SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Save Our Rivers

1996 Five Year Plan

The 1996
Save Our Rivers Five Year Plan
is dedicated to

Friedrich E.H. Schiller

Hired: March 1964
Retired: January 1996

During nearly 32 years of service, Fred Schiller has been the guiding light for the District's recreation and public use programs. His dedication, commitment, skill, and determination have provided countless opportunities to enjoy the beauty and excitement of recreating south Florida. The trails, campsites, boat ramps, and other facilities that he planned and built will be enjoyed by many future generations. Fred truly made a difference for all who love the out-of-doors. We can only hope that his example will inspire those who follow to meet his standards.

"His outstanding recreational planning skills have resulted in an array of county recreational areas, hiking trails, and boat ramps throughout the District."

—Bill Malone, Director, CLM, South Florida Water Management District

"Fred Schiller is the heart and soul of the District's recreation program. No one at the District has made a bigger contribution to the development and all phases of public use than Fred."

—Jack Maloy, Former Executive Director, South Florida Water Management District

"We will always remember you as a friend of the sportsmen and the Everglades."

—Freddy Fisikelli, Everglades Co-ordinating Council

"You have been an effective agency representative and a true friend of the Florida National Scenic Trail."

—Karl P. Sidenits, Forest Supervisor, National Forest Services

"He was instrumental in getting other government agencies to support the development of hiking trails in Florida."

—Paul Cummings, Past President, Florida Trail Association

"The horseback riding people are deeply indebted to Fred for having the insight and knowledge to put the DuPuis riding trail together."

—Joe Brader, DuPuis Horseman's Association

"Fred has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to provide outstanding recreation opportunities for the public in south Florida."

—Kent Wimmer, 1000 Friends of Florida

Save Our Rivers

Land For Waters' Sake

Table of Contents

From the Executive Director

Nearly every national poll taken in the last 10 years has shown strong public support for land acquisition as a method to protect and preserve natural resources. Within Florida, this support is evidenced by the outstanding Save Our Rivers, CARL, and local government acquisition programs. However, acquisition is only the first step in the effort to save these vital resources. We must also provide for adequate management and maintenance of these lands.

As the land base continues to grow, the need for management funds also grows. In these changing times, the South Florida Water Management District has developed many partnerships to help meet our growing stewardship needs. Although traditional interagency agreements with state agencies continue to be the primary focus of our management program, we have also developed several joint ventures with local government, non-profit institutions, and volunteer groups.

Some examples of these arrangements include:

- Orange County Parks and Recreation has provided an outstanding environmental education and visitors center at the District-owned Lake Tibet Butler property.

- Lee County has developed a similar program at the Six Mile Cypress Preserve.

- Palm Beach County is actively restoring a part of the Loxahatchee River Watershed and will provide a unique public recreation experience at this site in the near future.

- The PRIDE of Florida organization is providing interim management of the Stormwater Treatment Area lands in Palm Beach County. This program will actually generate revenue for the District while helping to rehabilitated inmates of the Florida state prison system.

- Horseback riding and hiking groups have contributed many hours and dollars to trail development and maintenance on several Save Our Rivers properties.

- The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has developed two new hunting opportunities on District property in Dade and Palm Beach County. These programs provide interim management, as well as recreational opportunities, at no cost to the District's management program.

We will continue to seek new and creative partnerships to manage our stewardship lands.

Since Florida is one of the fastest-growing states in the nation, we need to understand that environmental protection is really about our own ability to grow and prosper in a sustainable manner. The Florida that nurtured me as a child has, almost in an instant, begun to look quite frail. I know that the Florida my three young children are experiencing is far less resilient and healthy than the state I inherited. If we don't preserve and manage this land now for future generations to protect the quality of our water supply and other natural resources, then we threaten the future of our children, let alone our grandchildren.

Protecting our environment and wisely managing its resources is a never-ending job. The efforts of the South Florida Water Management District will span into the next century as we try to make parts of this ecosystem look and function more like it did 100 years ago rather than the way it does now. We can do it if we all work creatively together toward this goal.

— Samuel E. Poole, III

Introduction

The South Florida Water Management District (District) is a regional agency working to protect and manage the wetlands lakes, bays and rivers of south and central Florida. The District is the largest of five districts established across the state to act as guardians of the quality and supply of each regions present and future water resources. The mission of the District is to manage water and related resources for the benefit of the public and in keeping with the needs of the region. The key elements of the mission are:

- Environmental protection and enhancement
- Water supply
- Flood protection and
- Water quality protection.

In 1981, the Florida Legislature enacted a program known as "Save Our Rivers (SOR)." The legislation created Section 373.59, Florida Statutes, the Water Management Lands Trust Fund. The trust fund receives revenues from the documentary stamp tax and is administered by the Department of Environmental Protection (formerly Department of Environmental Regulation). Section 373.59 enables the water management districts to use moneys from the trust fund for the acquisition of fee or other interest in lands necessary for water management, water supply, and the conservation and protection of water resources. The act specifies the allocation formula to each District and the process for use of the fund.

Funds are also added from the Preservation 2000 Act. The Legislature enacted Preservation 2000 in 1990. The act creates the Florida Preservation Trust Fund, which is administered by the Department of Environmental Protection (formerly Department of Natural Resources). Projects must meet both criteria from Preservation 2000 and Save Our Rivers acts.

The South Florida Water Management District is responsible for acquiring such critical water resource lands in South Florida under the states Save Our Rivers (SOR) program. The District programs key emphasis revolves around the major purposes of the program are water management, water supply, and the conservation and protection of water resources.

As steward of these vital resources, it is the charge of the District to provide for their protection, enhancement, restoration, and preservation for the beneficial use and enjoyment of existing and future generations.

Manageability, surface and ground water systems, and the formation of corridors for the critical interaction of wildlife populations are major considerations in the land acquisition process. Prime requisites in managing these public lands are to ensure that the water resources, fish and wildlife populations, and native plant communities are maintained in an environmentally acceptable manner, and made available for appropriate outdoor recreational activities consistent with their environmental sensitivity. The care and nurturing of these resources may be accomplished in cooperation with other governmental agencies and the private sector through the design and implementation of appropriate stewardship programs.

Evaluation and Selection Process

Section 373.59, Florida Statutes specifies that monies from the Water Management Lands Trust Fund shall be used for acquiring fee title or other interest in lands necessary for water management, water supply and the conservation and protection of water resources. In addition, lands which include other features are eligible as well. These include, but are not limited to:

- River and stream flood plains and flow ways
- River and stream flood hazard areas
- Littoral zones
- Springs and lakes
- Aquifer recharge areas
- Wetlands
- Wellfields
- Unique water features

Each January, the South Florida Water Management District must submit to the Legislature and the Department of Environmental Protection, pursuant to the Water Management Lands Trust Fund an annual update to the Five-Year Plan.

In 1988, the South Florida Water Management District began a proactive program of identifying lands within the District that might be suitable as candidates for acquisition. Save Our Rivers

applications from private and public groups were reviewed, and District staff selected other sites for consideration from small-scale aerial photography.

Land Evaluation Matrix

The Save Our Rivers staff developed a matrix which addresses the water and natural resource values of each parcel. The matrix consists of the following ten parameters:

- Water Management
- Water Supply
- Conservation and Protection of Water Resources
- Manageability
- Habitat Diversity
- Species Diversity
- Connectedness
- Rarity
- Vulnerability
- Nature Oriented Human Use

The Land Evaluation Matrix is set up to review parcels for the water resource related issues (Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources), before consideration is given to environmental values. If proposed projects do not have appropriate water resource values, they are not evaluated for the remaining seven categories. Following on-site and aerial inspections of each tract, the value of each project, with regard to the matrix parameters, is determined by a team of senior technical staff.

A project benefits criteria system is a second method utilized to address projects which protect the integrity of ecological systems and provide multiple off-site as well as on-site benefits. These include the preservation of fish and wildlife habitat, recreation space, and water recharge areas. Projects are included in order to reverse the decline in the ecological, aesthetic, recreational and economic value of the State's water resources.

This system applies to projects designed primarily to supply off-site water resource benefits. Thus, evaluation is performed not on the lands themselves, as with the resource-based matrix, but consider the way these lands will be utilized within the described project. Examples for benefits provided by such lands would be:

A. Distribution systems to simulate sheet flow inputs into wetlands systems.

B. Detention systems operated to simulate the natural hydrograph for delivery of water into natural wetlands, lakes or estuaries

C. Water quality treatment system utilizing managed or unmanaged wetland vegetation processes.

D. Groundwater recharge and/or water table control to facilitate recharge to aquifers or retain seepage from water storage facilities.

E. Buffer access or transitional areas necessary to protect core lands from adverse impacts,provide wildlife corridors provide for public enjoyment of the core land, or isolate certain management practices such as flooding and prescribed burning.

All proposed projects must meet the following criteria: (any land acquisition would require prior Governing Board approval of the subject plan).

1. Proposed project lands are identified in a District Plan such as Water Use Management Plan (WUMP) or Surface Water Management Plan (SWIM), and

2. Subject lands would be utilized to provide simulated or naturally functioning water resource quality/quantity benefits,

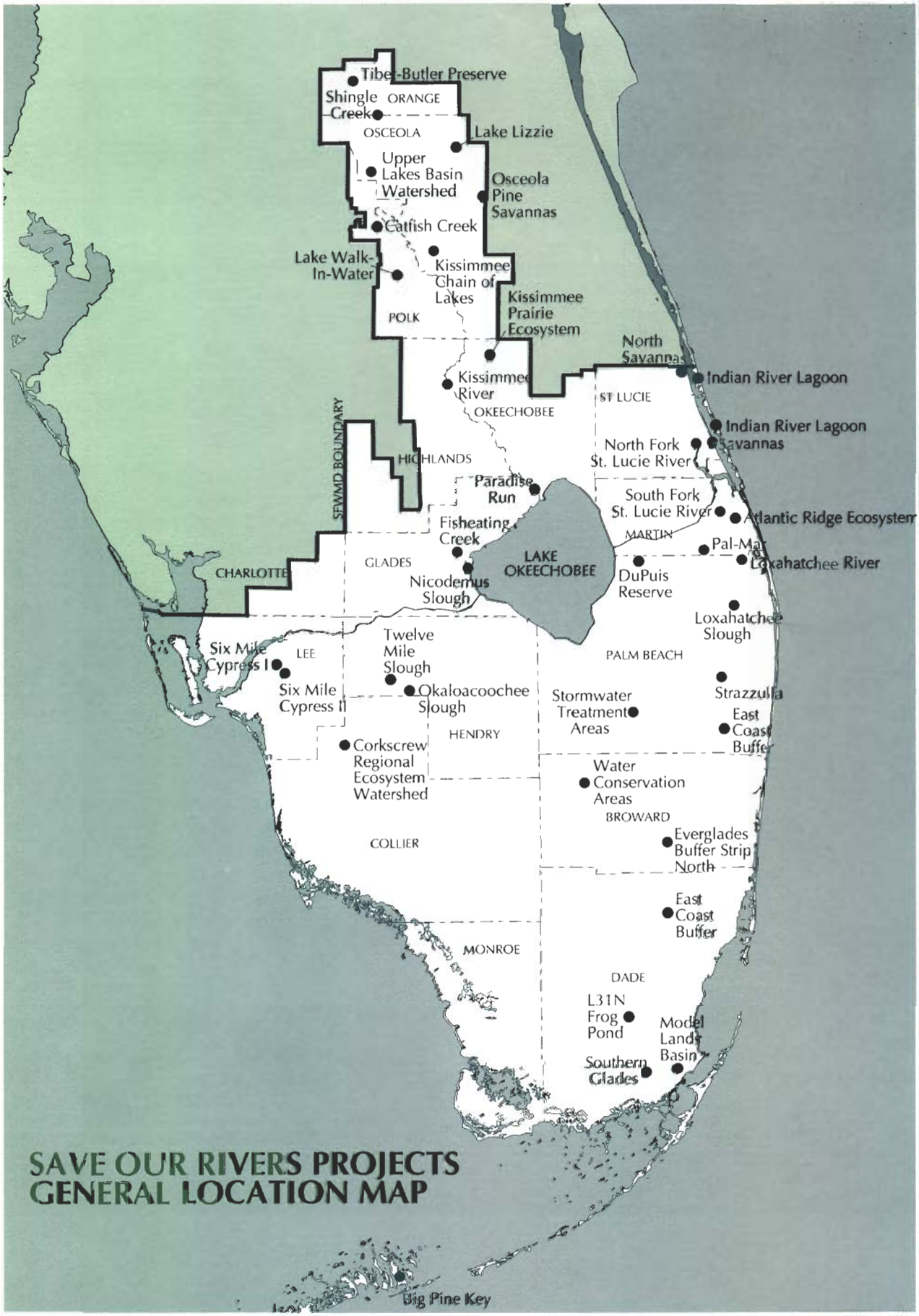
3. Lands would be part of the project resulting in net increase of natural resource values when considering both any on-site losses and off-site gains, and

4. Capital improvements, such as canals, levees, weirs, and pumps shall be limited on only those necessary to achieve the proposed water resource benefits, and

5. All appropriate funding sources for acquisition have been identified.

Staff recommendations are presented to the Land Selection Committee, which consists of senior managers representing all of the Districts departments. The endorsements or changes from the Land Selection Committee are presented to the Governing Board for final approval as the annual Five-Year Plan.

Persons reviewing this plan should be aware that funding levels and other factors may not allow acquisition of all lands shown in the plan.



SAVE OUR RIVERS PROJECTS GENERAL LOCATION MAP

Land Stewardship

The Florida Resource Rivers Act specifically states that Lands acquired with money from the fund shall be managed and maintained in an environmentally acceptable manner and, to the practicable extent, in such a way as to restore and protect their natural state and condition and make available to the public for appropriate recreational purposes. Further, Section 373.59, Florida Statutes, as amended, provides that up to 25% of the monies in the Water Management Lands Trust Fund may be allocated annually to the District for management, maintenance and capital improvements. District activities directed at achieving this level of stewardship are divided into the following categories:

I. STEWARDSHIP PLANNING

II. STEWARDSHIP FUNCTIONS

III. IMPLEMENTION STRATEGIES

I. Stewardship Planning

Stewardship planning includes the development of three types of plans:

1) **Strategic** — Strategic planning includes development of the District's water resource corridors concept, integration of the District's acquisition plan with other District programs and state and local programs. This activity also coordinates acquisition and management programs with the mitigation banking and regulatory programs.

2) **Conceptual** — Conceptual management plans are prepared to provide long-term goals and objectives and to establish a direction for the management of individual properties.

3) **Operational** — Operational management plans are more specific regarding what, why, how, and when various management activities will be undertaken, and which recreational activities are compatible.

A key element in the preparation of conceptual and operational plans is the environmental assessment, which is conducted for each parcel. The environmental assessments supply descriptions of the existing plant and animal communities and make recommendations for action to be taken to restore or maintain natural conditions.

II. Stewardship Functions

The Districts efforts under stewardship implementation revolve around three major areas: 1) restoration, 2) maintenance, and 3) public uses.

The District enacts its Stewardship program most often in cooperation with other government, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations.

1. Restore and Protect

Habitat Protection and Enhancement — Habitat enhancement and enhancement on SOR lands include a combination of hydrologic restoration in wetlands, prescribed burning to improve forage for wildlife and maintenance of native plant communities, and control of exotic vegetation.

Natural features of the South Florida landscape are rapidly being lost to agricultural and urban development. A major thrust of the Save Our Rivers program is to protect the flow ways, watersheds, and wetlands, which are critical to the water resources of the District.

Hydrologic Restoration — A very important stewardship task is returning SOR lands to as near a natural state, hydrologically, as possible. This provides for groundwater storage in wetlands, water quality improvement by slowing the rate of surface runoff, and habitat improvement for fish and wildlife. The Kissimmee River is the District's most aggressive restoration effort. Less intense programs are either planned or underway at the DuPuis Reserve, Nicodemus Slough, Loxahatchee River, Southern Glades (Canal 111), and Shingle Creek. These efforts range from the installation of diversion dams and water control structures in the Kissimmee River to filling or blocking drainage swales and ditches at the DuPuis Reserve.

Exotic Control — Includes the selective application of environmentally acceptable herbicides in a manner not harmful to the resource.

Prescribed Burning — Periodic fire is a natural element of native Florida ecosystems. The District uses prescribed burning as a tool for land management purposes, such as reduction of hazardous fuel load buildup, wildlife habitat enhancement and encouraging the restoration of native plant communities. The District began burning SOR lands in 1988, and intended to burn the larger tracts on an approximate three to five year rotations,

based on resource needs. During both winter and growing season, burns are employed to use fire as a management tool. Prescribed burning is also an intriguing part of the exotic control program and can be used to prepare areas for hydrologic restoration.

Environmental Monitoring Program — The environmental monitoring program is to evaluate the success of our land management and restoration programs. The program includes development of natural community maps and evaluation of changes in vegetation by monitoring plots and photomonitoring points. The wildlife observation/inventory program tracks what species use Save Our Rivers lands. Once discovered, threatened and endangered species are monitored. The location of rare plants is noted and recorded. Special management needs of rare species are incorporated into conceptual and operational management plans.

2. Manage and Maintain

General maintenance is required of the large number of firelines, roads, fences, culverts, houses, and sheds associated with the District's SOR lands. These activities include building and discing fire lines, mowing roadsides, grading roads, replacing and repairing culverts, and repairing and replacing perimeter fences. Houses, barns, and sheds also require periodic maintenance and repair.

The natural resources and real property assets of the District are protected by an integrated program of contractual law enforcement, on-site caretakers, lessees' vigilance, and employer inspections. All boundaries are fenced and/or marked with District ownership signs. The protection program must, however, be open to appropriate public use of the lands.

Certain resources of the District are renewable or expandable as marketable assets. The District attempts to utilize any renewable resources in an ecologically sensitive manner to help defray the cost of the management program. The most common use is for cattle grazing as a native range type intensity. There are uses such as TV towers and billboards that were acquired as part of the land acquisition. The District is actively seeking to expand this part of its Stewardship program in an environmentally responsible manner.

3. Public Recreation

Environmental Education — The District is developing an environmental education program to inform school groups and the public about the importance of maintaining water resources and environmentally sensitive land tracts. Environmental education workshops for teachers have been conducted on many SOR properties. SOR properties are always available for responsible research and educational activities.

Hiking and Camping — The Florida Trail Association (FTA) is working closely with the District on the development of hiking trails on SOR lands. Primitive campsites are being designated at appropriate locations along these trails for use by backpackers. Maintenance of the trails will be performed by FTA members. The Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST), one of eight officially designated national scenic trails, is currently being developed by FTA in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and a host of federal, state and local agencies and private landowners. A portion of the FNST has been certified for location along the Kissimmee River. Hiking trails provide a means by which visitors can view and enjoy, in quiet solitude, these sensitive lands. By eliminating areas used by off-road vehicles, plant and animal species are less likely to be subjected to adverse impacts.

Horseback Riding — The District is consulting with a variety of horseback-riding interests regarding the development of equestrian trails on District lands. Thirty-six miles of Equestrian trails have been developed for the DuPuis Reserve, and it is anticipated that additional areas may be targeted in the future. Care is being taken to limit the construction of these trails to suitable ecosystem types and to avoid sensitive wetland areas. Trail development and maintenance will be undertaken by private trail-riding organizations and/or other public agencies under appropriate agreements with the District.

Airboating — Airboating and other water-related activities may be allowed on lands within Water Conservation Areas 2 and 3, and also along the Kissimmee River, around the Chain of Lakes, and other selected tracts throughout the District. Boating and canoeing are limited to those SOR projects associated with rivers, such as the Kissimmee, Loxahatchee and South Fork St. Lucie.

Hunting and Fishing — The District, in cooperation with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, has opened SOR lands that are large enough, and support adequate game populations, for public hunting. Hunt programs are designed to provide a quality hunting experience while maintaining healthy populations of game species. Seasonal harvest quotas are established by the commission and are based on annual population surveys. Annual hunting regulations are proposed by the Commission for each area and approved by the District. Walk-in hunting is encouraged, as vehicular access is limited to the use of street licensed vehicles (excluding motorcycles) on designated roads. Fishing is allowed on all District lands, as appropriated under state law.

III. Implementation Strategies

The District employs a very diversified strategy in implementing its Land Stewardship Program. This approach is required by the ever increasing size and complexity of the management needs. The foundations of this program are: 1. Core Professional Management Group, 2. Internal Contracting, 3. Cooperative Management Agreements, and 4. Alternative Funding.

1. **Core Professional Management Group** — A small number of District staffs are dedicated to the planning and management functions of the Land Stewardship Program. This group includes professional land managers assigned to area offices with specific geographical responsibilities for comprehensive management responsibilities in specific geographical areas. These individuals also have specific areas of management expertise that they share with colleagues on the management staff.

The professional staff is supported by field crew of highly trained craft level employees to perform several diversified tasks throughout the District. This crew is primarily responsible for the preparation and execution of the fire management plans for each area. They also perform exotic control and general operations and maintenance services, as time permits.

District staff also performs the planning functions previously described and conducts a standard evaluation and monitoring program of the District's natural resources and the effectiveness of the management program.

2. **Internal Contracting** — A number of existing District department programs outside land management have capabilities and opportunities to provide substantial management services to the Stewardship program. The most prominent is the availability of general maintenance services from the Field Stations located throughout District. The Stewardship program has developed a process by which the SOR land management needs for general maintenance may be contracted to a local Field Station.

These functions are generally road side mowing, road maintenance, small culvert, and ditch repair, as well as carpentry, electrical, and plumbing work on various houses.

The Land Stewardship Program also relies on the District's Vegetation Management Division to coordinate large exotic control jobs, and the Department of Management Services for management and disposal of some real property assets not integral to the SOR mission.

This "internal" contract is perceived as a means to reduce duplication of functions and use all existing capably to the maximum extent possible.

3. **Cooperative Management Agreements** — The District has numerous land management service agreements. These agreements are primarily with other units of government, state, and federal agencies. They may involve complete management responsibility, or only specific services, and may or may not be funded by the District.

There are several advantages of these agreements that include the following factors:

a) Expertise. Other agencies provide knowledge, experience, and capabilities not available to the District. It is more cost effective to utilize this expertise from other agencies rather than to develop it.

b) Location. In several cases, local government or other agencies are made more conveniently located to provide essential services than the District.

c) Continuity of Program. District land laying adjacent to other public lands can be managed, as part of the larger ownership.

d) Local Benefits. Use of some District lands is almost exclusively by the local population. Management of these lands by local programs is consistent with who receives the benefits.

4. **Alternative Funding** — Since 1989, the District has funded all SOR Stewardship functions out of the management portion of the Water Management Lands Trust Fund (WMLTF). Although the legislature increased the allowable spending for management from 15% to 25% in 1995, these funds are still insufficient to meet all management needs. The District has augmented these funds in several ways:

In-Kind Services — As discussed in the previous section, several of our management agreements are at no cost to the District for either complete management services or selected services such as surveillance and law enforcement.

Revenue Agreements/Leases — The District has various land use leases that it obtained with the land purchase or developed to utilize renewable resources. The principal type of lease is for native range type cattle grazing. Several other agreements involve short-term use of lands that are in an interim management condition.

User Fees — This source of revenue is relatively new to the District, although most user groups support reasonable fees and are willing to contribute in-kind services. The District has good experiences with several user groups on developing and maintaining trails, trailheads, and primitive camping areas.

Mitigation — Perhaps the most promising revenue source is through the siting of off-site mitigation projects on District's SOR lands. The District's Stewardship program has received benefits in this manner in the form of land acquisition, restoration, and general management fees and services. This program needs to be familiarized and structured, and requires increased pre-acquisition of land management planning, but it offers the promise of substantial revenue to assist with the management cost of SOR lands.

Stewardship Milestones - FY 94-95

The following major accomplishments were achieved during the reporting period.

Implement local management programs. Land managers have been assigned to the Ft.Myers, Okeechobee, and Orlando area offices to direct land stewardship activities, at the local level. LSD has also increased its coordination for routine land management maintenance with local field stations. This reduces duplication of services and increases program efficiency.

Expanded management services relations: Examples: 1) interagency agreements with local governments to provide management at no cost, 2) agreements with GFC to conduct hunting, security, and exotic removal at no cost, 3) agreement with PRIDE of Florida to manage agricultural lands and share profits with District, and 4) land leases with for-profit corporations to manage land for fixed periods.

Increased public use opportunities. By employing the recently adopted Public Use Rule, we are capable of opening recently acquired District lands within one year of acquisition. A public use opportunity study was completed for the restored Kissimmee Valley. The Governing Board authorized creating a Land Management Advisory Committee for the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes area. Three cooperative agreements with the GFC will provide additional public hunting opportunities in Dade, Palm Beach, Okeechobee, and Highlands counties.

Restoration Projects. The construction of a major levee to improve water along the southern edge of the DuPuis Reserve was initiated. This project will create 2,500 acres of wetlands and will be funded by off-site mitigation agreements.

The Shingle Creek mitigation project was completed using funds from the Orlando Beltway mitigation. This project improved hydrologic conditions within Shingle Creek Swamp in Orange County.

Lee County, with assistance from the District, removed a road bisecting Six Mile Cypress Slough. This road removal will improve hydrological conditions within the Slough.

Increased management funds available. During the 1995 session, the legislature agreed to increase the funds available for SOR management activities from 15% of the WMLTF to 25%. For the SFWMD, this is equivalent to an additional $1,000,000.

List of Abbreviations

CARL	Conservation and Recreation Lands Program
CREW	Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection
DOF	Division of Forestry
DOT	Department of Transportation
DR	DuPuis Reserve
EEWEA	East Everglades Wildlife and Environmental Area
FNST	Florida National Scenic Trail
FTA	Florida Trail Association
GFC	Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
SCS	Soil Conservation Service
SFWMD	South Florida Water Management District
SITAC	Savannas Interagency Technical Advisory Commission
SOR	Save Our Rivers
SWIM	Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
WUMP	Water Use Management Plan
VWCS	Valencia Water Control District

Acquisition Summary

Acquisition from the beginning of the Save Our Rivers program in 1981 through June 1994 totaled 180,027 acres at land cost of $164,248,267.

Acquisition during the 1994 Plan period (July 1994 - June 1995) added approximately 35,818 acres at land cost of $44,851,585. These acquisitions bring the Save Our Rivers program totals for June 30, 1995, to 215,845 acres at a land cost of $209,100,352 See Table 1 for details of which lands were purchased.

The complete list of acquisitions are shown on the next page. The high apparent cost per acre of these acquisitions are due to the inclusion of the Everglades Buffer Strip lawsuit settlements as acquisitions.

There are an additional 2,075 acres of land which were approved for purchase but are pending closing. Purchase of these lands will expend an additional $2,987,660.00.

Acquisition Activity — Acquisitions July 1, 1994 - June 30, 1995

Project	Acres	Cost	Fund
Frog Pond	5,210.6	$6,250,000.00	P2000[1]
L-31 N	85.8[2]	705,627.50	P2000[2]
CREW	1,986	2,123,915.40	District
C-111	5.06	3,593.00	P2000
Everglades Buffer Strip	14.7	188,160.00	District
Everglades Buffer Strip	13.2	168,960.00	P2000
KCOL	13,433.41	15,326,322.00	P2000
Kissimmee River	761.62	2,840,300.00	P2000 2,400,900.00/ WMLTF 439,900.00
Upper Lakes Basin Watershed	10,068.55	8,083,600.00	P2000
Shingle Creek	285.65		Donation
STA's	3,336.18	9,097,000.00	P2000
WCA	617.5	64,107.00	District
TOTALS[3]	35,818.2700	$44,851,584.9000	

1. CARL provided matching $6,250,000.00
2. CARL puchased 85.8 additional acres
3. Does not include lands within SOR boundary acquired by CARL or the East Everglades project.

Acquisition Plan

The 1996 SOR Five-Year Acquisition Plan continues to anticipate significant cost-sharing with the state and local governments. The plan utilizes approved Preservation 2000 funding and the Water Management Land Trust Fund revenues. The plan also assumes that SOR management cost will utilize up to 25% of that income.

For the 1996 SOR Five-Year Plan, the following criteria were utilized to establish the general acquisition priority for qualified SOR projects.

1. Standing on the District Strategic Plan

SOR land acquisition is an integral element of the District's overall strategic plan for resource management. The priority of SOR land acquisition needs, as established by the Plan, must be directly translated to the SOR acquisition priority.

2. Potential for Resource Loss

Continued development activity in and around identified SOR projects raises concerns about loss of resource values for these projects if they are not protected by outright purchase or conservation easements. The Departments of Planning and Regulation, as well as local governments, are consulted annually as to the trend in development pressures around various SOR projects.

3. Potential for Cooperative Acquisitions

Several SOR projects are potentially qualified for cost sharing with other state and local agencies. Other projects are located in counties with land acquisition programs. Projects that can be acquired and/or managed with cost-sharing programs and remain consistent with SOR objectives receive priority consideration. It is important to establish the intent of the potential partner before granting a priority status.

4. Disposition of Owner(s)

The expressed willingness of the owner(s) of specific critical tracts within an SOR project is a factor in the acquisition priority consideration. Conversely, well managed lands owned by private interests reluctant to sell are given a low priority, even if the resource values are high.

Although this priority analysis should apply to SOR projects, it may be necessary to single out certain key tracts within a project as the critical factor for a priority; that is, the status or priority of certain core tracts within a project may determine the priority of the overall project. In these cases, the commitment of funds to the project should be to acquire the core pieces.

The Priority Acquisition Plan was developed using these criteria. The acquisition resources of the District will be specifically directed to accomplish this plan. However, any qualified SOR project may be considered for acquisition during the life of this plan as conditions and circumstances warrant.

The objective of the Save Our Rivers program is to acquire necessary interests in lands for water management, water supply, conservation and protection of water resources. The Five-Year Plan shows projects that have been determined to meet the Save Our Rivers objectives. Projects have been submitted from a variety of sources and analyzed through the District Save Our Rivers matrix. However, financial and other constraints may not allow acquisition of all lands included in the Five- Year Plan.

New Projects/Boundary Revisions

In 1995, the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board authorized the addition of five new projects to the Five Year Plan, as well as boundary modifications to five existing projects. The Board authorized deleting two projects from the Plan.

New Projects	Acres	County
Indian River Lagoon	535	St. Lucie
Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem	38,611	Okeechobee
Lake Lizzie	1,082	Osceola
Lake Walk-in-Water	4,109	Polk
East Coast Buffer	63,000	Dade, Broward, Palm Beach

Project Additions (Boundary Modifications)	Acres	County
Southern Glades /Model Lands Basin	911	Dade
Kissimmee Chain of Lakes	2,143	Osceola
CREW	1,080	Collier
Loxahatchee Slough	892	Palm Beach
North Fork St. Lucie River	1,000	St. Lucie
East Coast Buffer	166	Palm Beach

Project Deletions	Acres	County
Telegraph Swamp (At the request of the owner)	10,000	Charlotte
Johnson Ranch (Donated to GFC via mitigation)	1,642	Highlands
Dade/Broward Levee (Absorbed into East Coast Buffer)	12,000	Dade

The Five-Year Plan indicates to local governments that certain lands within their jurisdiction meet the criteria for Save Our Rivers project consideration. Budget, or other considerations, may constrain the acquisition of these lands. Accordingly, local governments should use the Five-Year Plan as only one of the many criteria in making land use planning evaluations.

1997 Save Our Rivers Five Year Plan Schedule

March 1996	Deadline for new project applications
May 1996	Land Selection Committee meeting--discussion of new projects/boundary changes
June 1996	Land Selection Committee meeting--discussion of 1997 priority projects and spending plan
August 1996	Governing Board Workshop on new projects/boundary changes
September 1996	Governing Board public hearing to adopt 1997 Five Year Plan

1996 Five Year Plan — SOR Priority Projects

Project	Include in Strategic Plan	Potential for Resource Loss	Cooperative Acquisition	Willingness to Sell	P-2000 Criteria
Kissimmee River Restoration	Yes	L	Federal Government		4, 6
Everglades Construction Project (Stormwater Treatment Area)	Yes	L	Special Taxing District		6
East Coast Buffer	Yes	L	Legislative Mandate	Yes	6
Florida Bay (Southern Glades, Model Lands, Frog Pond/L-31N)	Yes	M	CARL Dade County		1, 4, 6
Upper Lakes Basin Watershed	Yes	H	Mitigation	Yes	4, 6
South Fork St. Lucie (1)	No	M	Martin County	Yes	5, 6
Pal Mar	Yes	M	Martin & Palm Beach Counties/CARL	Yes	5, 6
Six Mile Cypress(1)	No	L	Lee County	Yes	1, 6
CREW	Yes	H	Lee County/CARL		4, 6
Water Conservation Area	Yes	L			4, 6
Everglades Buffer Strip(1)	Yes	L	Broward County U.S. Government	Yes	6
North Savannas	No	M	St. Lucie County	Yes	1, 4, 6
North Fork St. Lucie	Yes	M	St. Lucie County	Yes	1, 6
Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem	No	H	CARL	--	1, 2, 6
Okaloacoochee Slough	No	H	CARL	Yes	4, 6
Lake Walk-in-Water	No	M	Polk County	Yes	6
Catfish Creek	No	M	Polk County	Yes	6

Assumptions

1. P-2000 and SOR documentary tax stamps generate $30,000,000/year.
2. There are sufficient staff resources to execute the program.
3. No P-2000/WMLFT money allocated for SWIM or Aquatic Weed Control.

(1) On Priority List only if FY 95 allocation is unspent

P-2000 Criteria

1. Imminent danger of development
2. Imminent danger of subdivision
3. High rate of appreciation
4. Groundwater recharge
5. Purchase at 80% of appraised value
6. Serves/Protects endangered habitat/species


Projects

Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem

General Description

Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem is located in southern Martin County, between I-95 and US 1. It covers approximately 12,700 acres. The project contains numerous land owners, but the majority of the site is in relatively few ownerships. The current land use is mostly cattle grazing on unimproved pasture. Intense agriculture and residential development are occurring around the edges.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

The project contains extensive upland/wetland systems. This site is very diverse. In has large areas of wet flatwoods and forested sloughs. One of its most important features is coastal scrub. The area is tributary to the South Fork St. Lucie River and North Fork of the Loxahatchee River (Kitching Creek). The extensive wetland systems provide a source of groundwater baseflow for the two rivers.

This area is extremely important for aquifer recharge and water supply to the coastal portion of Martin County. It is a groundwater high, with high ground elevations when compared to surrounding lands.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

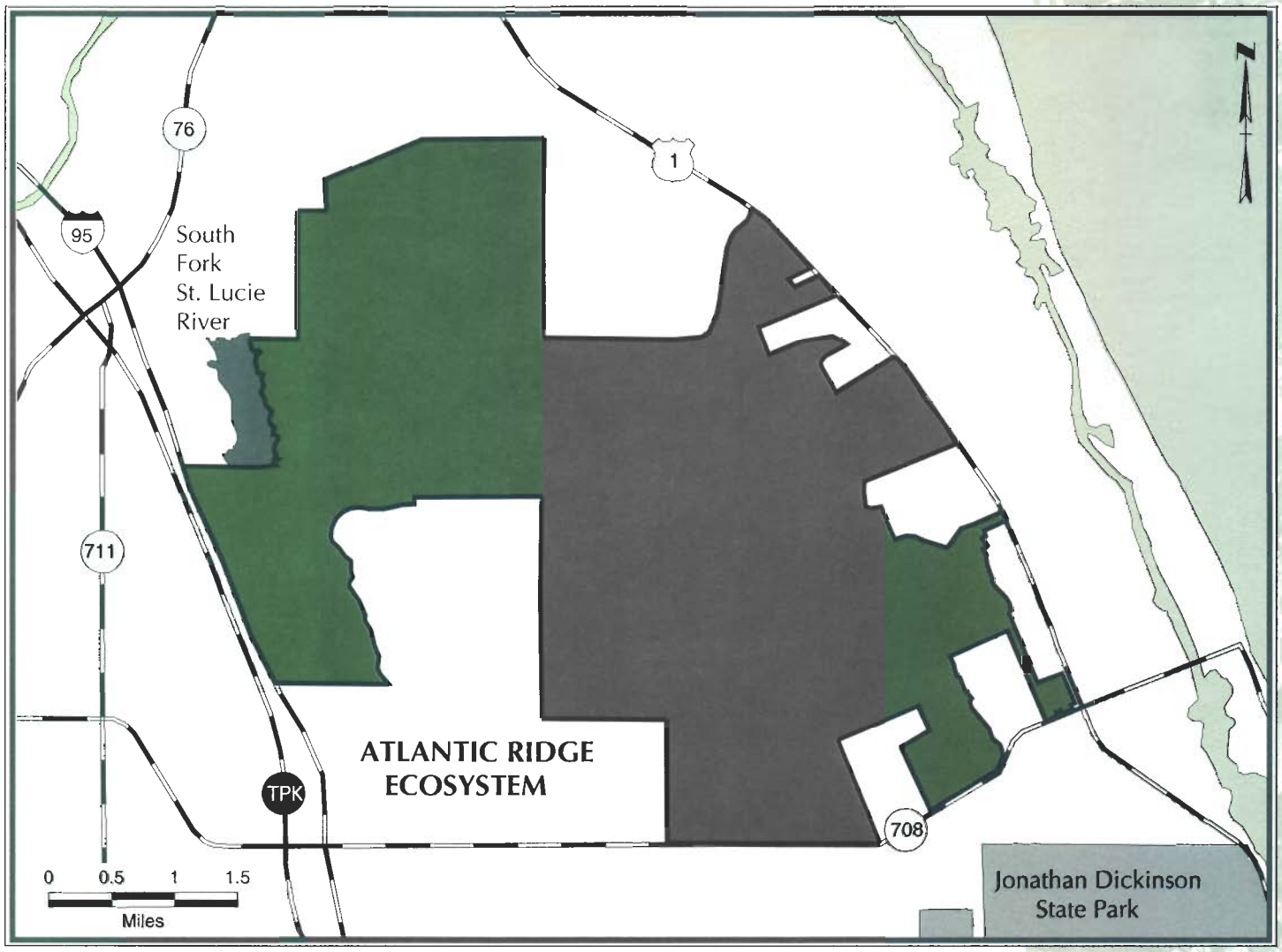
There are numerous abandoned farm fields in the north end which need to be restored. A ditch system connects wetlands in the northwest portion of the project, and drains to the South Fork. However, sheetpile weirs were installed in these ditches as the result of District enforcement action in the mid-1980's. The weirs have prevented the total drainage of the wetlands, but the wetlands could be completely restored with ditch plugs.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Sensitive Manner

Management of the site would probably be by SFWMD, with possible cooperation from GFC. No large exotic infestations are present, but exotic control certainly will be a management task. Prescribed burning will be necessary and as the surrounding area develops, will become more difficult.

Recreation Potential

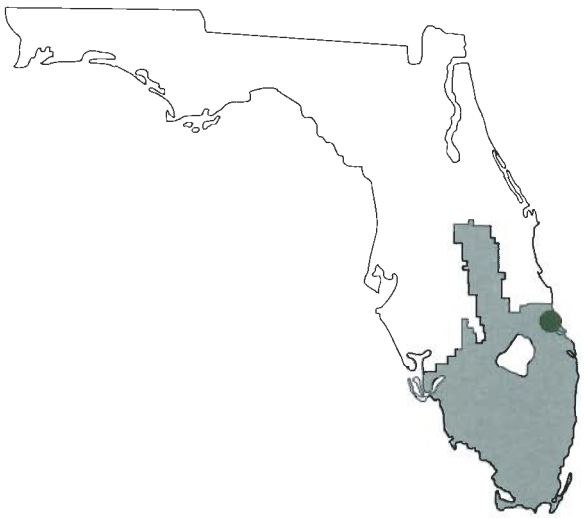
This site is large and very accessible to major population centers in south Florida. Public access points could be established along three sides of the project. The variety of community types would make interesting hiking and the area could be opened to fishing. Hunting might be possible under agreement with GFC.



County:
Martin

Total Project Area:
12,300 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Big Pine Key

General Description

The Big Pine Key project is designed to compliment the existing Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge. Land acquisitions were initiated by The Nature Conservancy, and by District Governing Board action The District's contribution was limited to $2,000,000. In 1990, the District completed its land acquisition commitment to the project. The District supports the ongoing land acquisition efforts by the Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), CARL and The Nature Conservancy to protect the remaining undeveloped parcels within the project boundaries.

Land Stewardship Activities

Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

A conceptual management plan was prepared under contract by The Nature Conservancy to provide future managers with guidelines for protecting and restoring the unique vegetative communities and wildlife populations on Big Pine Key. The plan includes descriptions and maps of the vegetative communities, as well as lists of observed wildlife, endangered plants and animals, and summaries of the island's freshwater lenses and hydrogeology. The plan discusses needs and methodologies for management activities which include prescribed burning, exotic plant removal and treatment, general cleanup work, natural resource inventory, and preparation of a land management plan.

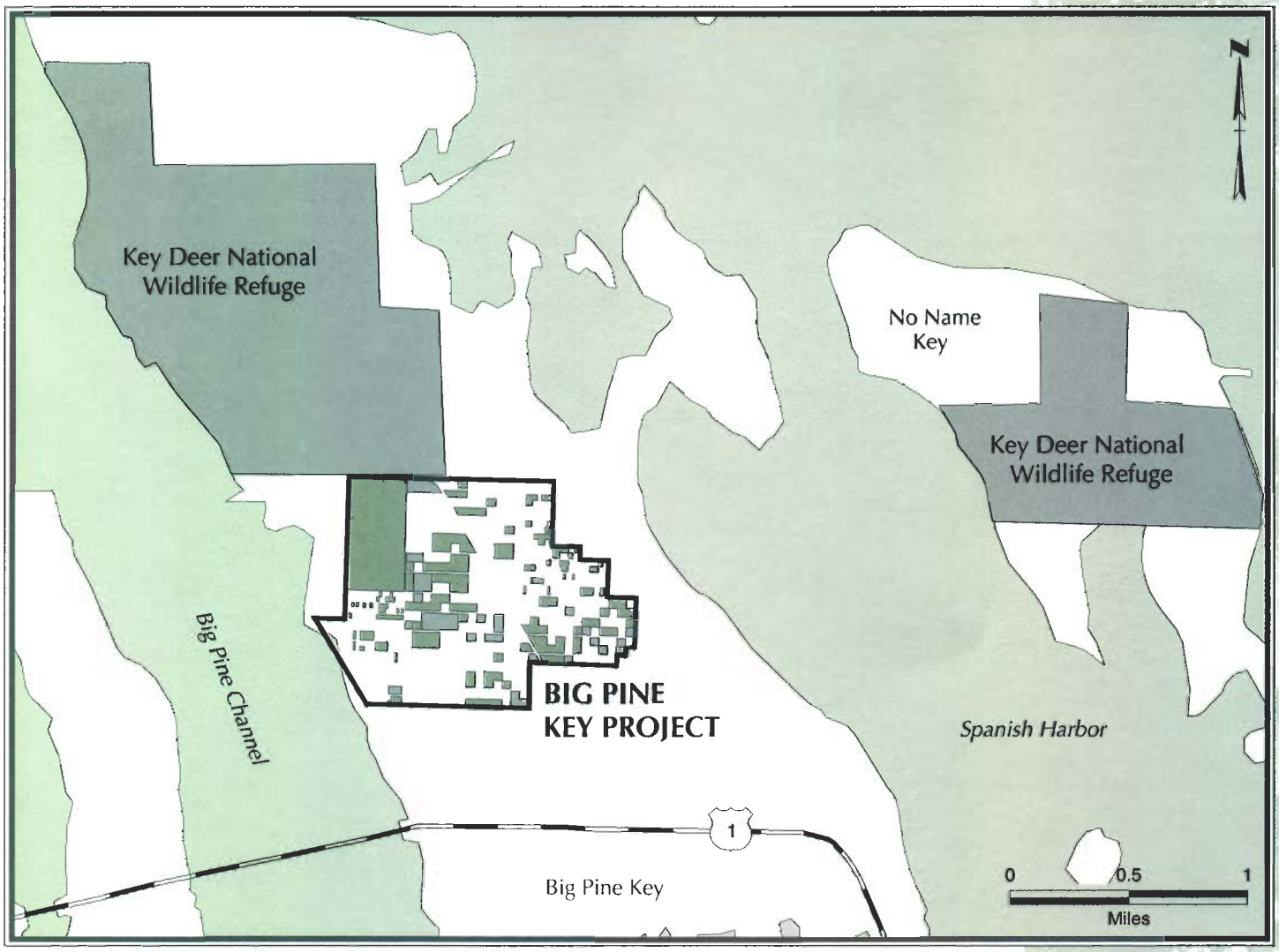
Management of Big Pine Key SOR lands by District personnel is very difficult due to its remote location. It is important to have a full time on-site manager to handle the day to day activities, as well as provide a security presence and deterrent to vandalism and illegal dumping. District staff have met with USFWS and Nature Conservancy land managers. It is proposed that long term management responsibility be turned over to USFWS. A fifty year contract for management services with the US Fish and Wildlife Service has been approved.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

Protection of the wetlands and restoration of the pine rockland community centers around three major activities — exotic plant control, habitat improvement, and prescribed burning. With the exception of a single 78 acre tract, the District's ownership pattern within the project is scattered and made up of numerous small parcels.

Public Recreation

The development of a hiking trail is possible on the largest tract (78 acres), but coordination will be done first with the National Key Deer Refuge, to see if additional trails are needed,and if the two systems can be combined.

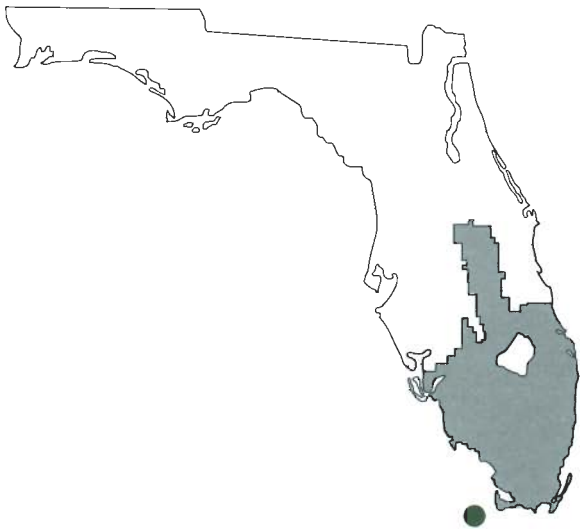


County:
Monroe

Total Acres Acquired:
190

Land Cost (SOR):
$1,999,900

Acres Remaining:
0



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Catfish Creek

General Description

Catfish Creek is located in Polk County. The project totals 5,000 acres, and connects with an existing CARL project (same name). Nearly 4,000 acres of the CARL project have been purchased, and much of which remains lies within this project. The District has already acquired 650 acres from the same owner along Lake Hatchineha, as part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes SOR project. Current land use is native range grazing, with some areas of improved pasture. This tract contains a diversity of community types, including scrub, seepage slopes, several types of wetlands, and pine flatwoods.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resource

This property has important water resource values due to its location and varied topography. Also, the sand hills in the southwest corner have deep sands which provide direct recharge to the Floridan Aquifer. This site is very diverse, particularly when combined with the lakefront property already acquired, and the Catfish Creek CARL property. It contains mesic hammocks, low flatwoods, dry prairie, scrub, and seepage slopes along the edge of the sand hills.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

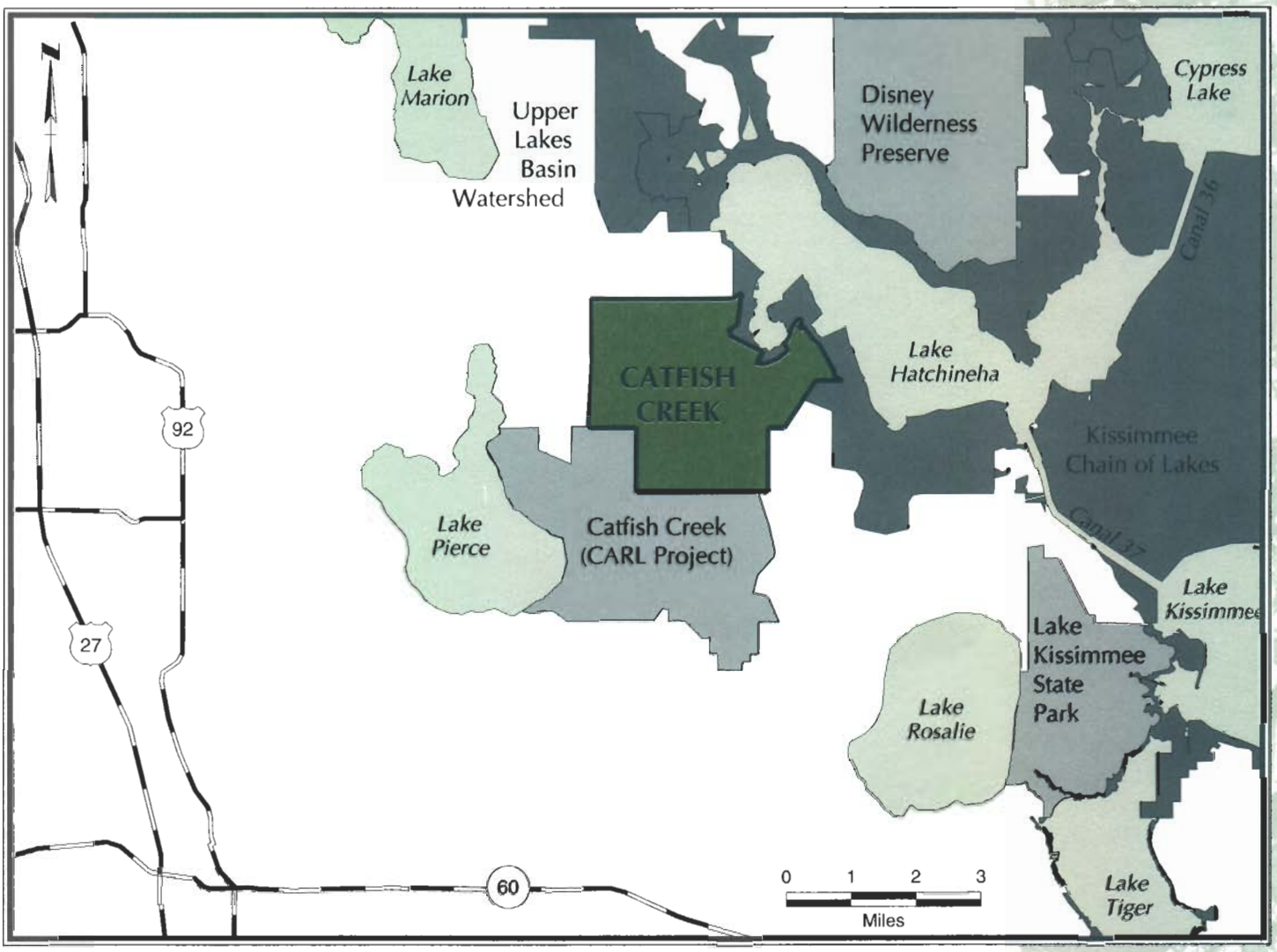
Numerous shallow ditches exist in the improved pastures, which drain to Lake Hatchineha. These ditches can be easily plugged, and the associated wetlands, restored. Upland restoration could be accomplished on the improved pastures. No stands of exotic vegetation were observed. The site contains several threatened communities, including scrub, seepage slopes, and mesic flatwoods. This tract is the headwaters to Catfish Creek which, as a blackwater stream, is also rare. Bald eagles, gopher tortoises, scrub jays, and wood storks have all been documented on the Catfish Creek CARL lands, and are expected to occur on this site, as well.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Prescribed burning would be required over much of the site. The Catfish Creek CARL project is being managed as a State Preserve by Florida DEP. That management would likely be extended onto this tract as well.

Recreation Potential

This site has excellent potential for passive recreational use, including hiking, horseback riding, camping, and nature appreciation.



County:
Polk

Total Project Area:
5,000 acres

Number of Owners:
One

- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1995 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

CREW

General Description

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) is a generic name for a vast project covering nearly 55,000 acres in Lee and Collier Counties. National Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is surrounded by CREW. However, the sanctuary is not included in the project boundary, nor will it be acquired.

In 1995, the District governing board approved the expansion of the project by 1,080 acres. The expansion fills in most of an out parcel in the project between Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and Lake Trafford. The expansion area includes a large expanse of wet flatwoods and wet prairie, as well as hydric hammock, which are in excellent condition. The expansion also includes active farm fields, which were formerly a mixture of mesic flatwoods and wet prairie. If acquired, it is recommended that the farmfields be restored through the mitigation process.

In 1994, 1,986 acres were acquired by the District. This acquisition brings the public ownership to more than 18,000 acres.

Vision Statement

The vision for CREW is primarily hydrologic in nature but contains ecological and public use components as well. The CREW is located at the top of the western Big Cypress watershed. It conveys surface water to private, state, and federally protected natural areas, including Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Big Cypress National Preserve, and Everglades National Park. In addition, surface water runoff from the Flint Pen Strand and Bird Rookery Swamp is transported to Estero Bay and the Wiggins Pass/Cocohatchee River Estuarine System via the Imperial River, Spring Creek and the Cocohatchee canal. It is the District's objective to maintain existing sheetflow and water quality conditions within undisturbed portions of CREW, as well as restoring hydrologic conditions in Bird Rookery Swamp through the installation of water control structures in existing canals.

The District intends to enhance natural communities that have been degraded by human impact. Natural reestablishment of slash pine and cypress trees will be encouraged in areas that were logged. Chemical treatment, and in some cases, chemical treatment in combination with prescribed fire, have been initiated and will continue until exotic plant infestations are under control.

Natural Resource Management

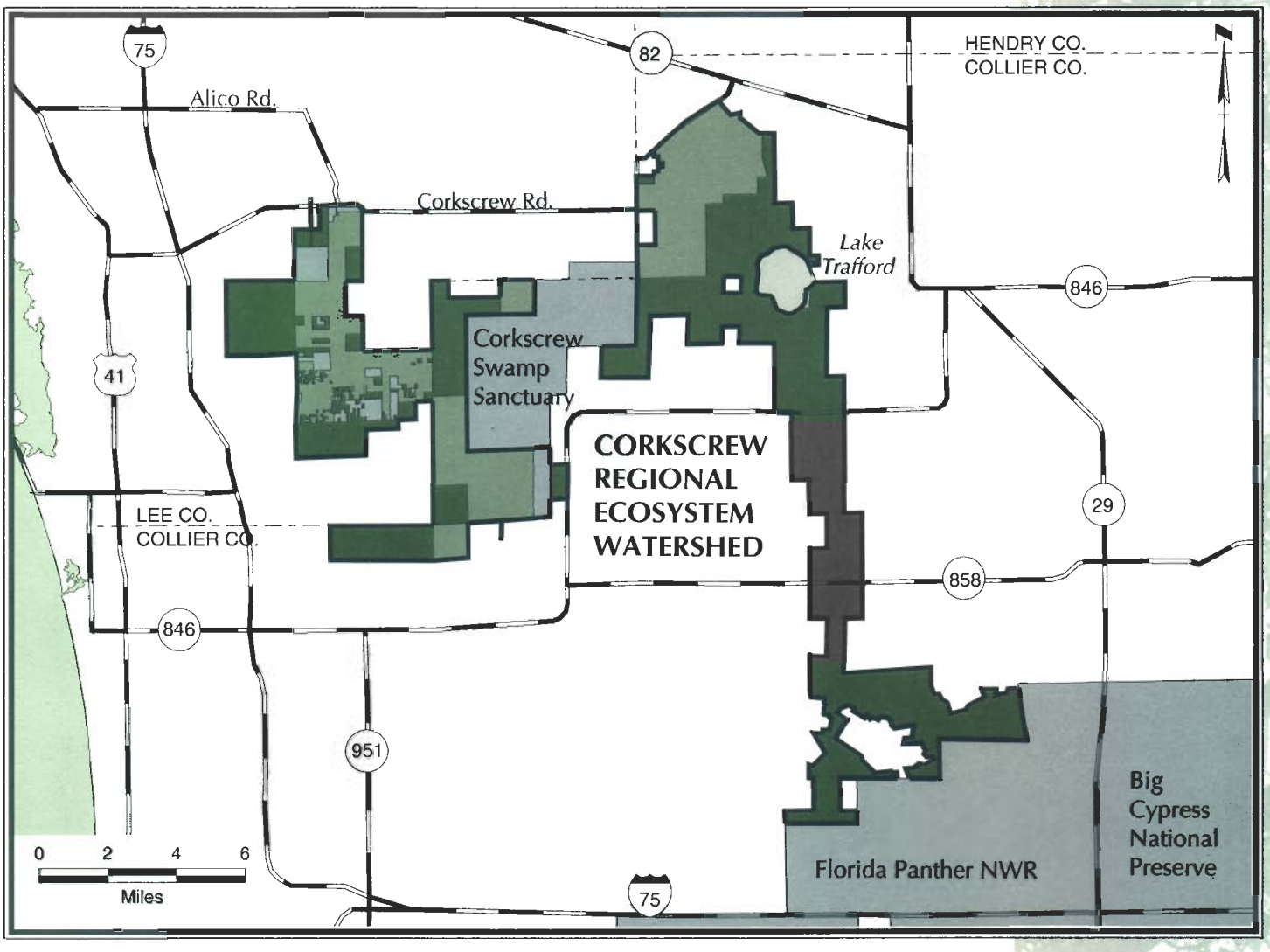
Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	8,000	8,000
Fire Management	480	600
Mowing/Chopping	7 miles	
Restoration	6 miles	2 miles
	Initiated	Ongoing
General Clean-up	•	•
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting	•	•
Security		
GFC Reserve		
GFC		

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting		•
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling (roads only)	•	
Camping		•
Airboating		•
Environmental Education	•	
Greenway System		
CREW		

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning	•	
Public Input		
CREW Trust		
Cooperative Management Agreement(s)		
County		
FTA		
CREW Trust		



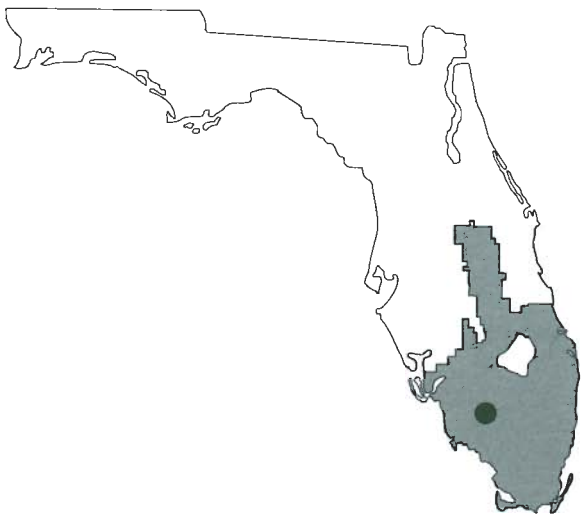
Counties:
Collier and Lee

Total Project Area:
55,968 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
18,415

Land Cost:
$18,827

Acres Remaining:
37,553



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

DuPuis Reserve

General Description

The DuPuis Reserve State Forest encompasses 21,875 acres in northwestern Palm Beach and southwestern Martin Counties. The property is interspersed with numerous ponds, wet prairies, cypress domes, and remnant Everglades marsh.

Project Vision

The DuPuis Reserve will be a mixture of community types, characteristic of the diverse ecosystem that existed before the impacts which increased drainage and reduced sheetflow Plant communities will include wet flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, wet prairies, depression marshes, cypress dominated basin swamps and restored Everglades. Water and fire will be the major natural elements that drive ecological succession. Hydrologic management, prescribed burning and exotic species control will be the primary tools used to restore and manage these communities. Wetland restoration efforts will restore the functional values of water storage and water quality provided by the DuPuis Reserve.

Natural Resource Management

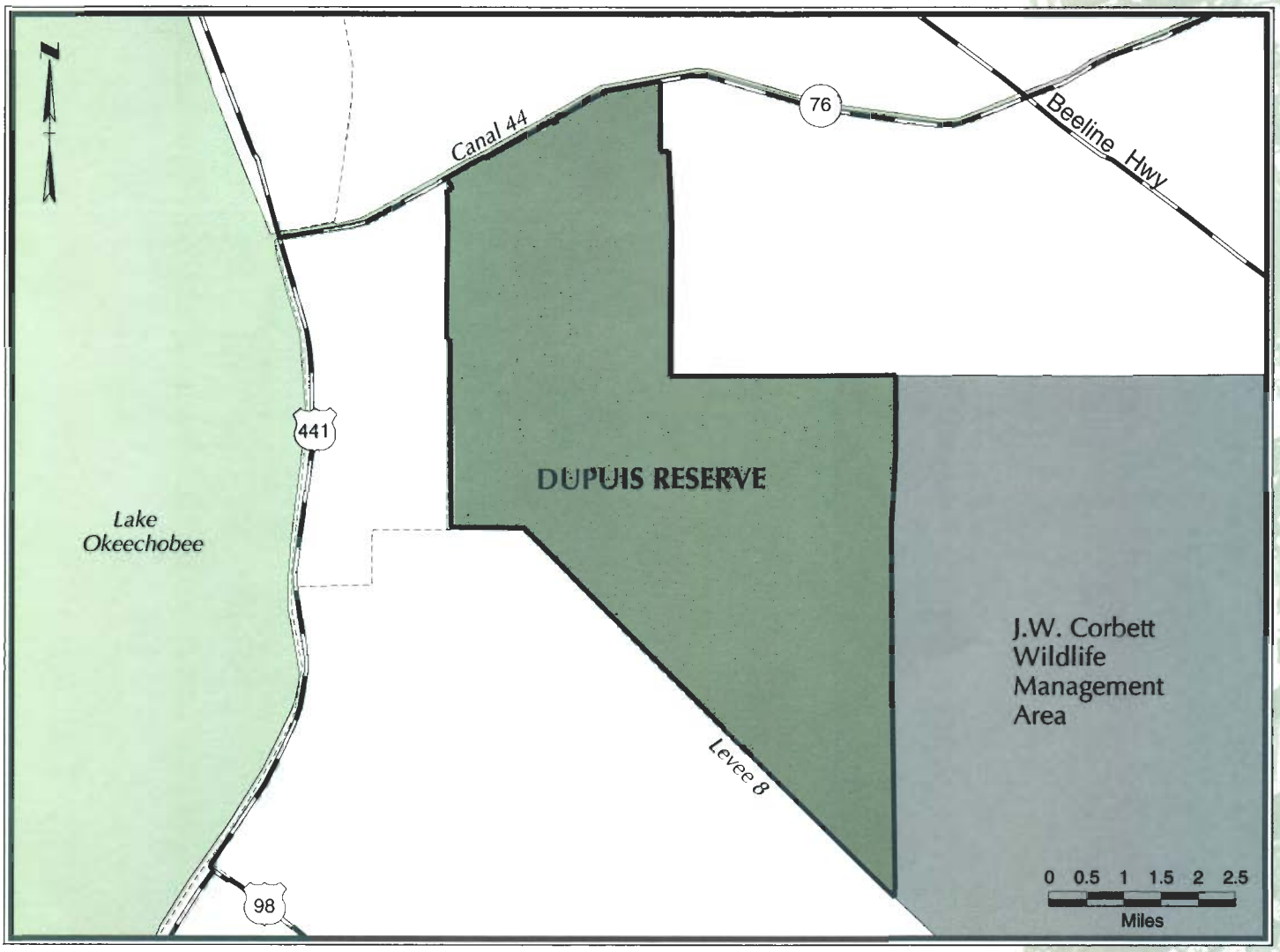
Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	DOF	
Fire Management	DOF	
Mowing/Chopping		
Restoration	2,500	
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		
Waste Removal	•	
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
GFC		

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting	•	
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding	•	
Bicycling	•	
Camping	•	
Airboating		•
Environmental Education	•	
Greenway System		
Lake Okeechobee to Atlantic Ocean		

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning		
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		

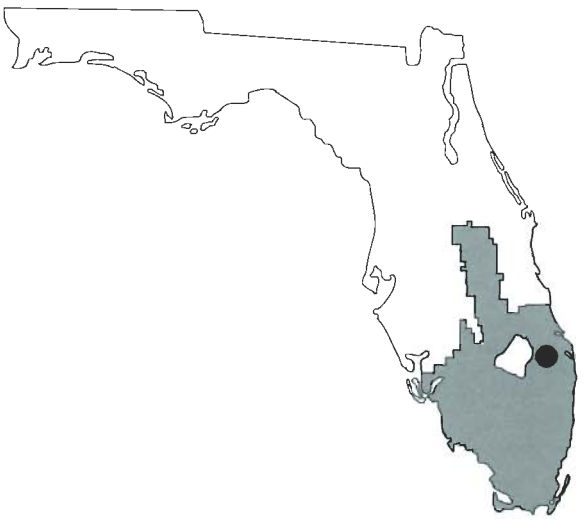


Counties:
Martin and Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
21,875 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
21,875

Land Cost:
$23 Million



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1995 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

East Coast Buffer

General Description

The East Coast Buffer consists of approximately 66,400 acres of marshes, reservoirs, and groundwater recharge areas in Palm Beach, Broward and Dade counties. These are proposed to be located on undeveloped lands abutting the East Coast Protective Levee. A detailed description of these lands may be obtained by contacting District staff in either the Land Stewardship or Lower East Coast Planning Divisions. The East Coast Buffer incorporates lands within three previously designated Save Our Rivers projects. The project previously shown as the Dade-Broward Levee is incorporated into the East Coast Buffer. The Everglades Buffer Strip North and Strazzulla projects are shown in this Five-Year Plan as separate projects due to specific land management agreements. The acreage of these projects is included within the total area shown for the East Coast Buffer Project.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

The East Coast Buffer would serve as a barrier to reduce the impacts of development to the Everglades, reduce levee seepage from the Everglades, increase groundwater recharge, enhance drinking water supplies, improve the Everglade's water supply, and enhance thousands of acres of wetlands that once comprised the Everglades. The project involves using excess stormwater to reduce the seepage loss from the East Coast Protective Levee. Management activities proposed for the marshes propose hydroperiod restoration and the removal of exotic vegetation for the enhancement, preservation and maintenance of the wetlands.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

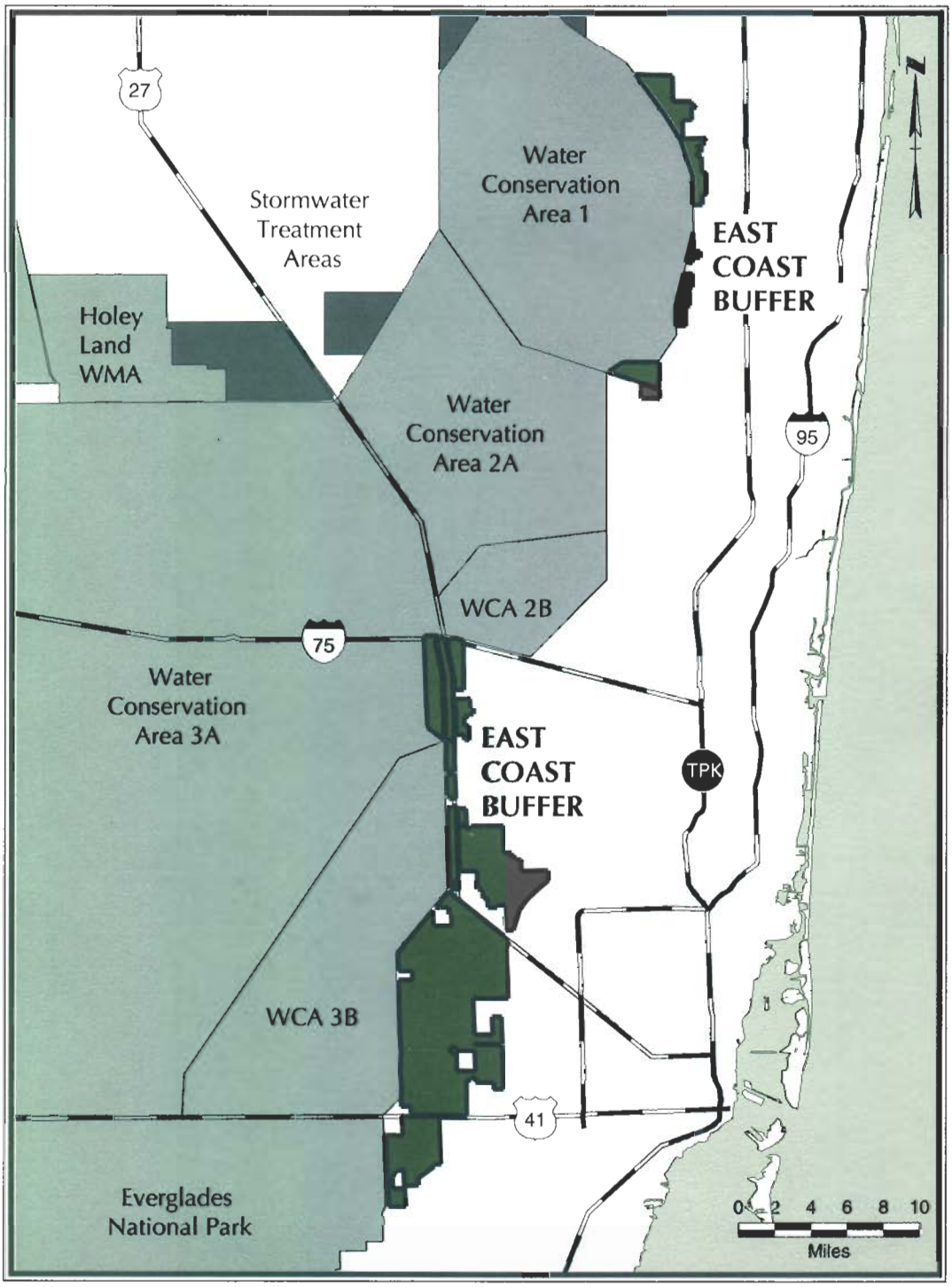
Areas contained within the boundary delineated for the East Coast Buffer consist primarily of undeveloped lands. Current land uses include very low intensity development, pasture land, and limestone mining. A significant portion of the area also is characterized by viable wetland habitat. An important consideration in the development of the buffer is the preservation and enhancement of these wetlands. Careful consideration was given to the improvement of the hydrologic patterns associated with these wetlands. Facilities such as pump stations, canals, and levees and associated operational criteria would be developed to enhance these valuable wetlands.

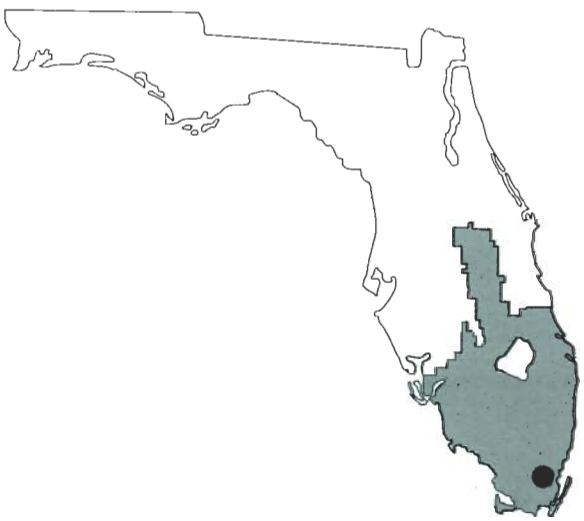
Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the East Coast Buffer is its role in restoring the Everglades. In 1992, the Corps of Engineers was authorized by Congress to conduct the Central and Southern Florida Project Comprehensive Review Study (Restudy). The Reconnaissance Report for the Restudy was completed in November 1994. The Corps incorporated the East Coast Buffer in their analysis, although they termed it "Water Preserve Areas." The Reconnaissance Report identified the need to restore more natural hydrologic conditions to the Everglades system. The ability of the Water Preserve Areas to capture and store water currently released to the ocean was considered an essential component in any comprehensive plan to restore the Everglades. The Corps of Engineers and the District will jointly conduct the next phase of the Restudy, which will specifically include the East Coast Buffer/ Water Preserve Areas.

Recreation Potential

Recreational activities could include fishing, canoe trails, environmental education and interpretive facilities.





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1995 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

Counties:
Palm Beach, Broward and Dade

Total Project Area:
66,400

Total Acres Acquired:
0*

Acres Remaining:
58,300

*Project area includes previously acquired lands.

Everglades Buffer Strip North:
1,657

Everglades Buffer Strip South:
1,178

Strazzulla:
1,225

Water Conservation Areas:
3,111

Other:
978

Everglades Buffer Strip North

General Description:

Everglades Buffer Strip totals approximately 4,000 acres. It exists as a one-half mile wide strip lying between the District's Levee 37 and Levee 33 and U.S. Highway 27 in Broward County. It extends from State Road 84 to the Dade County line. The Save Our Rivers Everglades Buffer Strip North project includes 1,600 acres which extend from SR 84 on the north to Canal 11 on the south.

Land acquisition has been shared by SOR, District ad-valorem funds, and Broward County funds. The project is funded in part by funds received from Land and Water Conservation Fund (LMWCF) Act of 1965, Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897, as amended. ($4,134,000 - 50% of a part of project acquisition costs). As an Approved Outdoor Recreation Project, conservation and resource protection are the primary purposes of the Project.

Project Vision

Preservation and restoration of this area is essential for proper water management and conservation for Broward County and the lower east coast area. The project will aid in environmental enhancement through increased water flow to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, improved wildlife habitat, and will provide aquifer recharge and drinking water supply benefits for Broward and Dade County. Treatment of exotic vegetation is a critical part of the management of this area. Exotic vegetation within the project be treated with mechanical, chemical and water treatment methods. The District staff is investigating a system of water management facilities to help maintain water levels in order to discourage new exotic plant growth and influence water seepage from the conservation areas. The plan proposes public use which is compatible with water management, water supply and conservation goals and the site's environmental sensitivity. The District is considering passive recreational uses such as fishing, canoeing and environmental interpretation/viewing. Early management tasks will include a program to inform the public about the importance of the Buffer Strip and an exotic removal/control effort.

Natural Resource Management

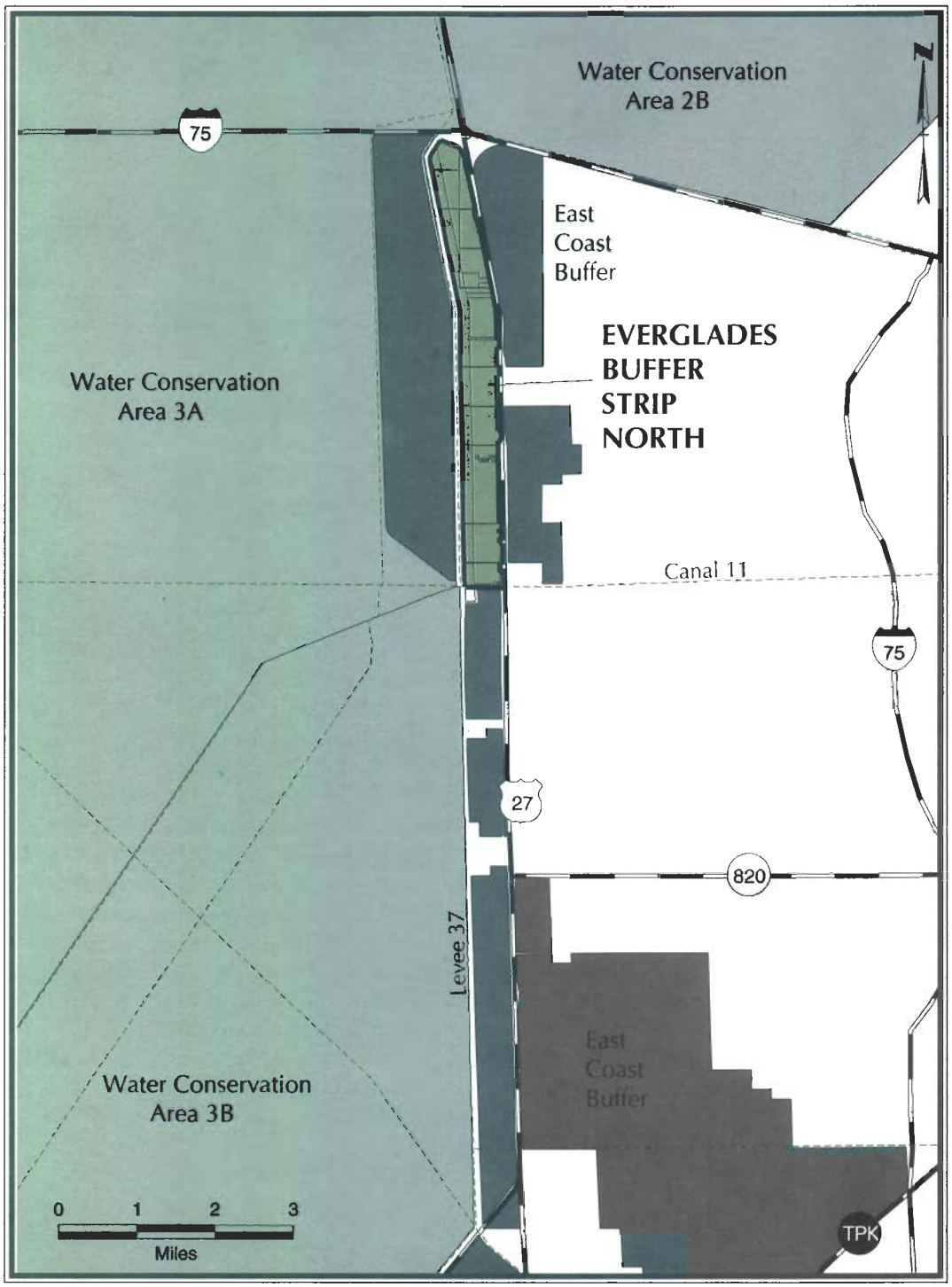
Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control		•
Fire Management		
Mowing/Chopping		
Restoration		•
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting		
Security		
Private		

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting		•
Hiking		•
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling		•
Camping		•
Airboating		•
Environmental Education	•	

Planning

	Initiated	Ongoing
Conceptual Planning	•	•
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		•
Public Input		
County Committee		



County:
Broward

Total Project Area:
1,654 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,155

Land Cost (SOR):
$11,095,530

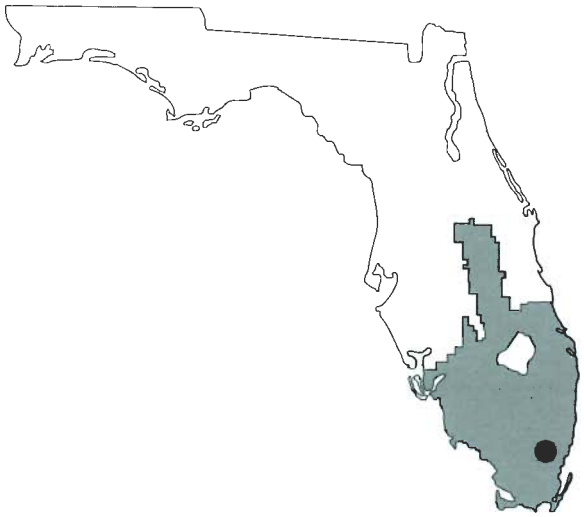
Land Cost (Other):
$1,118,952

FP&L Acres:
446

Other Agencies:
56

Acres Remaining:
12

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Fisheating Creek

General Description

Fisheating creek is an extensive riverine swamp system flowing through Glades County. The creek and its headwaters form an extensive watershed covering hundreds of square miles.

In 1991, the District Governing Board approved a boundary revision, which added nearly 15,000 acres to the project. The additional area includes a large freshwater marsh and low pine flatwoods, which buffer the riverine swamp corridor.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

Fisheating Creek is the only free-flowing tributary to Lake Okeechobee. The meandering runs and associated flood plain attenuate peak discharges during heavy storm events and are important for water quality improvement prior to discharges entering Lake Okeechobee. Groundwater resources have not been quantified for this area; however, the Surficial Aquifer has suitable capacity to supply low-volume users.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

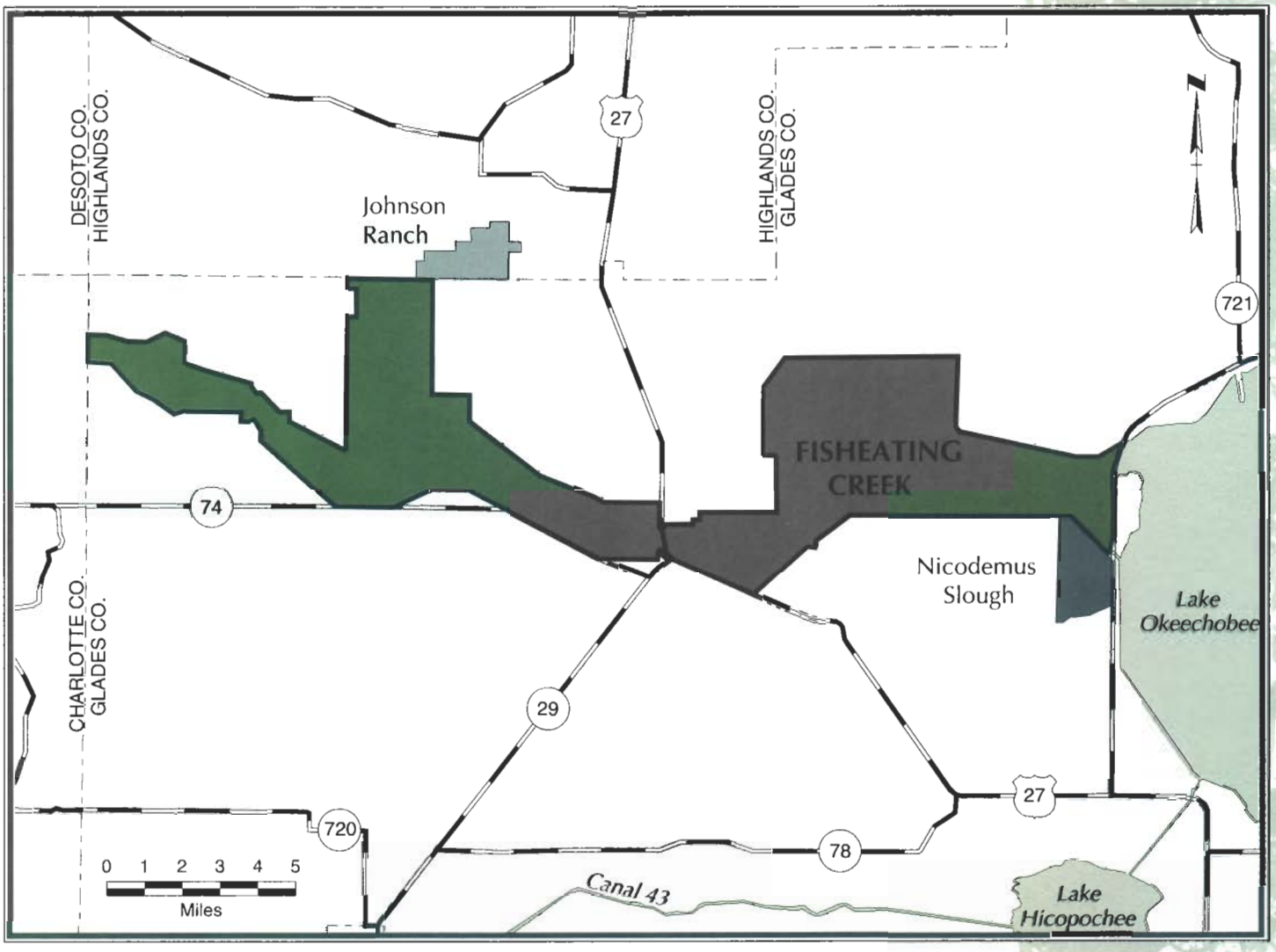
Much of the uplands and wetlands defined by the limits of this project remain in a relatively undisturbed state. Habitat types include cypress sloughs/mixed hardwood swamp forest, emergent marshes, willow thickets and openwater ponds and runs. Land-use in and around the flood plain is mostly native range. Use by wading birds is very heavy, including endangered wood storks, white ibis and great egrets. When stages in Lake Okeechobee are high, Fisheating Creek serves as an important feeding area for birds, which normally use the lake marshes.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Restoration requirements, if any, would be minimal, as most of the property is in its natural state. A prescribed burning program would be necessary to maintain appropriate species diversity in the plant communities and to reduce the potential for harmful wildfires. Additionally, it would be necessary to target the removal of noxious aquatic weeds from the lakes and creek channel to facilitate canoeing and fishing. Continued livestock grazing would be a likely condition to acquisition of the property and would necessitate the development of an approved program by the USDA Soil Conservation Service in consultation with the District and the livestock operator. Special consideration would be given to maintenance of critical habitat for endangered and/or threatened species, and a trapping program would be required to control the population of feral hogs. Implementation of a comprehensive security program would be needed to prevent unauthorized entry and to discourage poaching and other illegal activities.

Recreation Potential

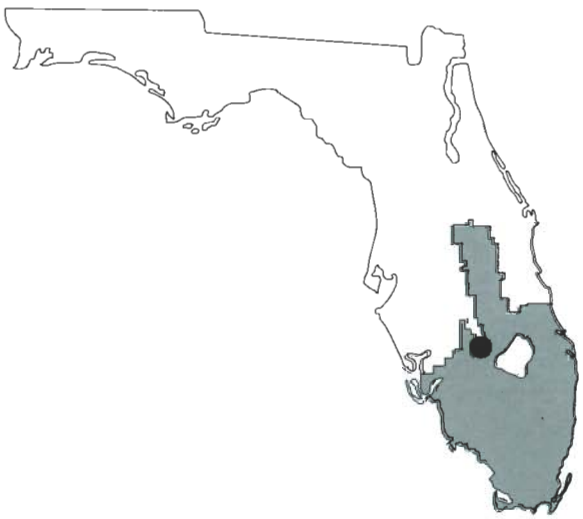
Acquisition and protection of Fisheating Creek, its floodplain and suitable upland corridor, could provide the public with opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreational activities. The reach of the creek upstream of Palmdale has been a popular canoe run for many years and is famous for its scenic attributes. Opportunities to view and photograph the flora and fauna that abound along the creek could be enhanced by the establishment of suitable hiking trails throughout the property and the implementation of guided tours. A connector trail to the proposed Florida National Scenic Trail around Lake Okeechobee would be a possibility. Access to the Fort Center archaeological site and the provision of appropriate interpretive facilities could provide visitors an insight to the area's history and early inhabitants. Environmental education programs could also be developed to enhance visitor awareness of the area's ecology. A full service campground is located west of US Highway 27 at Palmdale, and would avoid the necessity of providing these facilities elsewhere on the property.



County:
Glades

Total Project Area:
43,872 acres

Number of Owners:
One



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Frog Pond

General Description

The Frog Pond and L-31N Transition Lands cover approximately 10,450 acres and are located in Dade County. The project includes 5,200 acres of agricultural lands known as the Frog Pond, which lie immediately north of the C-111 SOR project, as well as 5,250 acres of transitional lands, which are located east of C-111 and L-31N, north of the Frog Pond, and south of the 8.5 Square Mile Area.

Acquisition Activity

In 1994, the District made its first purchases in the L 31N Transition area. In 1995, the District purchased about 5,211 acres in the Frog Pond and 86 acres in the L-31N. In addition, CARL purchased approximately 86 acres.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

The purpose of the project is to increase the hydroperiod of the marshes in eastern Everglades National Park and to improve freshwater flow to Taylor Slough and Florida Bay. Under the South Florida Water Management District's C-111/Taylor Slough Interim Plan, the groundwater table, as controlled through stages in C-111 and L-31 canals, will be maintained at higher levels to promote increased discharge into Taylor Slough.

In addition, the SFWMD preferred plan under the U.S Army Corps of Engineers C-111 General Re-evaluation Report (GRR) calls for a floodway to be located in the Frog Pond agricultural area. This area will serve several purposes:

A. to simulate the natural hydrograph for delivery of water into Taylor Slough,

B. to utilize natural vegetation and microbial soil processes to cleanse runoff before discharge into Everglades National Park, and

C. to restore the connection between Taylor Slough and its headwaters.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

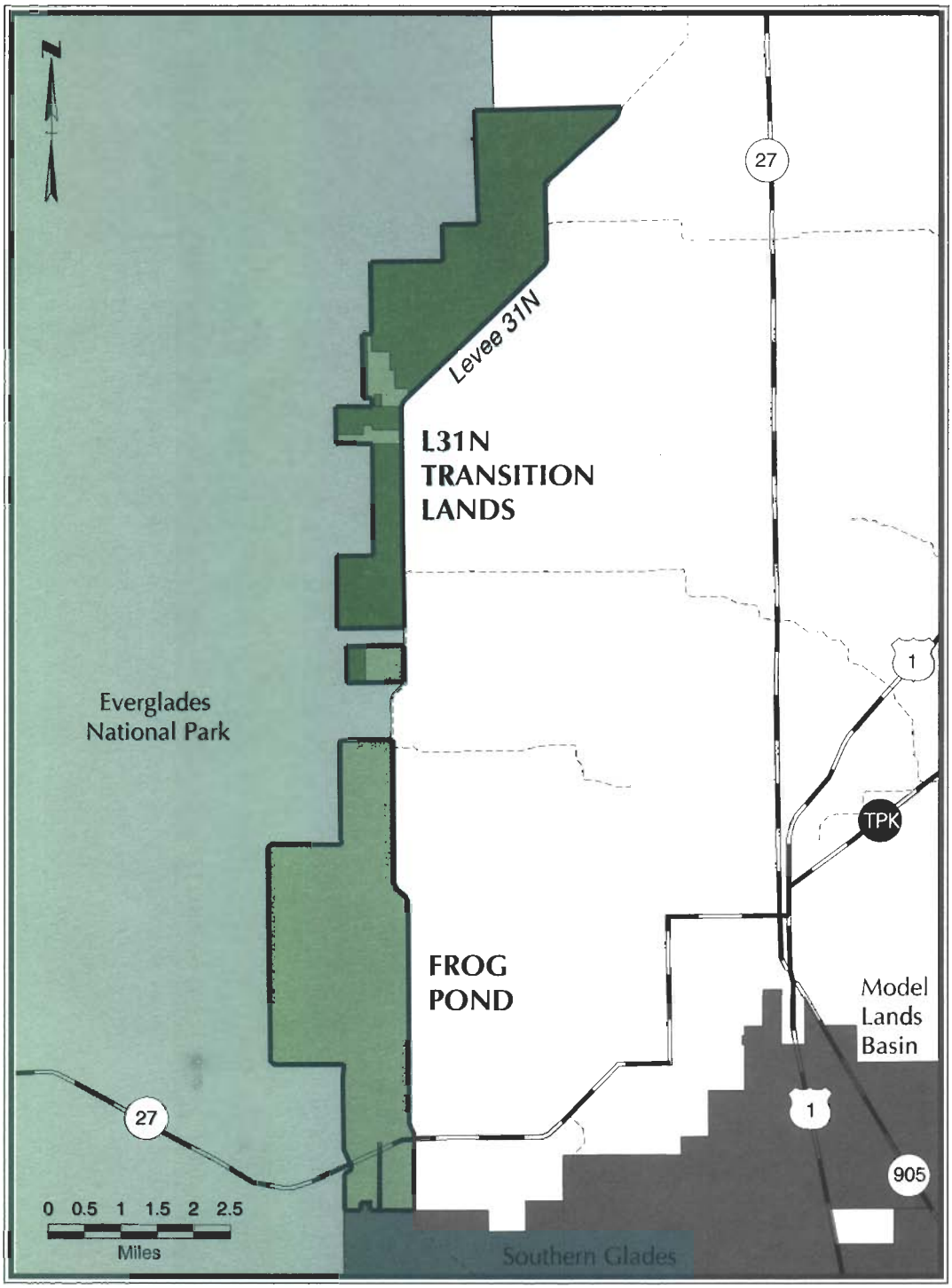
The Frog Pond and Transitional Lands are an integral part of the C-111/Taylor Slough Interim Plan and Corps GRR project that would result in restoration of natural freshwater hydropatterns to Florida Bay. Observations of seagrass die-off, mangrove losses, reduced fisheries, and algal blooms provide strong evidence that the Florida Bay ecosystem is declining under current water management practices. Current delivery of freshwater to the bay differs in volume, timing and distribution from pre-managed conditions. In addition, as recommended in the Everglades SWIM Plan, the Taylor Slough ecosystem within Everglades National Park itself will be enhanced through the improved hydroperiods and re-establishment of sheetflow over existing wetlands under this project.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Capital improvements, such as canals, levees, weirs, and pumps will be limited to only those necessary to achieve the proposed water resources benefits. Removal of existing canals and levees along the western boundary of the Frog Pond will be examined as part of the preferred C-111 GRR alternative. The area will be managed in accordance with plans to restore Taylor Slough and Florida Bay. These plans will be developed by the District, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Park Service.

Recreation Potential

As part of the overall planning process, restoration of scenic benefits at the entrance to Everglades National Park and other public recreational values will be examined. Potential public uses will also be examined for their effects on environmental sensitivity and water management values of the lands.



County:
Dade

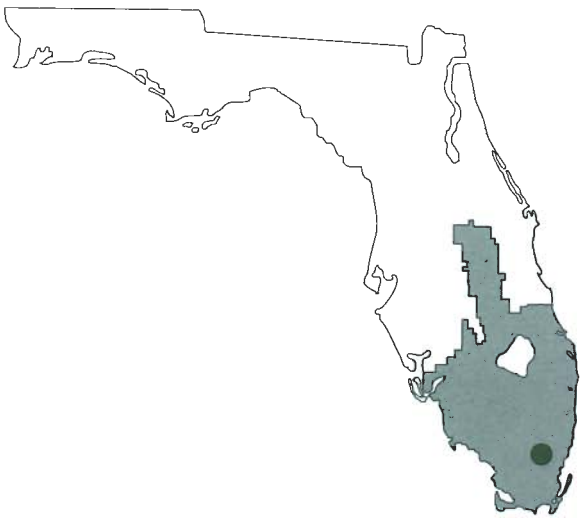
Total Project Area:
10,600 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
5,576*

Acres Remaining:
4,938

Number of Owners:
Numerous

(*Nic Lands Acquired by CARL)



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Indian River Lagoon

General Description

The Indian River Lagoon project consists of two tracts on Hutchinson Island, in St. Lucie County, totaling 535 acres. These are mosquito impoundments located between SR A1A and the Indian River. The lands represent the only two undeveloped parcels along the Indian River in St. Lucie County that are not in public ownership, or for which attempts toward acquisition have not been made. Approximately 87% of the two tracts are wetlands, dominated by red and black mangroves, with a few freshwater wetlands mixed in. One tract (Blind Creek) is #41 on the 1995 CARL Priority Projects list.

All of the remaining impoundment marshes along the St. Lucie County portion of the Indian River are either in public ownership or have been proposed for acquisition through various grant programs. Public ownership allows the county mosquito control program to manage the lands in conjunction with Florida DEP permits and best management practices prescribed in the Indian River Lagoon SWIM Plan. Best management practices include the installation of operable water control structures that allow flushing of the mosquito impoundments during most of the year (eight months), and the application of only "biorational compounds" for the control of mosquitos. If these areas remain in private ownership and are not managed by the county, mosquitos are controlled with aerial applications of chemical pesticides and the areas are not connected with the Indian River, depriving the estuary of an important source of mangrove detrital matter.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

These areas are critical to the water management of the Indian River Lagoon. Without them in public ownership, water control structures to allow flushing of the impoundments cannot be installed. Connection with the Lagoon to allow mangrove leaves, as well as the juvenile marinelife produced in these areas, is critical to the health of the estuary.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

The shallow waters of the impoundments are important nursery areas for approximately 80% of the commercial and sport fishery species in the lagoon. Following construction of the dikes, and the physical separation of the marshes from the estuary, most of the estuarine-related habitat functions of the marsh are lost. Under county management, water control structures would be left open for 7-8 months each year, allowing daily flushing and reflooding of the impoundments. In addition to mangrove and salt marsh wetlands, the sites contain approximately 15% tropical hammocks and freshwater wetlands.

Research conducted on mosquito impoundments reports a reduction in transient fish species use in the impoundments from sixteen species to five, following construction of the impoundment dikes. The installation of culverts to allow regular tidal flushing improves species diversity dramatically.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Management of both tracts would be the responsibility of St. Lucie County Mosquito Control. Their current management practices promote environmental and hydrologic restoration, and non-chemical control methods for mosquitos. Control of exotic vegetation will be necessary.

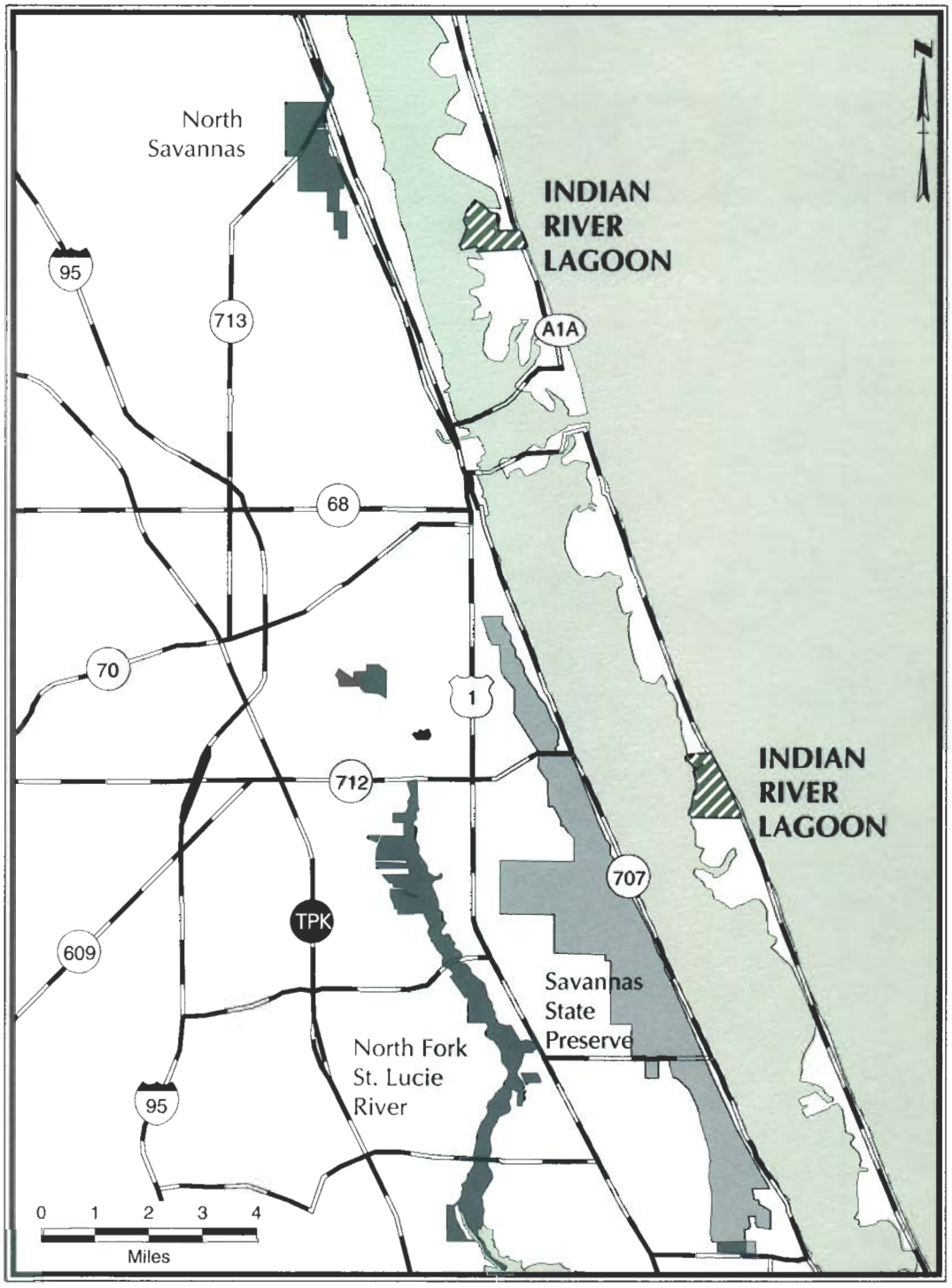
Recreation Potential

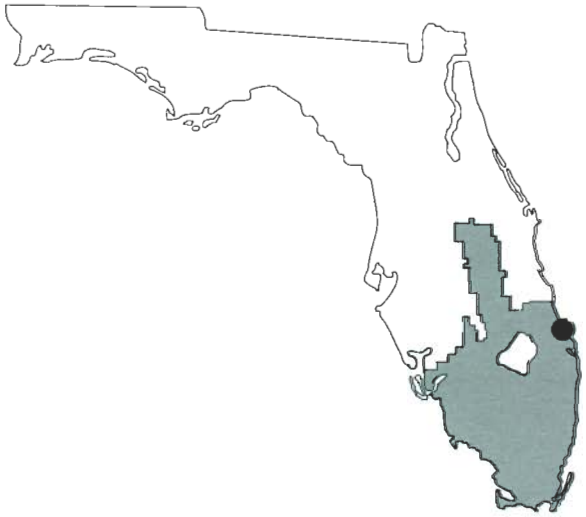
These sites may have some use as bird watching and fishing sites, and hiking trails could be constructed along the impoundment dikes, but it is unlikely that extensive recreational development would ever take place.

County:
St. Lucie

Total Project Area:
535 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1995 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem

General Description

The Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem is located in Okeechobee County, east of Canal 38. It totals approximately 46,000 acres, and is under the ownership of the Latt Maxcy Corporation. Approximately 7,000 acres of the project lie within the proposed Kissimmee River restoration area, and have all ready been proposed for acquisition under that project. The remaining 39,000 acres form one of the most unique land mosaics in the state. The dominant community type is dry prairie and, according to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, is endangered at the state and global levels. Because of the conversion of similar lands to citrus and improved pasture, this tract is likely the largest and best example of its type remaining in the world.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

Four major tributaries to the Kissimmee River have their headwaters on the property and discharge into the river (Pool B) along the western project boundary. Land elevations drop from 70' NGVD near the eastern boundary to 42' at the river, across a distance of 9-12 miles. Although the dominant land feature is dry prairie, there are extensive wetlands scattered throughout. Basin and depression marshes, and wet prairies vary in size from less than one acre to more than 500 acres, and all are in excellent condition. There are ten separate community types, all of which are mostly undisturbed, and the size and quality of the communities provide breeding habitat for a number of listed wildlife species.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

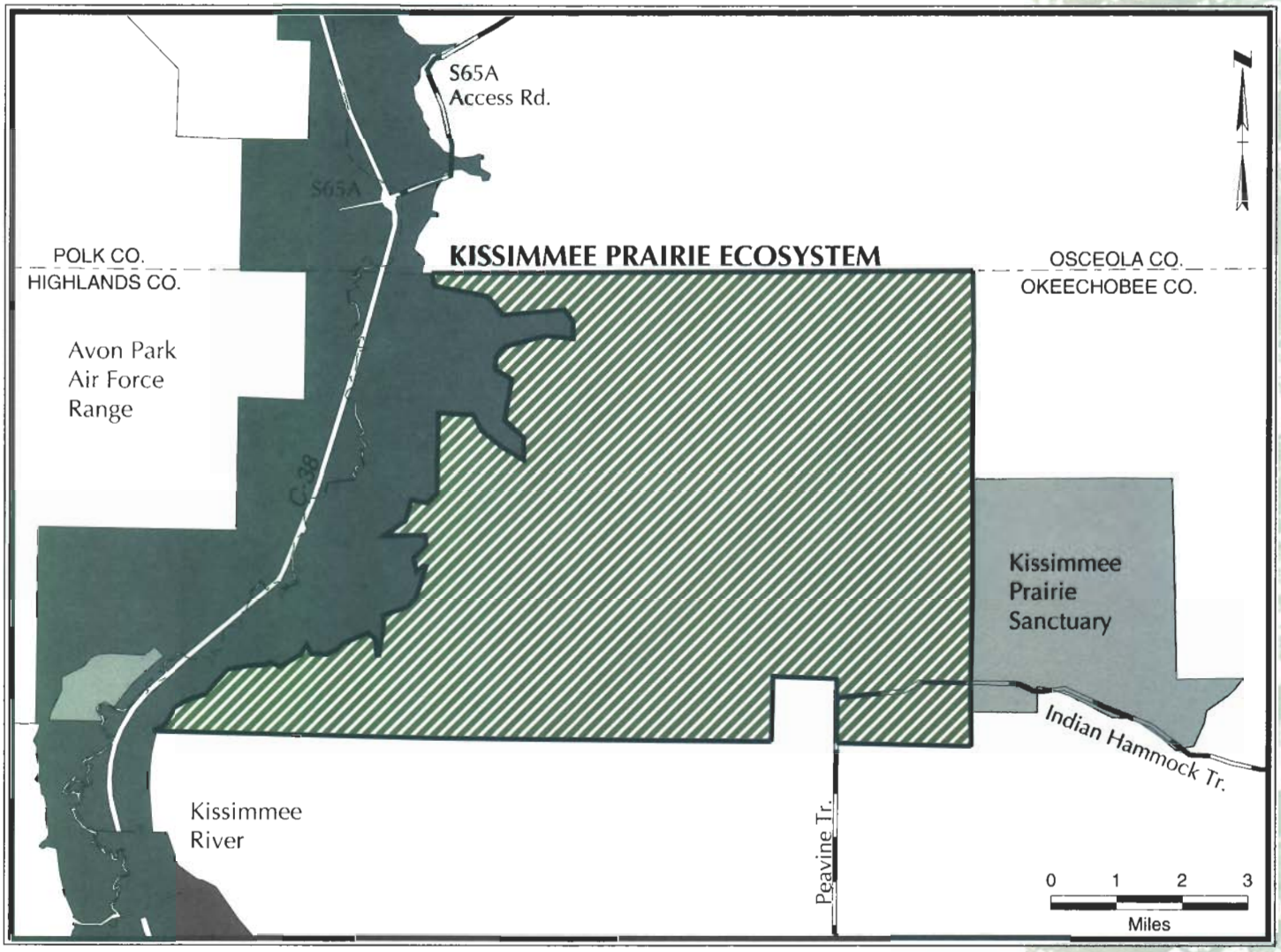
This project is also being reviewed for acquisition under the CARL program. It has been identified by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission as a Strategic Habitat Conservation Area in their 1994 publication *Closing the Gaps in Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System*. National Audubon's 7,400 acre Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary lies immediately west of the project and has a 3.5 mile long common boundary. The Audubon property is dominated by dry prairie, as well, which expands the coverage of that community type and its associated wildlife. This project forms an integral connection with the Kissimmee River acquisition lands. To the west of the river lies the 100,000+ acres Avon Park Bombing Range, much of which is managed as a natural area.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Overall, the property is in excellent condition. For the past 60 years, it has been operated as a cattle ranch, with no improved pasture. Most of Seven Mile Slough has been channelized, but restoration could probably be accomplished relatively easy with a series of earthen plugs. The major management tool will be prescribed fire. The dry prairie community is likely maintained with a high fire frequency, so annual burning of large tracts will be required.

Recreation Potential

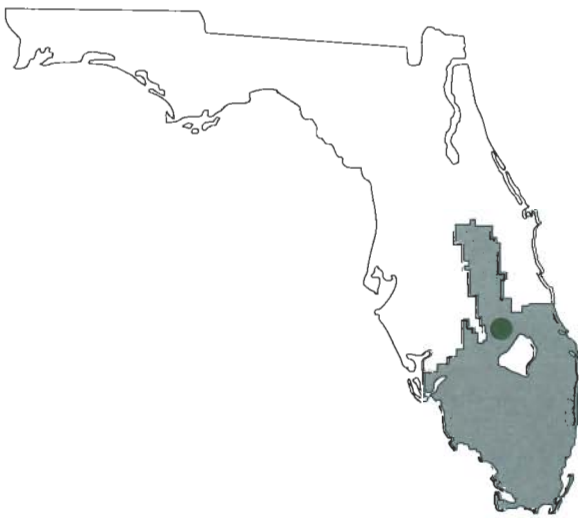
This tract has excellent recreational and educational opportunities. The property's size, diversity, and accessibility lend it to a variety of passive uses. Hiking and equestrian trails, including wilderness camping areas for both are possible. There are extensive educational and research opportunities. It is proposed that this site be managed as a state preserve by the state's Division of Recreation and Parks.



County:
Okeechobee

Total Project Area:
45,000 acres

Number of Owners:
One



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Kissimmee River (Lower Basin)

General Description

The Kissimmee River Save Our Rivers Project includes lands in the upper basin, referred to as the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and the lower basin, the Kissimmee River. Part of the SOR project is the Kissimmee River Restoration project. The restoration includes land in the upper and lower basins and covers an estimated 88,000 acres. The objective is to acquire lands necessary to accomplish the restoration. This figure and the project map will be adjusted as surveys of the required area are completed. In some areas, lands beyond the restoration project have characteristics that fit into the Save Our Rivers criteria. The Five Year Plan includes these lands.

The lower basin comprises the area required for the restoration of the river under the governor's Save Our Everglades program. More than 57,000 acres in the basin represent the historic flood plain of the Kissimmee River. In the lower basin, real property interests have been acquired in more than 29,000 acres.

In 1991, The District expanded the project to include 24,000 acres of the shoreline of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes in the upper basin. This includes 6,933 acres that meet the qualifications of the SOR program and are not parts of the Kissimmee River Restoration project. This portion of the project is to acquire real property interests to allow stages in these lakes to be raised from 52.5' NGVD to 54' NGVD. The additional water is needed to drive the Kissimmee River restoration project by providing year round flow.

The District's rule governing public use of SOR and other District lands (Chapter 40E-7, Part V) became effective in 1994 after more than a year of public discussion and review.

A Public Use Guide (PUG) setting forth the rule, the designated land management areas, and the special provisions applicable thereto has been developed to help persons interested in reaching these lands. The guide contains more detailed maps of Kissimmee River properties and specific information about public use on each management area. Copies of the Public Use Guide are available upon request at the District's headquarters and area offices.

Project Vision

The Kissimmee River stretched over 98 miles between Lake Kissimmee and Lake Okeechobee; with the construction of Canal 38, the River became a straight line fifty-six (56) miles with remnant oxbows in various places. More than 47,000 acres of wetlands were altered by the construction. The proposed restoration will reestablish pre-channelization hydrologic characteristics along fifty-two (52) miles of river channel and within 24,000 acres of flood plain. There is additional potential in portions of the river other than the targeted restoration. Project vision includes hydrologic restoration and enhancement of areas other than the river restoration. The Kissimmee River valley may offer many opportunities for public use. The strategy is to allow public use to occur at a level that does not impact upon the natural resources of the land.

Natural Resource Management

Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	20,085	20,000
Fire Management	2,442	5,000
Mowing/Chopping	2,100	2,500
Restoration	300	500

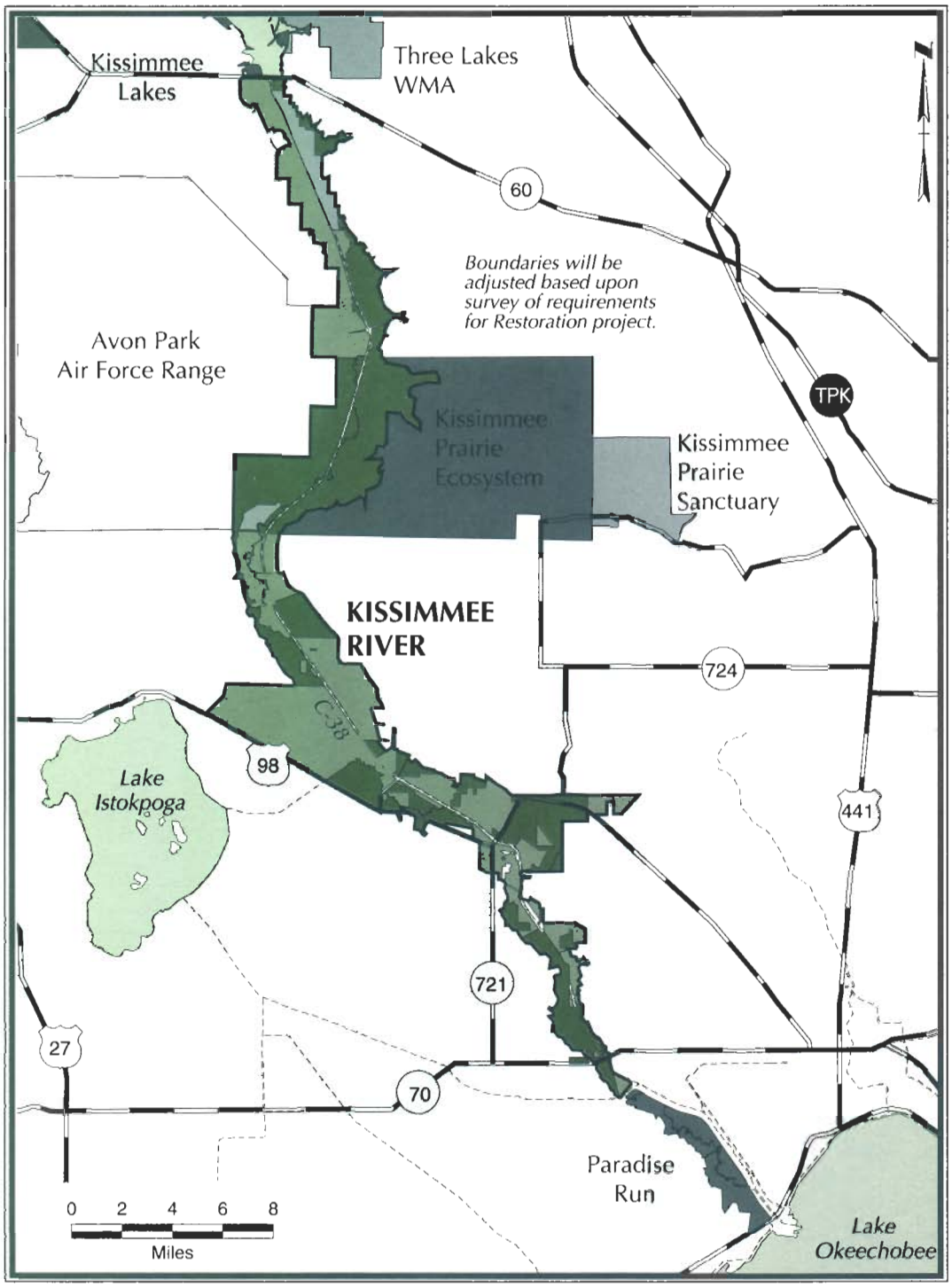
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	500	
Waste Removal	20	
Fencing/Posting	1,500	
Security		
GFC	8,000	
Private	22,500	
On-site Caretakers	17,000	

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting	•	
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling	•	
Camping	•	
Airboating	•	
Environmental Education	•	

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning	•	•
Hydrologic Restoration Plan	•	
Public Input		
Public Information Meetings		
Other		
Cooperative Management Agreement(s)		
County		
GFC		
FTA		



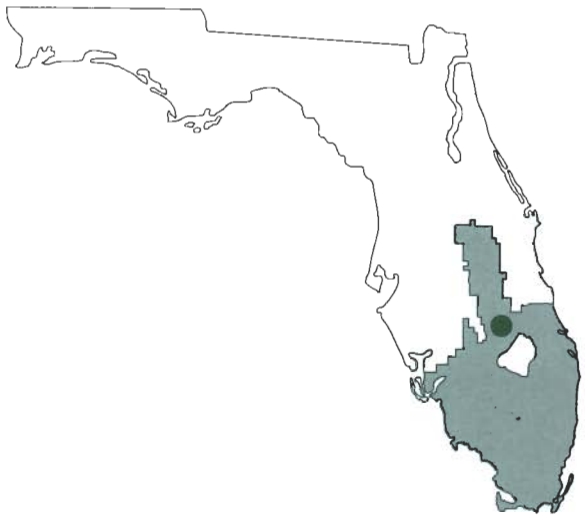
Counties:
Osceola, Polk and Okeechobee

Total Project Area:
101,433 acres (including KCOL)

Total Acres Acquired:
54,933

Acres Remaining:
47,000 (including KCOL)

Land Cost:
$77,166,322



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Kissimmee River (Upper Basin)

General Description

The Kissimmee River Save Our Rivers Project includes lands in the upper basin, referred as the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and the lower basin, the Kissimmee River. Part of the SOR project is the Kissimmee River Restoration project. The restoration includes land in the upper and lower basins and covers an estimated 88,000 acres. The objective is to acquire lands necessary to accomplish the restoration. This figure and the project map will be adjusted as surveys of the required area are completed.

In 1991, The District expanded the project to include 24,000 acres of the shoreline of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes in the upper basin. This includes 6,933 acres that meet the qualifications of the SOR program and are not parts of the Kissimmee River Restoration project. Real property interests have been acquired in more than twenty thousand (20,000) acres. An additional seventeen hundred (1700) acres are in State ownership.

In 1995, the District governing board approved the expansion of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes portion of the project by 2,143 acres. Acquisition of the expansion area would provide access across Canal 37 to the 10,000+ acre Bronson tract, which the District already owns. The property includes cypress-dominated shoreline on Lake Kissimmee, basin marsh, wet flatwoods, and hammocks. The addition also includes approximately 550 acres of improved pasture, which should be restored mesic and wet flatwoods.

Project Vision

This portion of the project is to acquire real property interests to allow stages in these lakes to be raised from 52.5' NGVD to 54' NGVD. The additional water is needed to drive the Kissimmee River restoration project by providing year round flow.

The District is working with an advisory committee, helped by a professional facilitator, to establish goals for management and public use of SOR lands. Prime objectives in managing these public lands are to ensure that the water resources, fish and wildlife populations, and native plant communities are maintained in an environmentally acceptable manner, and made available for appropriate outdoor recreational activities consistent with their environmental sensitivity.

Natural Resource Management

Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	1,800	1,000
Fire Management	298	1,000
Mowing/Chopping	250	200
Grazing Lease Mgmt	12,300	

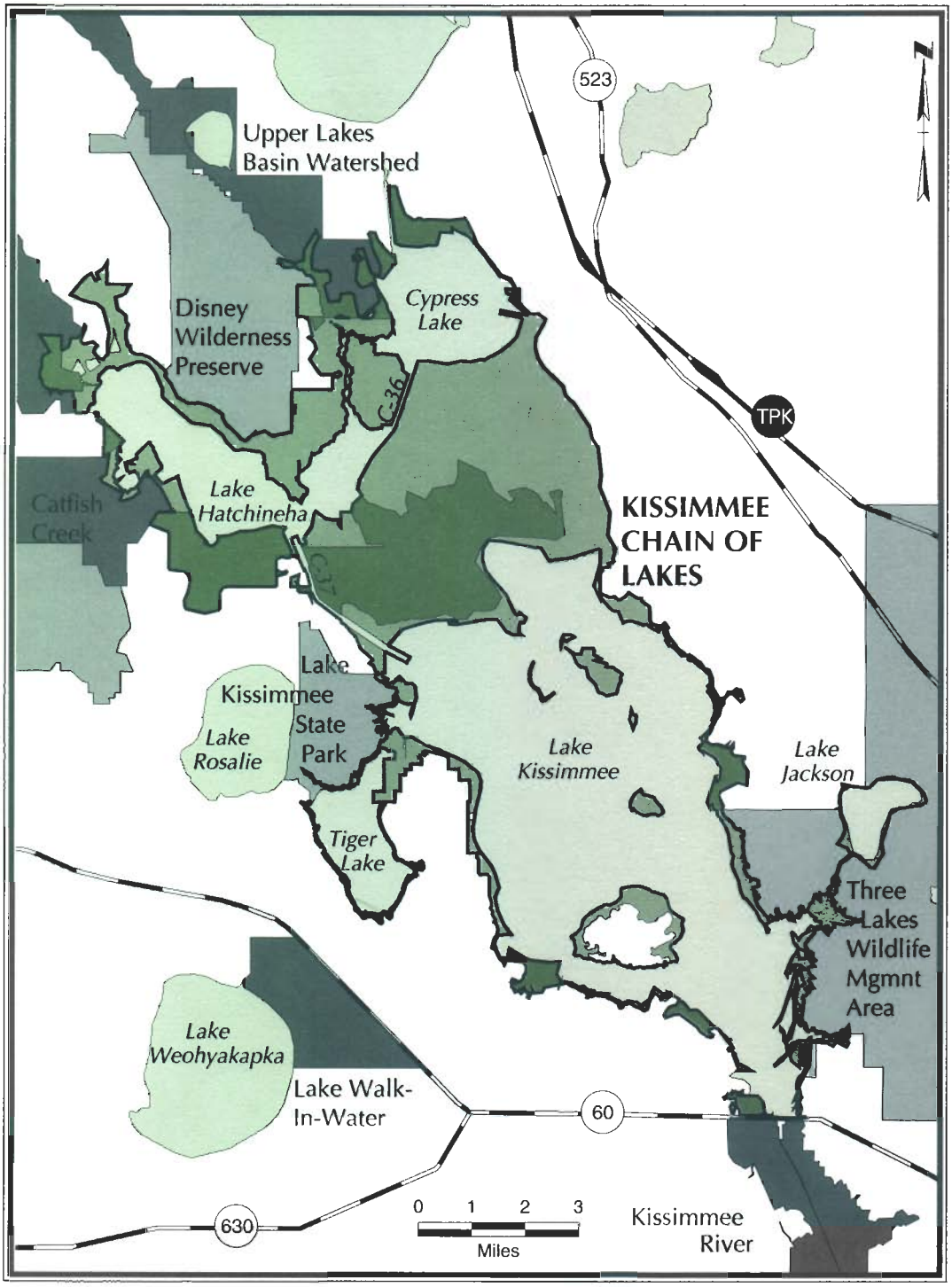
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal		
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
Private	•	

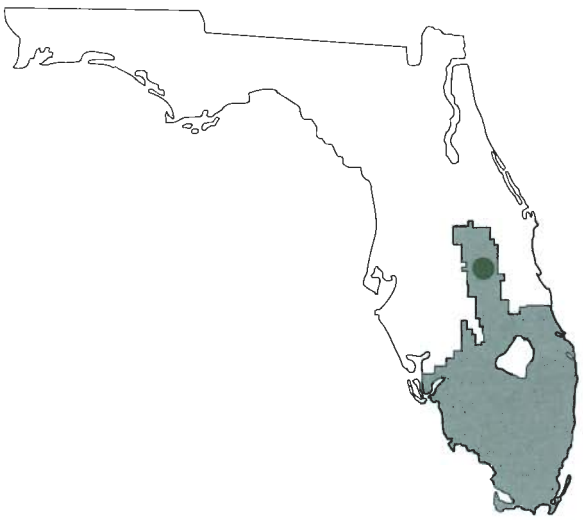
Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting	•	
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling		•
Camping	•	
Airboating	•	
Environmental Education		•

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning	•	
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		
Public Input		
Area-wide Committee		
Public Information Meetings		





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1995 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

Counties:
Osceola, Polk and Okeechobee

Total Project Area:
26,000 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
21,000

Acres Remaining:
5,000

Lake Lizzie

General Description

The Lake Lizzie project covers 1,082 acres in Osceola County, east of St. Cloud. It has frontage on three lakes — Lizzie, Trout, and Bay, and road frontage along US 192/441. The SOR tract lies at the extreme south end of a 1995 CARL project application, known as the Upper Econ Mosaic, which totals 31,343 acres. The Lake Lizzie portion contains a variety of community types, including pine flatwoods, basin marsh/wet prairie, scrub, and lake shore hammocks.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

Large basin marshes/wet prairies connect directly with Lake Lizzie and Trout Lake that provide important water management functions by containing storm runoff and slowly releasing it to the lakes. There is good species diversity in the plant communities. Scrub areas are present, but they have been disturbed. This site alone is too small and cut up to provide extensive habitat for terrestrial wildlife. When combined with the CARL project, however, large, contiguous tracts provide excellent habitat.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

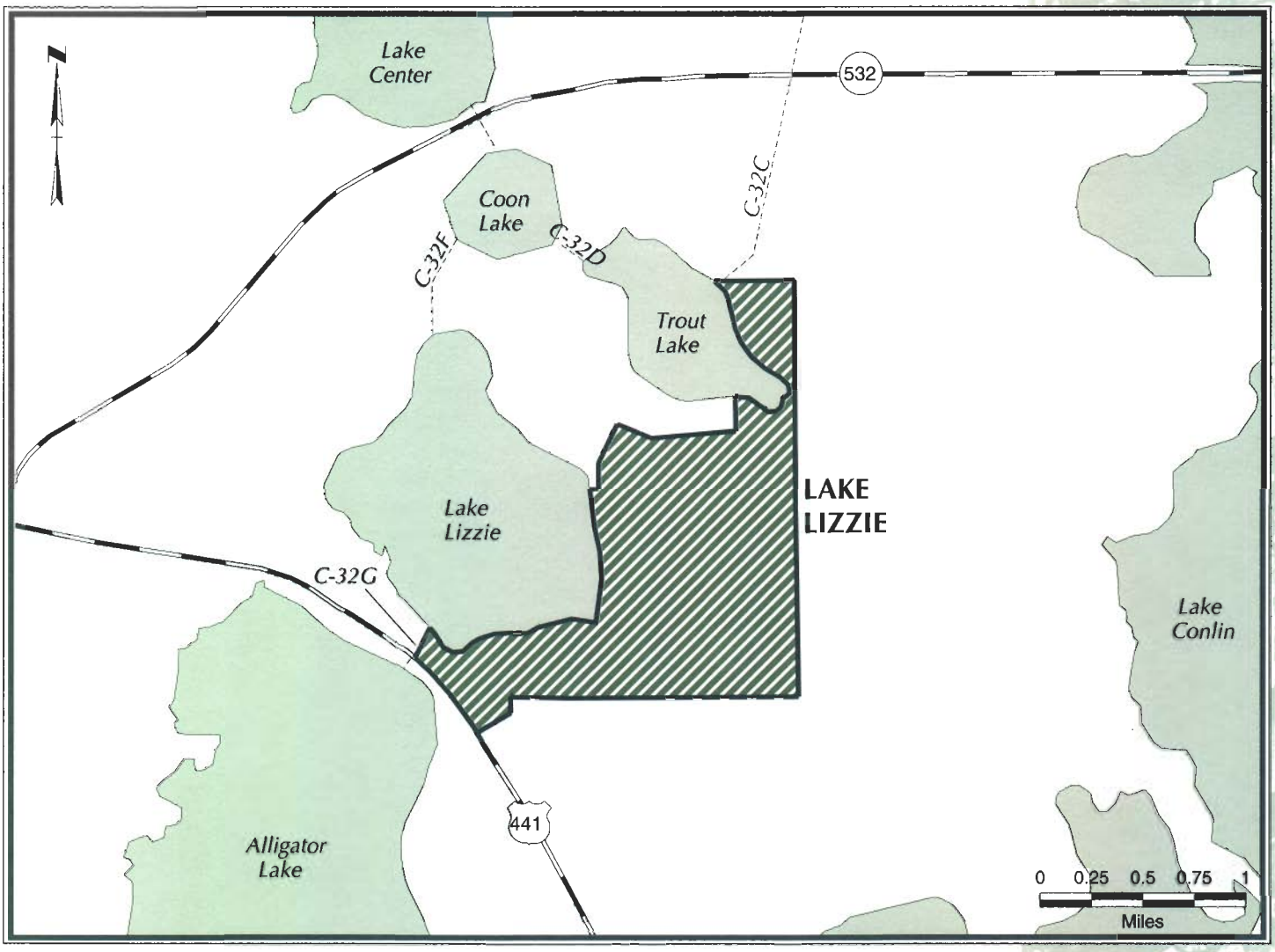
The hydraulic connection of a large portion of the Trout Lake marsh has been severed by an electric transmission line access road that also serves as the project's eastern boundary. Re-establishment of sheetflow could probably be accomplished relatively easily if stabilized swale crossings were installed. The Lake Lizzie tract is cut up and urban development is encroaching all around, both of which will make prescribed burning difficult. The understories in the upland communities have grown up and are in need of burning. Some disturbance has occurred in the scrub and other upland sites. Bahia grass has been planted in most of the flatwoods areas.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

The tract has highway frontage on US 192, and urban development is encroaching on several sides of the site. The eastern shoreline of Lake Lizzie is particularly vulnerable since it is mostly scrub. Much of the lake shoreline and uplands is developable, and similar adjacent lands have been sold or are planned for residential development. Conducting prescribed burns on this tract will be difficult, given the proximity of nearby residential development and a major roadway. This site should be managed as part of the overall CARL project.

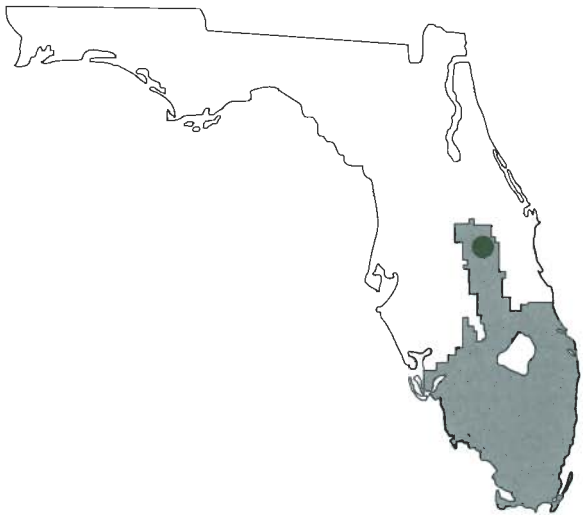
Recreation Potential

The recreational value of this tract on its own would probably be limited. The major vehicular access is through a residential subdivision. Some short hiking trails could probably be developed through the upland areas, but the site is too small for equestrian use. There may be some use of the site by boaters on Lake Lizzie. Public use could increase dramatically if it were part of a larger CARL acquisition.



County:
Osceola

Total Project Area:
1,100 acres



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1995 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

Lake Walk-in-Water

General Description

The Lake Walk-in-Water project covers 4,109 acres between the northeast shore of Lake Weohyakapka (Walk-in-Water) and SR 60. The retirement communities of Nalcrest and Fedhaven border the property to the west and the community of Indian Lake Estates lies to the south. The project has extensive frontage along SR 60 and Lake Walk-in-Water. The site has a large expanse of dry prairie, interspersed with small, isolated depression marshes, as well as a very large basin marsh along the highway. The property is in very good condition. Most of the disturbance is associated with the logging operation that took place in the Sumica settlement, which was in place on the property in the 1920's. Polk County will participate as a 50% acquisition partner, and will assist with management, as well.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

Walk-in-Water Creek forms part of the western boundary. It flows north toward Lake Rosalie. The large central basin marsh appears to flow off site, under SR 60, toward Lake Kissimmee. The project has more than four miles of shoreline along Lake Walk-in-Water. The site is very diverse; it contains floodplain forest along the banks of the creek; hydric hammock along the lake shoreline; scrub; and a diverse mixture of dry prairie, mesic and wet flatwoods, and basin marsh/wet prairies containing isolated dome swamps.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

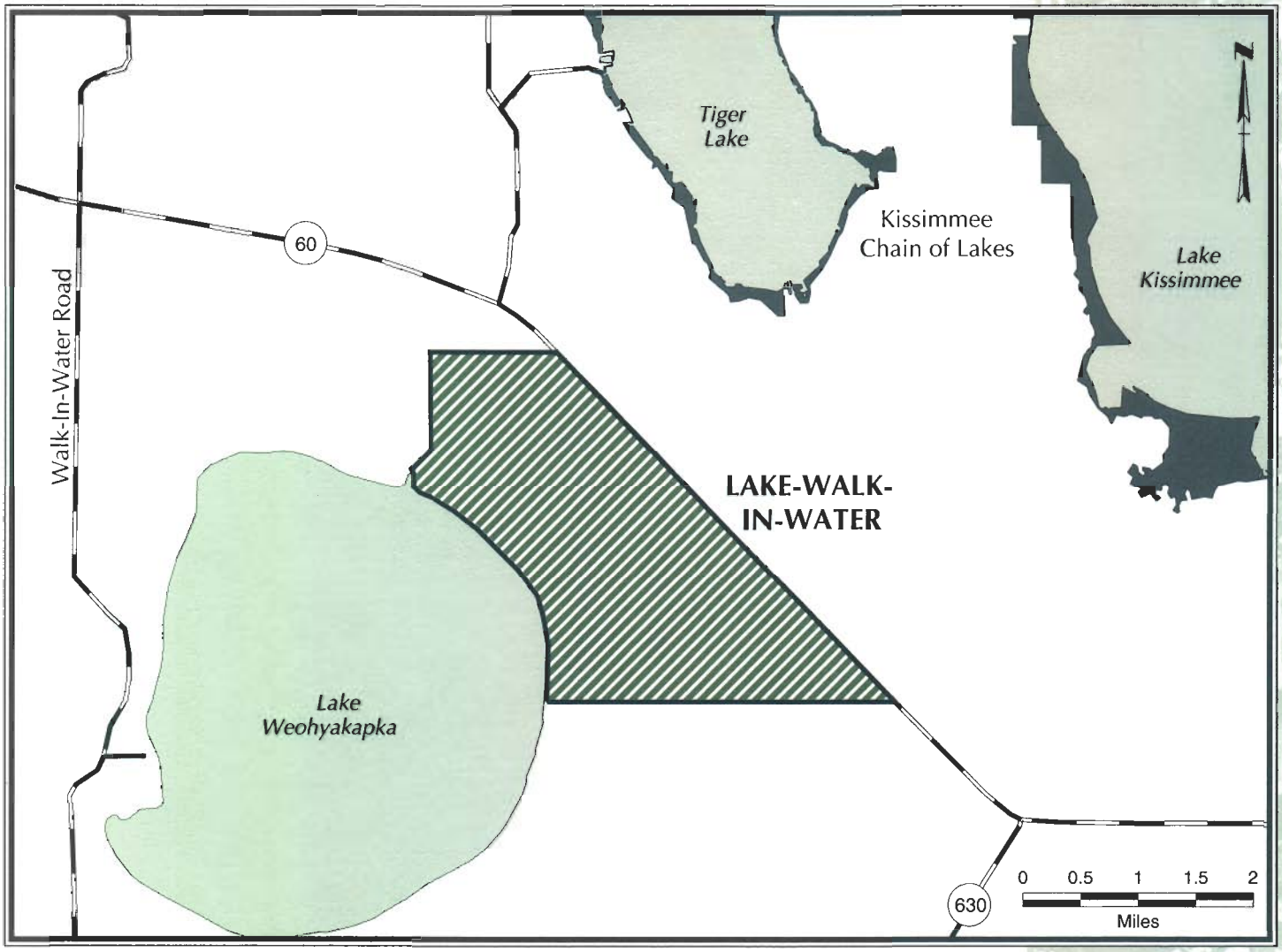
This tract is relatively undisturbed. It has been well maintained by the current owners. Maintaining the property in its existing condition will require diligent management, but the site does not need extensive restoration.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

The major management needs will center on prescribed burning. A large portion of the tract is dry prairie, which requires more frequent burning than other community types. Hydrologic restoration will be limited to a few ditch plugs. Several ranch roads provide good management access to most of the site. A cattle dip vat is located on the property that will require special care. Polk County has indicated a willingness to participate as a management partner.

Recreation Potential

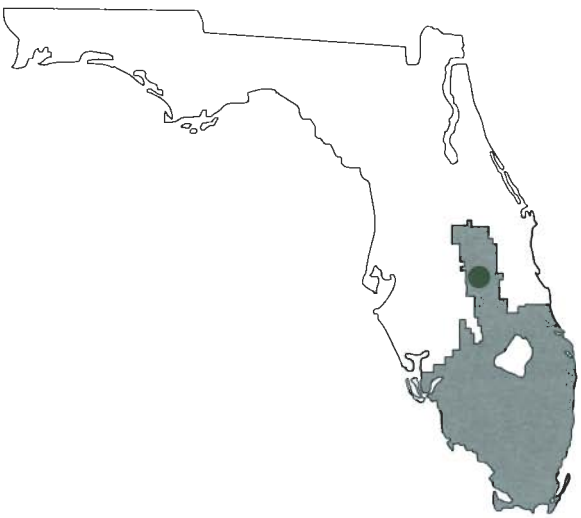
This tract has great recreation potential. Its long frontage on SR 60 would facilitate several public access points. Water access from the lake is also possible. The site contains enough uplands that equestrian trails can likely be developed. The variety of community types would make for interesting hiking trails and wilderness camping. A public hunting program could be developed together with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Polk County has indicated that they will accept full responsibility for any public use program development.



County:
Polk

Total Project Area:
4,10- acres

Number of Owners:
One



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Loxahatchee River

General Description

This project is located in Palm Beach and Martin Counties. Portions of the property are east of River Bend County Park, a short distance west of Interstate 95. Other parts are southwest of Jonathan Dickinson State Park and east of Interstate 95. The property includes the historic flood plain of the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River, a National Wild and Scenic River.

The District and DEP are working to implement the Loxahatchee River Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, which was prepared in 1985 as a requirement for inclusion of this portion of the river in the National Wild and Scenic River System. Lands north of Indiantown Road (State Road 706) are being managed by DEP, with Jonathan Dickinson State Park. Lands south of the highway will be managed by Palm Beach County under a separate agreement with the District. Management activities include law enforcement, prescribed burning, exotic species control, public-use regulation, development of hiking trails, and interpretive programs.

Project Vision

reservation and enhancement of the outstanding natural and cultural values of Florida's only federally designated Wild and Scenic River are the primary goals of the management program. Permanent protection and enhancement of the river will be accomplished through land acquisition, effective resource management, regulation of the river corridor, local government land use controls and volunteer support. Effective resource management of the river corridor must account for activities within the whole Loxahatchee River Basin, and adjacent uplands.

The District's vision for the water resources of the river includes: 1) maintaining surface water and groundwater flows to the Northwest Fork, 2) increasing minimum flows to the river as much as possible to affect downstream movement of the saltwater wedge during dry conditions, and 3) maintaining existing water quality in the River by eliminating identified water quality problems when possible.

The section of the river containing the "wild," designation will be managed less intensively than the "scenic" or "recreational" segments. The "wild" designation implies primitive shorelines, unpolluted water, river accessibility only by trail, and no alterations to the river bed itself. "Scenic" is defined as river areas free of impoundments with shorelines, largely primitive and undeveloped. These areas may be accessible by roads. "Recreational" river segments are readily accessible by roads; the river bed may have been impounded or diverted in the past and some development may exist along the shoreline.

Natural Resource Management

Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	100	300
Fire Management	125	100
Mowing/Chopping	200	200
Restoration		400

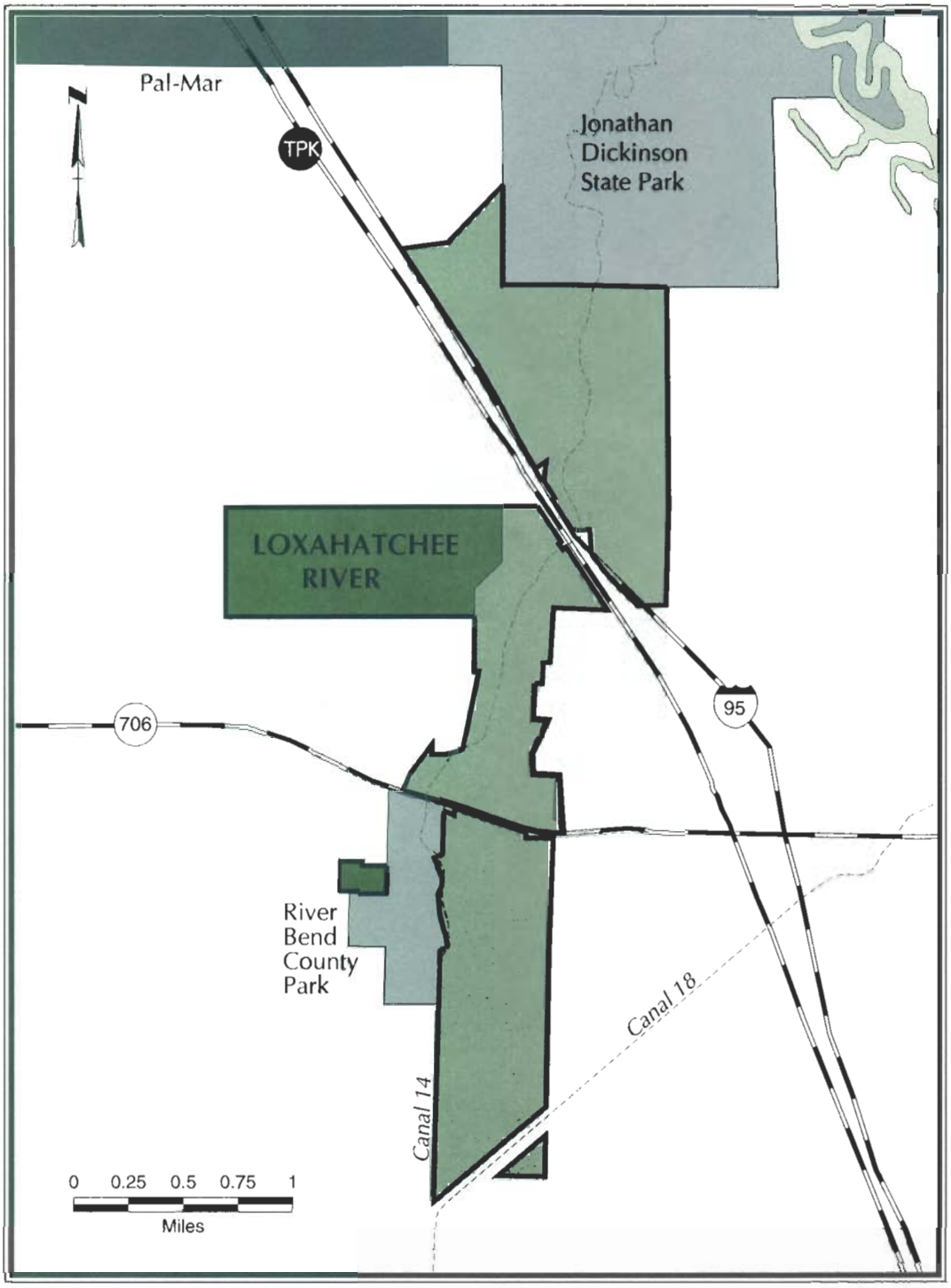
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		•
Waste Removal	•	
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
County	•	
DEP - State Parks	•	

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting		•
Hiking		•
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling	•	
Camping		•
Airboating		•
Environmental Education	•	
Greenway System		
Loxahatchee River		
Lake Okeechobee to Atlantic Ocean		

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning		•
Hydrologic Restoration Plan	•	
Public Input		
Public Information Meetings		
Loxahatchee River Coordinating Council		
Cooperative Management Agreement(s)		
Palm Beach County		
DEP		



Counties:
Martin and Palm Beach

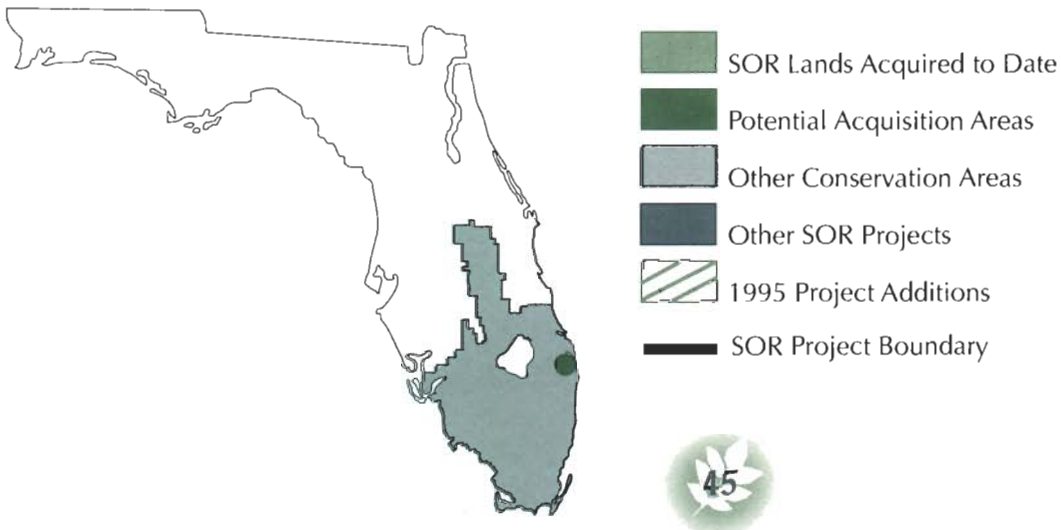
Total Project Area:
1,936 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,544

Acres Remaining:
399

Land Cost:
$9,058,143

Number of Owners:
One



Loxahatchee Slough

General Description

The Loxahatchee Slough is located in Palm Beach County, and covers nearly 13,000 acres. It contains a mixture of habitat types, including pine flatwoods, cypress forest, and wet prairie. The present land-use is native range. Some of the current landowners have long-range plans for urban development.

In 1995, Palm Beach County requested an addition to the project area. As a result the District added 892 acres to create a more definable line for a project boundary.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

The lands included in this project are those that border the Loxahatchee Corridor, which has been pledged for protection by the present landowner. The proposed project would provide additional watershed and upland buffer to the slough corridor. Public water supply potential does not appear to be significant; however, aquifer recharge does occur over the vast expanse of uplands and wetlands. This system is an important watershed for storing surface runoff and providing groundwater baseflow to Canal 18 and the Loxahatchee River.

The site contains a mosaic of habitats and lies in close proximity to several natural areas, including Jonathan Dickinson State Park, the Loxahatchee River SOR corridor, and the West Palm Beach Water Catchment Area. The mixture of upland and wetland communities provide needed foraging and nesting sites for wildlife in an area undergoing rapid urban development.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

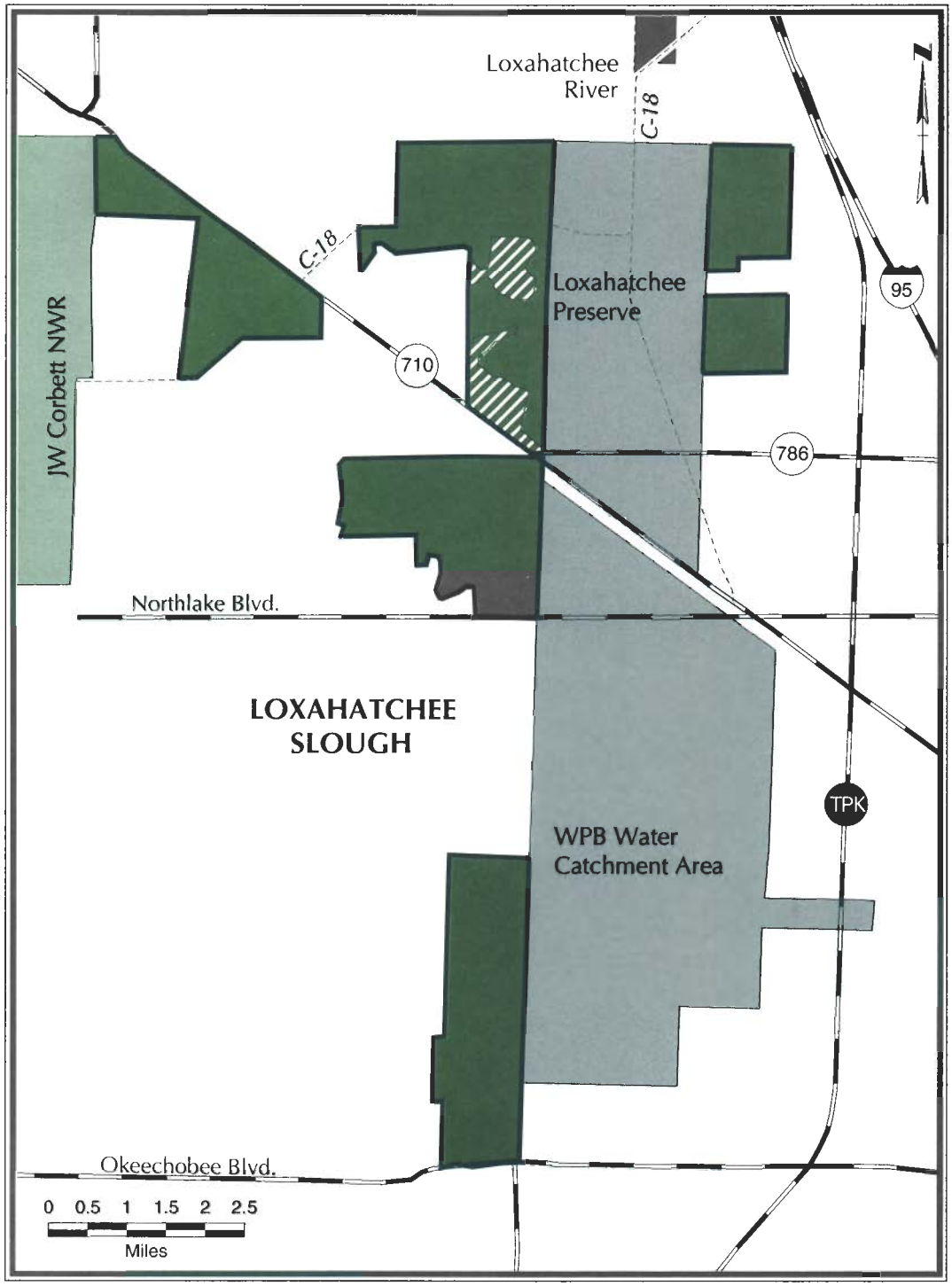
The project area is in relatively good condition. Exotic vegetation is invading the site due to overdrainage on adjacent parcels. The exotics appear to be a controllable amount, but would require regular attention. Drainage swales and ditches exist, but their impacts are correctable. Hydrologic restoration could be accomplished by filling or blocking swales and ditches.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management, with assistance from the District, has begun drafting a conceptual management plan. It will inventory resource information, list goals and objectives for overall management, and identify management responsibilities. In addition, it will specify management needs with regard to prescribed burning, exotic control, and public use. The District will prepare a separate section dealing with hydrology and hydrologic restoration needs. A draft plan is expected in early 1995.

Recreation Potential

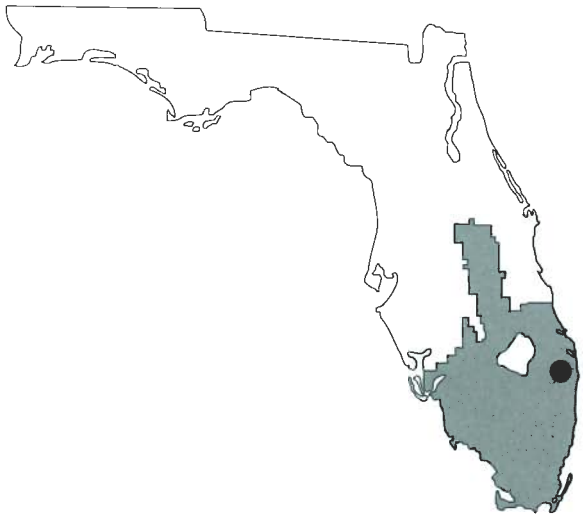
Its proximity to a large metropolitan area will lend this area to heavy public use. Hiking and equestrian trails could be developed in conjunction with local citizens groups. Environmental education would also be an expected use.



County:
Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
13,900 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Model Lands Basin

General Description

This project is located primarily in Dade County, with a very small portion on the edge of Monroe County. The FPL cooling ponds at Turkey Point nuclear power plant are not included in the project boundary.

The project area includes a variety of habitats, both freshwater and estuarine. The northwestern corner has been invaded by Australian pine and Brazilian pepper, but the great majority of the site is exotic-free. The majority of the tract is undisturbed fresh and salt water wetlands. The dominant freshwater habitat type is wet prairie, interspersed with tree islands. Vegetation includes red bay, dahoon holly, cocoplum and buttonbush in the freshwater upland islands, and red, white and black mangroves in the estuarine islands.

These lands form a contiguous habitat corridor with Everglades National Park, Southern Glades SOR project, Biscayne National Park, Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, the north Key Largo CARL purchases, John Pennekamp State Park, and the existing National Marine Sanctuary.

In 1994, discussions were held with Dade County and The Nature Conservancy, regarding an acquisition strategy. In early 1995, priority acquisition areas were targeted, and appraisals ordered.

In 1995, the District governing board approved modifications to the Model Lands project boundaries. Boundary modifications included the deletion of 106 acres and the addition of 920 acres, for a net increase in project area of 814 acres. The deletion area is dominated by small tracts, with multiple ownerships. The addition lands fit more closely with actual ownership boundaries.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

The sheet flow of water across this area provides high quality freshwater to the estuarine areas of Card Sound, Barnes Sound and Manatee Bay. Card Sound is classified as both an Aquatic Preserve and Outstanding Florida Water. This basin is a primary source of overland freshwater flow for Biscayne National Park and the southern portions of Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve.

This area functions as a recharge area for maintenance of the salt-barrier line thus serving an important function for the prevention of further saltwater intrusion into the region.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

This area is habitat for many threatened and endangered species including; Florida panthers, American crocodiles, wood storks, the coast leather fern, and the silver palm. This area is federally designated as critical habitat for the American crocodile. Natural communities are still in excellent condition for the most part. In conjunction with the shoreline of Biscayne National Park, this area forms the longest undeveloped strip of red mangroves on the east coast of Florida. The project is supported by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Dade County.

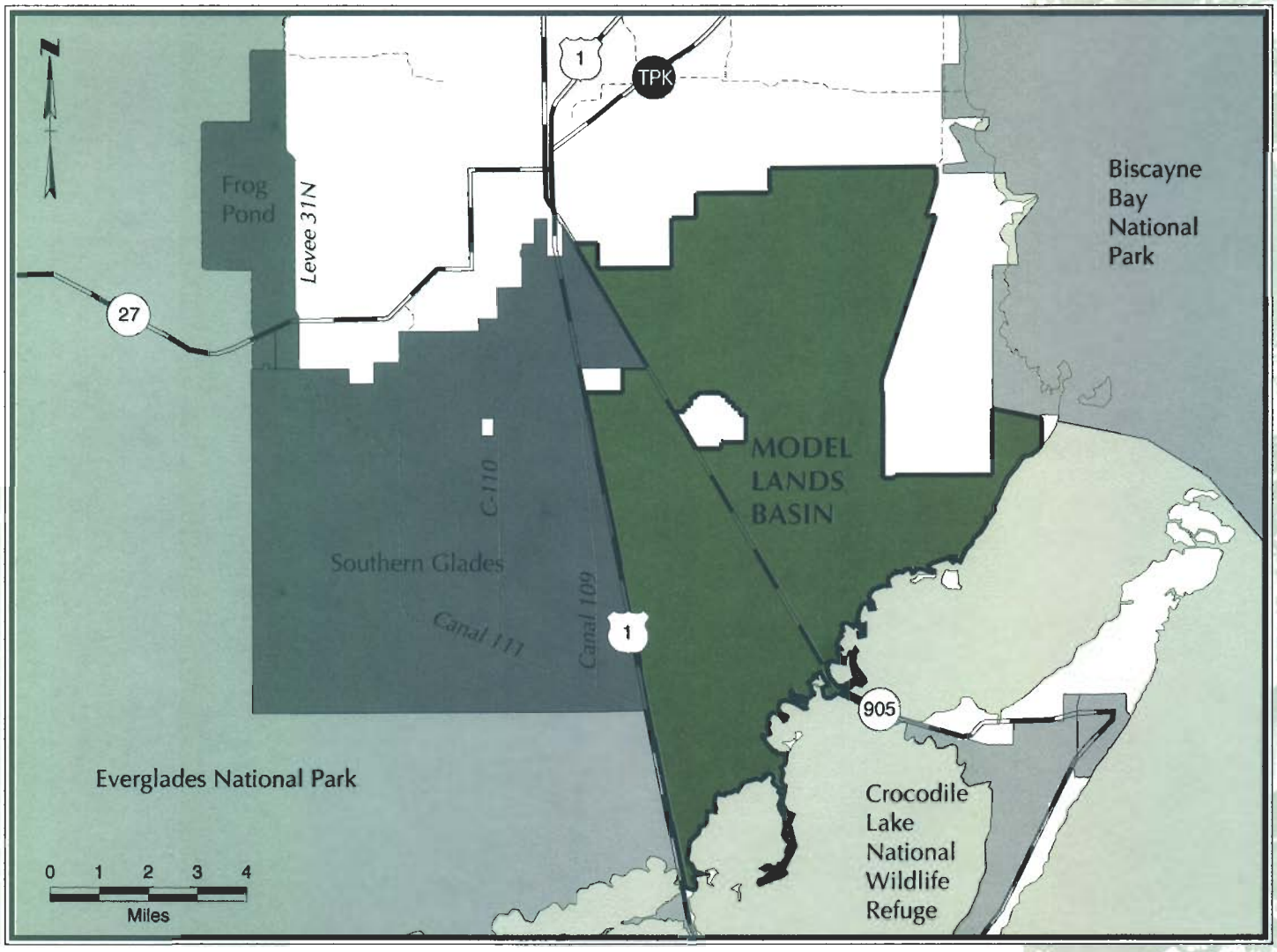
Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Exotic invasion in the northwest corner, and in the addition lands is severe. Dade County has indicated that this site would be a high priority area for treatment of exotics as part of their off-site mitigation program.

Dade County has a funding source for partial management, through the County's Freshwater Wetlands Mitigation Trust Fund, which could include exotic plant treatment and hydrologic restoration.

Recreation Potential

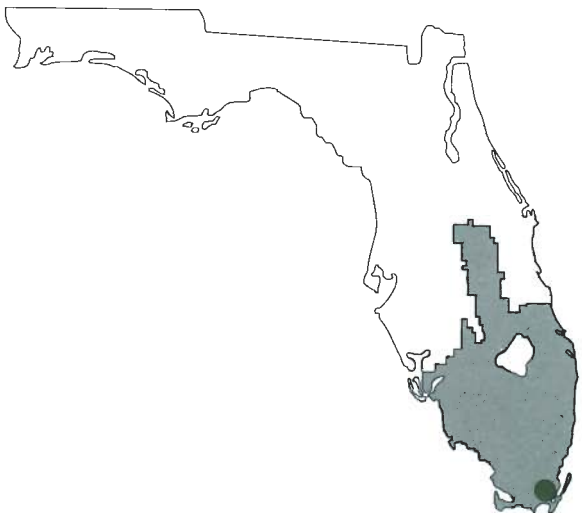
This tract is surprisingly open and, for the dedicated hiker, would provide the opportunity to explore a rather unique part of Florida. There is excellent opportunity for use of the extensive shoreline, by boaters and fishermen.



Counties:
Dade and Monroe

Total Project Area:
42,138 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Nicodemus Slough

General Description

Nicodemus Slough encompasses approximately 2,200 acres of wet prairie, broadleaf marsh and prairie hammock south of the Herbert Hoover Dike (LD-3) and west of State Road 78. Scattered tree growth occurs along the western edge of the tract. Until recently, the construction of the Herbert Hoover Dike, coupled with the maintenance of lower stages in Lake Okeechobee, resulted in a shortened hydroperiod and general lowering of water levels in Nicodemus Slough. This in turn altered vegetative patterns on the property and allowed the spread of transitional and upland species.

Project Vision

The original SOR legislation specified Nicodemus Slough for purchase because the land floods periodically under the higher regulation stages of Lake Okeechobee. The installation of new water control structures along the south and east boundaries and associated improvements to the Canal 19/Levee-41/42 system, now completed, is intended to improve the retention and manipulation of flood waters on the property. One of the District's objectives for Nicodemus Slough is to restore the mix of community types that existed prior to human influences, while providing flood control to adjacent land owners.

A series of proposed hydrologic improvements should increase the coverage of the open water slough and depression marsh and improve the quality of the remaining wet prairie. A recent hydrologic study recommended removing the north-south berm located on the western edge of the property and filling in the associated ditch. This action will augment overland water flow from higher lands to the west and should help in increasing the hydroperiod on Nicodemus Slough.

Water and fire will be the major elements used to mold future successional vegetation patterns. Land management tools will be applied directly to assist natural functions (fire and water) in operating as freely as possible within the property boundaries. Direct management intervention will be limited to protecting the property from exotics, human induced fires, damaging wildfires and disturbances to cultural resources.

The District staff envisions making Nicodemus Slough available for fishing, picnicking, canoeing, hiking, nature observation, limited volume airboating and photography. Prohibited uses are hunting, power boating and the use of off-road vehicles.

Natural Resource Management

Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	2,000	
Fire Management		1,500
Mowing/Chopping	600	200
Restoration		0

	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		•
Waste Removal		
Fencing/Posting		•
Security		
Private	•	

Public Use

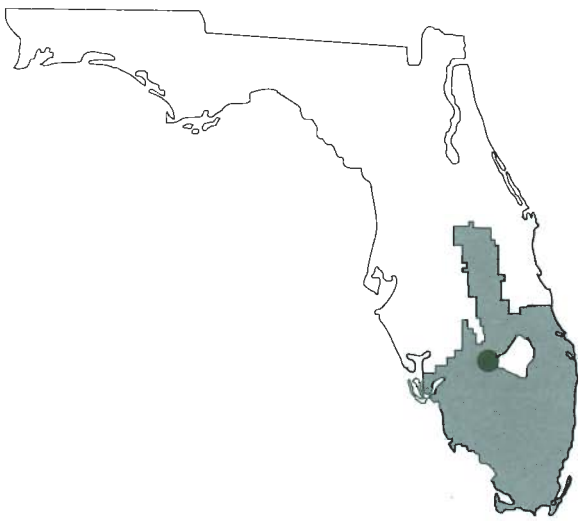
	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting		•
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling	•	
Camping		•
Airboating	•	
Environmental Education		

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning		•
Hydrologic Restoration Plan	•	•

County:
Glades

Total Project Area:
2,219 acres



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

North Fork St. Lucie River

General Description

The stretch of North Fork under consideration is approximately six miles long, and extends from the White City bridge to Canal 24. In 1995, the District governing board approved a boundary modification which added approximately 1,000 acres to the project. The additional acreage is scattered among a number of parcels along both sides of the river. Most of the addition lands lie adjacent to tracts which are already in state ownership. The environmental quality of these tracts varies. Some are relatively undisturbed and dominated by large pines and mixtures of oak and cabbage palm, while other sites are heavily infested with exotic vegetation.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

More than 80% of the project area is comprised of wetlands within the river flood plain. The wetland types include hardwood swamp, low hammock, sawgrass marsh and mangrove forest. The mangroves are limited to approximately the lower one-third of the project. The flood plain wetlands help lower current velocities in the river, thereby attenuating and gradually releasing the flood waters. This action also facilitates recharge of the surficial aquifer, and filters out nutrients, pollutants and suspended solids.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

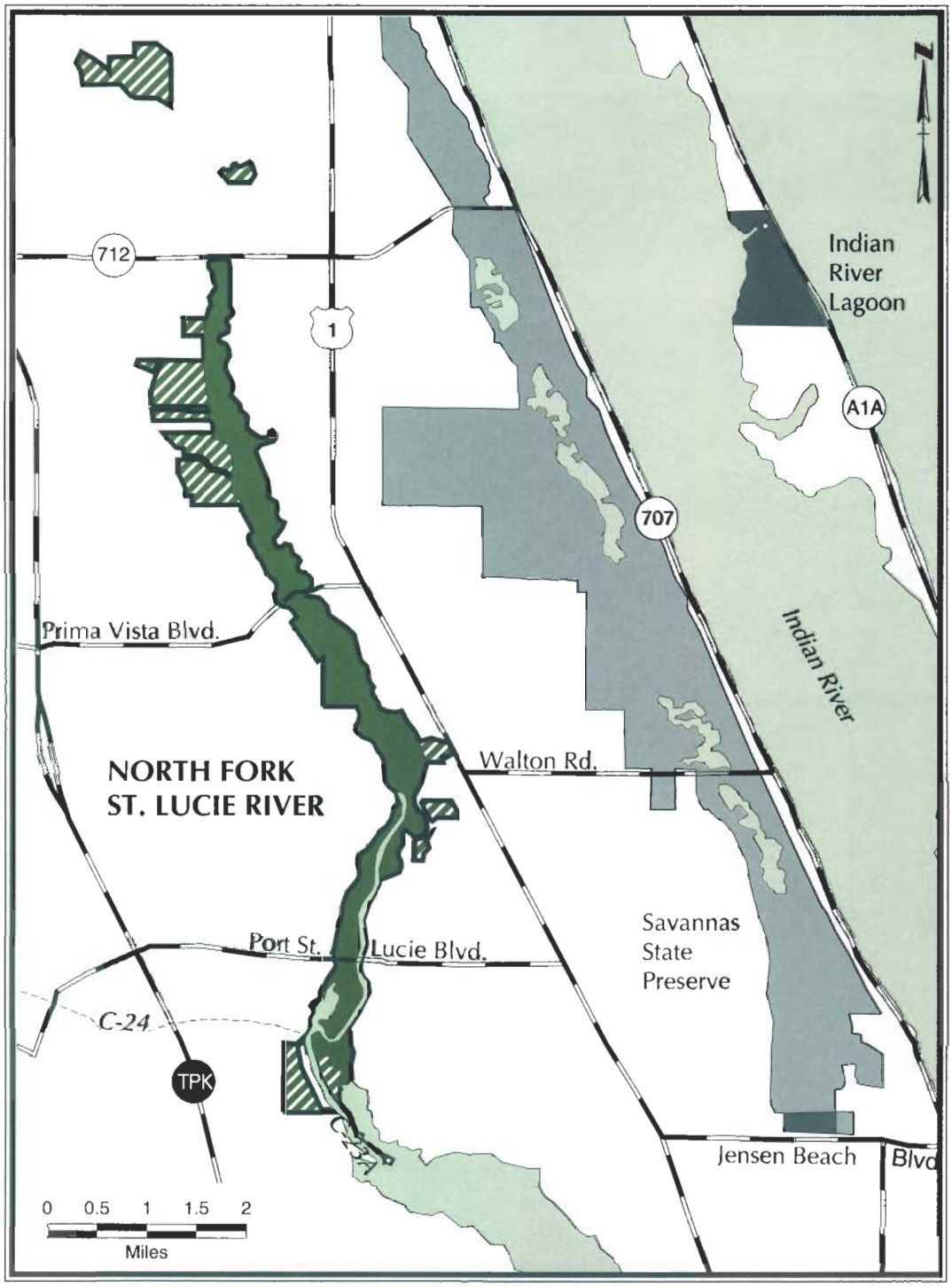
This stretch is included within the North Fork St. Lucie River Aquatic Preserve and is classified as Outstanding Florida Water. In addition to the river flood plain, the project includes approximately 175 acres of high quality uplands, such as high hammock, pine flatwoods and sand pine scrub.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Encroaching urban development proves the greatest threat. No flood plain restoration or structure replacement appears necessary. Some exotic vegetation is present, but in controllable amounts. Both St. Lucie County and the City of Port St. Lucie have agreed to manage the property and commit funds for management should it be acquired.

Public Recreation

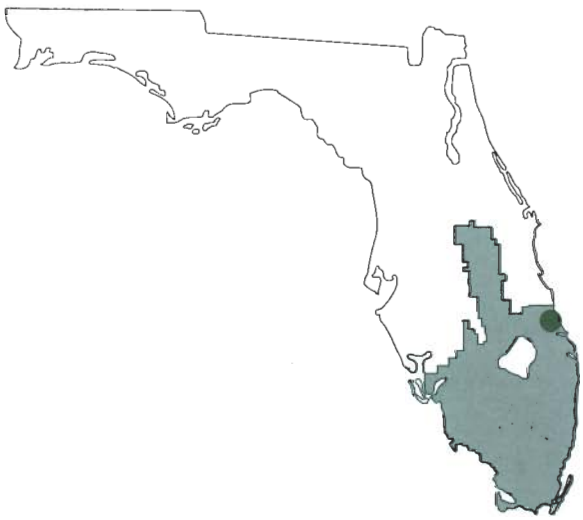
Due to its proximity to the rapidly expanding areas of St. Lucie County, the property is readily accessible to potential users. Boating, fishing and canoeing are actively pursued on this part of the river at this time. The willingness of local government to participate in management increases the likelihood of riverfront parks and other passive recreational facilities.



County:
St. Lucie

Total Project Area:
2,800 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

North Savannas

General Description

The site contains a 930 acre remnant of the historic savannas community type in St. Lucie County. It is completely separated from the Savannas State Preserve by the City of Ft. Pierce. St. Lucie County owns two adjacent tracts, totalling 353 acres, which were purchased as mitigation for expansion of the St. Lucie County Airport.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

Important water management functions of the site include attenuating peak discharges and improving water quality. The site promotes recharge to the surficial Aquifer, which is the primary source of potable water in St. Lucie County.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

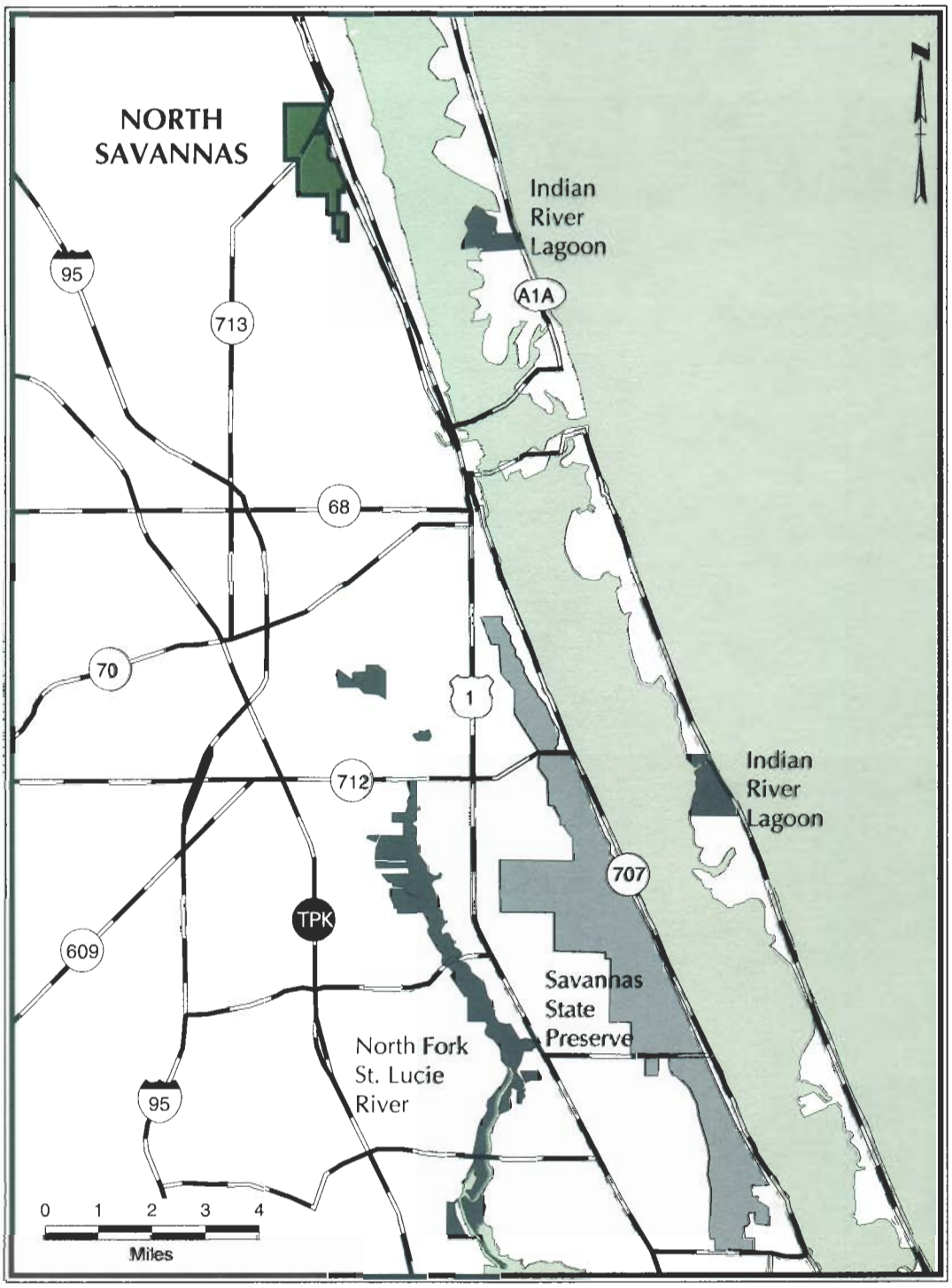
The site is in relatively good condition; however, numerous shellrock roads cross an old platted portion Removal of the old roads would probably benefit sheetflow.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

The site is very accessible, which may prove to be a security problem. Prescribed burning of the flatwoods would be difficult, due to the dense residential development immediately to the west and US Highway 1 to the east. Exotic vegetation is not a major problem at the present, but the area will require periodic checking and treatment.

Recreation Potential

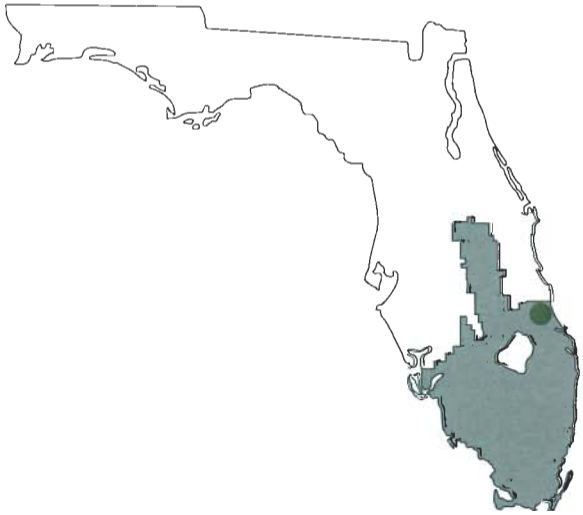
The site would be very suitable for hiking trails. Due to its proximity to a major metropolitan area, use of the property would probably be very high. The diversity of community types makes this area particularly appealing. Fishing in the deep water areas would be very popular.



County:
St. Lucie

Total Project Area:
930 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1995 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

Okaloacoochee Slough

General Description

Okaloacoochee Slough includes more than 19,000 acres in Hendry County. It is the major headwater to Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve and Big Cypress National Preserve. The property under proposal includes the heart of the slough and much of the high quality uplands and hammocks which lie adjacent. Okaloacoochee Slough was identified in the Florida Panther Habitat Protection Plan as a Priority 1 Habitat Protection Area. Native range grazing and logging are the primary land uses at this time.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

The project area contains the heart of Okaloacoochee Slough, which is the headwaters to Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve and Big Cypress National Preserve. The extensive network of sloughs and isolated wetlands store wet season runoff from the surrounding uplands. The site contains more than 11,000 acres of largely undisturbed wetlands. Okaloacoochee Slough is the most significant natural area in Hendry County. It is still in a rather remote area; intensive agriculture has not begun, although citrus groves are expanding in areas to the east and west. The mixture of uplands and wetlands forms a diverse ecosystem.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

This tract is very undisturbed. No drainage systems were observed, and the wetlands appear to be in excellent condition. Logging, native range grazing, and hunting leases have been the only uses for many years. No large outbreaks of exotics are apparent. It is likely that isolated individuals are present.

The site contains cut over wet flatwoods, interspersed with wet prairies, hydric hammocks of live oak and cabbage palm, and a wide variety of wetland types within the slough. The center of the slough is comprised mostly of maidencane and sawgrass marshes, and is fringed with willow thickets. As the slough extends southward, cypress sloughs begin to dominate along the edges.

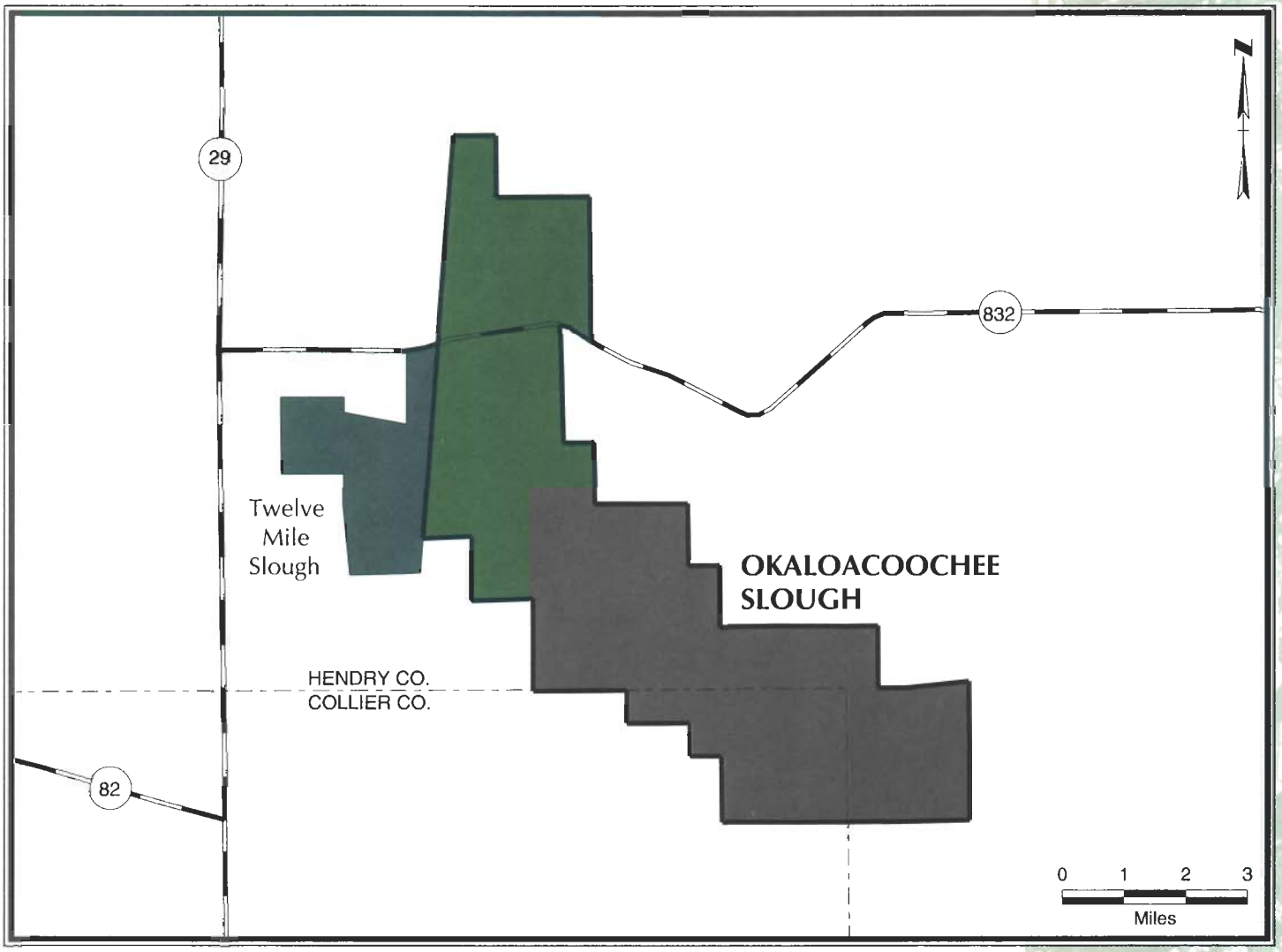
The diversity of community types provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Many wading birds would be expected to use the wetlands as feeding areas, including wood storks and numerous hawks.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

The property has been regularly burned to improve the native range, so heavy fuel loads are not a problem. Most of the marketable pine has recently been logged. Management would consist mainly of prescribed burning, controlling outbreaks of exotic vegetation, and providing security.

Recreation Potential

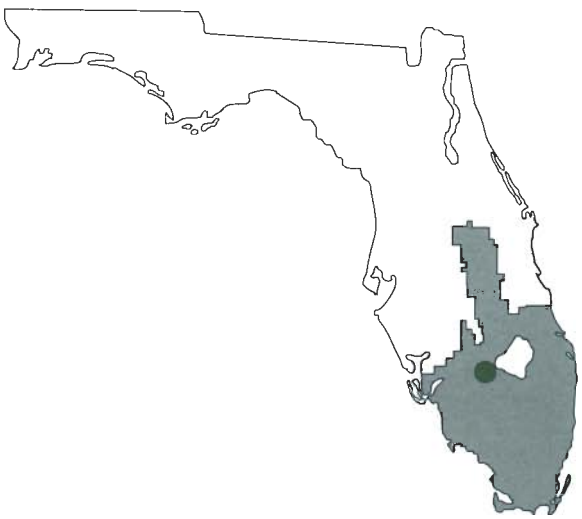
The diversity of community types and remote setting would make this a hiking and wilderness camping destination. The property is currently leased for hunting, and it is likely that public hunts could be conducted.



County:
Hendry

Total Project Area:
22,500 acres

Number of Owners:
One



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Osceola Pine Savannas

General Description

Osceola Pine Savannas is a 41,000 acre Save Our Rivers and CARL project, most of which is within the boundaries of St. Johns River Water Management District. The proposed 1,600 acre project is only that portion which lies within SFWMD. The entire project is located in Osceola County. Current land use is native range grazing. The 1,600 acre tract provides a good representation of the overall project. It contains a variety of community types, and is tributary to Crabgrass Creek.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

This tract contains isolated wet prairies, floodplain swamp forests, and hydric hammocks which are tributary to Crabgrass Creek and other waters in the Upper St. Johns River Basin. The site also contains a diversity of upland habitats, including dry prairie, longleaf pine-dominated mesic flatwoods, and scrub.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

This tract is in very good condition. Disturbances appear to have been limited to woods hunting trails. Exotic vegetation is not a problem. The biggest threat is from expanding citrus development in the area. Dry prairie and mesic flatwoods are highly susceptible to citrus conversion.

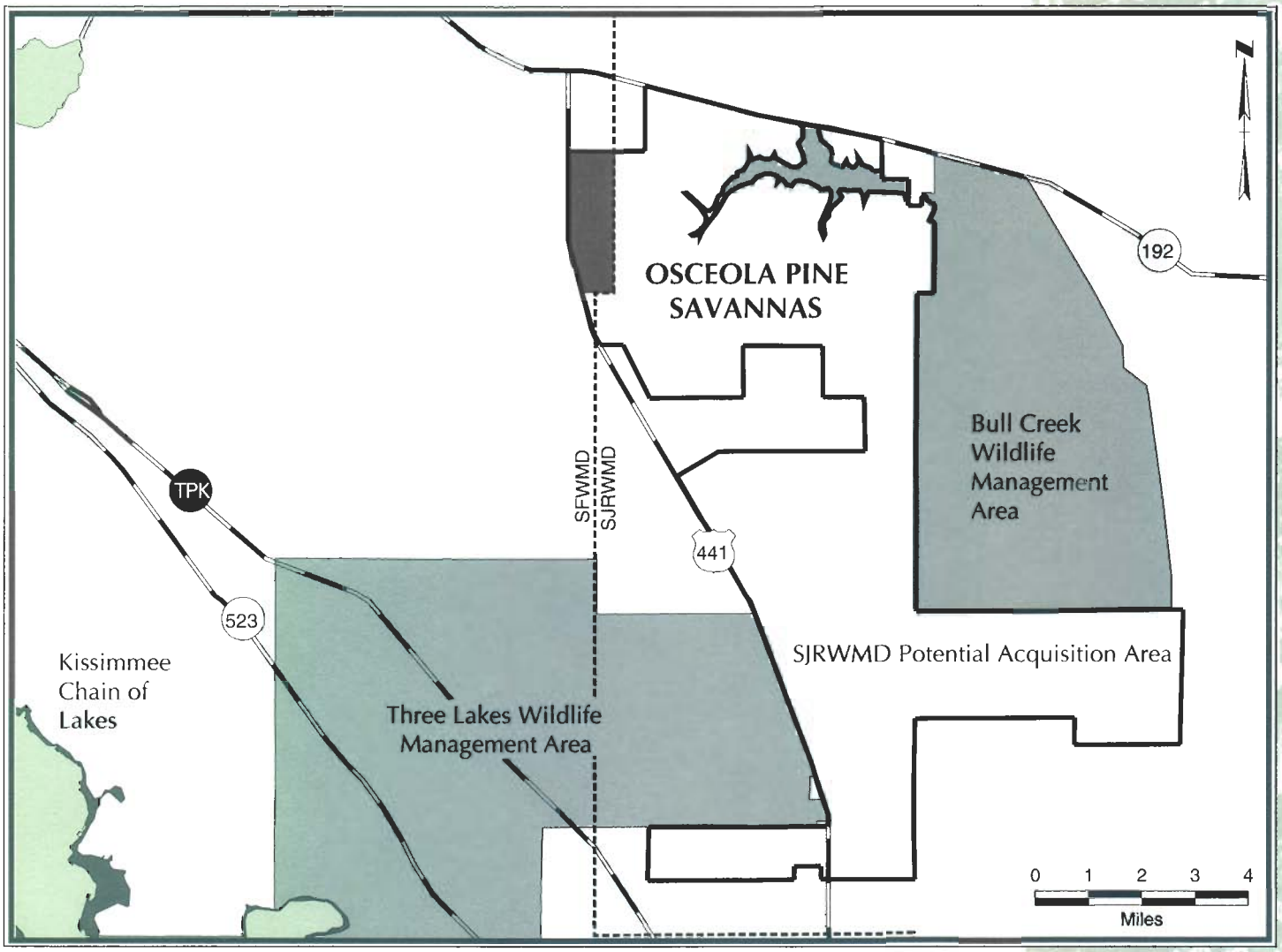
Acquisition of Osceola Pine Savannas would provide a key link connecting Bull creek Wildlife Management Area with Three Lakes WMA, creating a protected corridor in excess of 117,000 acres. Several listed species, including the red-cockaded woodpecker, have colonies on adjacent protected lands. Protecting this tract offers an excellent opportunity to extend their geographic distribution.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Management of this tract will likely be by Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, in conjunction with Three Lakes and Bull Creek Wildlife Management Areas. These lands are in good condition at present, with minimal restoration required. Most of the management activities would likely center around a prescribed burning program.

Recreation Potential

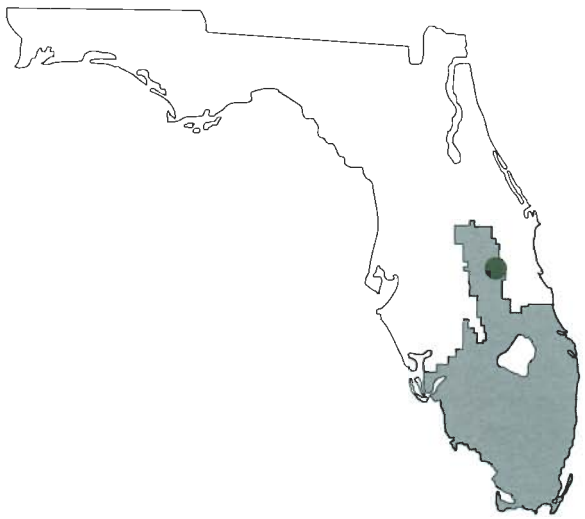
This site offers excellent recreational opportunities. Hiking, wilderness camping, nature appreciation, horseback riding, and hunting are all likely uses.



County:
Osceola

Total Project Area:
1,600 acres (SFWMD portion)

Number of Owners:
One



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Pal-Mar

General Description

Pal-Mar is located in Palm Beach and Martin Counties, east of J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (WMA). In 1991, the District Governing Board approved the addition of 4500 acres to the project. The addition includes those lands that separate Pal-Mar from Jonathan Dickinson State Park. Acquisition of the addition would form an extensive wildlife corridor connecting J.D. State Park, Pal-Mar, Corbett W.M.A., and DuPuis State Forest. In 1994, the District Governing Board revised the project boundary. Several additional entities are involved with land acquisition in Pal–Mar, including CARL, Martin County, and Palm Beach County. The revision made all agency boundaries coincide. The net of the 1994 boundary revisions added 9,814 acres to the project. In late 1994, the first purchase of 1922 acres was completed, in what will be a cost share project with Martin County. Discussions are under way with additional landowners. Stewardship activities, with public use opportunities, started in 1995.

Project Vision

Pal–Mar is a vast pine flatwood/wet prairie/depression marsh complex. This land is stable ecologically and is one of the highest quality pine flatwoods in south Florida. The District's objective is to maintain the existing ecological quality through land acquisition, and by applying land management tools like regular prescribed fire, exotic plant control and security.

An environmental inventory will be conducted and used to guide the land management activities. It is known that for federally endangered bird species use these lands to feed and/or nest. Standard state and U.S.F.W.S. management procedures would be followed to protect nesting areas of these species. Recreational use would probably be high, particularly if used as a wildlife management area. Several deepwater canals remain from earlier attempts to drain the property. Since these have no positive outfall, they provide good fishing.

Natural Resource Management

Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control		2,000
Fire Management		2,000
Mowing/Chopping	10	
Restoration		•

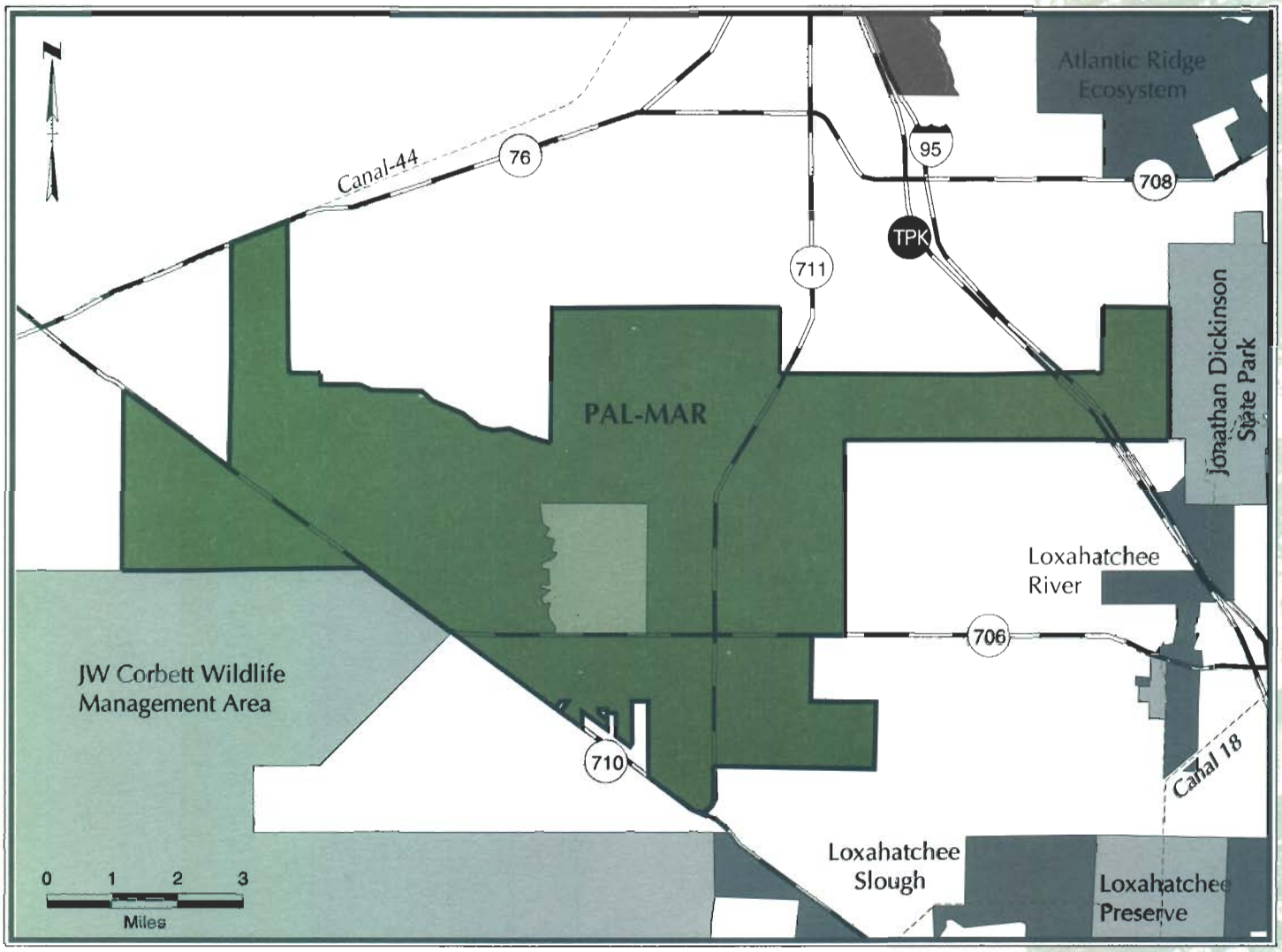
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		
Waste Removal	•	
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
Private	•	

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting		•
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling		•
Camping		•
Airboating		•
Environmental Education		

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning	•	
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		



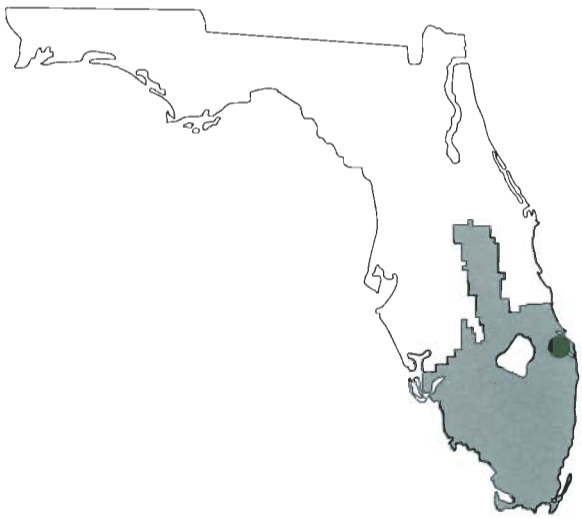
Counties:
Martin and Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
37,314 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,922

Land Cost:
$922,073

Acres Remaining:
33,567



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1995 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

Paradise Run

General Description

The project lies west of Canal-38, between Structure-65 E and Lake Okeechobee. Unlike the other pools of the Kissimmee River, Paradise Run will not be reflooded by Level II Backfilling, since it is controlled by the stage in Lake Okeechobee. Remnant river oxbows are still present, although the surrounding land has been drained and is now improved pasture.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

Paradise Run has degenerated because it receives no continuous surface water input to allow it to operate as a flowing riverine system. Runoff from adjacent uplands is the primary source of water. Flap-gated structures in the Levee-59 Borrow Canal can discharge water into Paradise Run when stages are high enough, but that does not occur on a regular basis. Paradise Run is physically separated from Canal-38 by a continuous spoil pile. Numerous wetlands still exist adjacent to the old river channel. Although these wetlands suffer from a lack of water, according to the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Paradise Run still has high wildlife utilization in the form of water fowl and wading birds.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

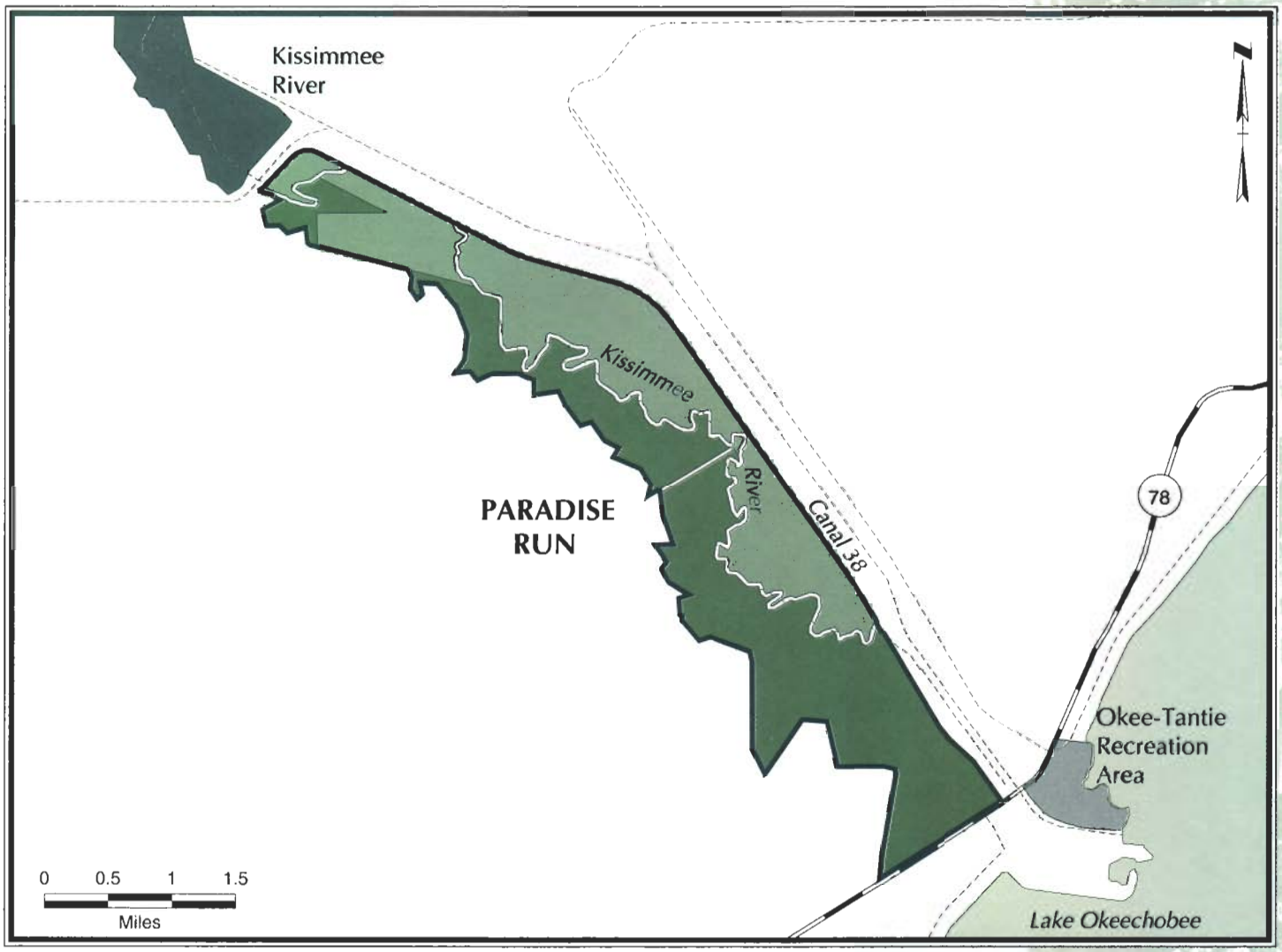
Since water levels in Paradise Run will not be affected by Kissimmee River restoration, other structural methods will have to be employed to provide a continuous flow of water to the reach. It appears that several engineering solutions exist. To date, time and funds have not been available to explore fully the various possibilities. Paradise Run suffers from lack of flow, resulting in stagnant conditions and low dissolved oxygen levels. Increased flows would improve greatly the quality of water being discharged to Canal-38 and Lake Okeechobee, as well as increase the habitat diversity gained by a flowing system versus a confined wetland.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Land management in Paradise Run will be difficult if restoration of the floodplain cannot be accomplished. The present land use is improved pasture and cattle grazing.

Recreation Potential

If connected with Canal-38 and constant flows reestablished, there is excellent potential for canoeing, fishing, and wildlife observation. Paradise Run's close proximity to the City of Okeechobee and Lake Okeechobee would make it a popular recreational destination. It is also possible that the Florida National Scenic Trail would be extended through Paradise Run.

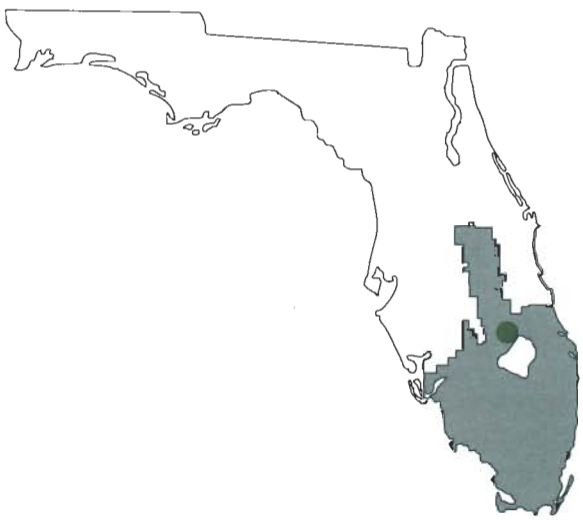


Counties:
Glades and Okeechobee

Total Project Area:
4,265 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,406

Acres Remaining:
2,859



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Savannas

General Description

The Savannas is located between the coastal dune, west of the Indian River, and the pine flatwoods of southeastern St. Lucie County. The Savannas extend into Northern Martin County. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) formerly Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has acquired approximately 4,700 acres under the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) program. This area is managed by DEP as the Savannas State Preserve. The 1,200 acres is the remainder of the project to be acquired. The District and DNR would cooperate in acquisition.

Stewardship Activities

Water resource restoration included filling 200 feet of a drainage ditch on the SOR lands This is predicted to reflood sixty acres of the Big Lake. In addition a mitigation project to offset installation of a 500-KV power line is projected to reflood 200 acres in both Martin and St. Lucie Counties. The project also includes removal of exotic plant materials and replacement with native plant materials.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

The freshwater aquifer which underlies the Savannas is not productive enough for municipal uses, but the recharge that occurs along the coastal ridge serves to hold back the saltwater wedge, thereby reducing the danger of saltwater intrusion. Habitat types are diverse and include sand pine scrub, openwater sloughs, emergent marshes and low pine flatwoods. The wetlands are important feeding and nesting sites for wading birds in St. Lucie and Martin Counties whose habitat has been lost to urban development. The Savannas is under heavy development pressure on both the east and west sides.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

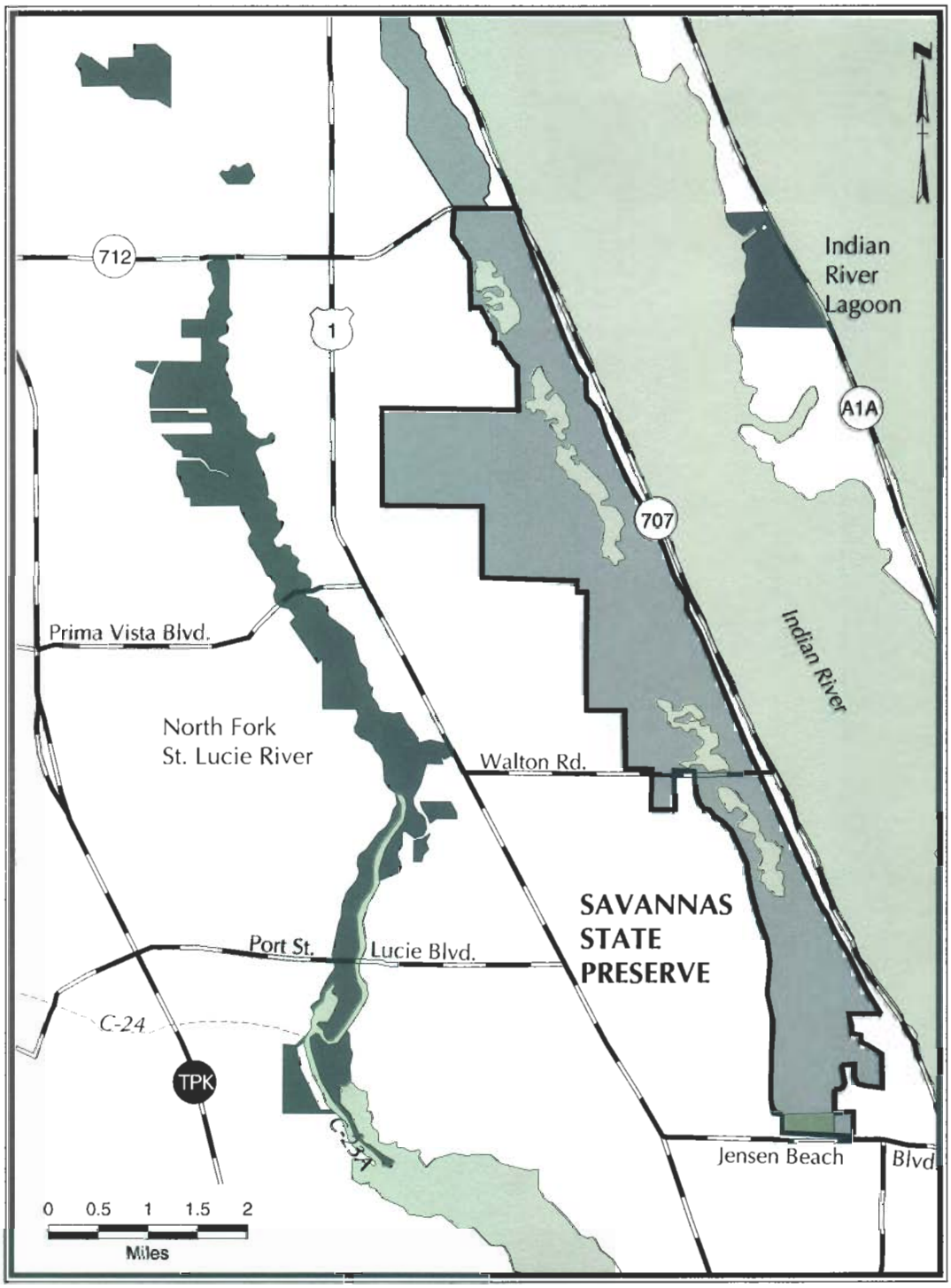
The Savannas is one of the most unique and endangered natural systems in the District. It is a remnant coastal wetland system, which historically extended along most of the Southeast Florida coast. Most of the area is in its natural state, thus eliminating the need for restoration. The wetlands are highly susceptible to degradation by stormwater inputs from urban development.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Exotic plant growth is minimal. Wetland communities are still in good condition. Extensive hydrologic restoration does not appear necessary. Management of the additional lands would be undertaken by DEP as part of the Savannas State Preserve.

Public Recreation

Public use of the Savannas is very high. It is used extensively by fishermen, canoeists and photographers. Its close proximity to urban population centers will increase the use by the public and school groups.



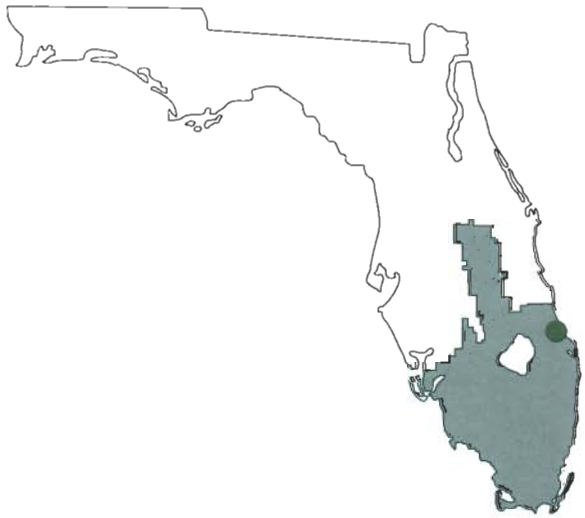
Counties:
Martin and St. Lucie

Total Project Area:
5,900 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
77.13

Land Cost:
$3,100,000

Number of Owners:
Numerous



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1995 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

Shingle Creek

General Description

Shingle Creek Swamp covers more than 7,000 acres in southern Orange and northern Osceola Counties. It is a major receiving body for storm water runoff from areas south and southwest of Orlando. The Orange County portion of the swamp is more than 1.5 miles wide, and is dominated by cypress, loblolly bay, and red maple. Water depths of 24" during much of the year are common. The swamp is bisected in the north-south and east-west directions by an Orlando Utility Authority transmission line and access road. Shingle Creek itself was channelized in the 1920's and it borders the eastern edge of the swamp. Most of the floodplain in Osceola County is intact, but adjacent uplands, which historically were wiregrass/longleaf pine-dominated systems, have been cleared and planted as improved pasture.

As mitigation for the Orlando Beltway Southern Connector, a hydrologic restoration plan was implemented in 1995 which will equalize water levels and sheetflow across the Orange County portion of Shingle Creek Swamp. A 100' long stabilized swale was cut across the Orlando Utility Authority powerline access road to equalize water levels and improve sheetflow. Prior to construction of the swale, water levels on the upstream side of the road were as much as 1.5' higher.

The District currently owns more than 1,100 acres in Orange County, and nearly half of that was obtained at no cost through the mitigation process. It is likely that the remaining lands in Orange County, east of the powerline, will also come through mitigation. The western portion of the project was platted into more than 1,000 individual lots many years ago. The District has no plans to actively pursue acquisition in this area due to the number of landowners and small lot sizes.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

Shingle Creek Swamp is largely isolated, except for its connection with Shingle Creek, which flows along the eastern border of the swamp. It plays a very important water management role because it receives the stormwater from most of Valencia Water Control District (VWCD). The swamp has several wetland habitat types, but it has been divided by two powerline easements and their associated service roads. The swamp plays major roles in flood attenuation and water quality improvement.

Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

The University of Florida College of Landscape Architecture is working with the District to develop a plan which will address public use for the project as a whole. Orange and Osceola Counties, the City of Kissimmee, and the District are also working cooperatively to establish a "greenbelt" along Shingle Creek which will link common areas.

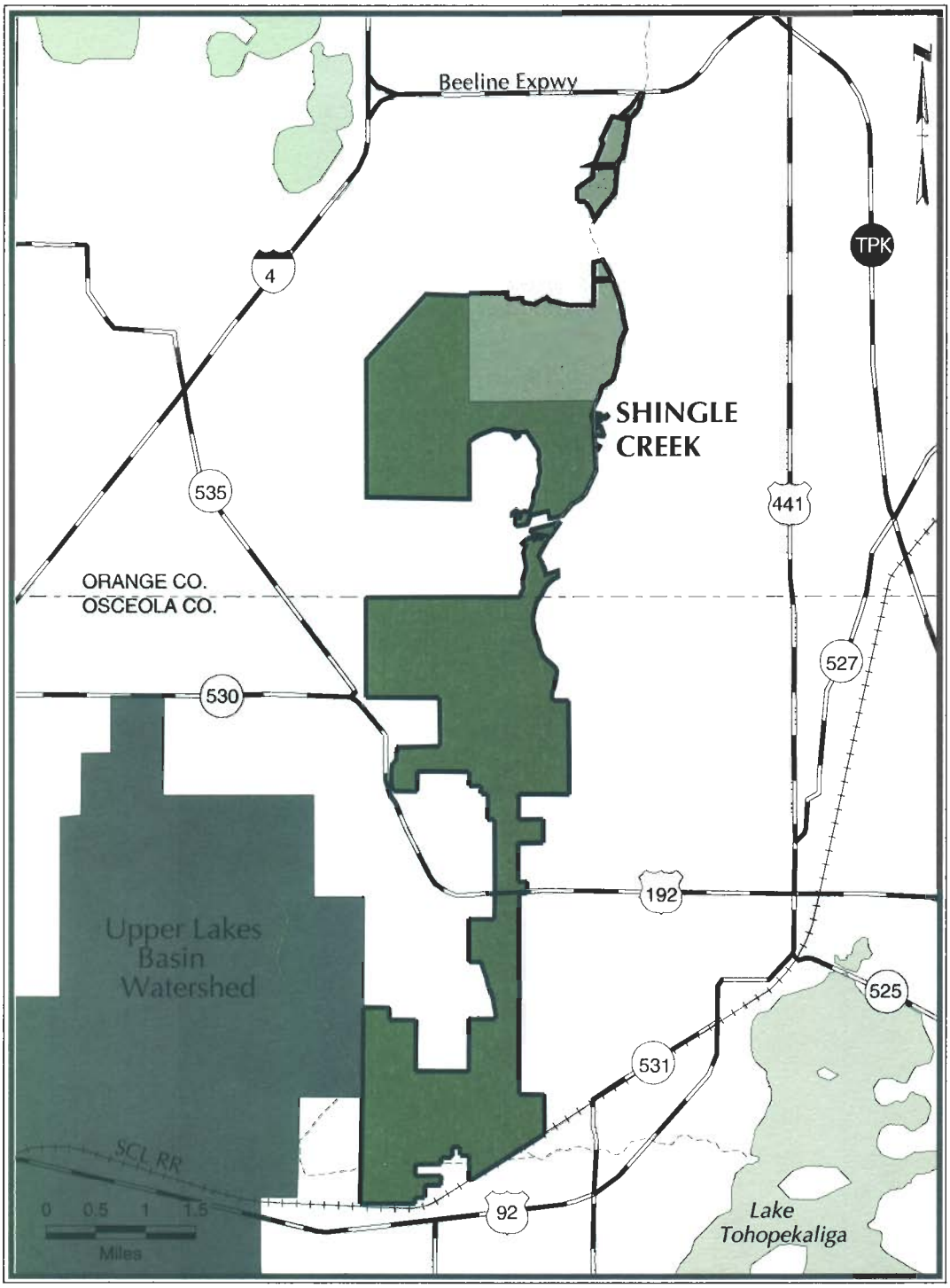
District-owned lands are dominated by forested wetlands, which are not fire dependent communities. If additional uplands are acquired in the future, fire management plans will be developed. Primrose willow appears to be the only nuisance exotic present on District-owned lands. The majority is along rights-of-way maintained by Orlando Utility Authority.

Construction of the powerline road swale will greatly improve water movement in the northern part of Shingle Creek Swamp. There may be opportunities for the installation of two additional swales to further facilitate sheet flow.

The lands adjacent to the floodplain in Osceola County have been cleared and planted as improved pasture. It is the District's intent to reestablish the native wiregrass groundcover and longleaf pine canopy layer, as well as block numerous shallow swales and ditches which have altered the hydrology.

Public Recreation

Canoeing in Shingle Creek is a popular activity. The berm along the west side of the creek would be an excellent place for a hiking trail. Additional hiking trails and primitive camping areas could be established on upland islands within the swamp. As mitigation for wetland impacts associated with commercial development, the District will gain title to a small tract in the northwest corner of the Orange County portion of the project which will provide public access to the interior of the swamp. In addition, the developer will donate land for the construction of a small public parking area and trailhead.



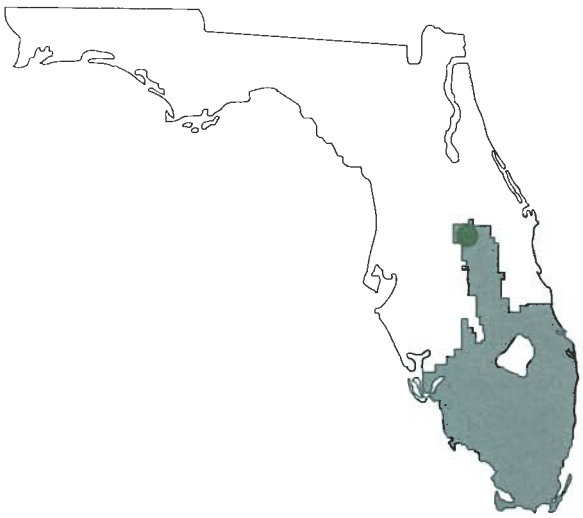
Counties:
Orange and Osceola

Total Project Area:
7,655 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,132

Land Cost:
$1,334,400

Acres Remaining:
6,523



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1995 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

Six Mile Cypress

General Description

Six Mile Cypress Slough occupies approximately 2,000 acres in Lee County southeast of the City of Ft. Myers. It extends from State Road 82 southwesterly for approximately nine miles to Ten Mile Canal. The slough averages 1,500 feet in width. The Slough consists of cypress swamp, interspersed with numerous open ponds. It is fringed with pine flatwoods, transitional hardwoods, wet prairies, and stands of Melaleuca. Melaleuca has become the dominant vegetation type south of Daniels Road.

Vision Statement

South Florida Water Management District has an agreement with Lee County for county management of Six Mile Cypress Preserve. One of the primary goals of the county is to provide an optimum hydroperiod for the continued health and establishment of cypress and associated vegetation types through hydroperiod management. In 1991, a water control structure near 10 mile canal was modified to provide higher water stages in the slough. Another county goal is protecting surface water quality to maintain optimum biological productivity

The vision for this project includes eradication and control of exotic pest plants and reforestation in areas where exotic plants are thick. Developing habitat for wildlife through maintaining a productive ecological system is an objective of the program.

An environmental education center has been developed. Associated trails introduce people to the Preserve. Public use includes hiking, picnicking, nature study and fishing. Lee County schools use the Slough extensively for outdoor classroom field visits.

Natural Resource Management

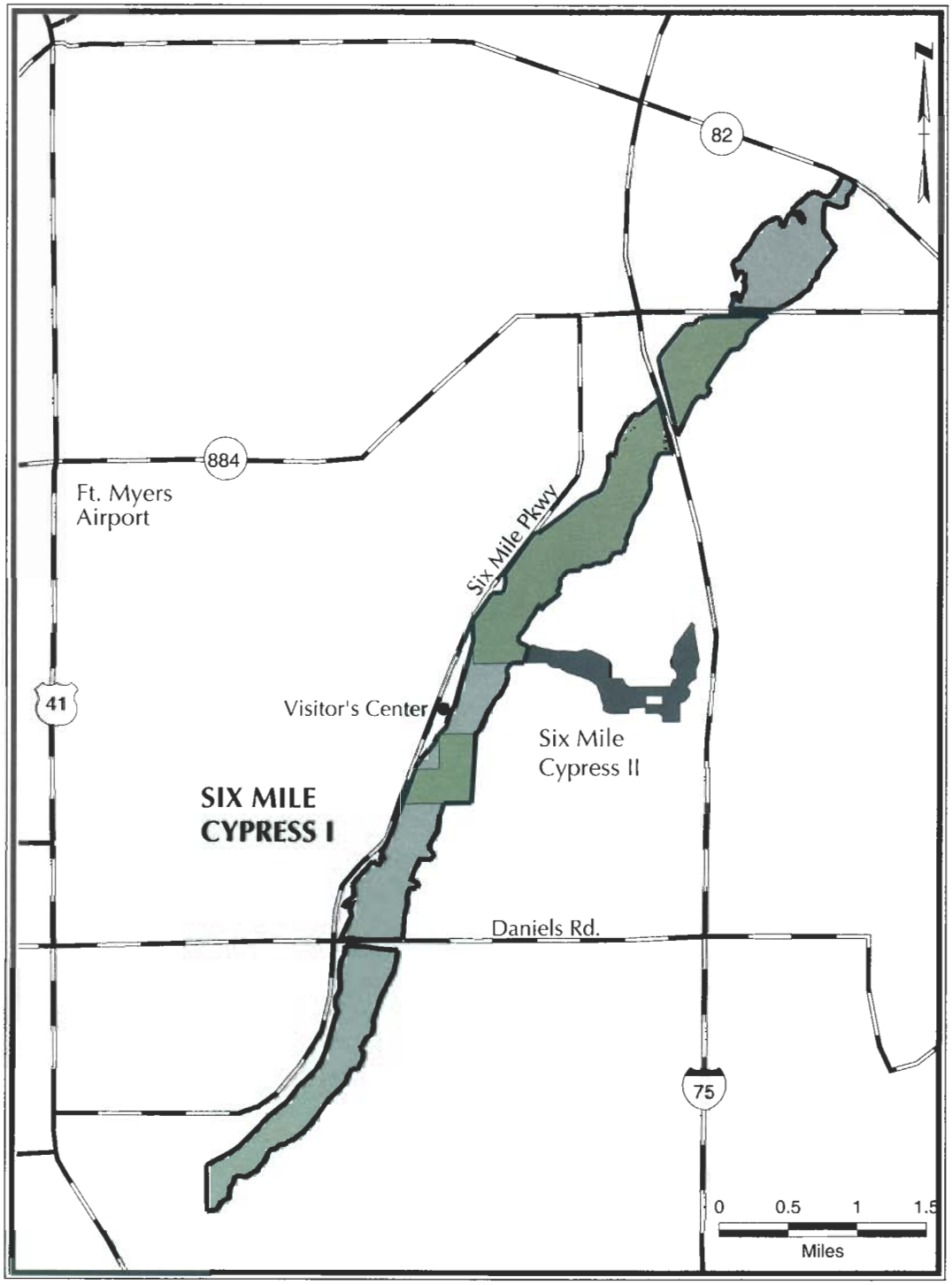
Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	800	
Fire Management		
Mowing/Chopping		
Restoration	•	
	Ongoing	**Complete**
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal		
Fencing/Posting		•
Security		
County	•	

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting		•
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding	•	
Bicycling	•	
Camping		•
Airboating		•
Environmental Education	•	

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning		
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		
Public Input		
County Committee		
Cooperative Management Agreement(s)		
Lee County		

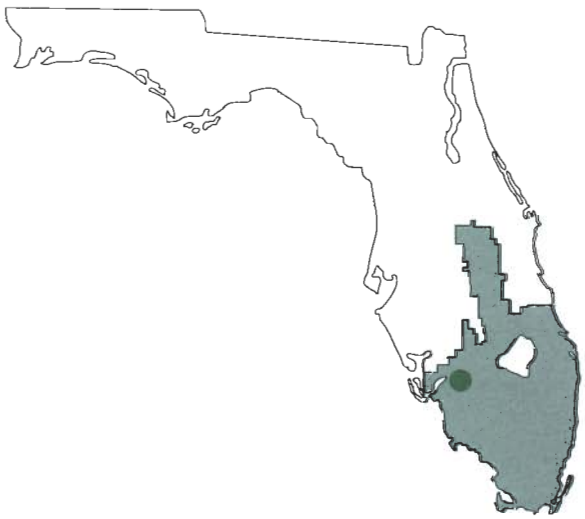


County:
Lee

Total Project Area:
1,741 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
794

Land Cost (SOR):
$1,520,321



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Six Mile Cypress II

General Description

Six Mile Cypress Slough occupies approximately 2,000 acres in Lee County, southeast of the City of Ft. Myers. It extends from State Road 82 southwesterly for approximately nine miles to Ten Mile Canal. The slough averages 1,500 feet in width. This project (Six Mile Cypress II), locally known as the North Arm, covers approximately 225 acres and appears to be a transitional arm of the main slough. It extends to the east for approximately two miles and varies in width from 400' - 1000'. The arm collects runoff from the north and areas east of I-75. Box culverts under the interstate direct runoff through the arm and into the main strand of Six Mile Cypress. The slough consists of cypress swamp, interspersed with numerous open ponds. It is fringed with pine flatwoods, transitional hardwoods, wet prairies, and Melaleuca.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

Lee County has agreed to develop, operate and maintain the slough as a nature preserve under an agreement with the District. A detailed description of the slough is contained in the Six Mile Cypress Slough Management Plan prepared by the County in 1986. Specific actions to implement the plan are set forth in the Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve Land & Water Management Plan prepared by the County and approved by the District in 1988.

Six Mile Cypress Basin is being studied as part of the Lee County Surface Water Management Master Plan. It will recommend design criteria to prevent further degradation and slough enhancement. A principal objective will be to restore a more natural hydroperiod to aid in wetland revitalization.

The District, through its local Government Assistance Program, is working with Lee County to develop a Surface Water Management Master Plan for Six Mile Basin. The plan will propose management strategies, such as revitalization of flow ways, to restore flows to the North Arm and main strand of the slough.

Melaleuca and Brazilian pepper are problem exotics that have proliferated in certain portions of the slough. Native vegetation has been completely replaced by Melaleuca in approximately 200 acres. A vigorous eradication/control program involving chemical and mechanical applications is planned to halt the future spread of these species. Reforestation with native species will be undertaken where large stands of exotics are removed.

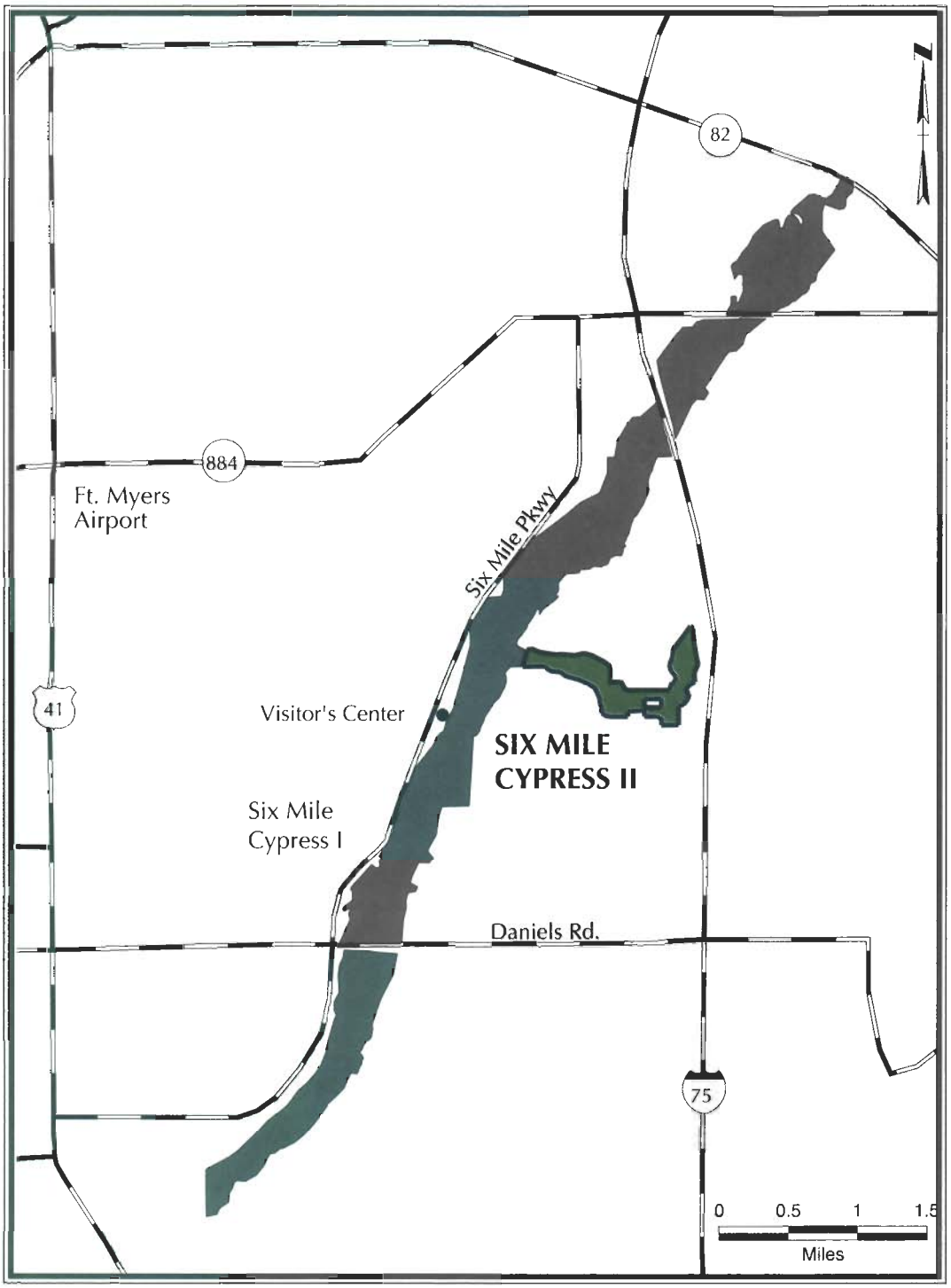
Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

The entire perimeter of the slough is being posted to prevent unauthorized access, and problem areas are being fenced and/or barricaded. Routine patrol will be provided by preserve personnel and the Lee County Sheriff's Department.

A prescribed burning program is proposed for the pine flatwoods north of Penzance Road to maintain the species composition of this community and prevent the buildup of fuels that could result in damaging wildfires. Fire lanes will be constructed to facilitate the burns and to protect sensitive cypress and hardwood areas. Wildfires will be suppressed only when considered necessary to protect adjacent lands and highway travel or when preserve resources would be subject to irreparable damage.

Public Recreation

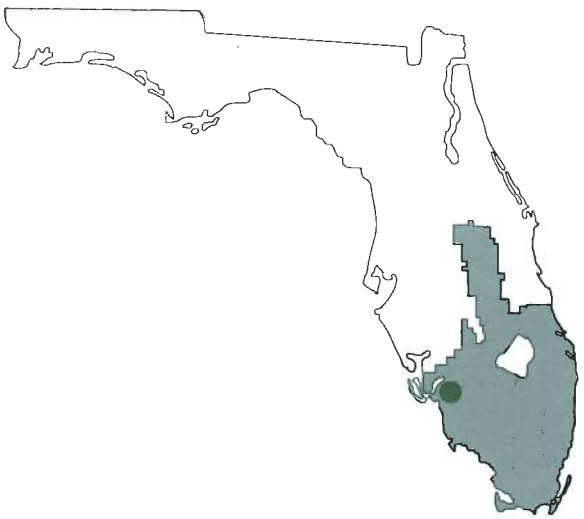
The slough has been used informally for both active and passive recreational activities for many years. The continuation of passive activities, such as fishing, picnicking, photography and nature observation, will be encouraged in appropriate locations within the preserve. Interpretive facilities consisting of an elevated boardwalk, covered amphitheater and parking area have been developed by Lee County to enhance visitor appreciation of the preserve. Special programs will be conducted by the Lee County Parks and Recreation Department. The Lee County School Board Department of Environmental Education will continue its past practice of conducting field trips to the slough.



County:
Lee

Total Project Area:
225 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

South Fork St. Lucie River

General Description

This project includes a portion of the upper reach of the South Fork St. Lucie River, commencing approximately 0.75 miles south of State Road 76 and extending approximately 1.25 miles southward. The project was proposed by the citizens of Martin County to preserve and protect this relatively undisturbed portion of the river for the use and enjoyment of existing and future generations.

In 1993, Martin County submitted an application to Florida Communities Trust (FCT) for the joint acquisition of thirty-seven (37) additional acres adjacent to, and immediately north of, the 100-acre SOR tract. FCT has informed Martin County that their application has been approved. Activities are now under way so that negotiations with the land owners can begin.

Project Vision

It is the District's goal to restore any degraded community types and to acquire additional lands along the South Fork of the St. Lucie River to protect the integrity of the river corridor. River water quality is best maintained when river corridor lands remain in their natural state and are restored and managed to enhance natural community quality.

Five of the seven natural community types existing on the property are in good condition and will require prescribed fire at appropriate intervals to maintain their quality. The groundcover in the wet and mesic flatwoods was planted to bahia grass for cattle grazing in some areas. Because of the disjunct nature of the bahia grass, prescribed fire conducted at regular intervals has been an effective restoration tool because it encourages growth and dominance of native ground cover plants.

Natural Resource Management

Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	20	
Fire Management		
Mowing/Chopping	50	100
Restoration		

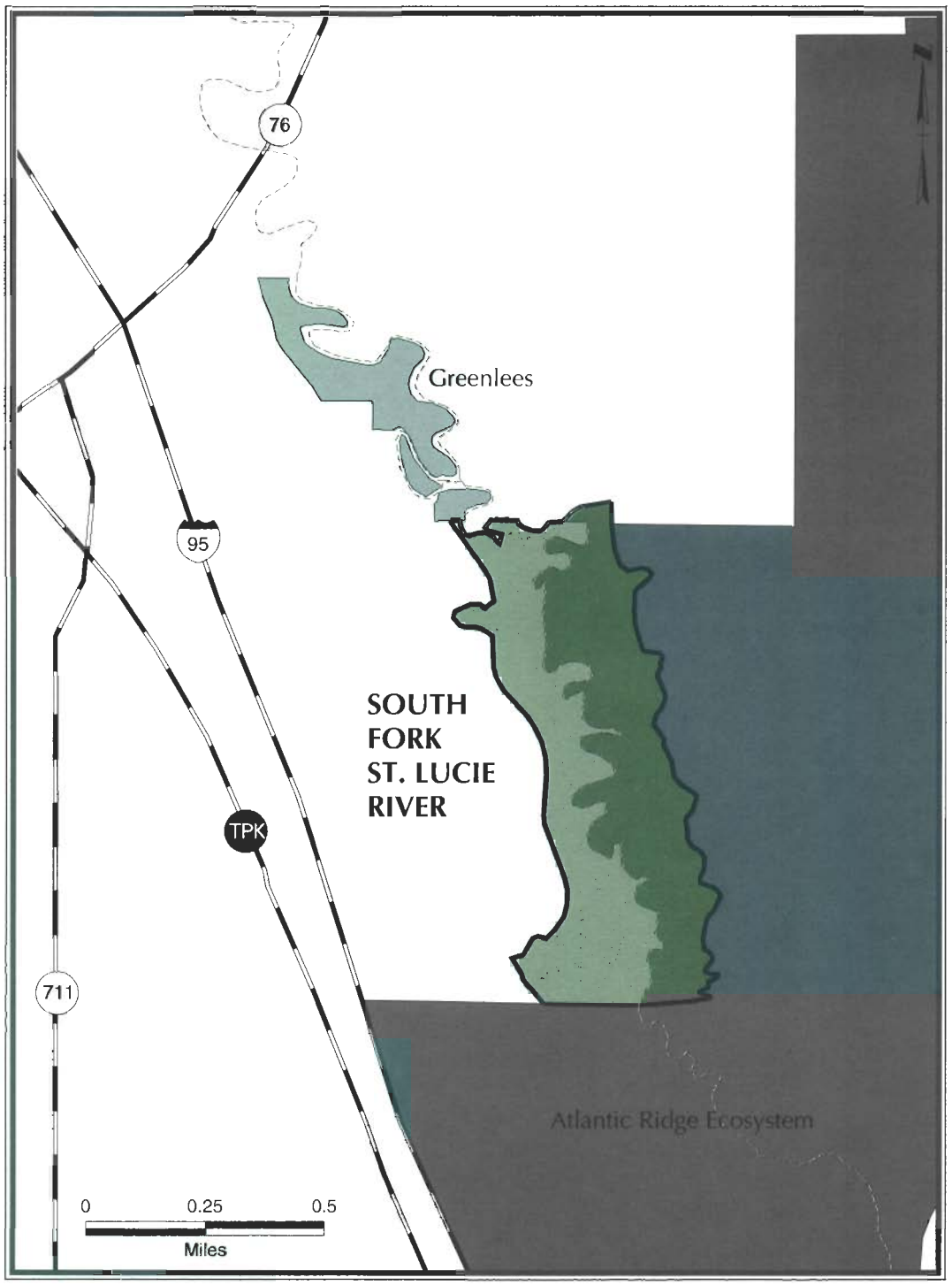
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		
Waste Removal		
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
Private	•	

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting		•
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling		•
Camping	•	
Airboating		•
Environmental Education	•	

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning		
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		
Public Input		
Public Information Meetings		
Cooperative Management Agreement(s)		
FTA		



County:
Martin

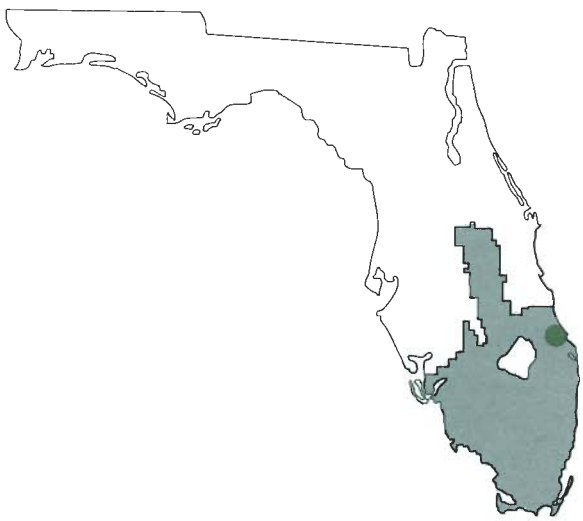
Total Project Area:
184 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
100

Land Cost:
$2,000,000

Per Acre Cost:
$20,000

Acres Remaining:
84



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Southern Glades

General Description

The lands in this project lie adjacent to the Canal-111, east of Everglades National Park, west of U.S. Highway 1, and south of S.R. 27. The project will benefit the flow of water into Everglades National Park and Northeast Florida Bay.

Project Boundary Revision

In 1995, the project boundaries were modified to more closely reflect property ownership lines. Boundary modifications included the deletion of 226 acres and the addition of 324 acres, for a net increase in project area of 98 acres. The deletion area is dominated by small tracts, with multiple ownerships.

Project Vision

It is the District's goal to use this property to provide water in sufficient quantity and quality to support interagency plans to restore the ecological functions of Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. Southern Glades functions as a recharge area for the Biscayne Aquifer and is important in maintaining a barrier to salt-water intrusion. In an attempt to improve sheetflow conditions to Everglades National Park, the Army Corps of Engineers recently modified the C-111, C-109 and C-108 canals.

The natural communities within this property are in good condition, except the transitional area adjacent to the agricultural fields. That area is heavily infested with exotic vegetation. The District intends to maintain the quality of these communities by continuing with the prescribed burn, exotic plant control and security programs.

Natural Resource Management

Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	13,000	yearly
Fire Management		
Mowing/Chopping		
Restoration		

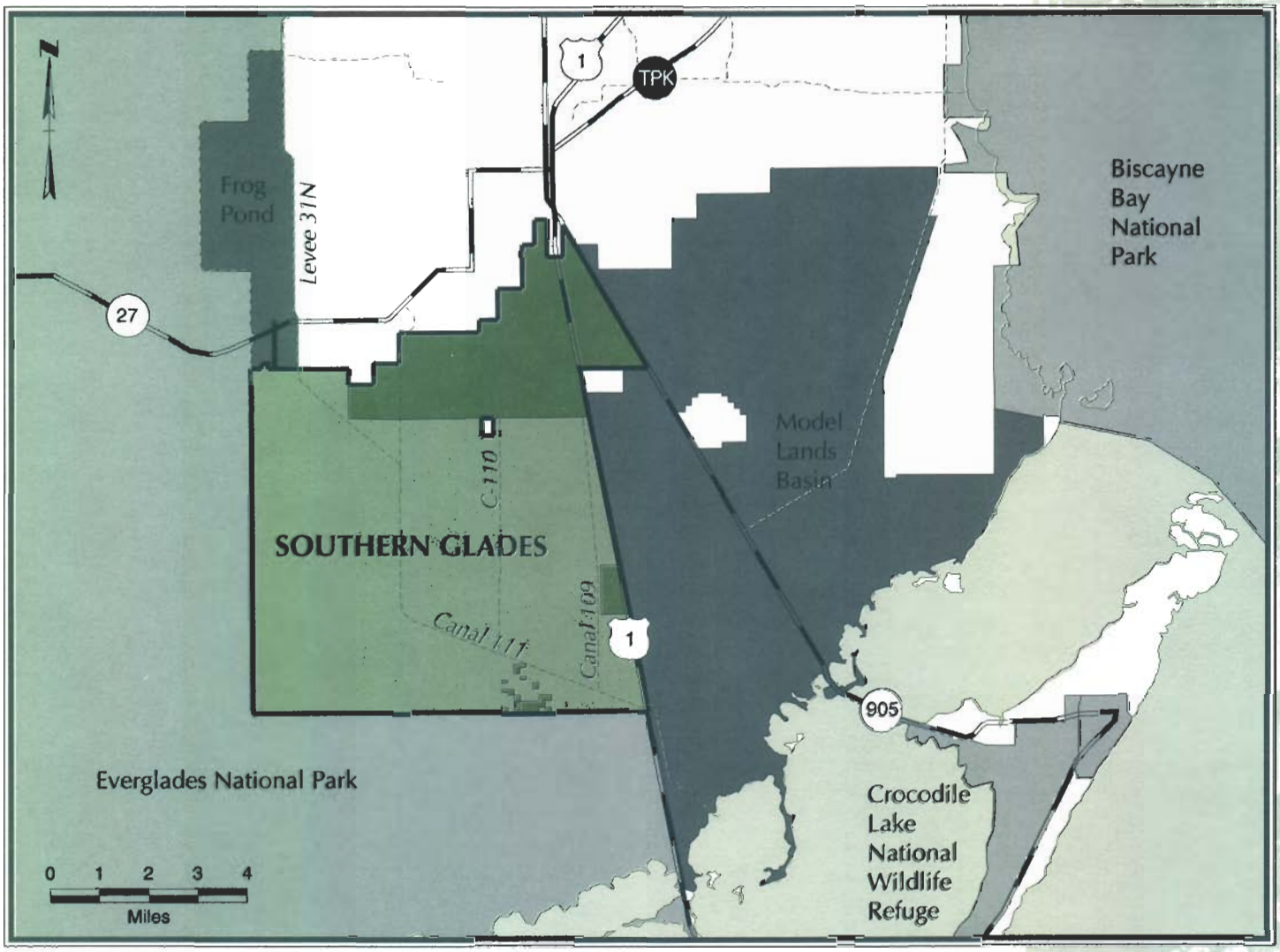
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		
Waste Removal		
Fencing/Posting		
Security		
GFC	•	

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting	•	
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding	•	
Bicycling	•	
Camping		•
Airboating	•	
Environmental Education		•
Greenway System		
South Dade Greenway		

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning	•	
Hydrologic Restoration Plan	•	
Cooperative Management Agreement(s)		
GFC		



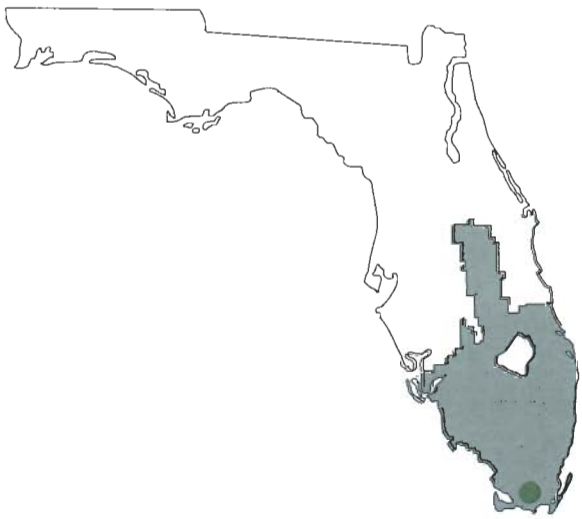
County:
Dade

Total Project Area:
37,600 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
28,157

Land Cost:
$7,104,214

Acres Remaining:
9,359



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Stormwater Treatment Areas

General Description

The Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) are filter marshes that will naturally remove nutrients from the stormwater runoff exiting the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), and prior to the water entering the Everglades Protection Area (EPA). Construction of the STAs has been mandated by the Everglades Protection Act, the settlement of the Everglades lawsuit, and the District's Everglades SWIM Plan, and is the key to the improvement of the water quality in the Everglades.

Five STAs are currently proposed under the Everglades cleanup plan, with each serving the area tributary to the primary agricultural drainage canals of the EAA, which are the West Palm Beach (STA-1), Hillsboro (STA-2), North New River (STA-3 and 4) and Miami Canals (STA-5). The STAs locations were selected to maximize the District's ability to use the existing network of canals and water control structures to most efficiently intercept the nutrient-laden stormwater flows. The exact size and location of STAs are continuing to be refined, according to the needs of the restoration plan. During 1995, the District acquired 3,336 acres within the project area.

Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

The STAs will be designed, operated and managed to filter out harmful nutrients contained in stormwater runoff before this water enters the Water Conservation Areas, including the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and Everglades National Park. The size and location of the STAs will allow significant improvements in the manner in which water flows to natural areas by allowing the reintroduction of sheet flow into tens of thousands of acres of the Everglades.

Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

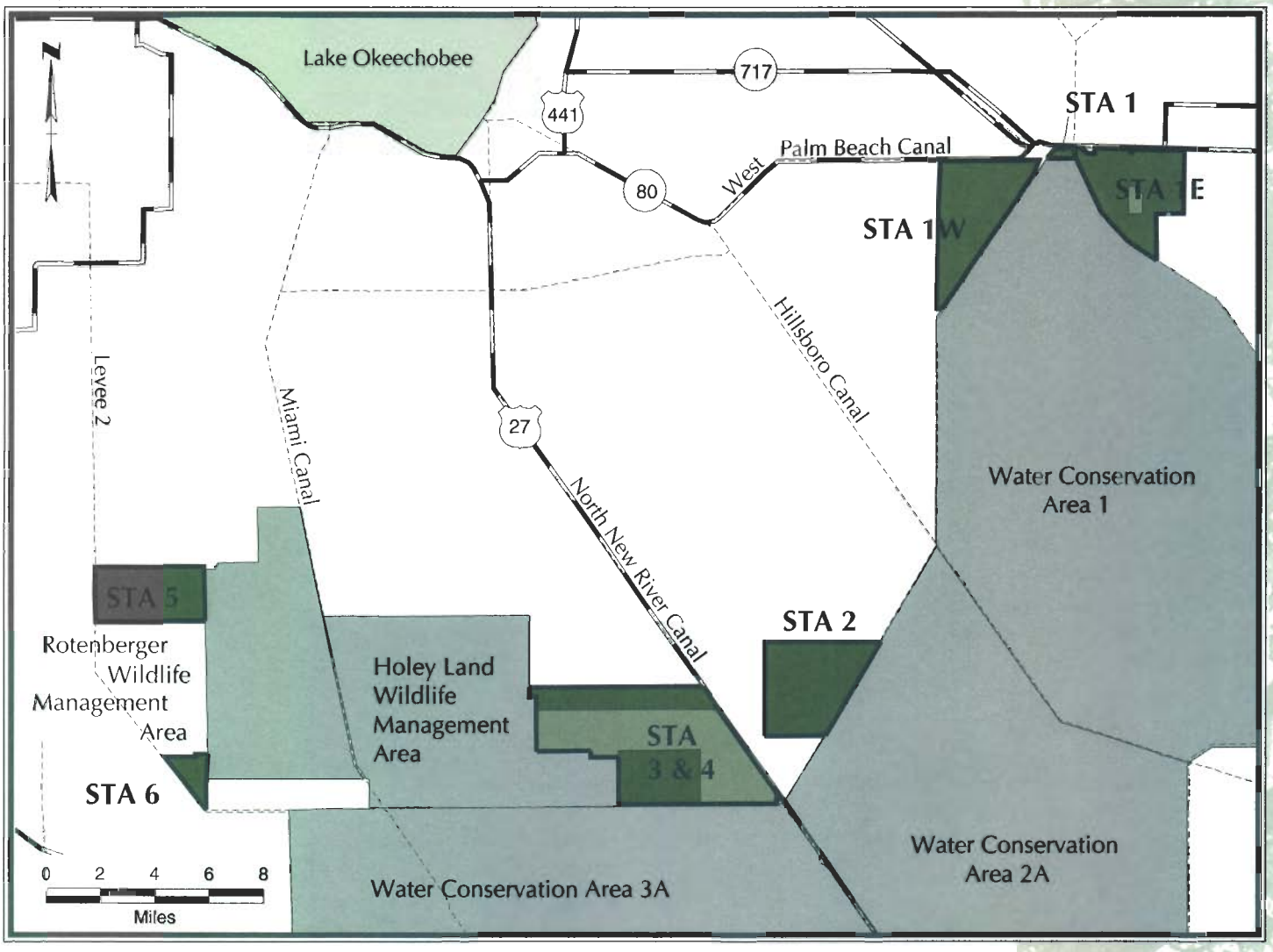
The STAs will be subject to intense management and monitoring in order to maximize their nutrient removal performance. Additionally, the District is considering various options to prevent unauthorized entry and trespassing.

Interim Management

Construction of the treatment cells within the STAs varies. In 1995, the District entered an agreement with Pride of Florida to manage an existing citrus grove in STA-1 East. Under a similar agreement with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission waterfowl hunting will be available in 1995 in STA-3/4. The District is preparing for the construction of STA-1 West, and recovering some acquisition costs, by selling the trees on a large tree farm that presently occupies the property.

Public Recreation

Public use and recreation on the STA lands will be examined in the planning and design process. Parcels will be evaluated for resource value and public use potential. Potential public uses will also be examined for their effect on environmental sensitivity and water management values of the lands.



County:
Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
44,500 acres*

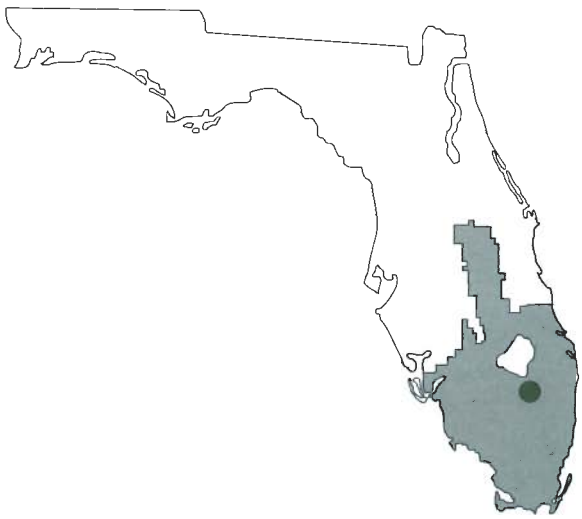
Total Acres Acquired:
3,336.18

Land Cost:
$9,097,000

Acres Remaining:
41,164

Number of Owners:
Numerous

*Acreage is inclusive of the Everglades Nutrient Removal Project



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Strazzulla

General Description

The Strazzulla tract is located east of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent to Levee 40. The western half of the property is sawgrass marsh. Cypress Sloughs, mixed with low pine flatwoods and wet prairies dominate the eastern half.

Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

Much of the eastern one-third of the project is being invaded by Melaleuca. The reason for this appears to be due to the lowering of the water table on the residential property to the east. If efforts to halt the invasion of exotic plants are expected to be successful, hydrologic restoration is essential.

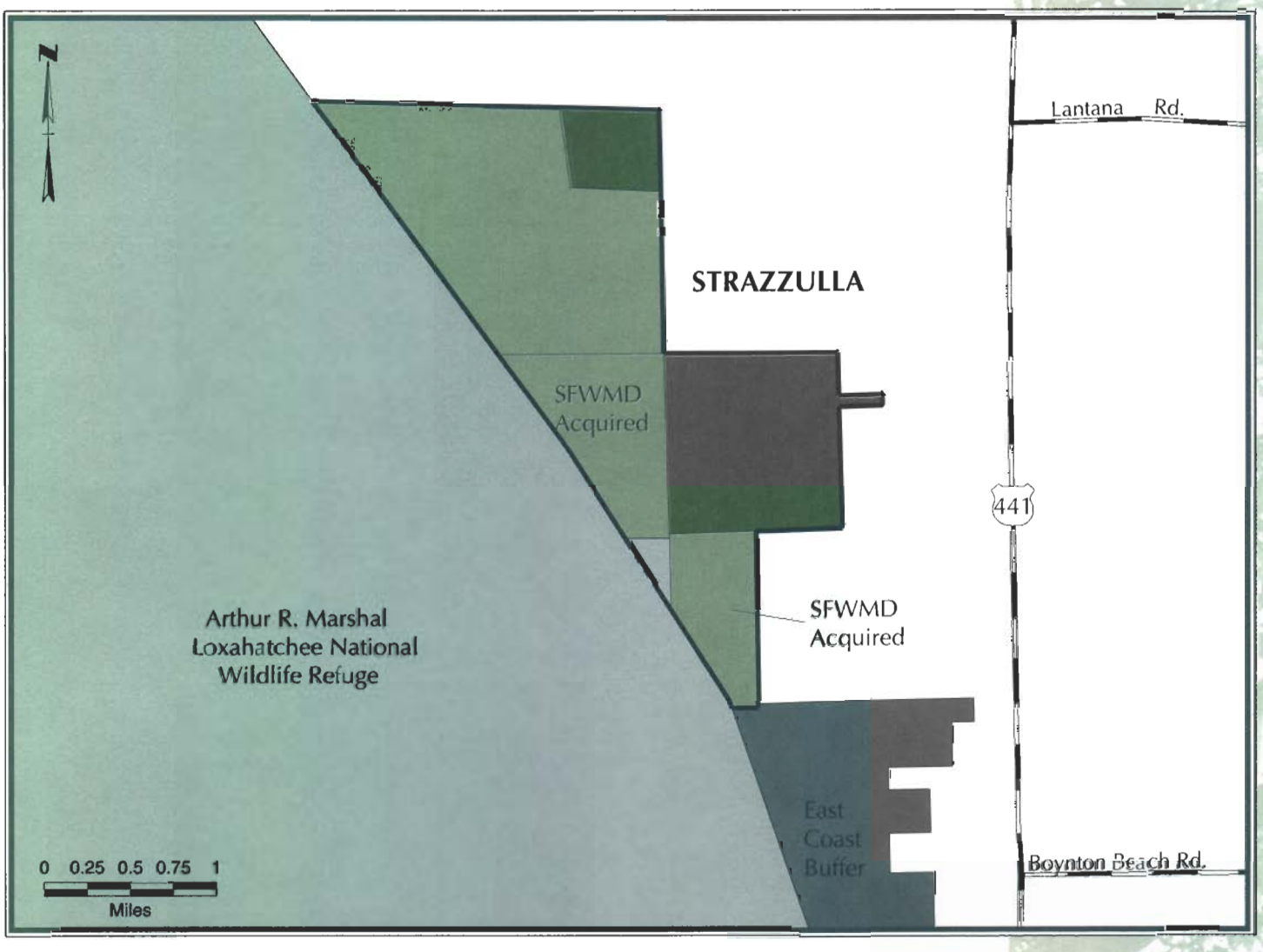
An investigation was made to determine the feasibility of diverting pumped stormwater away from the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and onto the exotic-infested portion of the SOR tract. It was hoped that the plan would provide the SOR property with needed water, while providing an acceptable level of treatment for the stormwater. Unfortunately, a large enough area could not be provided to accept the volume of water necessary to make the project work.

Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

The Strazzulla lands are now under the management of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

Public Recreation

Recreational possibilities would be mostly passive, in nature, and probably limited to hiking and wildlife observation.

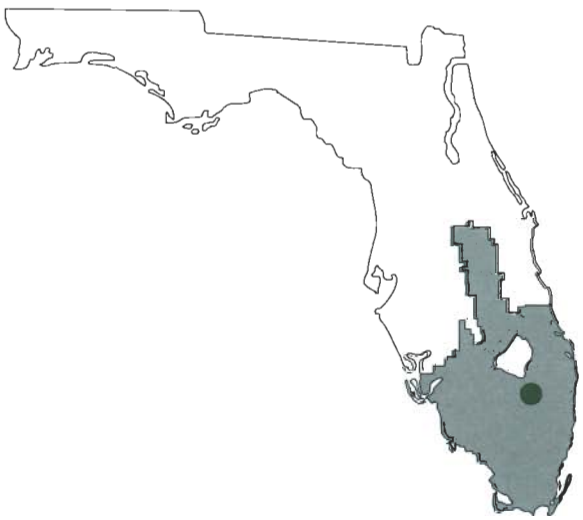


County:
Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
1,865 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,225

Acres Remaining:
640



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1995 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

Tibet Butler Preserve

(Previously Lake Forest Preserve)

General Description

The Preserve covers 439 acres along the southwest shore of Lake Tibet-Butler in Orange County. The vegetative communities include major areas of Bay Swamp, Pine Flatwoods and Wetland Forested Mixed and smaller areas of Xeric Oak, burned trees, Coniferous Plantation, Cypress, Pond Pine, Freshwater Marsh and Emergent Aquatic Vegetation. The Tibet-Butler Preserve site includes approximately 4,000 feet of shoreline on Lake Tibet. The majority of the site is within the 100-year flood plain and is subject to seasonal inundation. State Road 535 (Winter Garden-Vineland Road) traverses the southwest edge of the property.

Project Vision

Orange County staff considers the Tibet-Butler Preserve site to be ideal for passive recreation and public education. The preserve contains diverse natural features and a mosaic of habitats typical to central Florida. The location allows access from major roadways in the Orange County area. The County planned and constructed a nature center and the first one and one-half miles of trails. They used field design adjustments to maximize environmentally sensitive siting. The County plans extensive resource enhancement and preservation programs including: fire management, exotic control, forest management and habitat management for endangered species.

The master plan concentrates the nature center and related uses within the pine flatwood community next to SR 535, in the southwest portion of the site. From the nature center, trail systems will extend outward reaching into wetland and bog communities, xeric communities and marsh and lake communities. In some areas boardwalks will extend in short runs from the main trail loops to observation blinds. More than nine miles of trails are planned. Other facilities include controlled primitive group camping areas as well as group and individual picnic areas.

Natural Resource Management

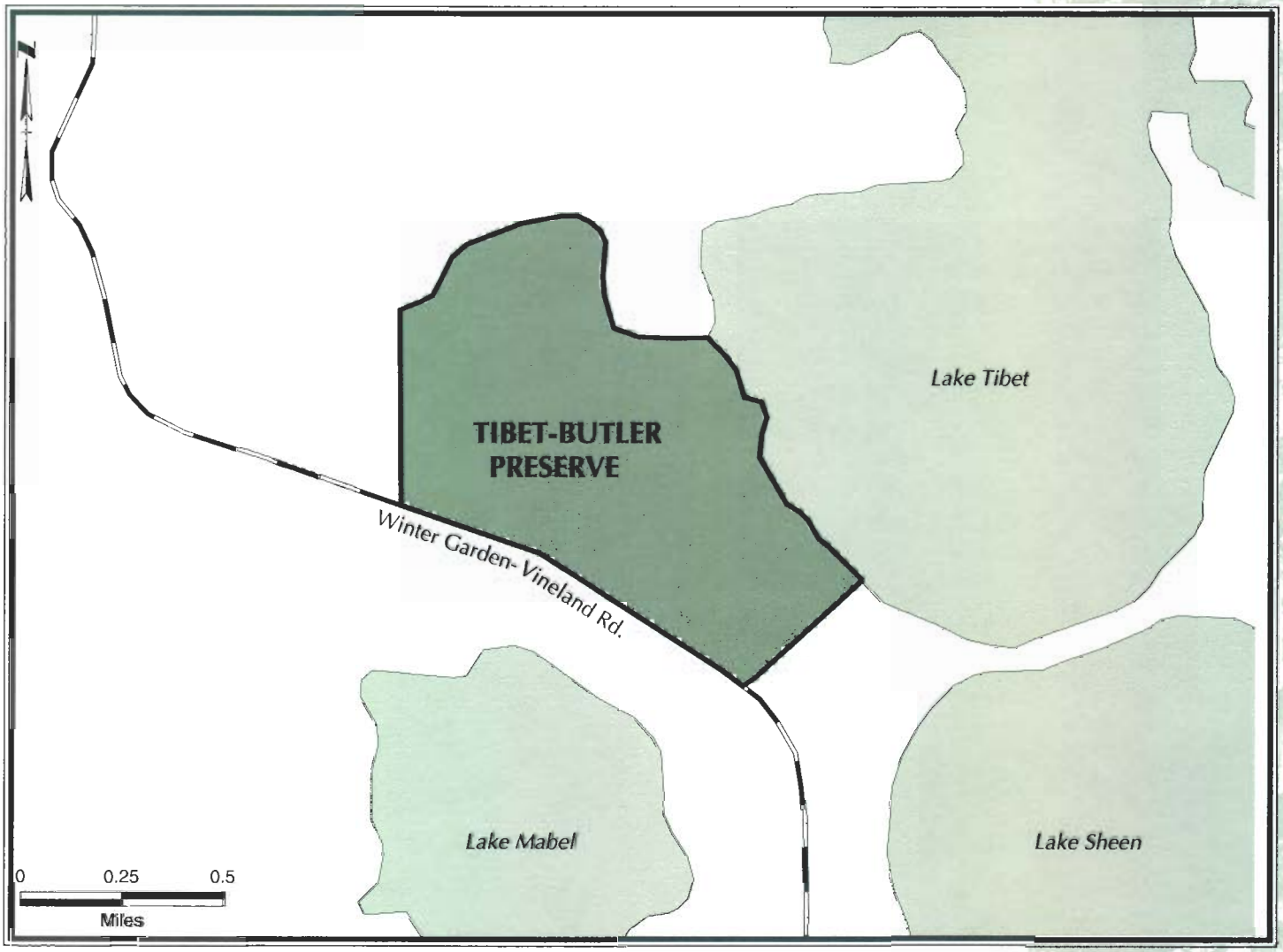
Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control		•
Fire Management		
Mowing/Chopping		
Restoration		•
	Ongoing	**Complete**
General Clean-up		
Waste Removal		
Fencing/Posting		•
Security		
County	•	

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	•	
Hunting		•
Hiking	•	
Horseback Riding		•
Bicycling		•
Camping		•
Airboating		•
Environmental Education	•	

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning		•
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		
Monitoring	•	
Public Input		
Public Information Meetings		
Cooperative Management Agreement(s)		
Orange County		
Volunteer Organizations		

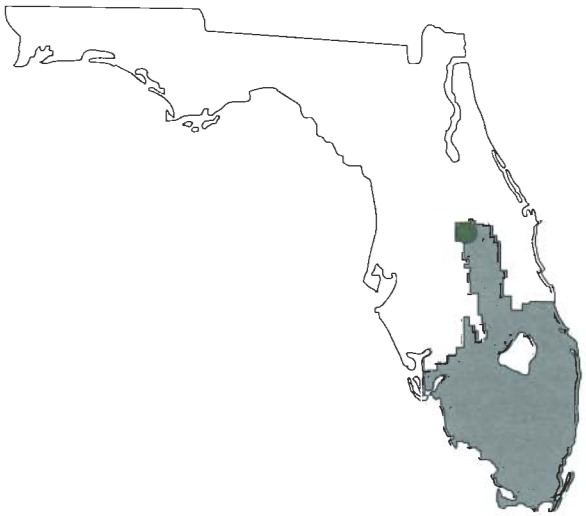


County:
Orange

Total Project Area:
439 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
439

Land Cost:
$3,700,000



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Twelve Mile Slough

General Description

The property known as Twelve Mile Slough is located in Hendry County and is tributary to the much larger and regionally significant Okaloacoochee Slough. It covers 3,300 acres and contains a mosaic of uplands and wetlands, as well as improved pasture areas which appear to be reverting to native range.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

Twelve Mile Slough is a headwater tributary to Okaloacoochee Slough, which supplies a major source of water for Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve and Big Cypress National Preserve. Surface water storage in the numerous wetlands provides for groundwater recharge of the underlying Surficial Aquifer, and provides surface water supply to the Caloosahatchee River.

The site contains a variety of vegetative communities, including several types of freshwater wetlands, pine flatwoods, and oak/cabbage palm hammocks.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

Numerous small ditches and swales, which have resulted in shortened hydroperiods in many of the wetlands, were excavated as part of ranch management practices to increase the amount of grazing area. Although the ditching is extensive, it is easily correctable through earthen ditch plugs.

The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, in its 1993 publication "Florida Panther Habitat Protection Plan," identified this property as having occasional use by panthers, and recommended public acquisition of the tract.

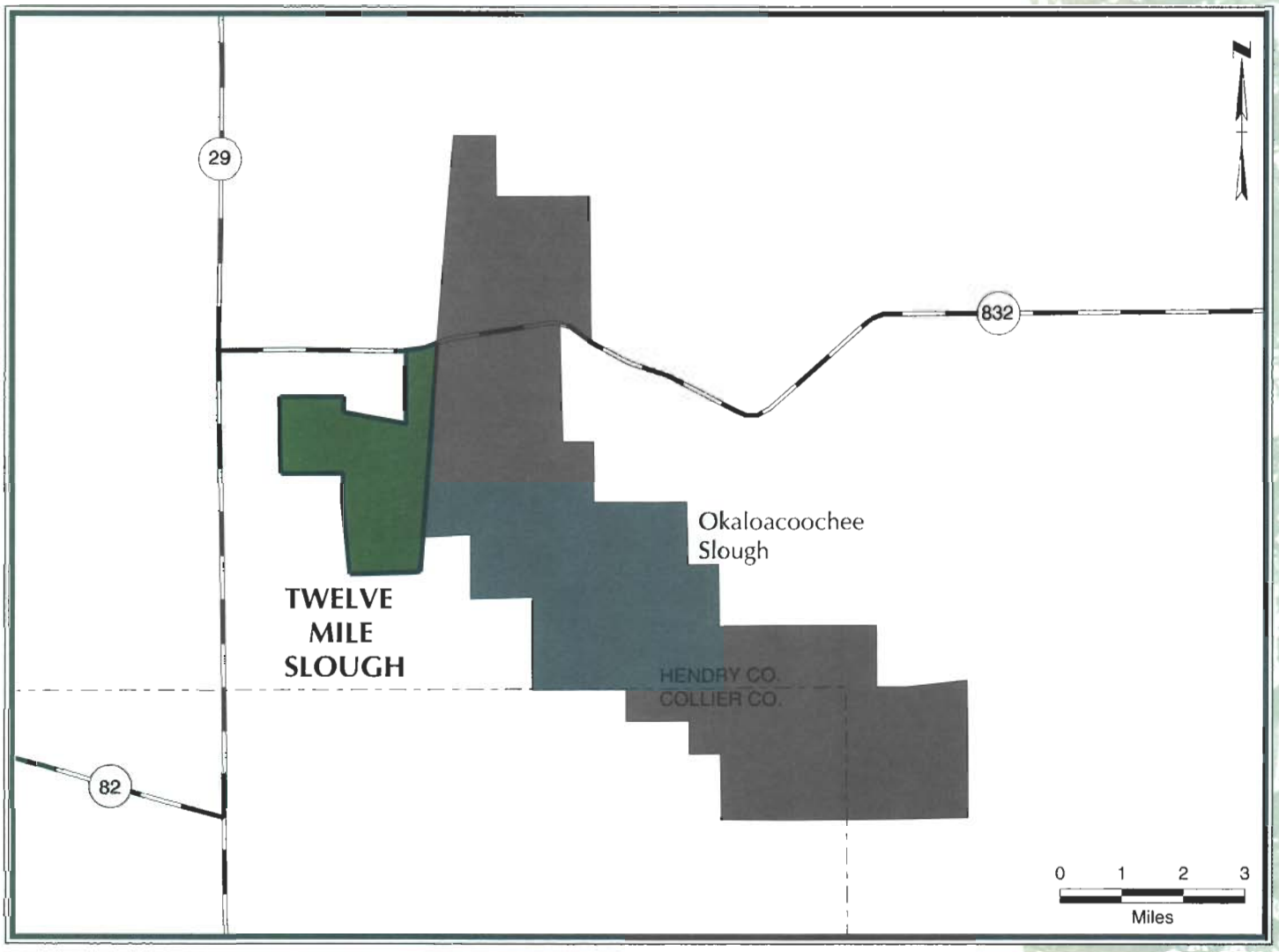
Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

Initial observations indicate that the property is overgrazed and could benefit from an ecological grazing plan. Prescribed burning and exotic control will continue to be management needs. Ditch plugging, to allow hydrologic restoration, will be extensive and time consuming, but a relatively easy undertaking.

This site is remote; however, pasture land conversion to citrus groves is rapidly occurring in the area. There may be an opportunity for this site to be acquired, restored, and managed with mitigation funding.

Recreation Potential

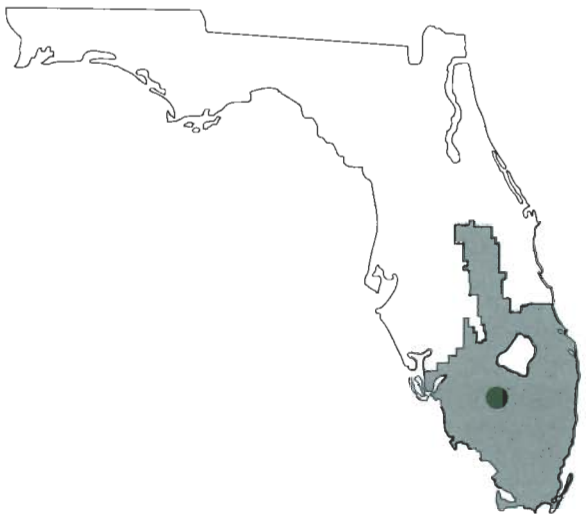
The mixture of habitat types would make this an interesting area for hiking trail development. However, its remoteness would probably make its use limited. An abandoned CSX Railroad grade runs adjacent to the property and lends opportunities for a "Rails to Trails" conversion, which could connect with hiking trails and primitive camping on this site.



County:
Hendry

Total Project Area:
3,300 acres

Number of Owners:
One



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Upper Lakes Basin Watershed

General Description

The Upper lakes Basin Watershed project area includes a substantial portion of the Reedy Creek and Lake Marion Creek drainage basins. This project is the headwaters for the entire Kissimmee/Lake Okeechobee/Everglades ecosystem. The Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee are the headwaters for the Everglades and Florida Bay. Protection of this watershed is a critical link in the restoration of the Kissimmee River, the Everglades, and Florida Bay. Contained within the project are large expanses of scrub. mesic and wet flatwoods, hydric hammock, and floodplain forest.

Reedy Creek Swamp is an extensive area of mixed hardwood/cypress swamp running for nearly 25 miles through western Osceola County, from the boundary of the Reedy Creek Improvement District, to Cypress Lake. It includes the Huckleberry Islands and totals more than 30,000 acres.

Lake Marion Creek is located in Polk County and flows from Lake Marion north and then southeasterly to Lake Hatchineha. The project area totals approximately 17,300 acres, 3,800 acres of which are within the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). It includes the 1,324-acre Horse Creek Scrub, designated for acquisition under the CARL program, and the Snell Creek Drainage Basin.

The District envisions the lands in this project being acquired with assistance from Southwest Florida Water Management District and the State of Florida (CARL). Lands acquired in the Upper Lakes Basin Watershed will connect with other properties being purchased as part of the Kissimmee River restoration. Most of the project is forested swamp and needs no restoration; however, the project also contains parcels of scrub that have been highly disturbed.

Acquisition Activities

In 1995, the District made the first land purchases within the project. Parcels in the Lake Marion and Reedy Creek watersheds were acquired, totaling 10,068 acres. These lands included endangered scrub parcels and floodplain forest next to Lake Marion, Snell, and Horse Creeks. More than 600 acres of the acquired lands are within the Horse Creek Scrub CARL project.

Importance of Water Management, Water Supply, and Conservation and Protection of Water Resources

Reedy Creek serves as the headwaters for Lake Russell and Cypress Lake. Peak discharges from major storm events are modified and stored within the swamp and provide year-round base flow for downstream lakes.

Wetlands comprise approximately 50% of the Lake Marion Creek portion of the project, and most are within the 100-year flood plain. The area is of critical importance to the recharge of the Floridan Aquifer because the deep sands of the Lake Wales Ridge allow water to infiltrate, rather than run off. Lake Marion serves as the headwaters for Lake Marion Creek, which combines with Snell and Horse Creeks to provide a constant supply of high quality water to Lake Hatchineha, which in turn discharges to Lake Kissimmee, the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee. All three lakes are priority water bodies under the SWIM Program.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

Reedy Creek Swamp has been fairly well protected due to its large size and inaccessibility. Unless high density urban encroachments or damaging silvicultural operations are permitted in the future, the swamp should be able to buffer itself. Exotic vegetation is not a problem at this time, and it does not appear that hydrologic restoration will be necessary.

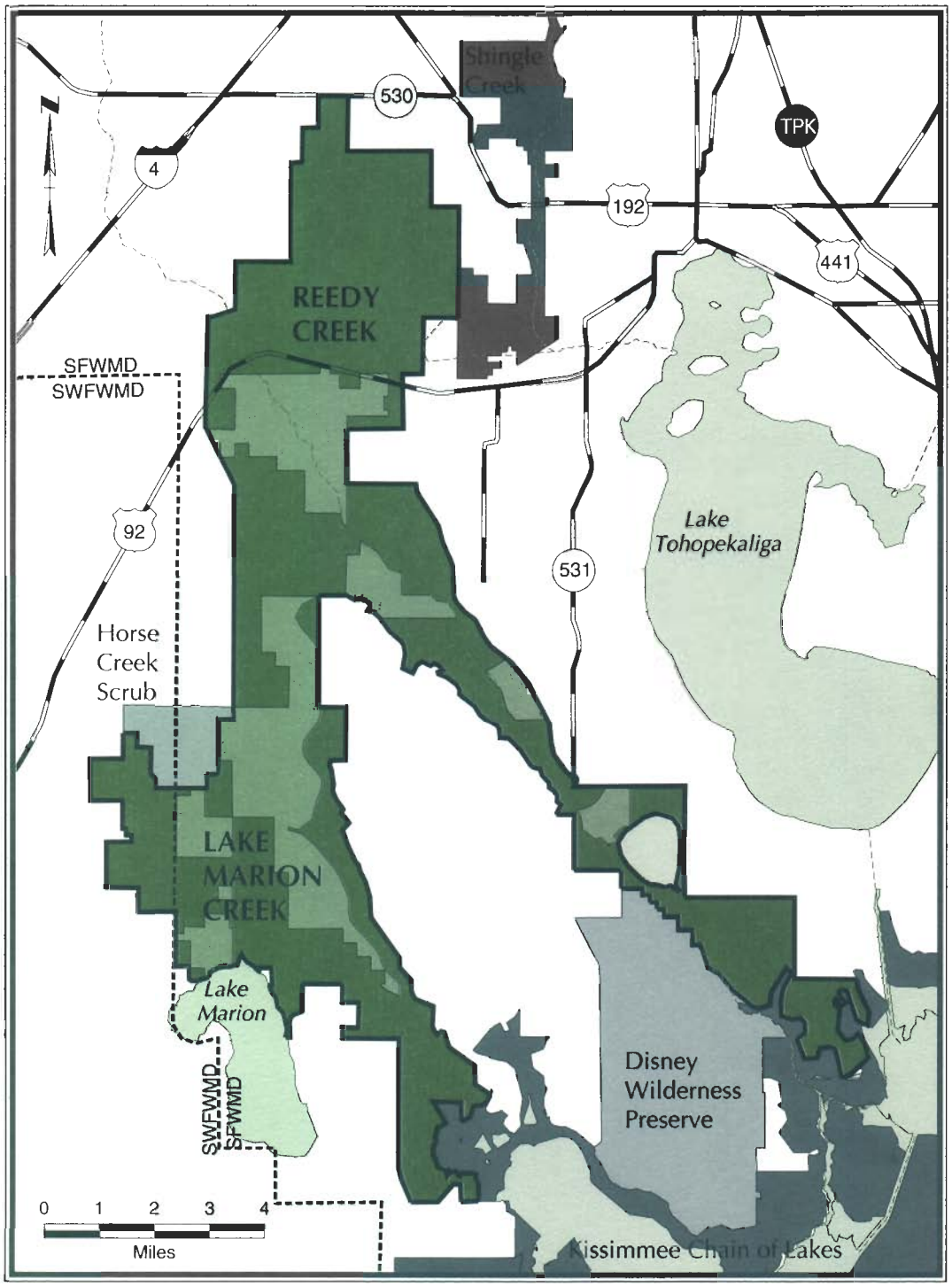
The natural habitats within the Lake Marion Creek area are generally in good condition although some scrub areas have been destroyed through land development activities. The size of the property and the deep swamps allows the interior portions to remain buffered from activities along the ridge.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

A conceptual management plan for the Lake Marion/Reedy Creek portions of the project was prepared prior to acquisition. A detailed environmental assessment, including plant community maps, locations of listed species, and wildlife information, will be completed by October 1996. Information generated from the study will guide the development of detailed operational management plans.

Recreation Potential

At this time, it is anticipated that recreation will be centered around passive uses, such as hiking and canoeing. Opportunities for both uses on newly acquired lands will be explored during 1996.



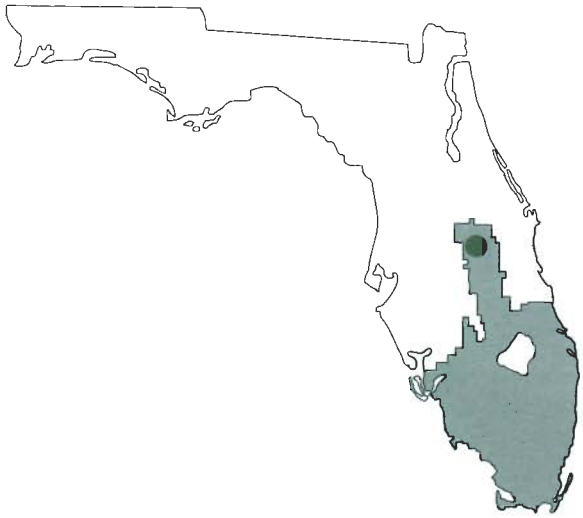
Counties:
Osceola and Polk

Total Project Area:
43,500 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
10,049 acres

Acres Remaining:
33,431 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Water Conservation Areas

General Description

The three Water Conservation Areas (WCA's) are part of the original Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project to provide water supply and flood control to South Florida. The SOR project is designed to complete the public acquisition of outstanding land interests in order to protect this area's role in long-term water resource management. This acquisition was mandated in the original legislation for the Save Our Rivers Program.

Land Stewardship Activities

Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

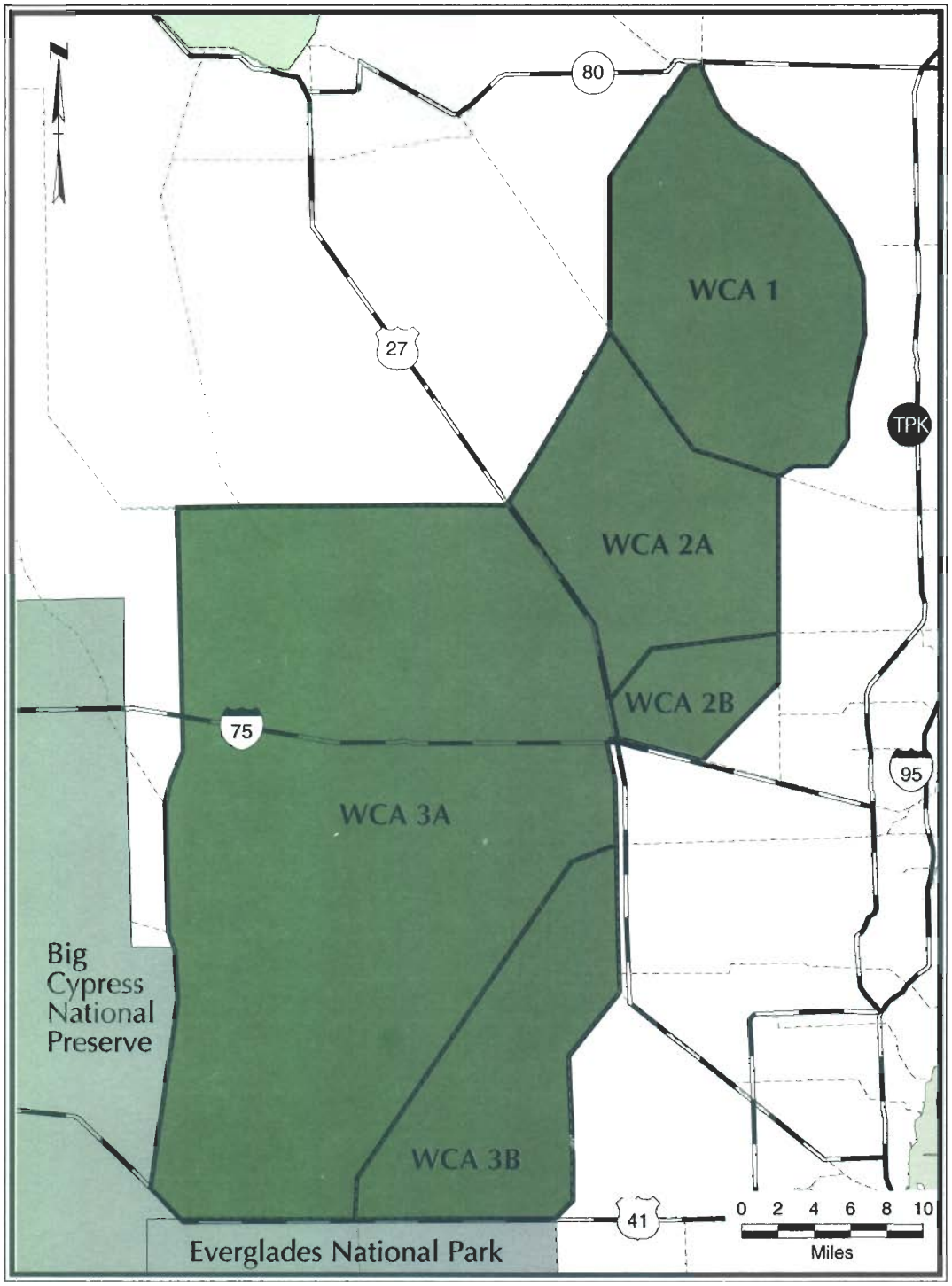
The District and the US Army Corps of Engineers have been regulating water levels in the three Water Conservation Areas, in accordance with criteria initially established in the 1950s and modified at various times over the years to meet changing conditions. The general purpose of the schedules is to provide for the storage of floodwater from developed areas adjacent to the WCAs for later use during the dry season. In establishing the schedules, consideration was given to the needs of wildlife indigenous to the WCAs and the requirements of emergent vegetation. Releases from the WCAs during the dry season and, particularly during drought conditions, are considered vital to the maintenance of adequate water levels in the coastal canals and wellfields and the prevention of saltwater intrusion. Flows from WCA 3 are essential to the well-being of Everglades National Park. The amount and manner of delivery of these flows has and continues to be the subject of intense public debate. Much work has been done to devise a system of delivery that most closely approximates historical patterns (See Canal-111 SOR Project discussions).

Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

WCA 1 is managed as the Arthur R. Marshal Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). WCAs 2 and 3 are managed as the Everglades Wildlife Management Area by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) under separate cooperative and license agreements with the District. Both agencies have developed management plans and actively manage the fish and wildlife resources and public use of the areas under their charge. The District has been engaged in environmental research in the WCA for many years, concentrating on the effects of water quantity and quality on the biota. In recent years, efforts to halt backpumping into Lake Okeechobee have resulted in increased flows from the Everglades Agricultural Area into WCA 3 and this in turn appears to be triggering certain vegetative changes of concern to environmentalists. ENP officials have expressed concern that water quality problems appearing in WCA 3 will be translocated to ENP unless remedial action is taken. All parties are actively working to find acceptable solutions to this problem.

Public Recreation

The Water Conservation Areas are important outdoor recreation areas used heavily by the public for fishing, hunting, boating, frogging, and nature appreciation. Over the years, numerous recreation sites and facilities have been provided to facilitate public access. Site development has generally followed the recommendations set forth in two published recreational plans: *Recreation Plan, the Area South of Lake Okeechobee*, prepared in 1960 for the District by the Florida Development Commission and *Recreational Development of the Everglades Water Conservation Areas: Five Year Plan 1973-1978*, prepared in 1974 by the Everglades Recreational Planning Board.Both the USFWS and the GFC have established rules and regulations governing public use of these areas.



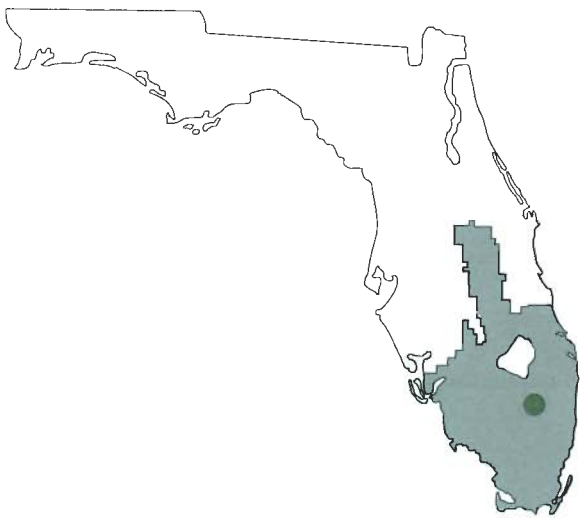
Counties:
Broward, Dade and Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
256,000 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
42,741

Land Cost:
$7,943,552

Acres Remaining:
213,300



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1995 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Appendices

Project Evaluation and Selection

SCOPE

This policy will apply to all projects selected under the Save Our Rivers (SOR) Program.

DEFINITIONS

Acquisition — Acquiring title to land in fee; or in the discretion of the District, such other legal interest necessary for water management, water supply, or the conservation and protection of water resources.

Board — The Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District.

Department — The Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

District — The South Florida Water Management District.

Plan — The Five-Year Plan as approved by the Board.

Secretary — The secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection.

Selection — The process of identifying and evaluating proposed projects for inclusion in the Five-Year Plan.

SOR — The Save Our Rivers Program as provided under Section 373.59, Florida Statutes.

SOR Project — A geographical area possessing unique features necessary for water management, water supply, and the conservation and protection of water resources.

Florida Preservation 2000 — Section 259.101, Florida Statutes, providing for the proceeds of bonds deposited in the Florida Preservation 2000 Trust Fund and for criteria for certain projects financed by such proceeds.

Water Management Lands Trust Fund (WMLTF) — Section 373.59, Florida Statues, providing revenue from the Documentary Tax Stamp to acquire and managed authorized SOR projects.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

1. The Governing Board recognizes a need to provide guidelines for selecting projects to be considered under the Resource Rivers Act (Section 373.59, Florida Statutes), which is also known as the Save Our Rivers Program. These guidelines include procedures for project selection and land acquisition and are intended as an addition and complementary to Rule 40E-7, Florida Administration Code.

2. It is the Governing Board's intention to implement the Save Our Rivers Program in a manner that will provide long-term benefit to the citizens living within the District as well as the water resources of the District.

3. It is the goal of this Program to identify, prioritize, and acquire necessary interests in lands for water management, water supply, conservation and protection of water resources.

4. In compliance with Section 373.59, Florida Statutes, the District will file an annual Five-Year Plan with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Legislature.

5. Funding for the Save Our Rivers Program is derived from revenue and Preservation 2000 Bond proceeds collected from the documentary stamp tax, and it is administered by the Department of Environmental Protection as provided for by Rule 17-402, Florida Administration Code.

6. To most effectively administer the Save Our Rivers Program, the District will closely coordinate with all other public land acquisition programs.

7. Through its regulatory programs, the District shall apply the same regulatory criteria to lands being considered for acquisition/protection under the SOR program, as it does to similar lands not being considered for acquisition/protection.

8. The District's regulatory program shall not be used for the purpose of controlling or valuing of lands to be considered for acquisition/protection under the SOR Program, notwithstanding normal effects of regulations on land values.

9. It is the policy of the Governing Board that inclusion of a property in the Five-Year Plan, pursuant to Section 373.59, F.S., does not reflect a definite intention by the South Florida Water Management District to acquire said property. Inclusion in the Five-Year Plan indicates that the subject property has acquisition potential depending upon further investigation as to its water resources, environmental and management features, and negotiation of a mutually acceptable acquisition price.

General Guidelines

1. Selection Committee

A committee shall be established and composed of the following District staff members to make recommendation to the Board for selection of projects for inclusion in the Plan:

a. Director, Department of Planning

b. Director, Department of Regulation

c. Director, Department of Research and Evaluation

d. Director, Department of Operations and Maintenance

e. Director, Department of Construction and Land Management

f. District Counsel

g. Director, Department of Management Services

h. Director, Department of Everglades Restoration Implementation

i. Director, Department of Government & Public Affairs

Each committee member may designate a specific staff member to function as the representative on all committee work.

The Committee Chairman will be elected by the Committee. The Vice Chairman will be the Director of Construction and Land Management.

The committee shall be responsible for receiving and evaluating all suggestions for selection of projects under the Save Our Rivers Program. In addition, the committee shall provide direction to the Save Our Rivers Program for the development of policies. This includes the incorporation and prioritization of the projects currently on the District's Strategic Plan with the Save Our Rivers Five-Year Plan and the administration of Preservation 2000 requirements. All proposals to the Board for selection shall originate from the committee; all suggestions for selection shall be submitted to the committee. The committee shall meet at least twice a year to order for a suggested project to receive approval for consideration on the proposed by the committee, it must be nominated by one committee member and have votes of approval by at least five committee members. Should any members of the committee have a direct or indirect, present or contemplated future interest in a parcel proposed or could personally benefit from the acquisition of the parcel, the member shall not participate in discussion, vote or other action in regard to that parcel. The Board may consider appeals on any project proposed to the committee but not recommended to the Board by the committee.

The public meetings of the Selection Committee shall be widely publicized. Notices of the Land Selection Committee meetings shall be published in the Florida Administrative Weekly. Notices of meetings, including maps of proposed new projects, shall be published in newspaper in general circulation in the vicinity of the proposed project(s). Minutes summarizing all comments made at the meetings shall be prepared and distributed to all committee members.

Project Selection Guidelines

1. Types of Projects

Projects considered necessary for water management, water supply, and the conservation and protection of water resources and thus eligible for selection include, but are not limited to:

a. River and stream flood plains

b. River and stream flood ways

c. River and stream flood hazard areas

d. River and stream littoral areas

e. Springs

f. Lakes including littoral zones

g. Aquifer recharge area

h. Wetlands

i. Well fields

j. Unique water features

k. Appropriate buffer zones qualifying for a-j

l. Lands needed to retain or store water

m. Remainders of land ownerships included in a-l

2. Legislatively Mandated Projects

In 1981, when Florida Resources Rivers Act was passed, the Florida Legislature specified that three projects within the South Florida Water Management District be considered for purchase with the monies from the Water Management Lands Trust Fund.

a. Water Conservation Areas

b. Nicodemus Slough

c. Savannas

3. SOR Project Proposal

The SOR Projected Proposal Form shall be completed and submitted to the District for consideration of any proposed project.

4. Evaluation Matrix

The project Evaluation Matrix is used to screen and categorize prospective additions to the Five-Year Plan. Based on the Project

Ranking Criteria and Guidelines for Site Priority Ranking, each project will be scored on a 1-5 scale for each parameter. In addition, weighing factors, or multipliers, have been added to certain high priority parameters. The first phase, or Category I parameters, deal strictly with water resource related issues.

a. Category I

Parameter	Weighing Factor
1. Water Management	5
2. Water Supply	5
3. Conservation and Protection of Water Resources	5

Each project will be screened by the parameters in Category I first. After the initial screening is complete, seven additional factors in Category II will be evaluated. Those include:

b. Category II

Parameter	Weighing Factor
4. Manageability	2
5. Habitat Diversity	2
6. Species Diversity	1
7. Connectedness	2
8. Rarity	2
9. Vulnerability	1
10. Nature Oriented Human Use	1

It is intended that project scoring be conducted by a team of reviewers, each of whom is familiar with all the projects. In this manner, any personal biases will carry through all the projects, rather than only reflect in one or two.

5. SOR Selection Criteria for Water Resource Projects

a. Application

These criteria apply to projects designed primarily to supply off-site water resource benefits. Thus, evaluation is performed not on the lands themselves, as with the resource-based matrix, but consider the use to which the lands would be put in context with a described project. Examples for benefits provided by such lands would be:

1) Distribution systems to simulate sheet flow inputs into wetlands systems.

2) Retention systems operated to simulate the natural hydrograph for delivery of water into natural wetlands, lakes or estuaries.

3) Water quality treatment system utilizing managed or unmanaged wetlands/marsh vegetation process.

4) Groundwater recharge and/or water table control to facilitate recharge to aquifers or retain seepage from water storage facilities.

5) Buffer, access or transitional areas necessary to protect core lands from adverse impacts, provide wildlife corridors, provide for public enjoyment of the core land, or isolate certain management practices such as flooding and prescribed burning.

b. Criteria

Any land acquisition would require prior Governing Board approval of the subject Plan.

1) Proposed project lands are identified in a District Plan such as WUMP or SWIM, and

2) Subject lands would be utilized to provide simulated or naturally functioning water resource quality/quantity benefits, and

3) Lands would be part of the project resulting in net increase of natural resource values, when considering both on-site losses and off-site gains, and

4) Capital improvements, such as canals, levees, weirs, and pumps shall be limited to only those necessary to achieve the proposed water resource benefits, and

5) All appropriate funding sources for acquisition have been identified.

c. Notification of Owners

The District will prepare a release identifying the general boundaries of new or expanded SOR projects, prior to initiating the project review and approval process. This release will be published in a paper of general circulation within the vicinity of the project and will provide information as to location, date, and time of all meeting concerning the review of the project. Concerned owners within the project will be invited to contact the District for more information regarding the SOR program, the project approval process, and the land acquisition process.

As owners are identified in an approved Five-Year Plan project, a notification letter will be mailed to them. The letter will briefly describe the program objectives and provide a focal point for future questions and discussion.

Priority Project Criteria

The objective of the Save Our Rivers program is to acquire necessary interests in lands for water management, water supply, conservation and protection of water resources. The Five-Year Plan shows projects that have been determined to meet the Save Our Rivers objectives. Projects have been submitted from a variety of sources and analyzed through the District Save Our Rivers matrix. However, financial and other constraints may not allow acquisition of all lands included in the Five-Year Plan.

The following criteria were utilized to establish the general acquisition priority for qualified SOR projects.

1. Standing on the District Strategic

Plan SOR land acquisition is an integral element of the District's overall strategic plan for resource management. The priority of SOR land acquisition needs, as established by the Plan, must be directly translated to the SOR acquisition priority.

2. Potential for Resource Loss

Continued development activity in and around identified SOR projects raises concerns about loss of resource values for these projects if they are not protected by outright purchase or conservation easements. The Departments of Planning and Regulation, as well as local governments, are consulted annually as to the trend in development pressures around various SOR projects.

3. Potential for Cooperative Acquisitions

Several SOR projects are potentially qualified for cost sharing with other state and local agencies. Other projects are located in counties with land acquisition programs. Projects that can be acquired and/or managed with cost-sharing programs and remain consistent with SOR objectives receive priority consideration. It is important to establish the intent of the potential partner before granting a priority status.

4. Disposition of Owner(s)

The expressed willingness of the owner(s) of specific critical tracts within an SOR project is a factor in the acquisition priority consideration. Willingness to sell at less than market value may also be a consideration. Conversely, well managed lands owned by private interests reluctant to sell are given a low priority, even if the resource values are high.

Although this priority analysis should apply to SOR projects, it may be necessary to single out certain key tracts within a project as the critical factor for a priority; that is, the status or priority of certain core tracts within a project may determine the priority of the overall project. In these cases, the commitment of funds to the project should be to acquire the core pieces rather than the less critical (lower priority) tracts.

The Priority Acquisition Plan is developed using these criteria. The acquisition resources of the District will be specifically directed to accomplish this plan. However, any qualified SOR project may be considered for acquisition during the life of this plan as conditions and circumstances warrant.

The Five-Year Plan indicates to local governments that certain lands within their jurisdiction meet the criteria for Save Our Rivers project consideration. Budget, or other considerations, may constrain the acquisition of these lands. Accordingly, local governments should use the Five-Year Plan as only one of the many criteria in making land use planning evaluations.

Preparation of the Five-Year Plan

An Acquisition Plan and Status Report shall be prepared by the committee and presented to the Governing Board annually, or more frequently, if considered necessary by the Board or the committee.

1. The Acquisition Plan shall include a written report of the favorable and unfavorable merits of each project selected for acquisition consideration and shall consider and evaluate in writing:

   a. An assessment of the project's water management, water supply and conservation values including ecological values, vulnerability, endangerment, and any other related environmental information.

   b. The public purpose of the project, including the statutory authority.

   c. An assessment of management cost, utilization, ownership, and appraised value estimates.

   d. The determination whether the project conforms with local and state comprehensive plans or any other adopted governmental plans.

   e. The determination whether the project meets one or more of the six criteria for Preservation 2000:

      1) A significant portion of the land in the project is in imminent danger of development.

      2) A significant portion of the land in the project is in imminent danger of subdivision which will result in multiple ownership and may make acquisition of the project more costly or less likely to be accomplished.

      3) The value of a significant portion of the land in the project is likely to appreciate at a rate that makes purchasing the land immediately with bond proceeds more cost-effective than delaying its purchase until acquisition funds which are not bonded are available for the project.

4) A significant portion of the land in the project serves to protect or recharge groundwater and to protect other valuable natural resources or provide space for natural resource-based recreation.

5) The project can be purchased at 80 percent of appraised value or less.

6) A significant portion of the land in the project serves as habitat for endangered or threatened species or serves to protect endangered natural communities.

f. Potential management options.

The Plan shall identify lands needed to protect or recharge groundwater and shall establish a plan for the acquisition as necessary to protect potable water supplies. These lands shall also serve to protect other valuable resources or provide space for natural resource-based recreation. The Five-Year Plan report will include a detailed summary of acquisition activity, modification, or additions to the Acquisition Plan and a description of all land management activity.

2. Board Consideration of the Five-Year Plan

As a minimum, the Board shall review all proposed projects and current projects on an annual basis. The Board shall annually adopt an update on the Five-Year Plans and after adoption, the projects approved shall be incorporated in a report and it will be made available to the public. The Board recognizes that the Five-Year Plan is a list of projects that qualify for the program. Projects included on the Five-Year Plan will not necessarily be acquired.

Save Our Rivers Project Proposal Form

Please return ten copies of this form with ten copies of all referenced attachments to:

Director, Save Our Rivers

South Florida Water Management District

P.O. Box 24680

West Palm Beach, Florida 33416-4680

Please complete every question on this form. If necessary, designate N/A where a question is not applicable. Complete applications will receive more prompt and complete attention.

1. Name and Location

Property Name (commonly known as) _____

_____

County (or counties) _____

Within Municipal Boundaries? Yes ___ No ___

Please attach a location map (8 by 11") specifying the property location and include a north arrow (map drawn to scale if possible); also please provide with any additional property maps or aerial photography which may further clarify the suggested product.

2. Size

Estimated Number of Acres _____

Estimated Number of Parcels _____

Estimated Acreage per parcel _____

3. Access

Does the property front on a public road? Yes ___ No ___

If not, describe type of legal access. _____

_____

_____

4. Ownership Information

Identify the property owner and the contact address and telephone number _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Survey Information

Are surveys and/or legal descriptions available? _____

If so, attach or specify where they may be obtained _____

_____

6. Title Information

Are abstracts available from owner(s)? _____

Do/Does owner(s) have title insurance policies? _____

7. SOR Qualifications

Provide detailed information concerning the qualifications of the property for water management, water supply, or the conservation and protection of water resources. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Natural Characteristics

Provide a description of the natural characteristics of the property, including the predominant plant and animal life; specify types of trees and percentage of coverage, types of animal life, any rare, or endangered or threatened species, identified by federal or state programs or unique geological features, etc. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Also, provide information on reports prepared by any other agencies on the physical characteristics of the property; if possible, attach a copy of the report. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. General History Influences

What are the historical and archaeological values of the property?

Provide a description of general history of the property; include the identification of significant past disturbances, both natural and human; include dates of storm damage, fires, floods, exotic infestations, farming, grazing, mowing, or other site disturbances; also describe any structures, roads, rails, fences, etc.; is land involved in litigation (if yes, specify); is land on other public land acquisition lists (if yes, specify program, and agency). _____

10. Buildings

Describe types and occupancy, if any: _____

11. Future Impacts

Identify the anticipated future impacts which may have a negative effect on this property and whether the impacts in the near future or are long range. _____

12. Planning and Zoning

Indicate local zoning and land use designation (from future land use map) on each parcel. _____

Identify any other adopted stage, regional and local plans that may affect the project; is it compatible with the State Water Use Plan?

13. Local Participation

Will the local government participate in the funding? _____

Provide in-kind services? _____
Assist the management? _____
If yes, to what extent? _____

14. Attachments

Identify and label each attachment (with boundaries notes). Suggested attachments may include: zoning maps, soil maps, ownership maps, aerial photographs, vegetative maps, water resource maps, endangered specifies maps, on-site photographs and U.S.G.S. Quadrangle maps.

Attachment A: _____

Attachment B: _____

Attachment C: _____

Attachment D: _____

Attachment E: _____

It is the policy of the Governing Board that inclusion of a property within the Five-Year Plan pursuant to Section 373.59, F.S. does not reflect a definite intention by the South Florida Water Management District to acquire said property. Inclusion within the Five-Year Plan indicates that the subject property has acquisition potential, depending upon further investigation as to its environmental and management features and the negotiation of a mutually acceptable acquisition price.

15. Form Completed by:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: ( ) _____

Please state affiliation to owner(s): _____

South Florida Water Management District

Save Our Rivers Five Year Plan

Save Our Rivers

SOR

Land For Waters' Sake

South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 24680, West Palm Beach, Florida 33416-4680