

Watermelon Pond

Alachua and Levy Counties

Partnerships

Purpose for State Acquisition

In southwestern Alachua County, the original landscape of dry longleaf-pine sandhills pocked with marshes and lakes, important for wildlife, has been much reduced by agriculture and encroaching ranchettes. The Watermelon Pond project will conserve part of this original landscape for wildlife such as fox squirrels and sandhill cranes and for plants like the scrub bay; for the protection of the groundwater supply of the county; and for the public to enjoy for years to come.

Manager

Florida Forest Service/FFS, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

General Description

The project is important for its extensive tract of xeric uplands (sandhill and scrub natural communities) and seasonally interconnected wetlands of the Brooksville Ridge physiographic province. The complex of these uplands with their marshes and lakes is regionally significant to vertebrate fauna in an area of the state subject to extensive development pressures. No comparable complex is protected in north-central Florida. The project is also the major aquifer recharge area in Alachua County. No archaeological sites are known from the project. The uplands are threatened by subdivision for agriculture and ranchette developments.

Watermelon Pond FNAI Elements	
Striped Newt	G2G3/S2
Florida Sandhill Crane	G5T2T3/S2S3
Florida Mouse	G3/S3
Sherman's Fox Squirrel	G5T3/S3
Skelley's June Beetle	G2/S2
Southern Hognose Snake	G2/S2
<i>Giant Orchid</i>	G2G3/S2
Bachman's Sparrow	G3/S3
Gopher Frog	G3/S3
<i>Scrub Stylisma</i>	G3/S3
Short-tailed Snake	G3/S3
Wood Stork	G4/S2
24 rare species are associated with the project	

Public Use

This project will be designated as a state forest with such public uses as hiking, fishing, horseback riding and camping.

Acquisition Planning

Phase I: (essential) Loncala (acquired) and other large sandhill and xeric tracts including Gladman, Burch, Matson, Hart, Barry, O'Steen and Outler. Phase II: Remaining tracts.

On October 15, 1998, the Council designated the unsubdivided portion of section 36 and 11 other "corridor" parcels as essential.

On February 7, 2003 the Council added 250 acres in Alachua County to the project boundaries.

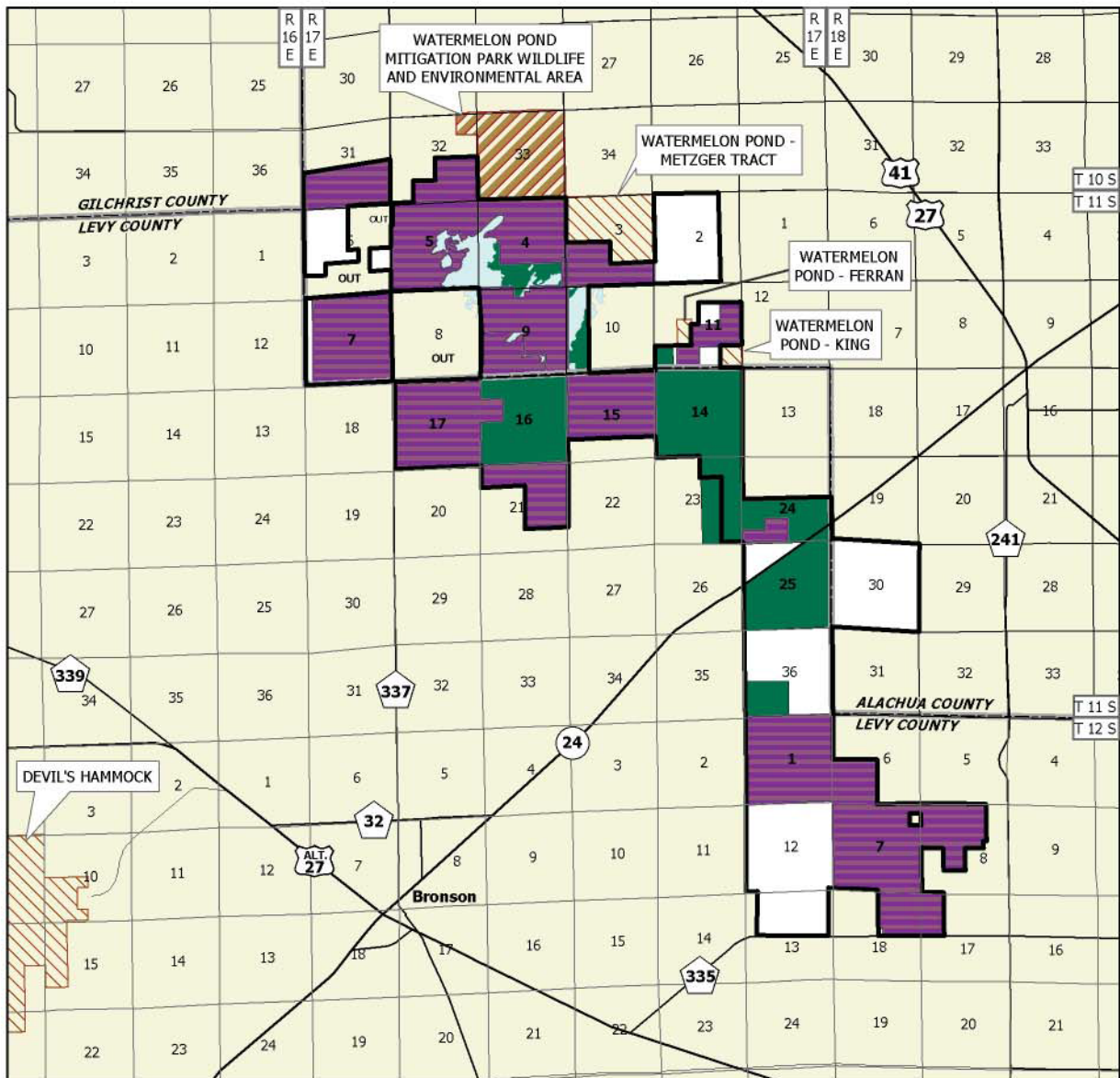
On December 5, 2003 the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) moved this project to the Group B list.

In April 2007 the FWC acquired 1,288 acres, identified as Barry Ranch. Of these acres, 607 are within the Watermelon Pond Florida Forever project boundary.

On August 13, 2010 ARC approved a 3,161-acre reduction in the project boundary due to residential/commercial/infrastructure development.

On December 9, 2011 this project was placed in the Partnerships category of Florida Forever projects.

Placed on List	1994
Project Area (GIS Acres)	11,977
Acres Acquired (GIS)	6,270*
at a Cost of	\$8,707,029*
Acres Remaining (GIS)	5,707
Estimated (Tax Assessed) Value of	\$5,293,910
*includes acreage and expenditures by the FWC.	



WATERMELON POND

LEVY AND ALACHUA COUNTIES

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands

0 0.5 1 2
Miles



JANUARY 2013

Coordination

Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and Alachua County are acquisition partners. On April 11, 2012 Alachua County purchased 640 acres in an adjoining area, which will help buffer the project.

Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the Watermelon Pond CARL project are to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; to conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, in order to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect; and to provide areas, including recreational trails, for natural-resource-based recreation.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation The natural pine forests and the restorable pine plantations of the Watermelon Pond project make it desirable for management as a state forest.

Manager The FFS is recommended as manager.

Conditions affecting intensity of management The areas of pine plantation and agricultural land in the project will require reforestation and restoration efforts beyond the level typically expected on a state forest. Consequently, management intensity and related management costs might be slightly higher than what would normally occur on a state forest.

Timetable for implementing management and provisions for security and protection of infrastructure

Once the core area is acquired, the FFS will provide public access for low-intensity, non-facilities-related outdoor recreation. Initial activities will include securing the site, providing public and fire management access, inventorying resources, and removing trash. The FFS will provide access to the public while protecting sensitive resources. The project's natural resources and threatened and endangered plants and animals will be inventoried to provide the basis for a management plan.

Long-range plans for this project will generally be directed toward restoring disturbed areas to their original conditions, as far as possible, as well as protecting threatened and endangered species. Some of the pinelands have been degraded by timbering and require restoration.

An all-season burning program will use, whenever possible, existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks to contain fires. Timber management will mostly involve improvement thinning and regeneration harvests. Plantations will be thinned and, where appropriate, reforested with species found in natural ecosystems. Stands will not have a targeted rotation age. Infrastructure will primarily be located in disturbed areas and will be the minimum required for management and public access. FFS will promote environmental education.

Revenue-generating potential The FFS will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will provide a variable source of revenue, but the revenue-generating potential for this project is expected to be low to moderate.

Cooperators in management activities The FFS will cooperate with and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government entities and other interested parties as appropriate.

Management Cost Summary/FFS

Category	Startup	Recurring
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$80,530	\$80,530
OPS	\$0	\$0
Expense	\$30,000	\$20,000
OCO	\$112,500	\$6,000
FCO	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$223,030	\$106,530

Updated February 10, 2016