South Florida Water Management District

Save Our Rivers

1997 Five Year Plan

Save Our Rivers

Land For Waters' Sake

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From the Department Director

The unprecedented successes of this Agency and our partners in acquiring land in 1996 is truly phenomenal. By the close of the calendar year, we had acquired more land in this twelve month period than we did in the previous five years combined! District ownership of lands is quickly approaching 300,000 acres; double the amount we owned just two years ago.

It is important to recognize our external partners for their role. From private landowners and conservation organizations, to local, state and federal governments; they are invaluable players on our land acquisition team.

Another critical element is the dedication, motivation and commitment of our own staff. Successful land acquisition relies on a cadre of professional employees representing a broad spectrum of inter-related disciplines: real estate appraisals and negotiations, survey and mapping, financial and accounting procedures, the Inspector General, legal review, risk management inspections, restoration and water resource evaluations and planning, management and administrative support. They are all vital to the land acquisition process, and they are all to be commended for the tremendous effort demonstrated in 1996.

Ironically, it is this great success which creates concern for the future: 1) acquisition funding projections do not match the cost of the lands proposed for acquisition; 2) more importantly, management of lands acquired by, and for, the public is a serious future need.

The projected costs associated with acquiring all of the "projects" identified in this book exceed one-half billion dollars. Conversely, the projected amount of revenue expected to be available to the South Florida Water Management District through the P-2000 Program is considerably less; around one-hundred million.

It is imperative that we continue to explore and develop new partnership opportunities with landowners, other agencies, and local governments to help us address this tremendous shortfall in funding. Shared and less than fee acquisitions help us leverage our available monies. We must also continue to work toward the availability of acquisition funds.

With regard to management (stewardship), I believe we and our partners around the State are doing a credible job with limited resources. The need is for better coordination of our collective efforts to provide good stewardship. We are all better at some things than others. And, there are things that others do better than we. We all seem to be looking to hand off as much as we can, at minimal cost. But when hired by others to help manage, we all want top dollar. This atmosphere strains relationships, does not produce the best stewardship and is not the most efficient use of resources. Policy issues abound in this dilemma. Our leaders need to come together to address land stewardship needs in a way that protects and enhances the public's resource investment.

— William F. Malone

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 region's 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 programs.

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's key emphasis revolves around the major purposes of the program which 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 projects. 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).

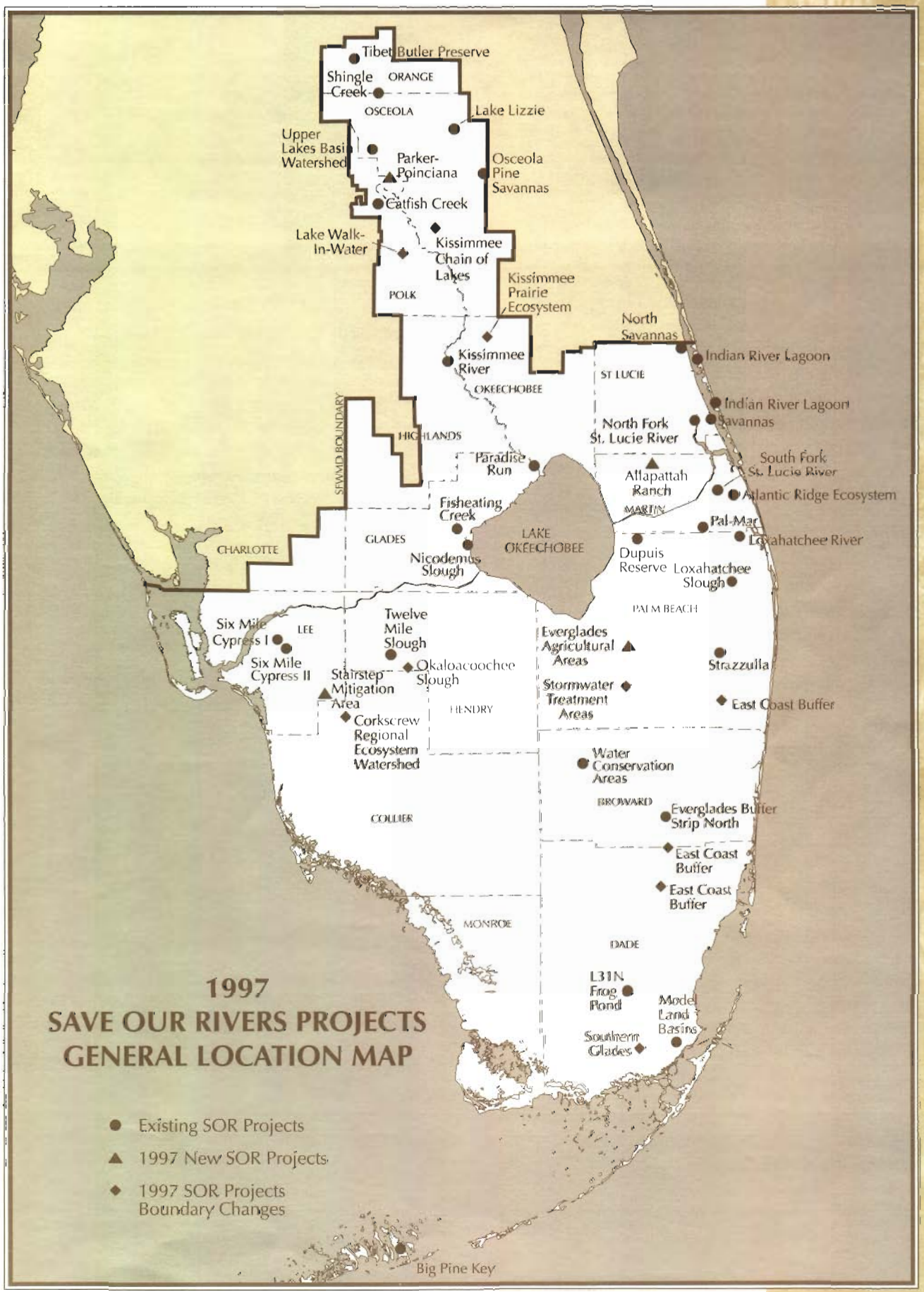
1. Proposed project lands are identified in a District Plan such as Water Use Management Plan (WUMP) or Surface Water Management Plan (SWIM), and
2. Subject lands would be utilized to provide simulated or naturally functioning water resource quality/quantity benefits,
3. Lands would be part of the project 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 District's 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.

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



1997 SAVE OUR RIVERS PROJECTS GENERAL LOCATION MAP

- ● Existing SOR Projects
- ▲ 1997 New SOR Projects
- ◆ 1997 SOR Projects Boundary Changes

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 part of the Stewardship program.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Land Stewardship Program is to plan and implement measures necessary for the proper stewardship of land and associated water areas owned or controlled by the District. These lands generally include those acquired by the Save Our Rivers program and other large holdings not utilized for operational or administrative purposes.

As steward of District lands, the Program is responsible for their protection, enhancement, restoration, and preservation for the beneficial use and enjoyment of existing and future generations. A prime requisite in managing these public lands is to ensure that the water, fish and wildlife populations, native plant communities, and related resources are maintained in an environmentally acceptable manner and made available for appropriate outdoor recreational activities consistent with protection of the water resources.

The Program is primarily directed by the Land Stewardship Division with assistance from several other District departments, service centers and field stations. Considerable assistance in managing the lands is provided by other governmental agencies and volunteers through cooperative agreements. Where appropriate, the private sector is encouraged to undertake certain management activities through leases and concession contracts.

The Program's Mission is composed of six major functions:

1. Strategic, project, and management planning
2. Operation and maintenance of land resources
3. Development of public use programs
4. Development of restoration projects
5. Evaluation of management activities (monitoring)
6. Administration of land management service contracts

In the following pages, progress in each of these six major functions will be outlined.

Stewardship Report

The District's Stewardship program uses an adaptive ecosystem management approach with strong consideration for multiple use and renewable resources concepts. We seek and receive considerable assistance in managing our lands from both the public and private section in funded, voluntary and revenue type partnerships.

The growth of the District's ownership has accelerated with the additional dollars from P-2000 since 1990 (see Figure S-1). During the first ten years of our program, from 1980 to 1990, we acquired land in nine projects, with fifteen management areas, totalling 150,000 acres. In the last six years, 1990 – 1996, we've added six projects, forty-five management areas, and 110,000 acres.

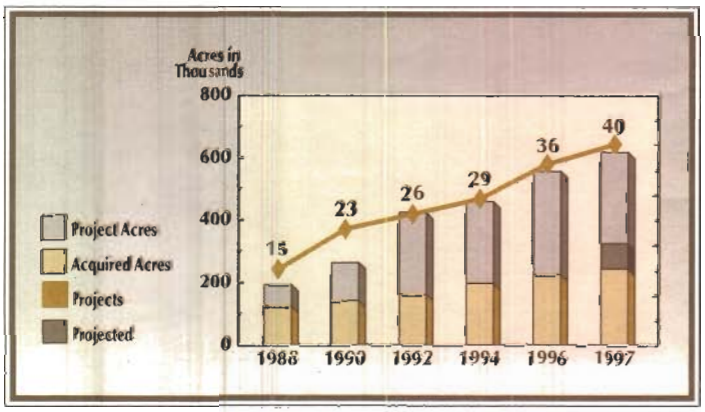


Figure S-1. Save Our Rivers Program Growth

During the most recent years, the trend has continued with over 80,000 acres approved for purchase. By the end of this calendar year, if all approved purchases close, the SOR land ownership will exceed 300,000 acres.

Resources

The land management costs are funded from a variety of sources (see Figure S-2). The principal source is the Water Management Lands Trust Fund (WMLTF). This state documentary tax stamp revenue totals about $12,000,000/year, but the amount available for management is limited by legislation to 25% or $3,000,000. This pays for about 65% of the total management cost.

As a result of our policy to seek management partnerships, the District receives about $1,000,000 worth of in-kind services from State (GFC) and local governments. Most of this is for law enforcement services. This is about 20% of our total effort.

We have also aggressively pursued use of our renewable resources and other revenue generating opportunities, especially the opportunity available from various regulatory programs seeking off-site mitigation. This is a growing part of our management funds. Currently, it represents about $300,000 in annual revenue or 7.5% of our total cost. The final 7.5% of the program costs are met by internal "contracting" and general administrative overhead. This support is funded from the District's ad valorem budget.

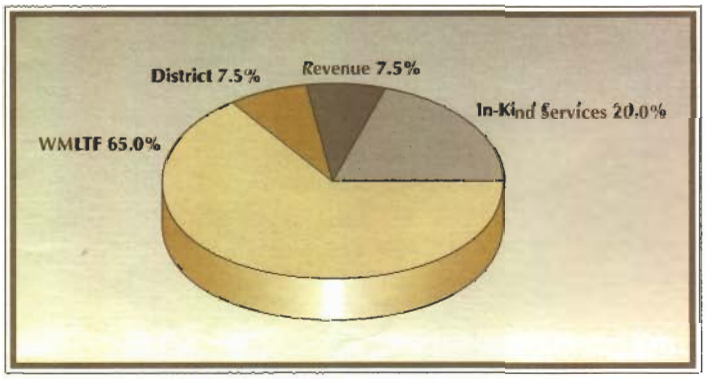


Figure S-2. Management Resources

Stewardship Elements (1–6)

The Stewardship program involves six elements. The activities and the approximate portions of total effort denoted to each are shown in the figure below.

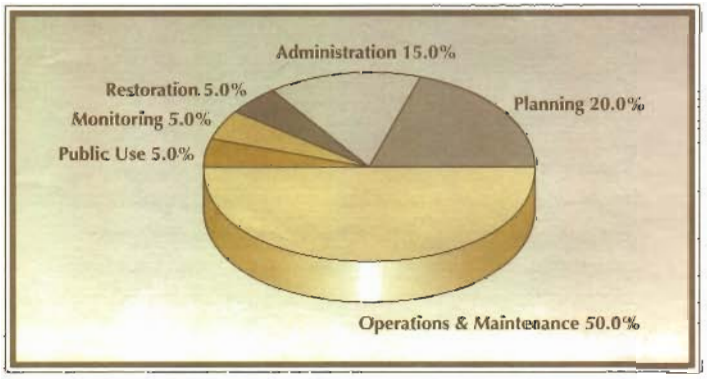


Figure S-3. Stewardship Elements

1. Planning

Strategic — The stewardship planning unit prepares and coordinates the development of the SOR Five-Year Plan, and integrates it with other District planning processes and the land acquisition and management programs of various state, county, and local government agencies. The Land Stewardship Division works closely with Regulation Department in locating suitable off-site mitigation areas.

Project Planning — All potential SOR projects must be evaluated prior to being placed on the Five-Year Plan. The water and other natural resources of the proposed projects are rated by a team of District professionals under the direction of LSD. This process is conducted annually to produce the Five-Year Plan. To date, more than 50 projects have been evaluated and numerous project boundary modifications have been reviewed.

Preliminary Management Strategies and Conceptual Management Plans (CMP) — Preliminary management strategies are developed to guide initial management activities immediately after property is acquired, and before more detailed plans are prepared. The CMP incorporates all relevant information about the project, including resource data, access, past and present land uses, public use potential, restoration and management needs, and goals and objectives to guide management actions. Separate planning documents may be prepared for restoration projects or substantial recreation programs. Restoration projects typically consist of hydrologic restoration, but may also include upland restoration. CMPs, restoration plans, and public use plans may be produced in-house, or as contractual services.

Planning Partners

Internal:	Planning Department, Ecosystem Restoration Department, Regulation Department
State/Federal:	DEP, GFC, other water management districts, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Counties:	Orange, Osceola, Polk, Okeechobee, Highlands, St. Lucie, Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, Lee
Other:	The Nature Conservancy, Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Land Management Advisory Committee

FY96 Planning Highlights

Strategic Planning

- Evaluated new SOR project proposals for 1997; prepared 1996 Five Year Plan
- Continued to support statewide Greenways Commission
- Initiated public interest questionnaire for Five Year Plan and Public Use Guide

Project Planning

- Completed Shingle Creek CMP /Initiated implementation with Orange and Osceola County and the City of Kissimmee
- Formed Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Advisory Committee to develop management policy recommendations
- Dade County completed CMP for South Dade Wetlands (Model Lands)
- Entered into agreement with The Nature Conservancy to manage District-owned mitigation lands adjacent to Disney Wilderness Preserve
- District/Corps began restudy of C&SF system to include East Coast Buffer plan
- Assisted DEP and Planning Department prepare master plan for Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem

FY 97 Objectives

General

- Evaluate new SOR projects for 1998; prepare 1997 Five Year Plan
- Prepare official electronic base maps for all SOR projects
- Respond to Water Management Review Commission recommendations
- Develop revised management plan outline

Regional

- Prepare site plan for Lake Russell environmental education facility
- Assist Palm Beach County with completion of Loxahatchee Slough CMP

2. Operation and Maintenance Of Land Resources

The land maintenance program involves a wide range of activities to protect, maintain, and enhance the natural resources and real property assets of the District. The Program is implemented by a series of professional land managers with unique skills and background located in several service centers and at District headquarters. Major parts of the program include:

- **Security and Resource Protection.**

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. Boundaries are fenced and/or marked with District ownership signs. The protection program must, however, be open to appropriate public use of the lands.

- **Natural Resource Management**

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 integral part of the exotic control program and can be used to prepare areas for hydrologic restoration.

- **General Maintenance of Improvements, Restoration Structures, and Public Use Facilities**

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.

Maintenance Partners

Internal:	Operations and Maintenance Department, Administrative Services
State/Federal:	DEP, GFC, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Counties:	Orange, Palm Beach, Lee
Other:	Lessees, User Groups, Non-profits

FY 96 Highlights

General

- Completed recruitment for land managers at service centers
- Expanded fire program to include second burn team and aerial ignition
- Executed management service contracts for exotic control, fence construction, and vegetation maintenance in cooperation with Operations and Maintenance Department

Project

- Volunteer maintenance projects conducted at DuPuis and Nicodemus Slough
- Completed 6,800 acres of prescribed burning at six different management areas
- Assisted GFC on prescribed burning of KCOL lands around Lake Kissimmee
- Completed 2,000 +/- acres of exotic control on four management areas by District crews and 7,000 acres by contractors.
- Executed limited farming leases on Frog Pond to prevent exotic infestation
- Assumed management responsibility for the 22,000 acre DuPuis Reserve with no staff increase

FY 97 Objectives

Operations and Maintenance

- Complete remaining fencing at DuPuis and post boundary with new signs.
- Prepare road and infrastructure for development of Osceola County School environmental education facility at Lake Russell.
- Completion of a grazing management report.

Security

- Develop program to provide on-site housing for law enforcement personnel on District lands.
- Streamline security contract procedures to increase efficiency and save money.

Fire

- Complete a minimum of 5,000 acres of prescribed burning at DuPuis in conjunction with the exotic plant control program.
- Initiate the prescribed burning program in the Upper Lakes.
- Conduct sensitive ecological burns in the scrub at Hickory Hammock, KICCO, and Lake Russell.
- Development of an Arc/Info GIS prescribed burn database for DuPuis.

Exotics

- Continue the aggressive program to eradicate Melaleuca at DuPuis Reserve using exotic plant control contractor.
- Continue aggressive exotic plant control program in CREW to eliminate Melaleuca and downy rose myrtle.
- Complete Chinese tallow control at Catfish Creek.
- Investigate and initiate, if feasible, a feral pig trapping program for Micco Landing.

3. Public Use Programs

Public access to, and use of, District lands for appropriate outdoor recreational activities is encouraged, consistent with the District's legal interest and the preservation and management of their water and environmental resources. Recreational development focuses on the provision of basic facilities for access, health and safety, and interpretation. Special consideration is given to the provision of outdoor recreational opportunities for persons with disabilities. District staff gives consideration to the provision of facilities and services through concession contracts and/or agreements with private non-profit organizations.

Public use activities are described for each management unit in the District's Public Use Guide.

Hiking and Camping — The Florida Trail Association (FTA) is working closely with the District on the development and maintenance of hiking trails on SOR lands. Primitive campsites are designated at appropriate locations for use by backpackers. The Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST), one of eight officially designated national scenic trails, is 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.

Horseback Riding — The District is consulting with a variety of horseback-riding interests regarding the development and maintenance of equestrian trails. Care is taken to limit the construction of these trails to suitable ecosystem types and to avoid sensitive wetland areas.

Airboating — Airboating and other water-related activities may be allowed on lands within Water Conservation Areas 2 and 3, 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. Fishing is allowed on all District lands, as appropriated under state law.

Educational programs are developed on selected project lands by the District and/or other managing agencies to increase awareness of, and appreciation for the natural resources of these areas and the vital role of water and land management in maintaining their viability and productivity. SOR properties are available for responsible research and educational activities.

Public Use Partners

Internal:	Planning Department, Ecosystem Restoration Department, Field Stations
State/Federal:	DEP, GFC
Counties:	Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Lee
Other:	Florida Trail Association, DuPuis Horsemen Association, Florida Sportmen's Conservation Association, Polk County Airboat Club, DuPuis Users Committee, CREW Trust

FY 96 Public Use Highlights

General
- Improved process for public input to update of Public Use Guide
- Expanded contacts with user groups
- Replaced retired recreational planner

Planning
- CREW hiking trail system completed by CREW Trust
- Formed DuPuis User Group Advisory Committee
- Initiated evaluation of equestrian use at KICCO and Hickory Hammock
- GFC opened two new hunting areas — Terrytown (waterfowl) and Frog Pond (doves)

FY 97 Objectives

General
- Conduct user fee study
- Revise format for Public Use Guide
- Develop Memoranda of Understanding with volunteer groups and establish bicycle and canoe trails on appropriate properties

Regional
- Extend South Fork hiking trail across County-acquired lands
- Begin development of KCOL public use program
- Support FTA trail expansion in Kissimmee Valley
- Continue work on Lake Okeechobee Trail Plan

4. Restoration

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. One common disturbance to SOR lands includes land clearing for improved pasture and drainage improvement. Land Stewardship Division assesses SOR lands for hydrologic and environmental restoration needs, and makes recommendations as to how impacts can be corrected. Restoration projects may be funded, designed, constructed, and maintained by District forces, by developers as mitigation, or a combination of methods.

Habitat enhancement on SOR lands includes 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.

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 SOR program is conducting several small hydrologic restorations but the primary focus is on the nationally significant programs to restore the Kissimmee, Okeechobee, and Everglades Ecosystem. Several SOR acquisition projects are contributing directly to the effort to restore and protect the vital water and natural resources of south Florida.

Restoration Partners

Internal:	Planning Department, Field Stations, Regulation Department
State/Federal:	GFC
Counties:	Lee
Mitigation:	Florida Power & Light, Dept. of Transportation, Palm Beach County, Orlando Beltway Authority

FY 96 Restoration Highlights

General
- Began development of regional DOT mitigation plans for all areas of District
- Completed planning for two District mitigation banks on SOR lands

Project
- Prepared plans for potential DOT mitigation sites in East Coast Buffer
- Prepared cost estimate for exotic plant removal in East Coast Buffer
- DuPuis/L-8 levee construction completed
- Conducted wetland restoration on CREW lands
- Southern Glades, C-109 canal back-filled as DOT mitigation for US 1 widening
- Completed hydrologic evaluation of Nicodemus Slough

FY 97 Objectives

Regional
- Revise and permit Johnson Island mitigation plan
- Complete mitigation plans for DOT mitigation projects
- Prepare hydrologic restoration plan for Loxahatchee Slough (Sandhill Crane site)

5. Evaluation Of Management Activities (Monitoring)

A major objective of the Save Our Rivers program is to restore and maintain the natural state and condition of the SOR land resources. The Land Stewardship Division has an established monitoring program which evaluates the division's management and restoration activities, including hydrologic restoration, prescribed burning, and exotic vegetation control efforts.

The Division utilizes an established monitoring protocol for

conducting vegetative and photographic monitoring. Photographs and written summaries are complied into an annual report. Vegetative sampling data is stored on GIS databases for future analysis.

Evaluation Partners

Internal:	Ecosystem Restoration Department, Regulation Department
State/Federal:	DEP, GFC
Counties:	Palm Beach
Others:	Private contractors, The Nature Conservancy

FY 96 — Evaluation of Management Activities Highlights

General

- Entered into resource inventory contract to provide species lists and community maps for critical SOR projects
- Initiated more intensive evaluation program
- Continued GIS data base development

Project

- Resource inventories begun on Upper Lakes Basin Watershed and KCOL
- University of Florida research project on control of pasture grasses completed
- Management evaluation monitoring continues at 36 sites

FY 97 Objectives

- Complete fence and gate installation at the Micco Landing cattle exclosures and initiate data collection for the cattle grazing study.
- Continue to monitor response to fire and exotic plant control on District lands.
- Initiate community mapping at Pal-Mar.

6. Administration Of Land Management Service Contracts

Contractual agreements for management services and leases on District land are an important part of the Stewardship program. Currently, over 90 contracts, agreements, leases, and reservations are administered by the program. The program prepares contract specifications, negotiates terms and monitors compliance. The number and diversity of these contracts is a substantial task.

The number and types of contracts can be summarized into four groups.

Type	Number
Funded Specific/General Management Services	21
Unfunded General Management Services	16
Revenue Leases and Reservations	40
Recreation Agreements	16

Administrative & Service Partners

Internal:	Management Services, Legal Office, Procurement & Contracts
State/Federal:	DEP, GFC, TNC, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Counties:	Martin, Highlands, Broward, Dade, Palm Beach, Orange, Lee

FY 96 — Administrative & Service Highlights

General

- Expanded contractual management services to include more real property management expertise

Project

- Executed six agricultural leases in Frog Pond
- Executed three game management leases with GFC
- Executed agreement with PRIDE for management services in STA 1E
- Renewed three cattle leases
- Executed separate management agreements with St. Lucie Co., Polk Co., and TNC
- Implemented management agreement with US Fish and Wildlife Service on Big Pine Key
- Received proposals for management of Nicodemus Slough

FY 97 Objectives

- Continue to restore and monitor revenue leases and agreements
- Implement procedures to expand off-site mitigation funds
- Evaluate funding procedures for land management agreements with state agencies
- Execute management agreements for Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem and Okaloacoochee Slough

Performance Measures

The Program has adopted performance measures for FY 97 based on the recommendations of the 1995 Internal Audit. These standards measures the efficiency of the Program in the performance of its assigned tasks. Based on the historical data presented below, the Program has adopted the following performance goals

1. 7,000 acres per stewardship employee
2. $20/acre/year management cost
3. 20% of management cost from non-public funds

In addition to these Program performance measures, each functional area and employee also have criteria to measure progress towards the District's stewardship goals. On the following page, a table illustrating the Program's performance in a number of categories is shown.

FY 96 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

	FY 89/90	FY 90/91	FY 91/92	FY 92/93	FY 93/94	FY 94/95
SOR Acres Purchased (Total)	127,400	147,300	161,000	163,700	180,000	215,800
Cost (Total)	102,119,780	$118,071,000	$134,178,000	$138,700,000	$164,248,800	$209,100,000
Acres Managed (Total)	83,000	97,000	102,000	107,000	128,000	140,502
Management Expenditures Public Dollars	$1,336,000	$1,742,000	$1,472,000	$2,136,000	$2,227,000	$3,928,000*
# Employees in Stewardship Program	13	15	17	17	19	21
Management Cost/Acre	$16.10	$18.00	$14.40	$19.95	$17.50	$27.95**
Acre/Employee	6,400	6,500	6,000	6,300	6,700	6,700

* Includes $1,338,000 of fixed capital cost (primarily, L-8 Levee Restoration)

** Management cost excluding capital outlay = $18.43/acre/year for FY 94/95

Note: The acres managed in this analysis exclude the WCA and several other project areas managed entirely by others. In addition, the management expenditures includes only SOR funds minus lease revenues. The cost per acre rates do not include any estimates of the value of in-kind services. It is estimated that the in-kind services are equivalent to about 20% of the total management cost of all District ownership. Revenue from various leases and off-site mitigation requirements is growing rapidly and now provides about 7.5% of the management funds. Internal "contracting" and general support from other District Departments also represents about 7.5% of the management effort.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Program provides a variety of products to an array of internal and external customers. A summary of our customer list and products include.

Internal

Governing Board
Annual updates of SOR Acquisition Plan
Annual update of Public Use Guide
Land Stewardship Management Policies and Plans

Real Estate Division
Technical review of acquisition strategies and proposals
Management appraisals of acquisition parcels

Regulation Department
Consultation on off-site mitigation proposals

Service Centers
Stewardship program policies and programs

Government and Public Affairs
Pertinent information regarding public use activities and opportunities

External

State Agencies and Local Government
Assistance in developing comprehensive ecosystem management program for land and water resources.
Opportunities for management partnerships

For Profit and Non-Profit Land Management Providers
Fair opportunity to participate in appropriate management activities

General Public
Appropriate public use opportunities
Healthy/Recovering ecosystems contributing to the welfare of the state

Seventh Generation
A self functioning ecosystem contributing to an economy based on the principles of sustainable natural resources.

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 capability 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 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 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.

Acquisition Summary

Acquisition from the beginning of the Save Our Rivers program in 1981 through June 1995 totaled 215,845 acres at land cost of $209,100,352.

Acquisition during the 1996 Plan period (July 1995 - June 1996) added approximately 10,173 acres at land cost of $41,752,077.25. See Table 1 for details of which lands were purchased. These acquisitions bring the Save Our Rivers program total for June 30, 1996, to 228,960 acres (Includes lands purchased by others within SOR project boundaries)

There are an additional 80,028 acres of land which were approved for purchase but are pending closing. Purchase of these lands will expend an additional $83,963,000.00.

Acquisition Activity — Acquisitions July 1, 1995 - June 30, 1996

Project	Acres	Cost	Fund
Southern Glades	10.65	5,400.00	P2000
East Coast Buffer	1,046.36	12,341,981	P2000
	333.33	600,000	Mitigation
Total	1,379.69	12,941,981	
KCOL	41.04	390,069	P2000
	1986.3	1,470,000	Mitigation/WMLTF
Total	2,027.34	1,860,069	
KR	3013.95	5,523,456	P2000
		204,670	WMLTF
Total	3013.95	5,728,126	
L-31 N	773.55	7,350,181	CARL/P2000-50%
Lox	7.00	150,000	District
Six Mile Cypress	20.00	205,000.00	P2000
South Fork	80.89	480,000	P2000
STAs	47.5	1,271,754	WMLTF
	19.10	455,000	District
	194.21	1,260,963	Mitigation
	1,268.95	8,239,037	P2000
Total	1,529.76	11,226,754	
Strazzulla	835.5	1,753,465	P2000
Sub-Total	9,678	41,700,976	
WCA	155.00	16,081.25	District
	340.00	35,020	WMLTF
Total	495.00	51,101.25	
TOTALS	10,173	$41,752,077.25	

Acquisition Plan

The 1997 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 1997 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.

Specific areas within a project must be removed from the five year plan if a landowner specifies in writing that they do not wish their property to be considered for acquisition. The District currently notifies all owners of lands being considered for the acquisition plan. This notification will now include specific language regarding request to remove land from the plan.

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.

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.

New Projects/Boundary Revisions

During 1996, the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board authorized mid-year revisions to the Five Year Plan:

I. Acquisition Plan Report

Changes to the Acquisition Plan — Revisions to the acquisition plan are evaluated by District staff and reviewed by the Land Selection Committee (LSC), which consists of representatives from most of the District's departments. The LSC also suggests the list of priority projects (those most likely to have some acquisition activity). The Governing Board reviews the LSC recommendations and considers comments from interested parties. Board approval is necessary to add a project to the five year plan.

The Land Selection Committee met on January 23, 1996, May 22, 1996 and June 24, 1996 to discuss new projects, proposed

boundary changes, and the 1997 Priority projects list. The following is a brief summary of the projects, the LSC recommendations, and Governing Board actions relative to the SOR Acquisition plan:

A. Changes to 1996 Five Year Plan Mid-Year Revisions

The Governing Board approved the following changes to the 1996 Five Year Plan in March and June:

March

1. **EAA Lands (Talisman)** (48,570 ac) – Palm Beach County

June

2. **CREW** (3,240 ac) – Lee/Collier Counties
   a. 320 ac in Lee Co., adjacent to District-owned lands and Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary
   b. Two 160 acre tracts which front on SR 846.
   c. 2,760 acres in southeast corner of Flint Pen Strand.
   d. 640 ac in southwest corner of Bird Rookery Swamp
3. **Okaloacoochee Slough** (320 ac) – Hendry County
4. **East Coast Buffer** – 8.5 Square Mile Addition (1,065 ac) – Dade County

B. Changes to 1997 Five Year

In 1996, the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board authorized the addition of three new projects to the Five Year Plan, as well as boundary modifications to five existing projects.

New Projects	Acres	County
Parker-Poinciana	1,970	Osceola/Polk
Stairstep	632	Lee
Allapattah Ranch	22,500	Martin

Project Additions (Boundary Modifications)	Acres	County
Kissimmee River – Upper Basin	72	Polk
Lake Walk-In-Water	643	Polk
Southern Glades	100	Dade
Kissimmee Prairie Ecosystem	7,315	Okeechobee
Stormwater Treatment Areas	1,233	Palm Beach

1998 Save Our Rivers Five Year Plan Schedule

March 1997 Deadline for new project applications

May 1997 Land Selection Committee meeting – discussion of new projects/boundary changes

June 1997 Land Selection Committee meeting – discussion of 1998 priority projects and spending plan

August 1997 Governing Board Workshop on new projects/boundary changes

September 1997 Governing Board public hearing to adopt 1998 Five Year Plan

1996 Five Year Plan — SOR Priority Projects

Project	Potential Acquisition Partner
Kissimmee River Restoration	Federal Government
EAA Lands	Everglades Privilege Tax
East Coast Buffer	CARL
Florida Bay (Southern Glades, Model Lands, L-31N)	CARL/Dade County
Upper Lakes Basin Watershed	Mitigation/Polk County
Pal-Mar	CARL/Martin & Palm Beach Counties
CREW	CARL/Lee County
North Fork St. Lucie River	St. Lucie County
Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem	CARL
Indian River Lagoon	CARL, St. Lucie Co., Federal Govt.
Stairstep	Mitigation
Parker-Poinciana	The Nature Conservancy
Loxahatchee Slough	Palm Beach County

The 1996 Legislative changes to the program enacted a guideline that projects requiring full fee acquisition must be identified in the Five Year Plan.Other projects shown in the plan are either completed or would be acceptable by acquiring less than fee.

Project	Approved Acres	Acquisition Requirement
EAA Lands (Talisman)	48,570	Fee title required
East Coast Buffer	67,465	Fee title required
Frog Pond/L-31N	10,600	Fee title required
Kissimmee River (Lower Basin)	75,433	Fee title required
Kissimmee River (Upper Basin)	6,072	Fee title required
Parker-Poinciana	1,970	Fee title required
Stairstep	632	Fee title required
Stormwater Treatment Areas	45,733	Fee title required
Water Conservation Areas	256,000	Fee title required

Projects

3,240
55,968
59,208

Allapattah Ranch

General Description

The Allapattah Ranch SOR project covers 22,560 acres in western Martin County. This project was been placed on the CARL acquisition list in 1996. The overall landform is very flat from east to west, with ground elevations from north to south varying from 27-30' NGVD. The site is dominated by poorly drained flatwoods soils which are saturated for much of the wet season. Historically, this area was a flatwoods matrix, interspersed with depression marshes and wet prairies. With the exception of the four northern sections that drain to Canal-23, the entire site drains slowly to the southeast to the South Fork St. Lucie River. Over the past 30 years the project area has undergone a change in land use from native range grazing to improved pasture, sod farms, and row crops. Most of the understory has been cleared and planted in non-native pasture grasses. The pine flatwoods that remain are open and sparse. Most of the depression marshes remain; however, most of the wet prairies have been drained and the depression marshes have been significantly impacted by drainage. An area of hydric hammock dominates the extreme western boundary. There is good species diversity and many large trees remain. A large canal borders the eastern edge of the hammock, and several smaller canals extend into the hammock, which have significantly lowered the water table and reduced the hydroperiod in this area.

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

Allapattah Ranch plays a key role in the District's effort to reduce flows from C-23 into the St. Lucie Estuary. Regional attenuation facilities, or Water Preserve Areas, have been proposed which would to store stormwater runoff from the agricultural areas of western St. Lucie County, which would reduce damaging peak discharges into the St. Lucie Estuary. If acquired, 8,000 acres of the project adjacent to C-23 would be converted to a reservoir to provide approximately 32,000 acre-feet of storage, which is estimated would reduce wet season stormwater flows into the estuary by 39%. It is estimated that an additional 14% reduction in discharge to the estuary could be achieved by not draining the property. Completely eliminating stormwater discharges is not possible; however, significant reductions could probably be made by blocking existing drainage ditches.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

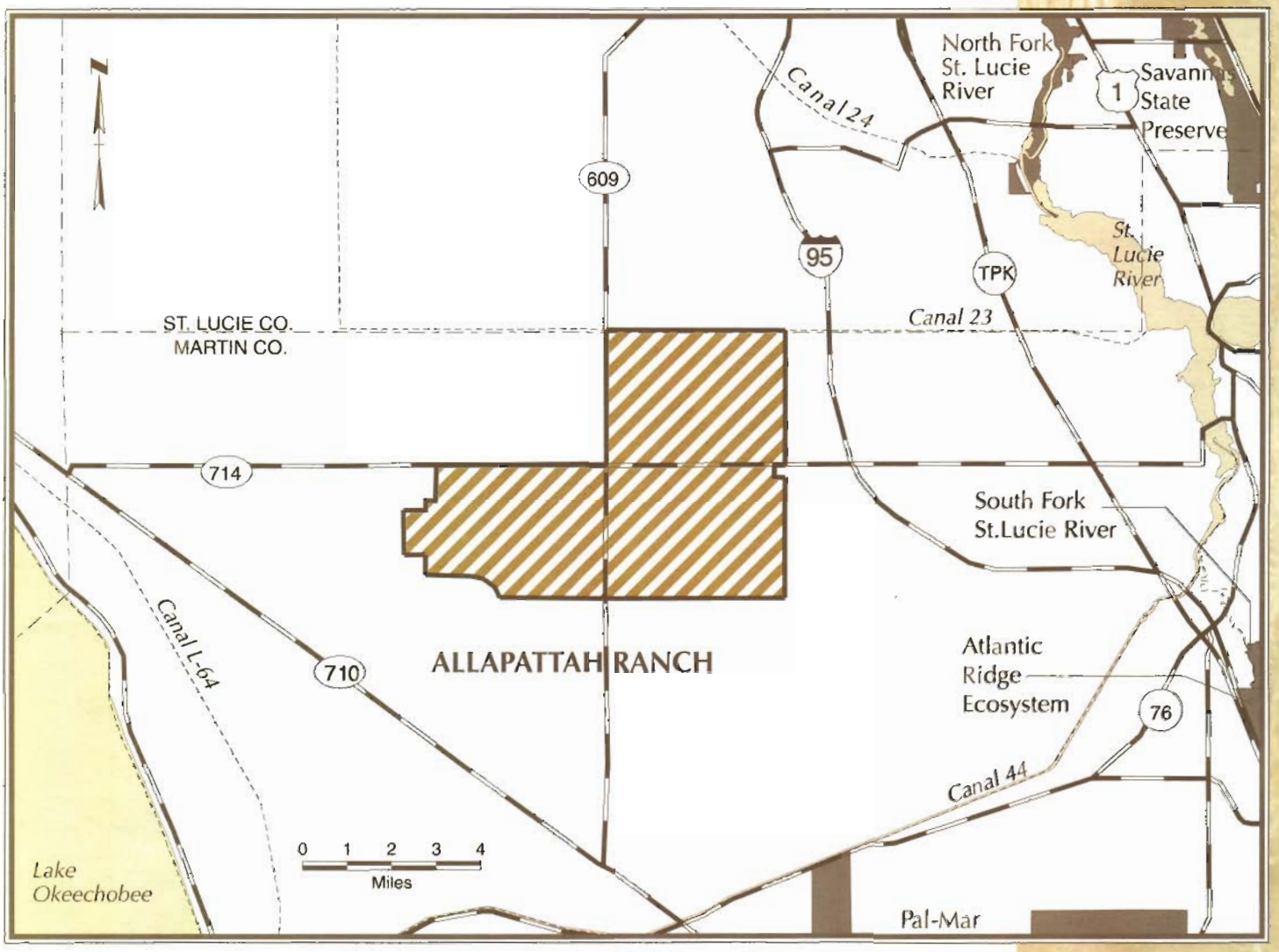
Most of the natural habitats on this tract are highly disturbed. Shallow swales and ditches have reduced the hydroperiod in the wet prairies and depression marshes. Clearing for improved pasture has removed most of the native shrubs and understory. Acquisition would enable most of the wetlands to be restored through the installation of earthen ditch plugs. If water control structures can be installed in the large ditches near the hydric hammock, restoration of that community is possible as well. Upland restoration of the mesic and xeric flatwoods will be much more difficult.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Sensitive Manner

The project area has been operated as a cattle ranch for many years. Most of the native shrub understory has been cleared and planted in bahia grass. The hydroperiod of most of the wetlands has been severely shortened. Heavy grazing has kept the site from becoming dominated with wax myrtle. Management of the project will be difficult, even with hydrologic restoration. If cattle are removed it is expected that wax myrtle will rapidly spread. The elimination of bahia grass pastures and restoration of the pone flatwoods communities will be time consuming and expensive. Exotic vegetation control will be a major task, although exotics are not presently a problem. Allapattah Ranch has been proposed to mitigate the loss of recreational hunting opportunities that will occur when Browns Farm Wildlife Management Area is converted into STA 2. As such, it is proposed that Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission be the lead manager for the non-reservoir areas. The District would retain responsibility for all hydrologic restoration.

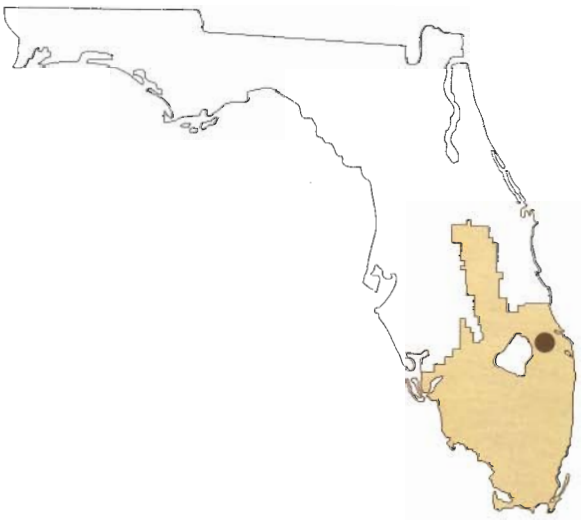
Recreation Potential

This tract is large enough to accommodate a variety of recreational uses, including hunting, hiking, camping, and horseback riding.



Counties:
Martin

Total Project Area:
22,500 acres



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

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

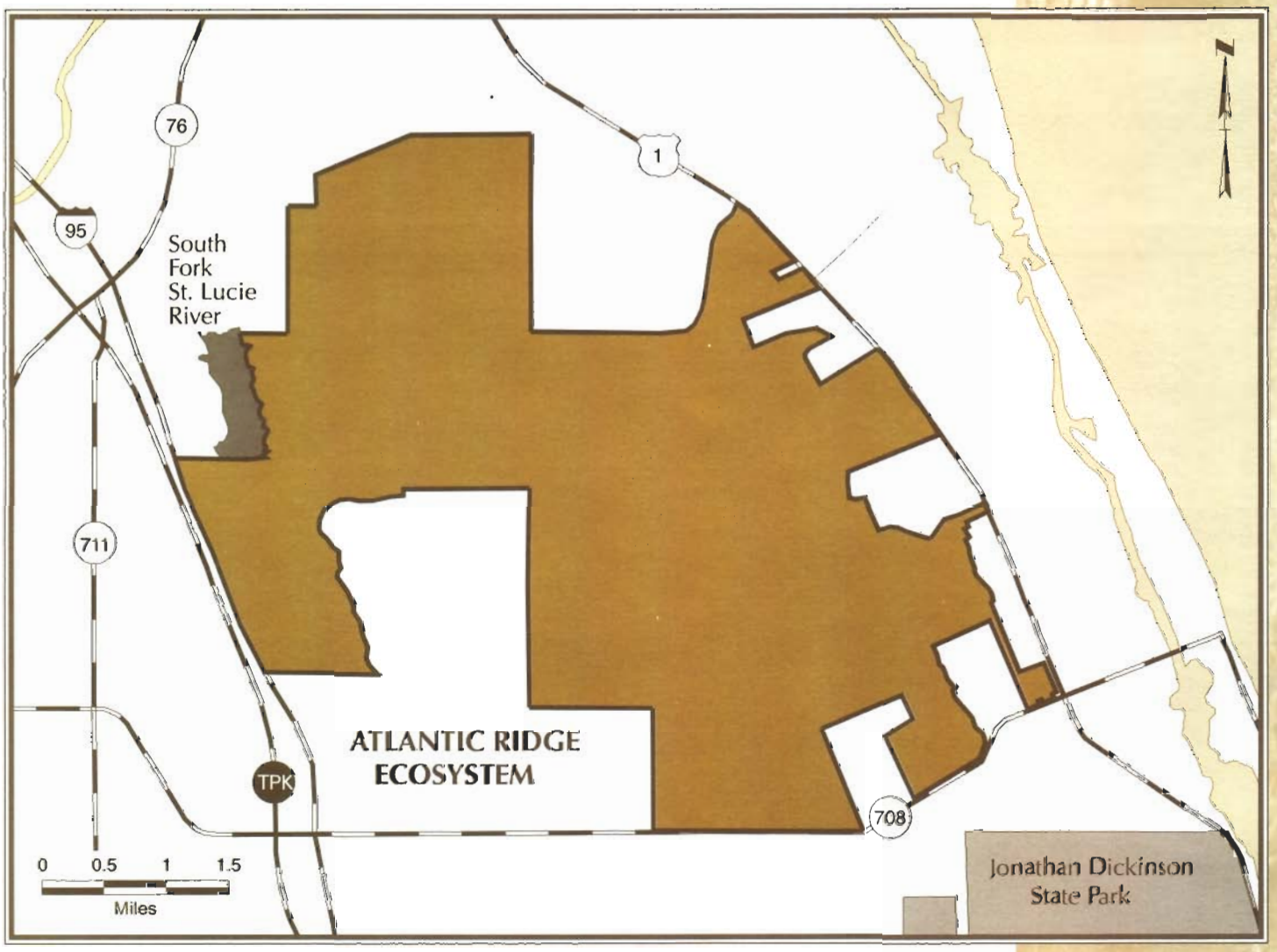
There are numerous abandoned farm fields in the north end which need to be restored. A ditch system connects wetlands in the northwest portion of the project, and drains to the South Fork. However, sheetpile weirs were installed in these ditches as the result of District enforcement action in the mid-1980's.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

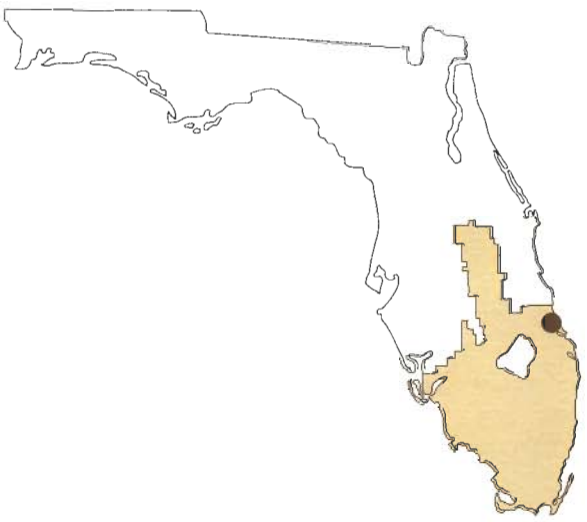
This site is large and very accessible to major population centers in south Florida. Public access points could be established along three sides of the project. The variety of community types would make interesting hiking and the area could be opened to fishing. Hunting might be possible under agreement 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
1996 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.

Natural Resource Management

Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	80	50
Fire Management	0	10
Mowing/Chopping	0	51
Restoration	5	

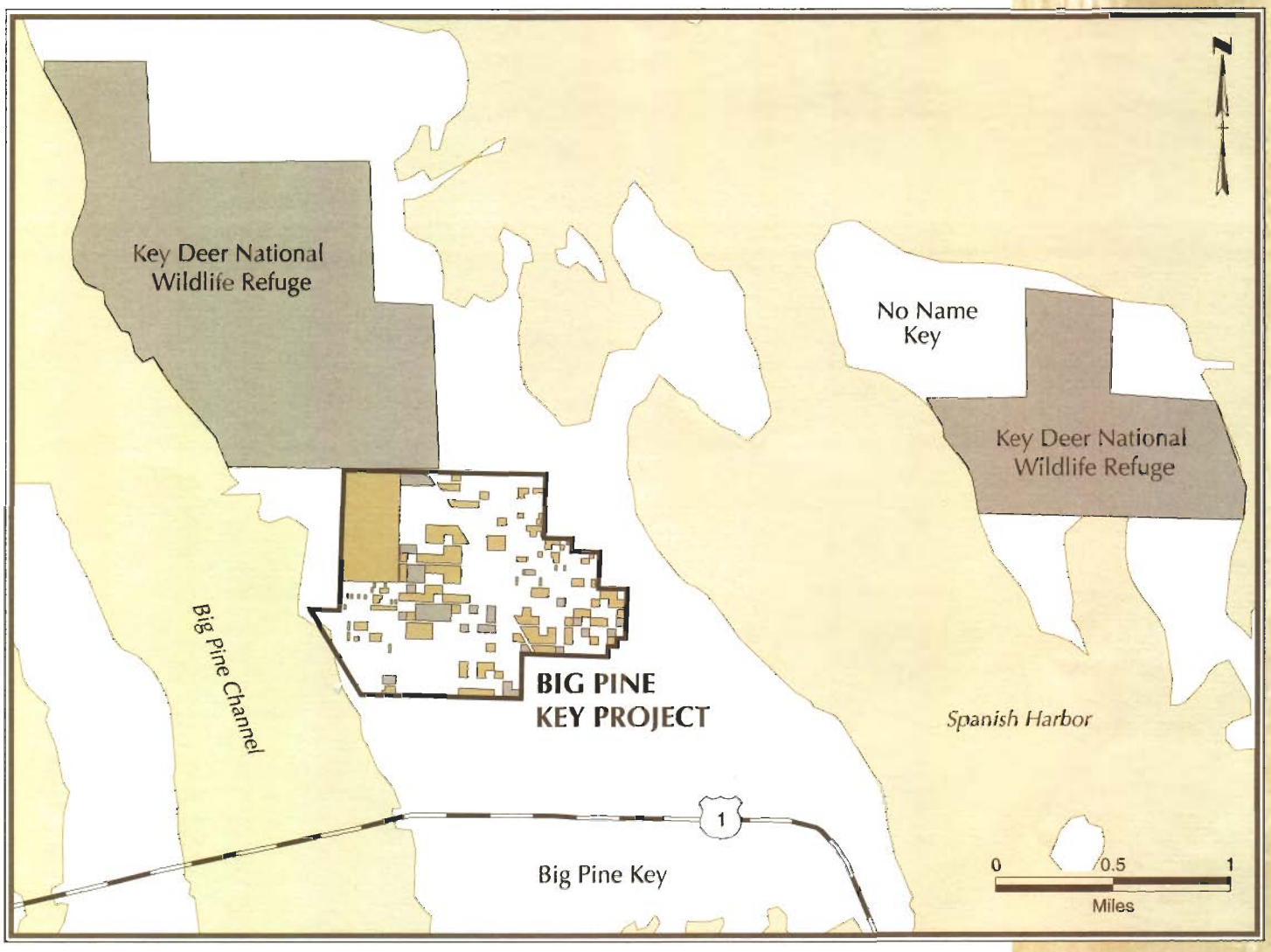
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting		•
Security USFW		

Public Use

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

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning	•	
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		



County:
Monroe

Total Acres Acquired:
189

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

Acres Remaining:
0

SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 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

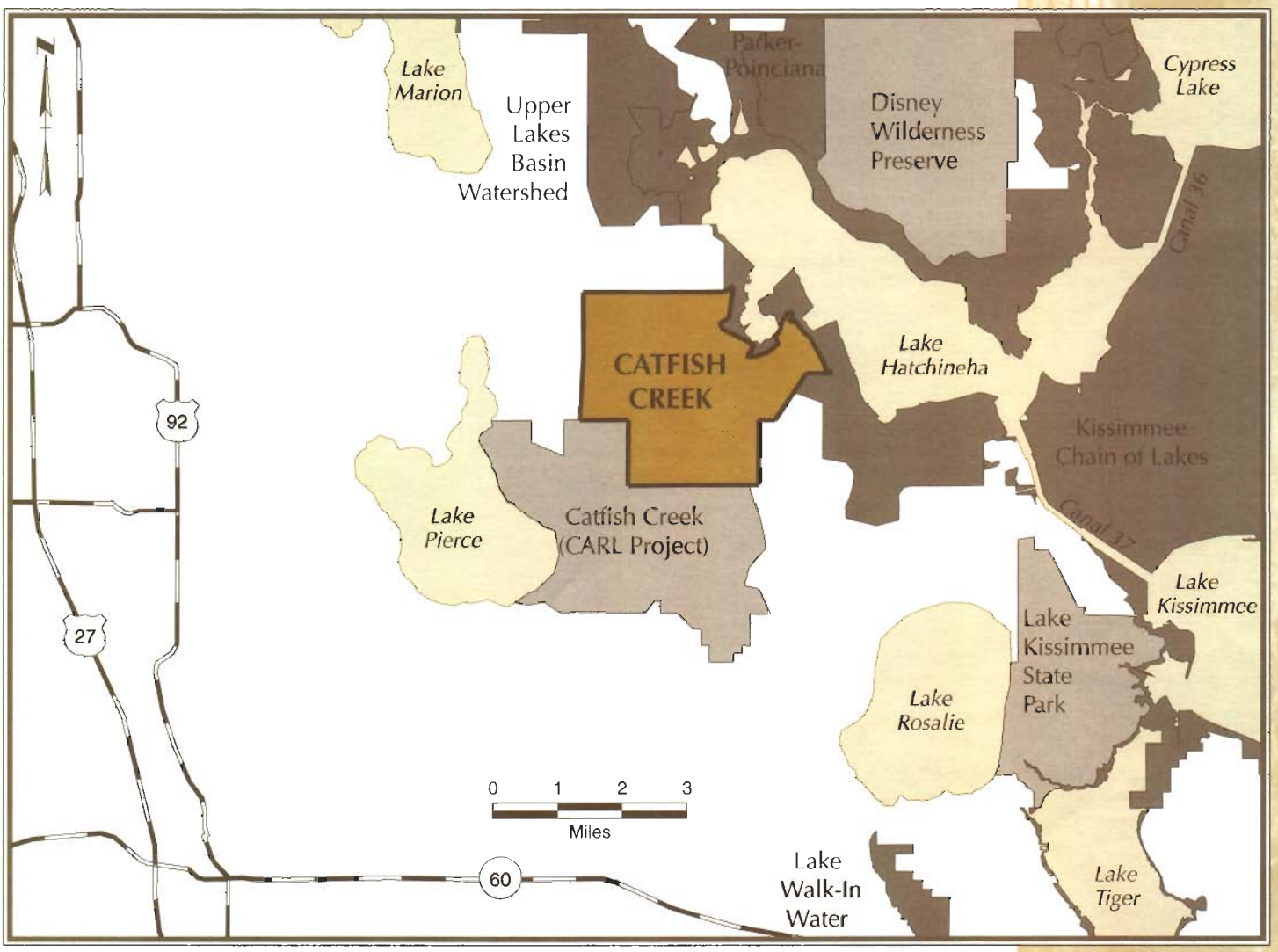
Numerous shallow ditches exist in the improved pastures, which drain to Lake Hatchineha. These ditches can be easily plugged, and the associated wetlands, restored. Upland restoration could be accomplished on the improved pastures. No stands of exotic vegetation were observed. The site contains several 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

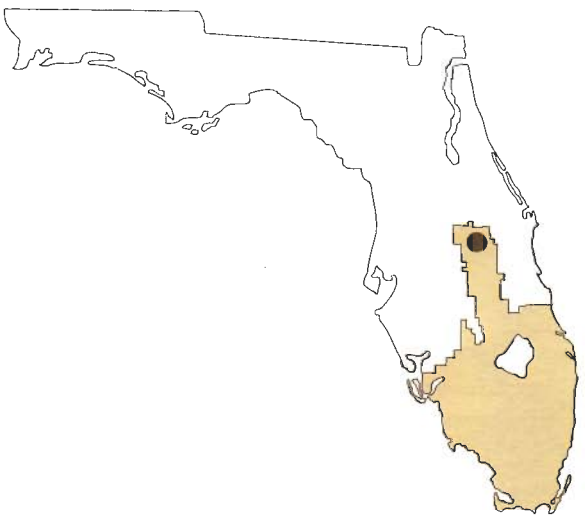
This site has excellent potential for passive recreational use, including hiking, horseback riding, camping, and nature appreciation.



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
- 1996 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 June 1996, the District governing board approved the expansion of the project by 3,240 acres. The expansion lands include 320 acres adjacent to District owned lands and Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, 320 acres next to SR 846, 640 acres in Bird Rookery Swamp and 2,760 acres in the southeast corner of Flint Pen Strand.

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	5,000	
Fire Management	260	2,000
Mowing/Chopping	9 miles	
Restoration		

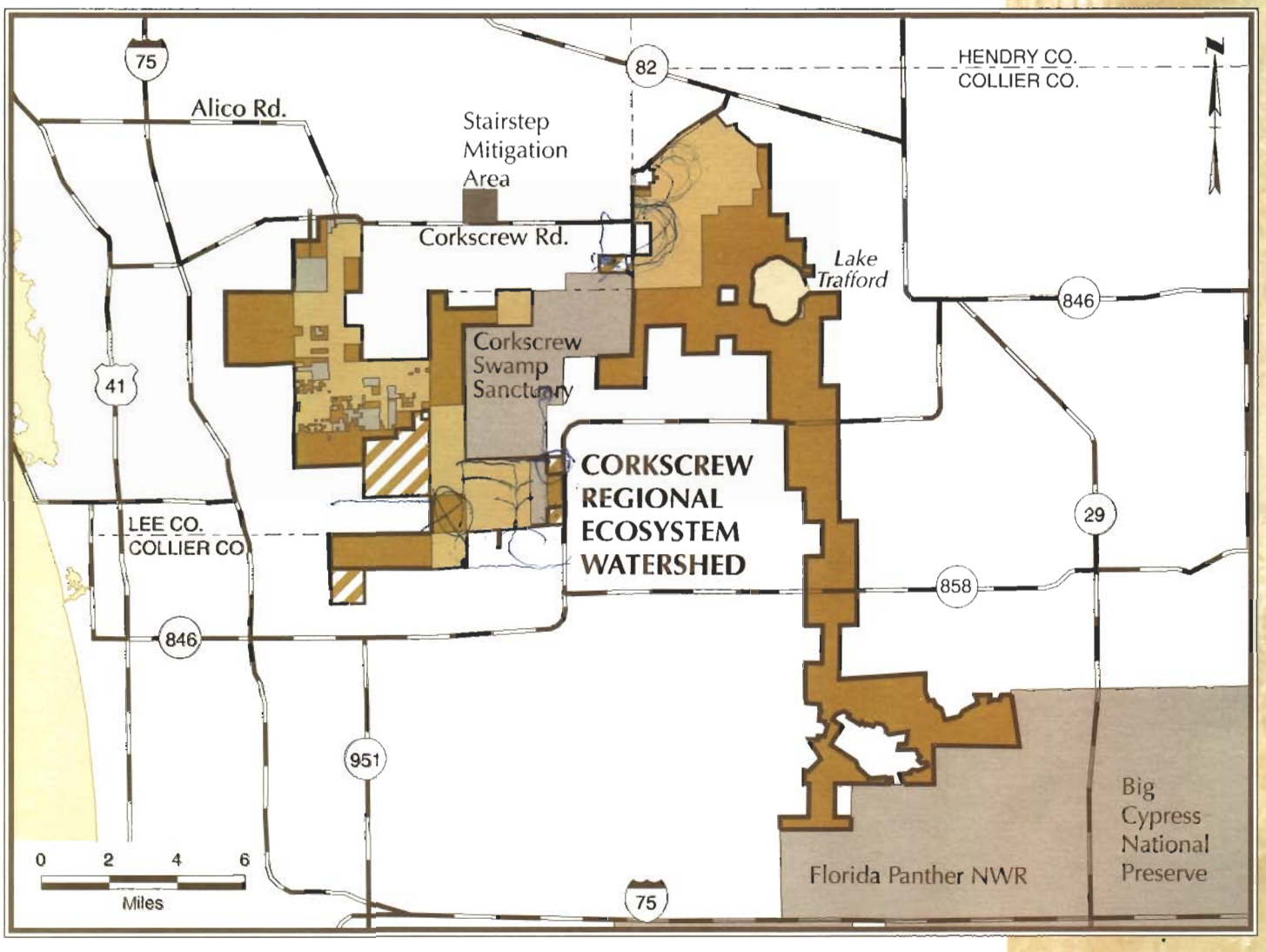
	Initiated	Ongoing
General Clean-up		•
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting		•
Security		
GFC Reserve		
GFC		

Public Use

	Yes	No
Fishing	NA	
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

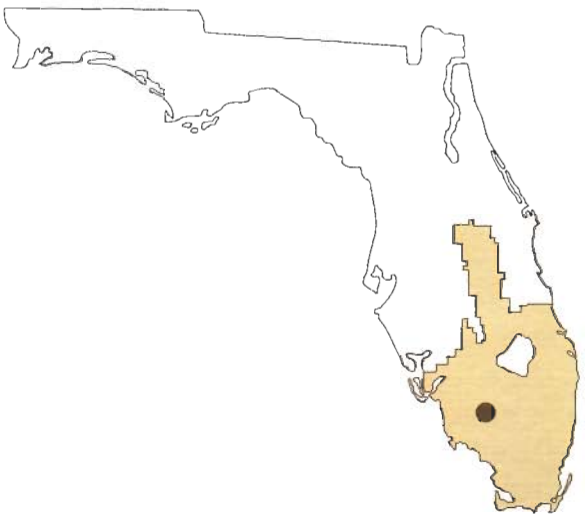
Total Project Area:
~~55,968 acres~~ 59,208

Total Acres Acquired:
18,791 + 51

Land Cost:
$13,058,705

Acres Remaining:
37,553

Acres Acquired by Others:
5



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 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	7,000	10,000
Fire Management	4,300	7,000
Mowing/Chopping	2,000	2,000
Restoration	2,000	2,000

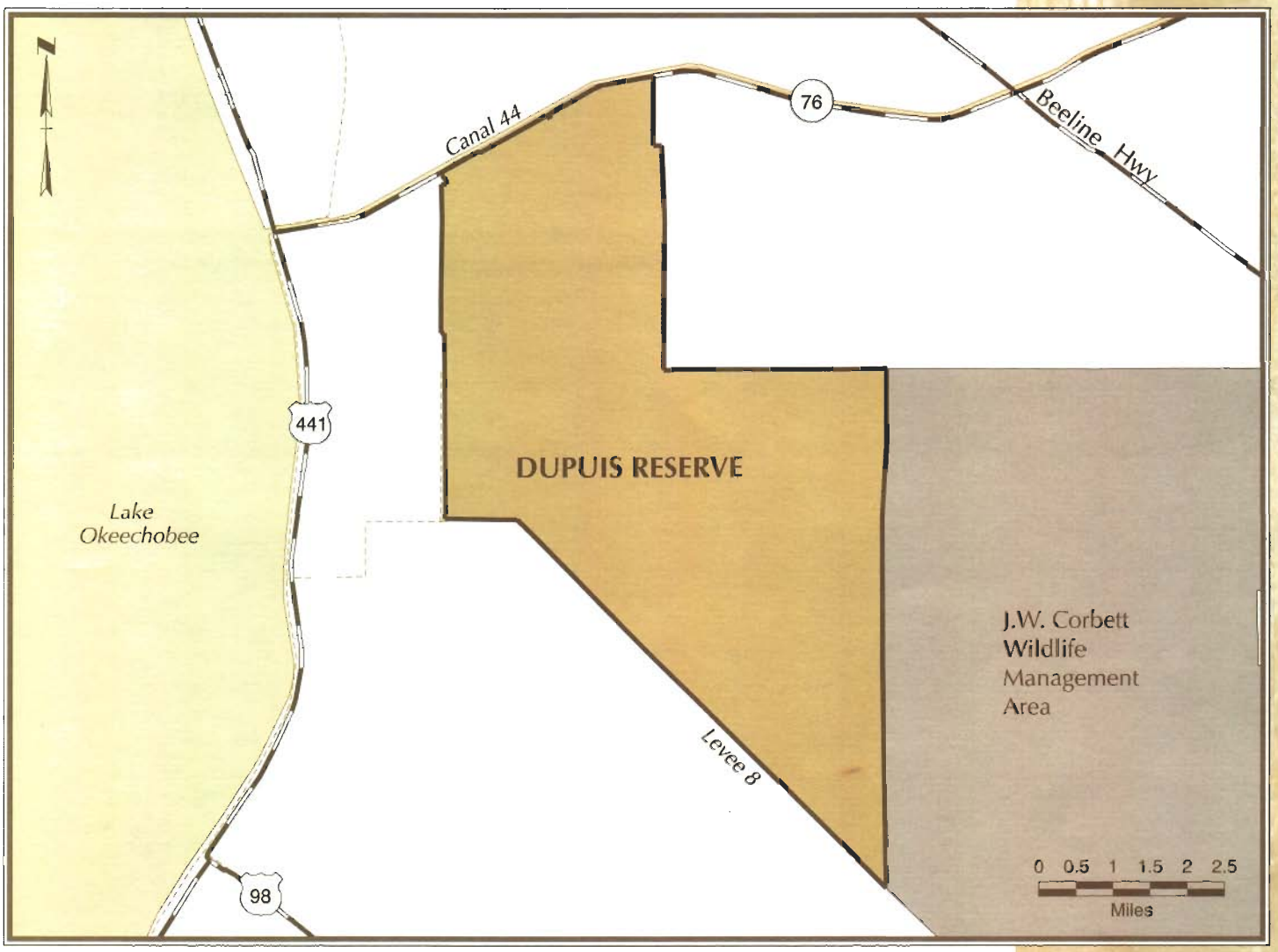
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal	•	
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
GFC		

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	•	

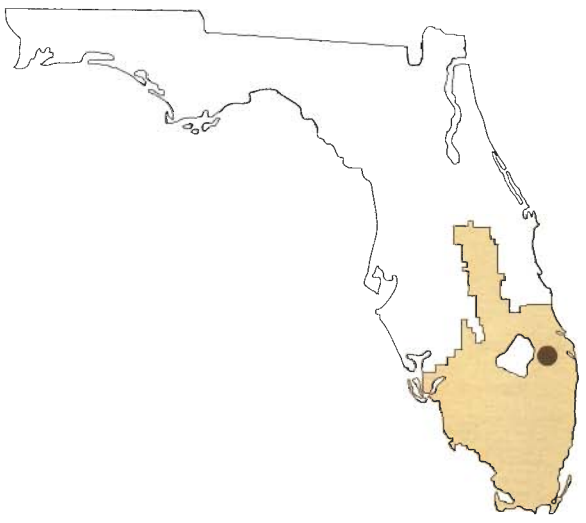


Counties:
Martin and Palm Beach

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
- 1996 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.

In June 1996, the District governing board approved the expansion of the project by 1,065 acres. The expansion is projected to help the District to hold higher water levels in northeast Shark River Slough. In 1995-1996 the District acquired 1,379.7 acres within the project area.

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

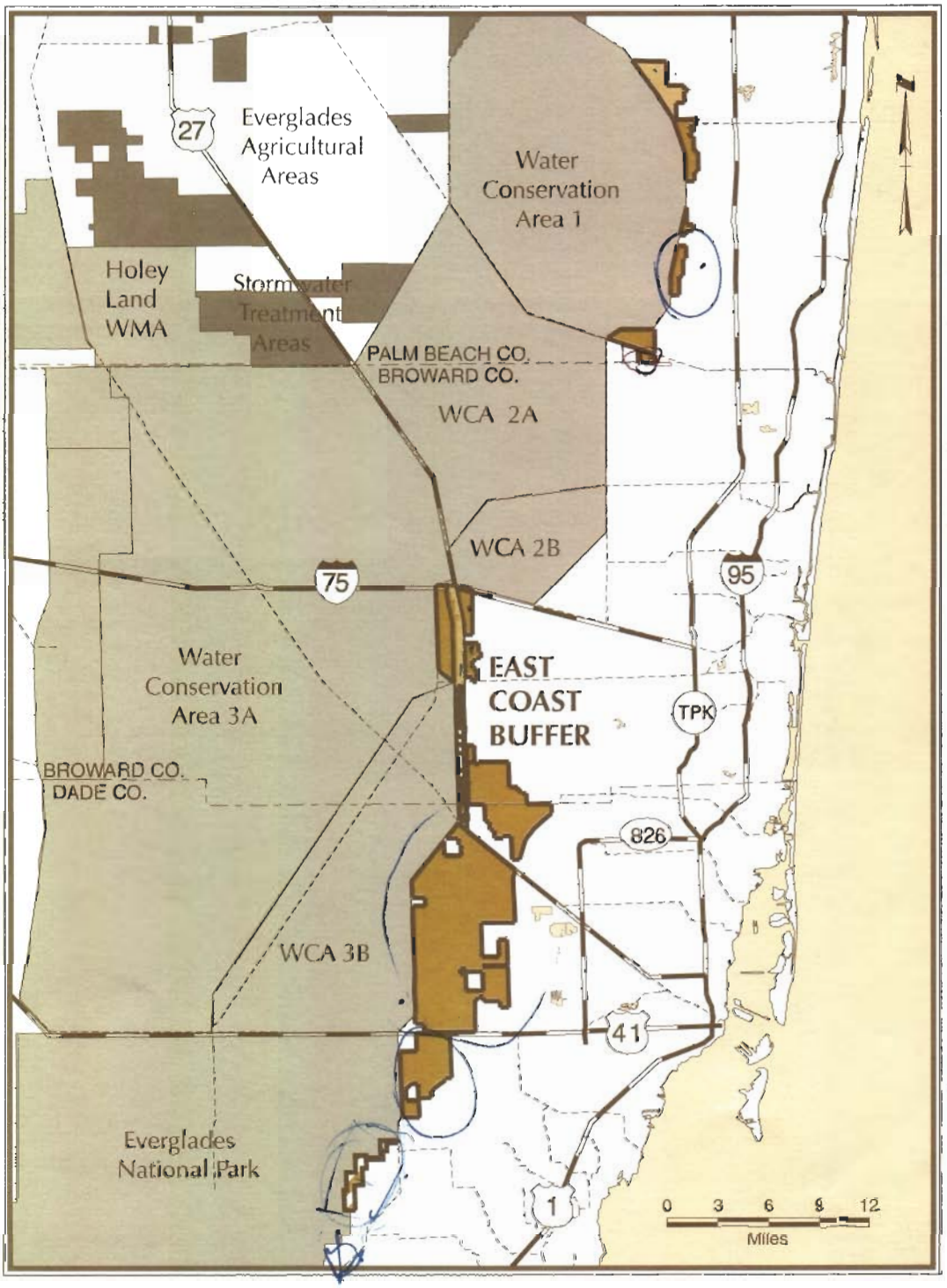
Areas contained within the boundary delineated for the East Coast Buffer consist primarily of undeveloped lands. Current land uses include very low intensity development, pasture land, and limestone mining. A significant portion of the area also is characterized by viable wetland habitat. An important 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.

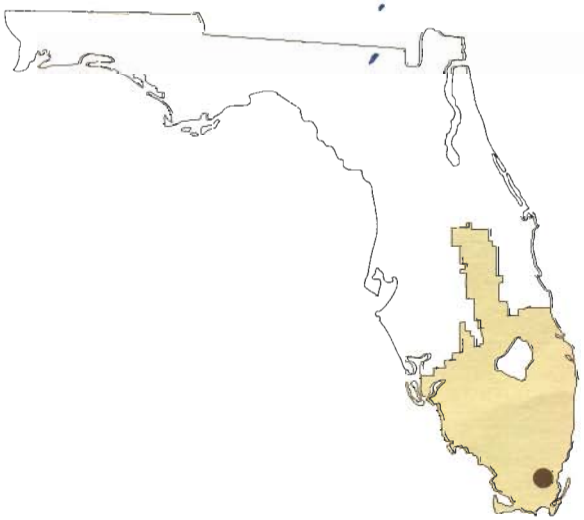
Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

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

1996 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

Counties:
Palm Beach, Broward and Dade

Total Project Area:
~~66,400~~ 67,465

Total Acres Acquired:
1,380

Acres Remaining:
55,775

*Project area includes previously acquired lands.

Everglades Buffer Strip North:
1,657 +5 = 1,662 FY '97

Everglades Buffer Strip South:
1,178

Strazzulla:
2,323

Water Conservation Areas:
3,111

Other:
978

1,380
1,662
1,178
~~2,323~~
FY97 963
7,508

66,400
1,380
65,020
65,465

Everglades Agricultural Area

General Description:

The EAA Lands consist of 48,570 acres of real estate holdings of the Talisman Sugar Corporation Inc. These lands lie in the southern portion of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) between the Miami Canal and North New River Canal in the S-7 and S-8 drainage basins. This area is south of Lake Okeechobee and west of the Water Conservation Areas.

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

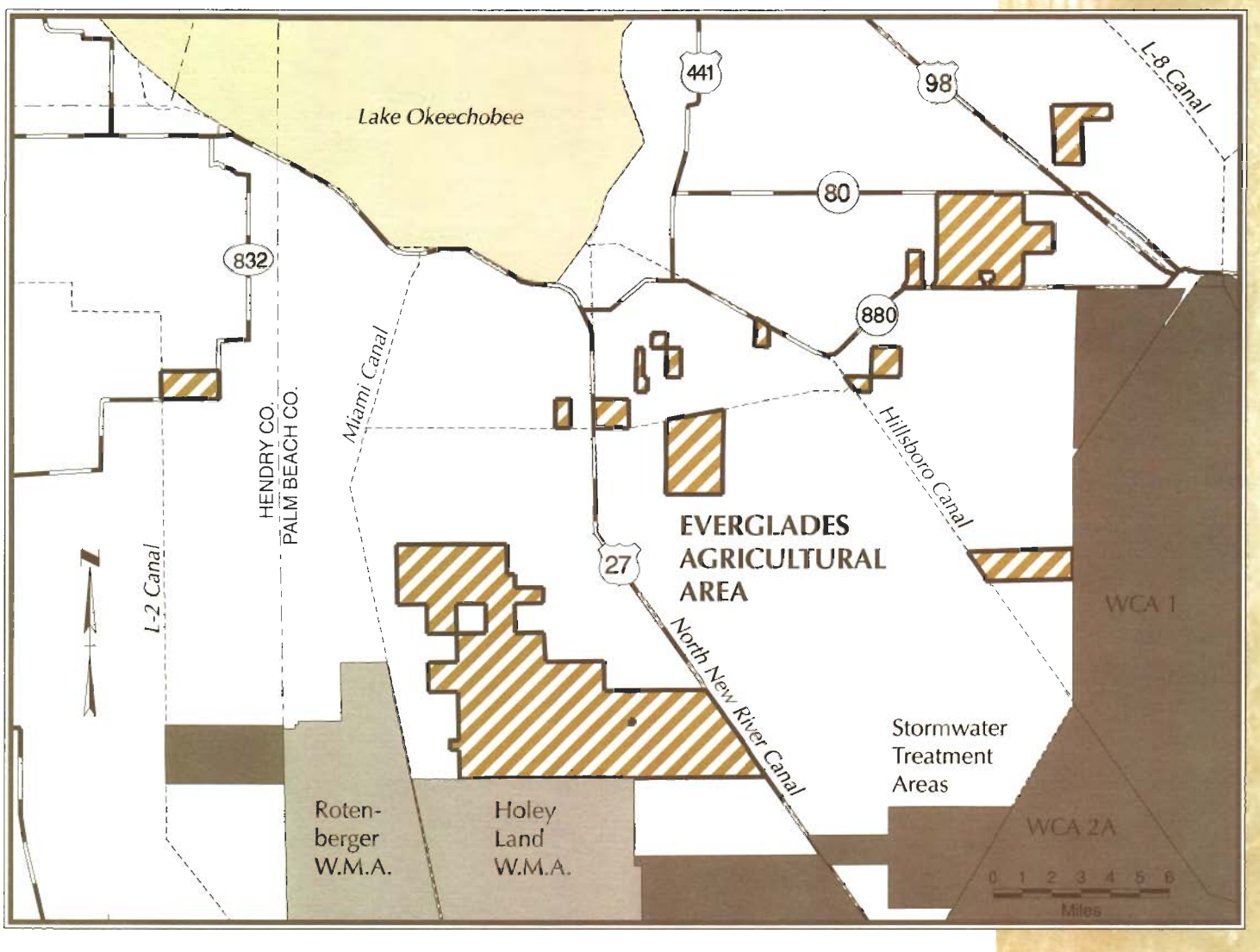
The Everglades Agricultural Areas would serve as a barrier to reduce the impacts of development to the Everglades, reduce levee seepage from the Everglades, increase groundwater recharge, enhance drinking water supplies, improve the Everglade's water supply, and enhance thousands of acres of wetlands 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

Another possibility for the lands would be restoration of the "historic" Everglade's ecosystem that once existed in that area. This would require restoration of pre-drainage hydrology in reestablishing the natural temporal and spatial distribution of flows and water depths that contributed to the sustainability of the pre-development ecosystem. The Natural System Model simulations of the pre-development hydrology indicate that the lands near the Holey Land experienced inundation approximately 80-90 percent of the time with an average depth of just over one-half foot.

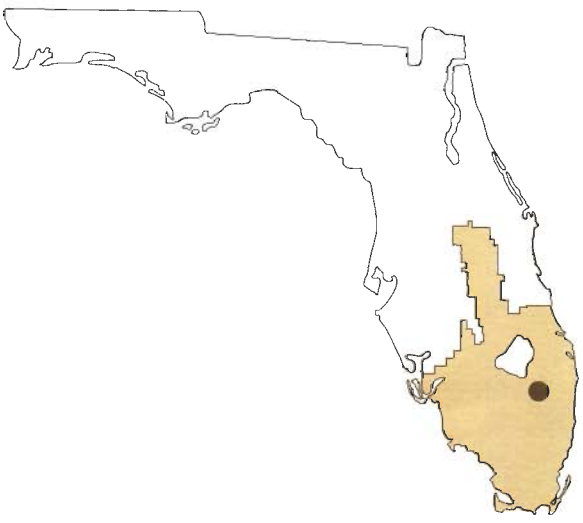
Recreation Potential

Recreational activities could include fishing, canoe trails, environmental education and possibly some interpretive sites.



Counties:
Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
48,570 acres



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

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 orcer 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

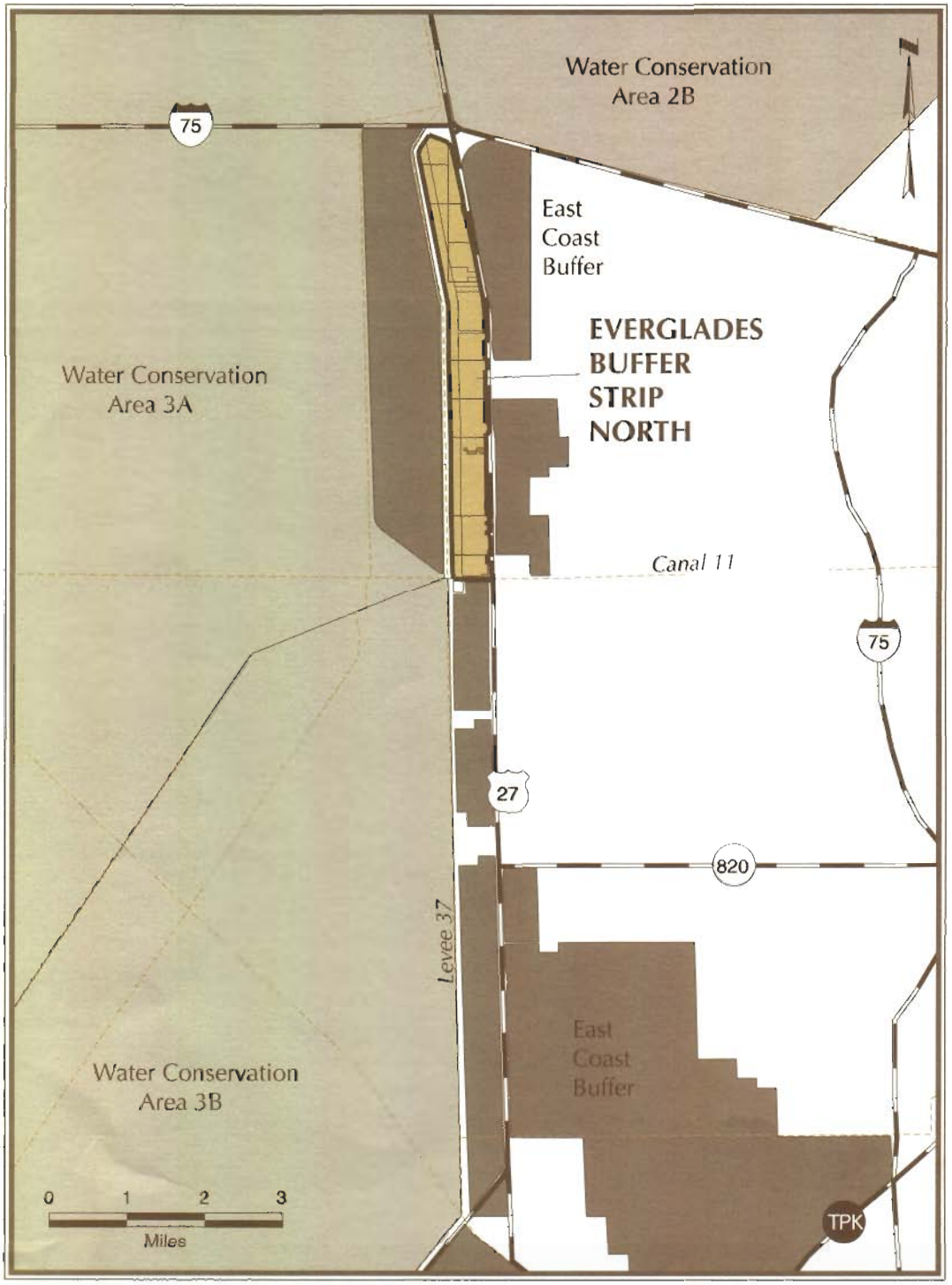
Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control		•
Fire Management		
Mowing/Chopping		
Restoration		•
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting		
Security		
Private		

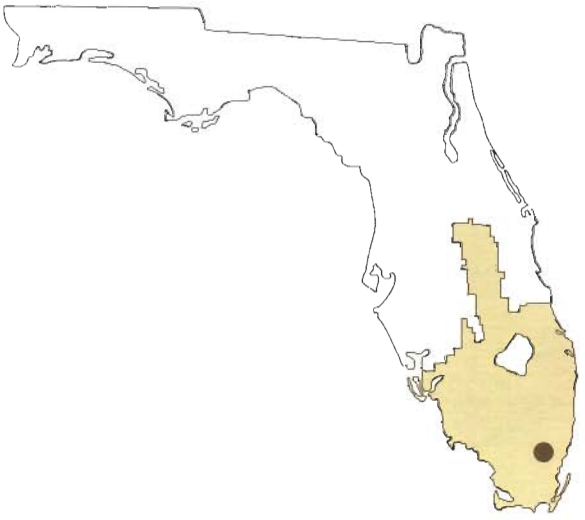
Public Use

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

Planning

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





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1996 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

County:
Broward

Total Project Area:
1,570 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

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

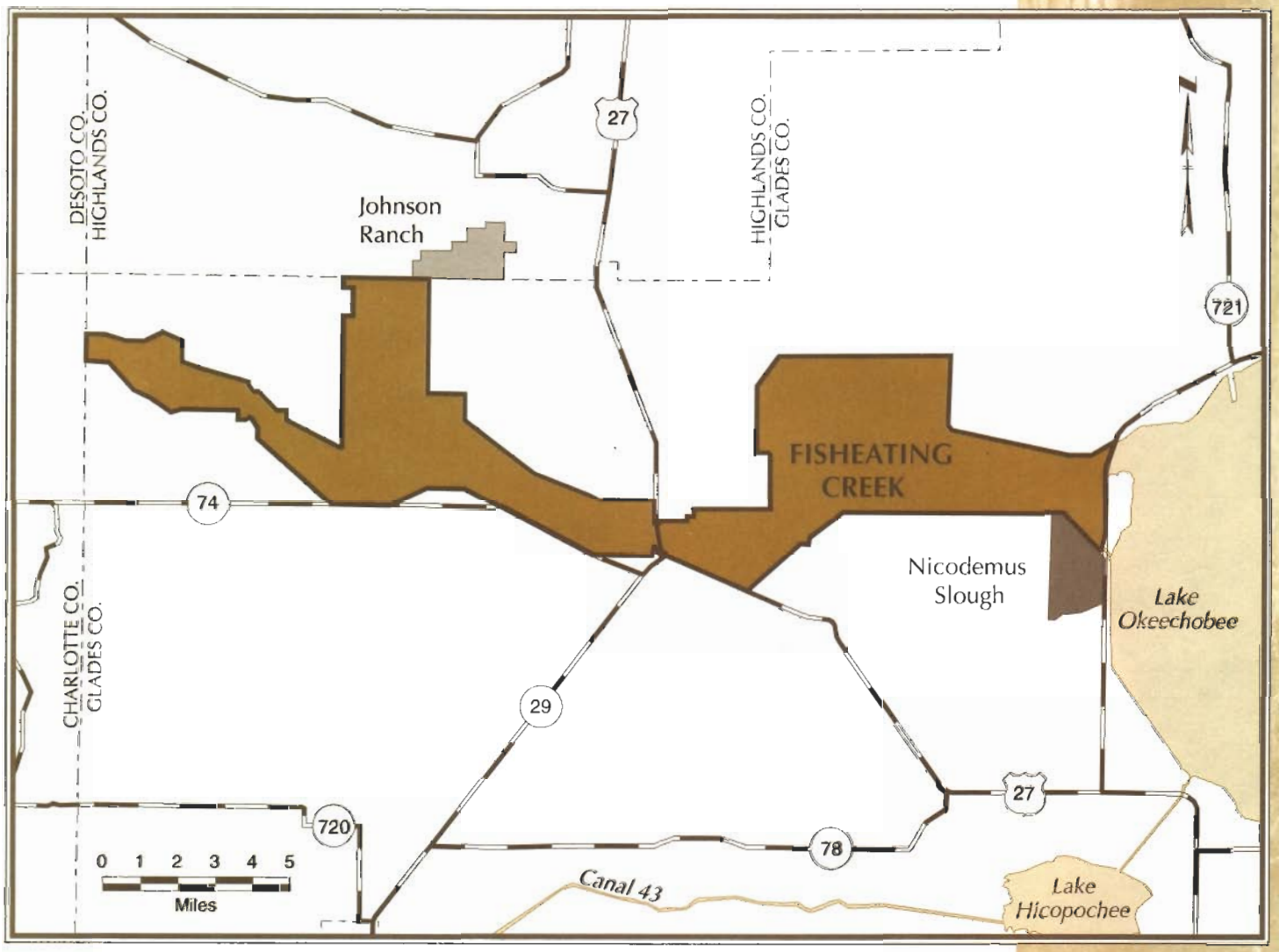
Much of the uplands and wetlands defined by the limits of this project remain in a relatively undisturbed state. Habitat types include cypress sloughs/mixed hardwood swamp forest, emergent marshes, willow thickets and openwater ponds and runs. Land-use in and around the flood plain is mostly native range. 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

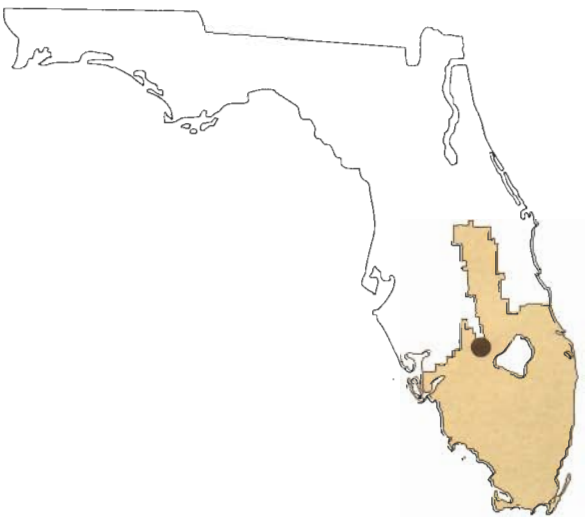
Acquisition and protection of Fisheating Creek, its floodplain and suitable upland corridor, could provide the public with opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreational activities. The reach of the creek upstream of Palmdale has been a popular canoe run for many years and is famous for its scenic 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
1996 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. During the 1996 Plan period, the District acquired 774 acres. The CARL program provided fifty percent funding for these lands.

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

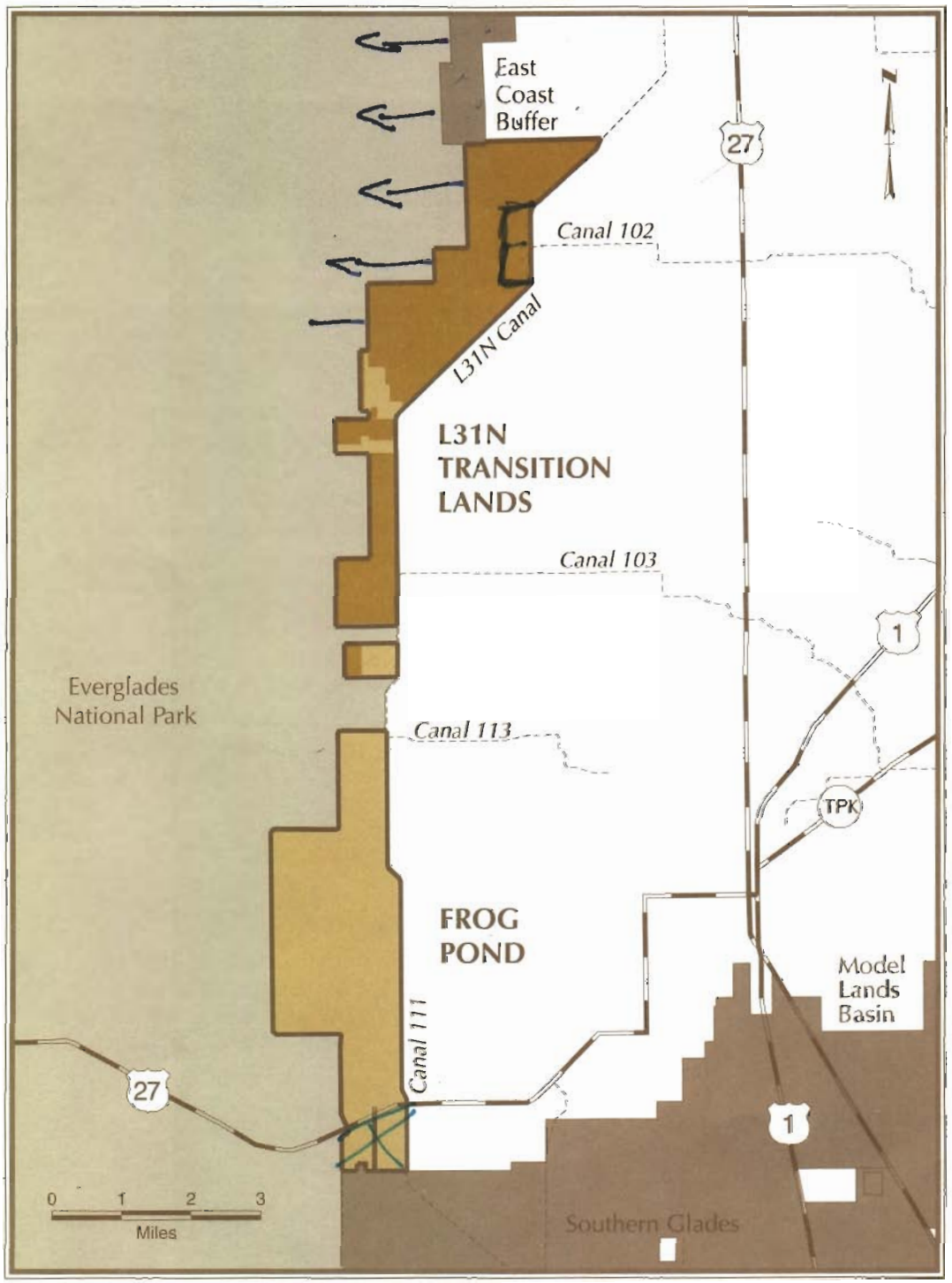
The Frog Pond and Transitional Lands are an integral part of the C-111/Taylor Slough Interim Plan and Corps GRR project that would result in restoration of natural freshwater hydropatterns to Florida Bay. Observations of seagrass die-off, mangrove losses, reduced fisheries, and algal blooms provide strong 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

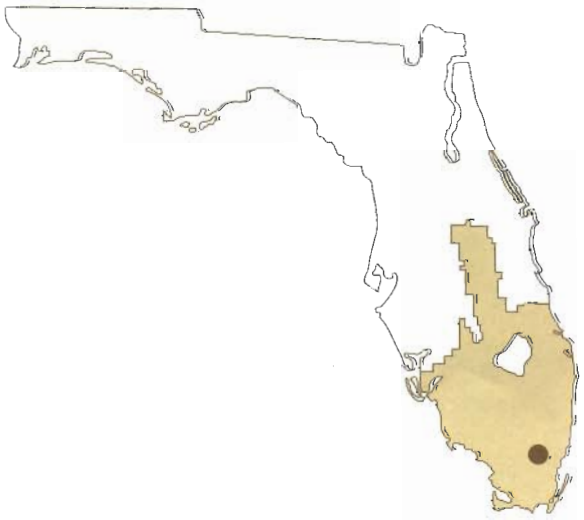
Total Project Area:
10,600 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
6,427 + 1,112 = 7,539

Acres Remaining:
4,173

Number of Owners:
Numerous

(*Nic Lands Acquired by CARL)



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 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.

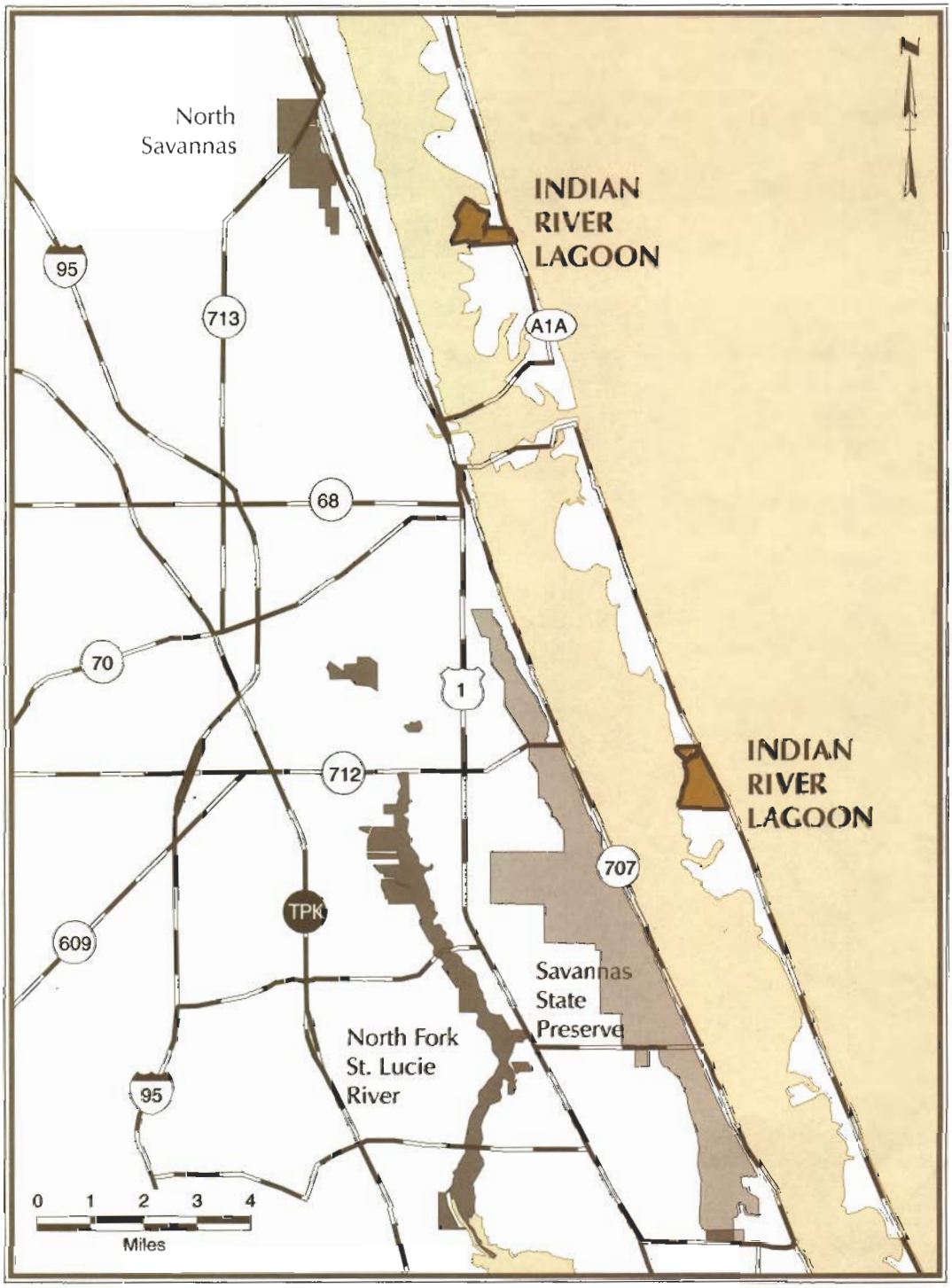
Research conducted on mosquito impoundments reports a reduction in transient fish species use in the impoundments from sixteen species to five, following construction of the impoundment dikes. The installation of culverts to allow regular tidal flushing improves species diversity dramatically.

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

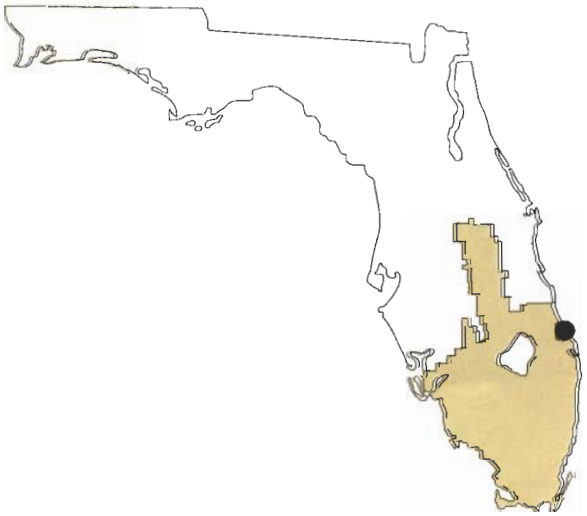
These sites may have some use as bird watching and fishing sites, and hiking trails could be constructed along the impoundment dikes, but it is unlikely that extensive recreational development would ever take place.



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
1996 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.

For the 1997 plan update the Board approved the addition of 7315 acres next to the eastern project boundary. The property to be added is currently owned by the Audubon Society and is named the Ordway Whittell Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary. The majority of this property was historically used for cattle ranching with a small portion converted to tomato fields. The land has limited drainage and is at least 50% wetlands.

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

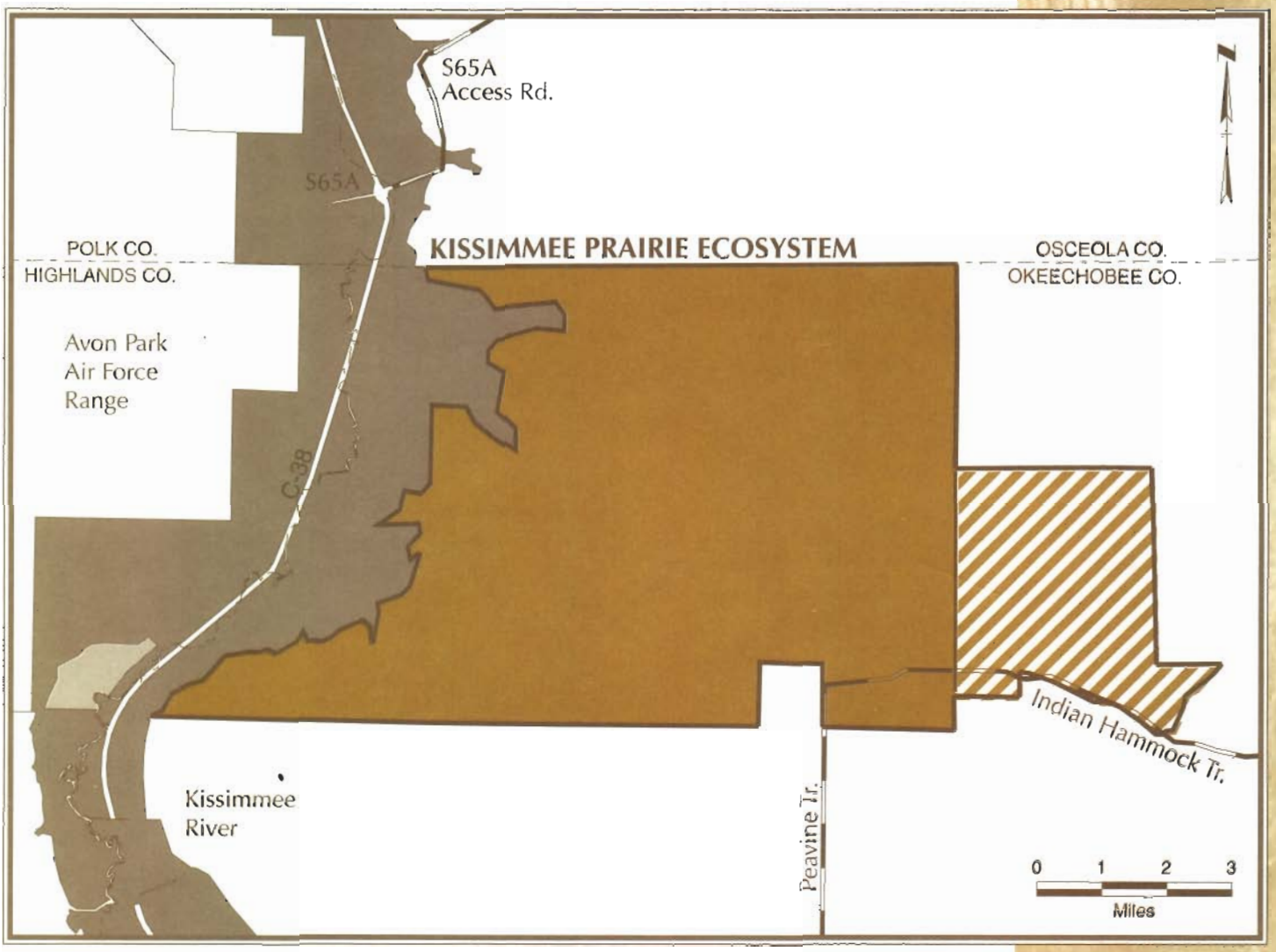
This project is also being reviewed for acquisition under the CARL program. It has been identified by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission as a Strategic Habitat Conservation Area in their 1994 publication *Closing the Gaps in Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System*. National Audubon's 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

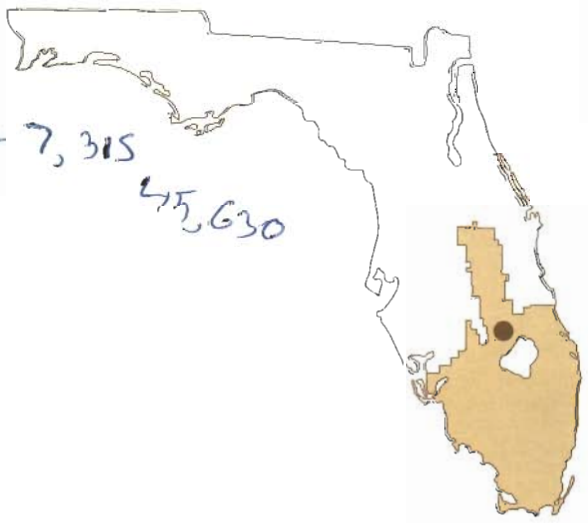
This tract has excellent recreational and educational opportunities. The property's size, diversity, and accessibility lend it to a variety of passive uses. Hiking and equestrian trails, including wilderness camping areas for both are possible. There are extensive educational and research opportunities. 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:
~~52,300 acres~~ 38,315 + 7,315
45,630

Number of Owners:
One



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 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 30,000 acres.

During the period from July 1, 1995 to June 30 1996 the District acquired 3,014 acres. The Board approved acquisition of an additional 12,259 acres.

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

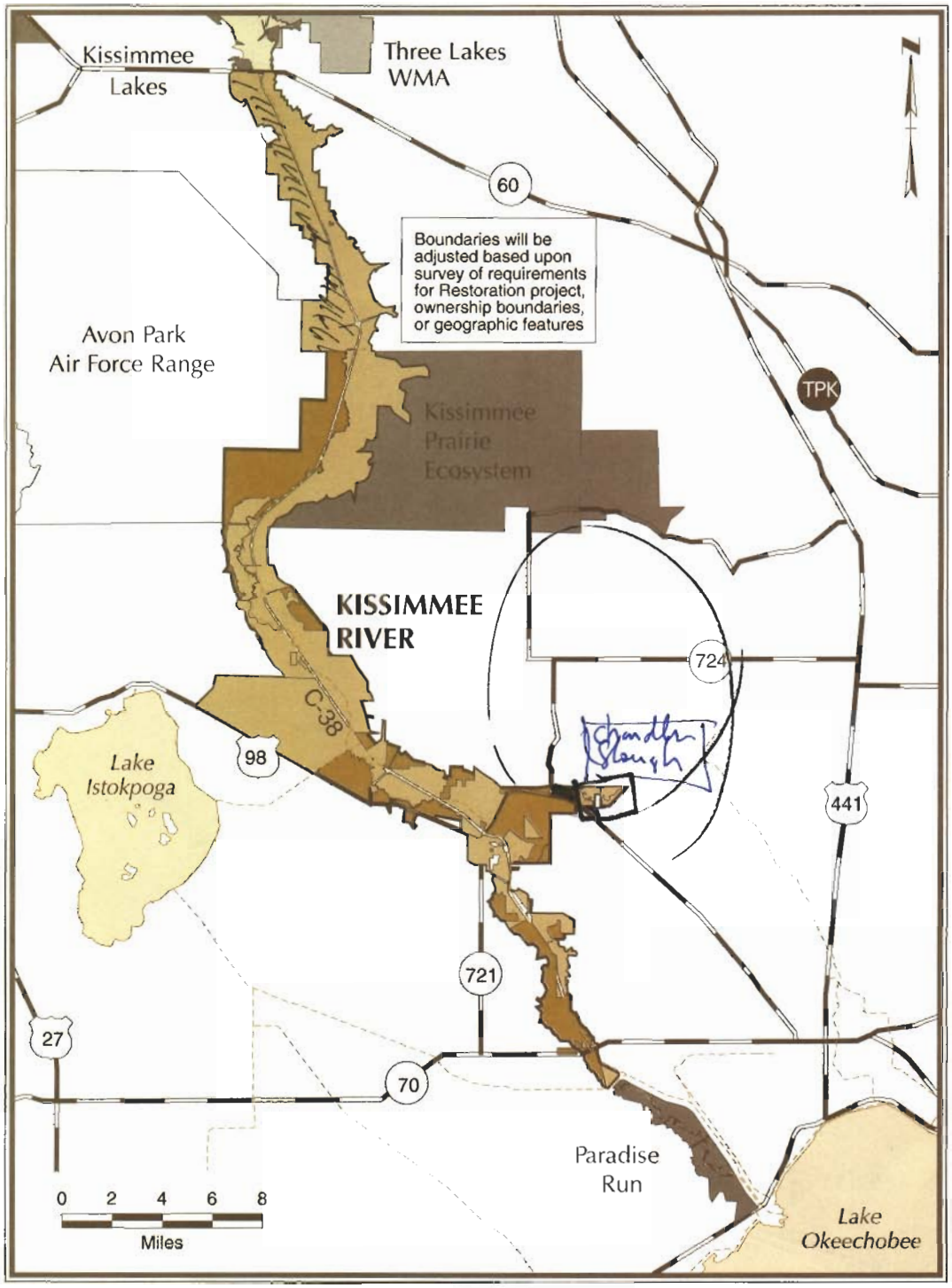
Activity	Acres	Proposed
Exotic Control	2,000	2,000
Fire Management	2,000	5,000
Mowing/Chopping	3,000	2,500
Restoration	300	500
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	200	
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
GFC	8,000	
Private	22,500	
On-site Caretakers	17,000	

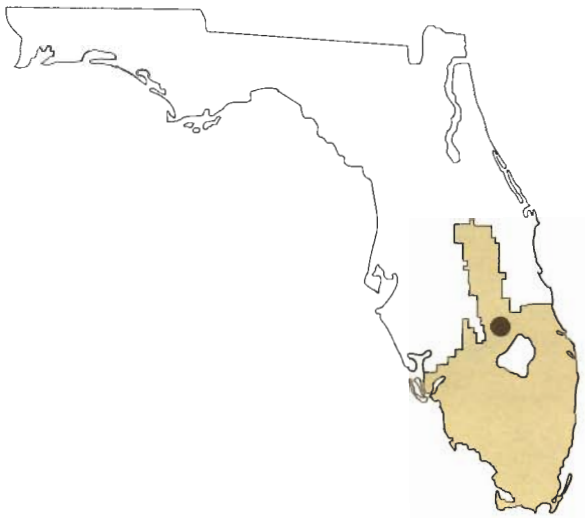
Public Use

	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		





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1996 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

Counties:
Osceola, Polk and Okeechobee

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

Total Acres Acquired (SOR):
30,633 + 13,288 43,921

Acres Remaining:
52,400 (including KCOL)

Land Cost:
$77,166,322

Acres Acquired by Others:
5,510

Acres Acquired Prior to SOR:
12,843

Lown 13,288

KCOL 2,135

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. In 1996, the District governing board approved the expansion of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes portion of the project by 72 acres.

During the 1996 plan period the District acquired forty-one acres. The Board approved the acquisition of an additional 1,043 acres. Real property interests have been acquired in more than twenty-three thousand (23,000) acres. An additional seventeen hundred (1700) acres are in State ownership.

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	200	3,000
Mowing/Chopping	100	200
Grazing Lease Mgmt	12,300	

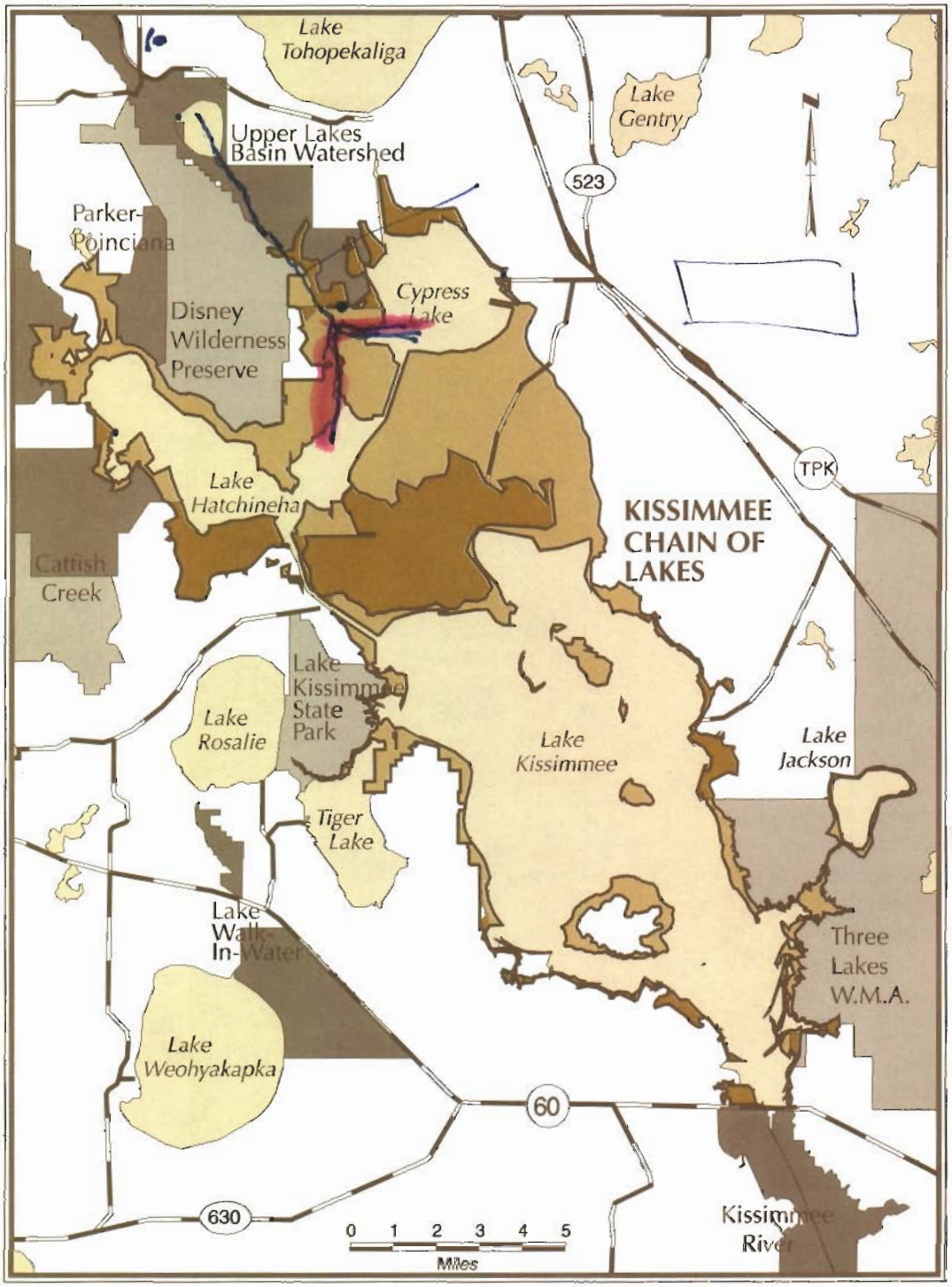
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal		
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
Private	•	

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		



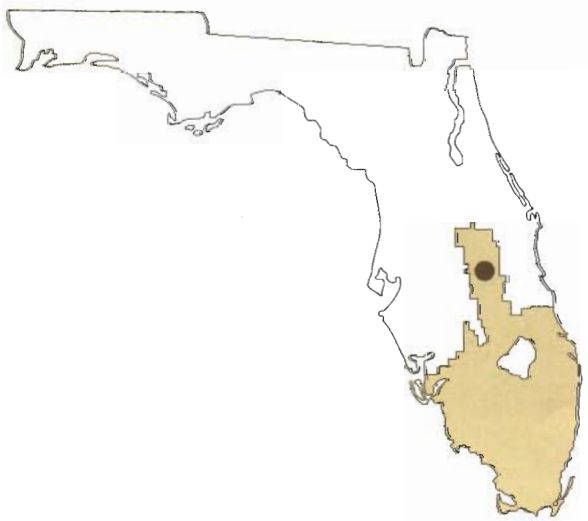
Counties:
Osceola, Polk and Okeechobee

Total Project Area:
26,072 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
23,152 +2,135 = 25,287

Acres Remaining:
2,921

Acres Acquired by Others:
1,700



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

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

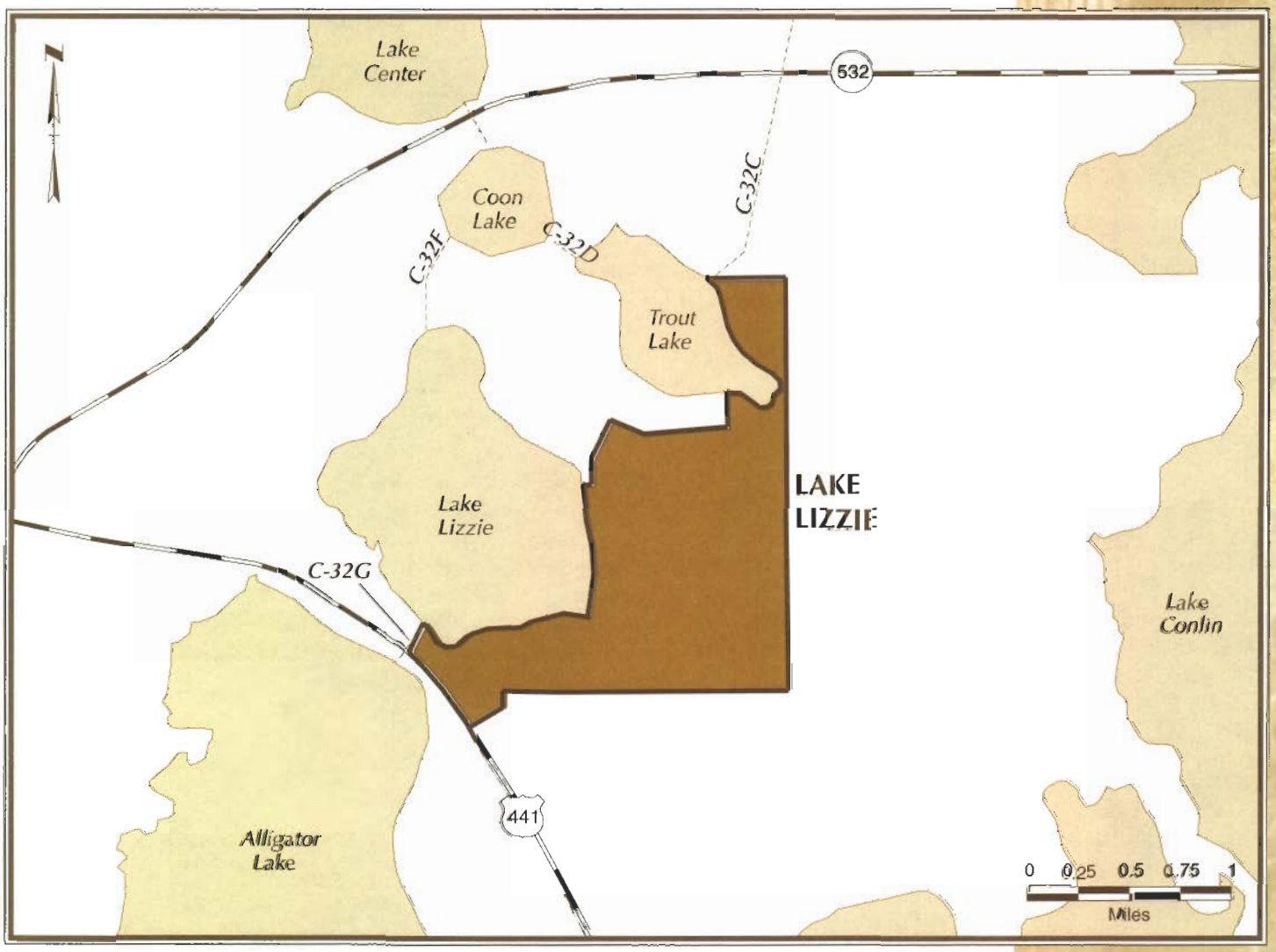
The hydraulic connection of a large portion of the Trout Lake marsh has been severed by an electric transmission line access road that also serves as the project's eastern boundary. Re-establishment of sheetflow could probably be accomplished relatively easily if stabilized swale crossings were installed. 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.

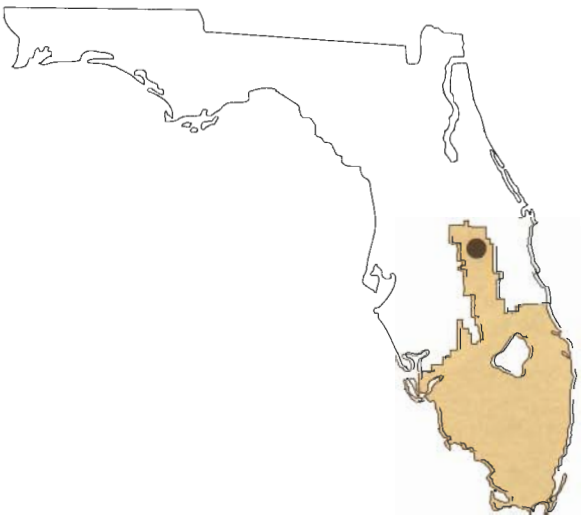
Recreation Potential

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
- 1996 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. In September 1996, the Governing Board approved a 643 acre boundary modification which allows Walk-in-Water Creek to be included. 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 lies along 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

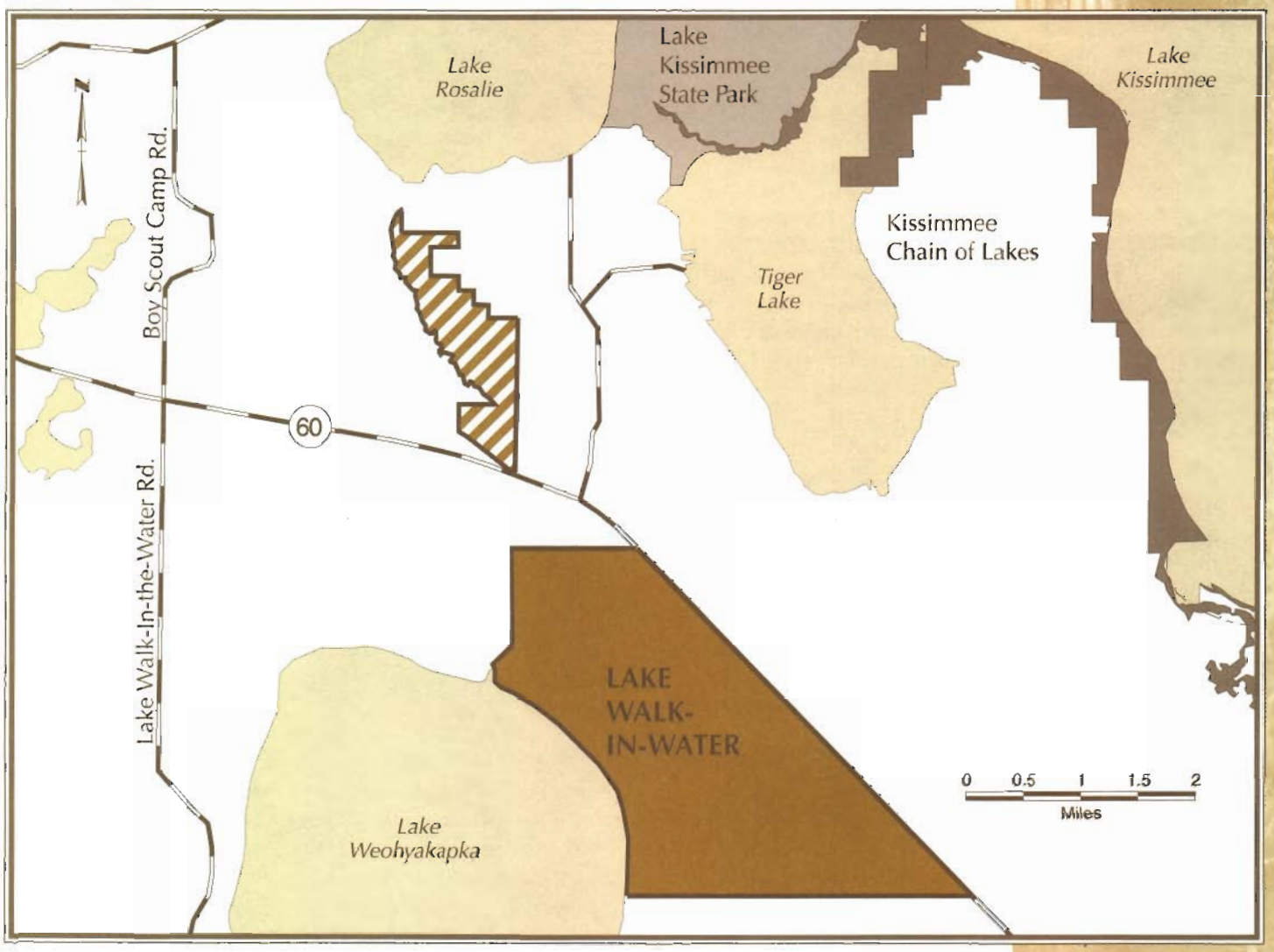
This tract is relatively undisturbed. It has been well maintained by the current owners. Maintaining the property in its existing condition will require diligent management, but the site does not need extensive restoration.

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

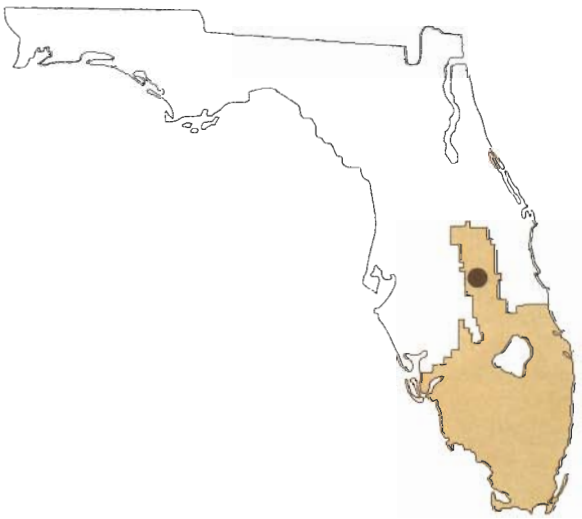
This tract has great recreation potential. Its long frontage on SR 60 would facilitate several public access points. Water access from the lake is also possible. The site contains enough uplands that equestrian trails can likely be developed. The variety of community types would make for interesting 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:
4,114 acres

Number of Owners:
One



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 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.

During the 1996 plan year the District acquired an additional seven acres along the eastern edge of the currently owned lands. This land will be used to access an environmental restoration project within the northern portion of the SOR lands. Palm Beach County acquired the northwestern portion (389 acres) of lands outlined in the SOR Five Year Plan and will be managing that property.

Project Vision

Preservation 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	
Fire Management		100
Mowing/Chopping	200	
Restoration		400

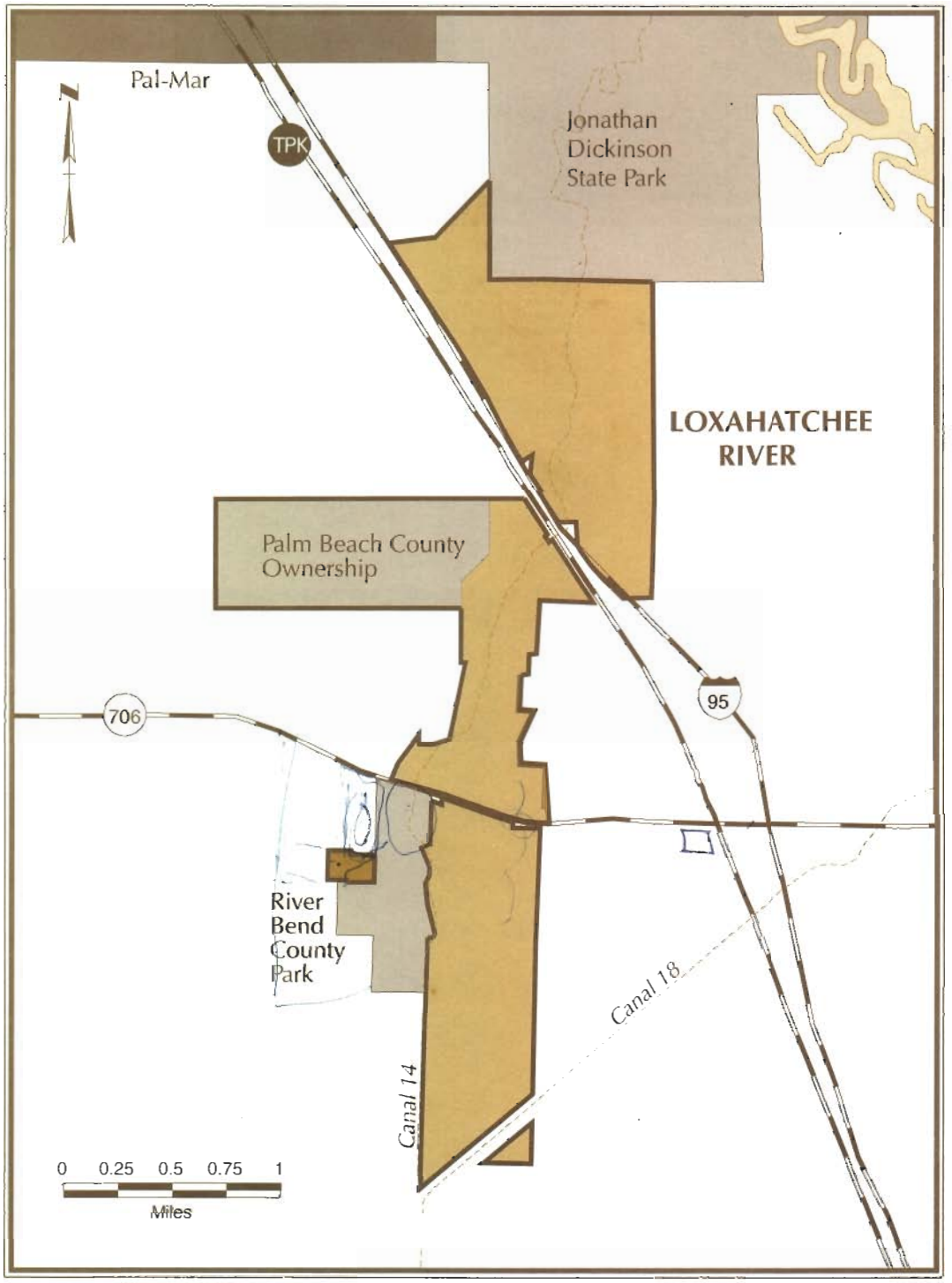
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		•
Waste Removal	•	
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
County	•	
DEP - State Park	•	

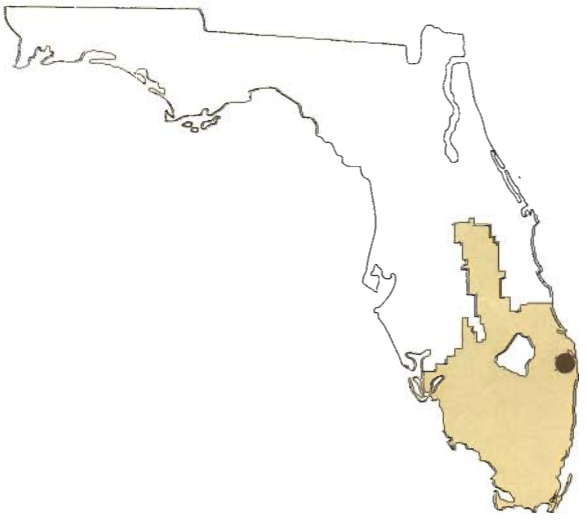
Public Use

	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		





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1996 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

Counties:
Martin and Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
1,936 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,926

Acres Remaining:
10

Land Cost:
$9,058,143

Number of Owners:
One

Acres Acquired by Others:
372

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

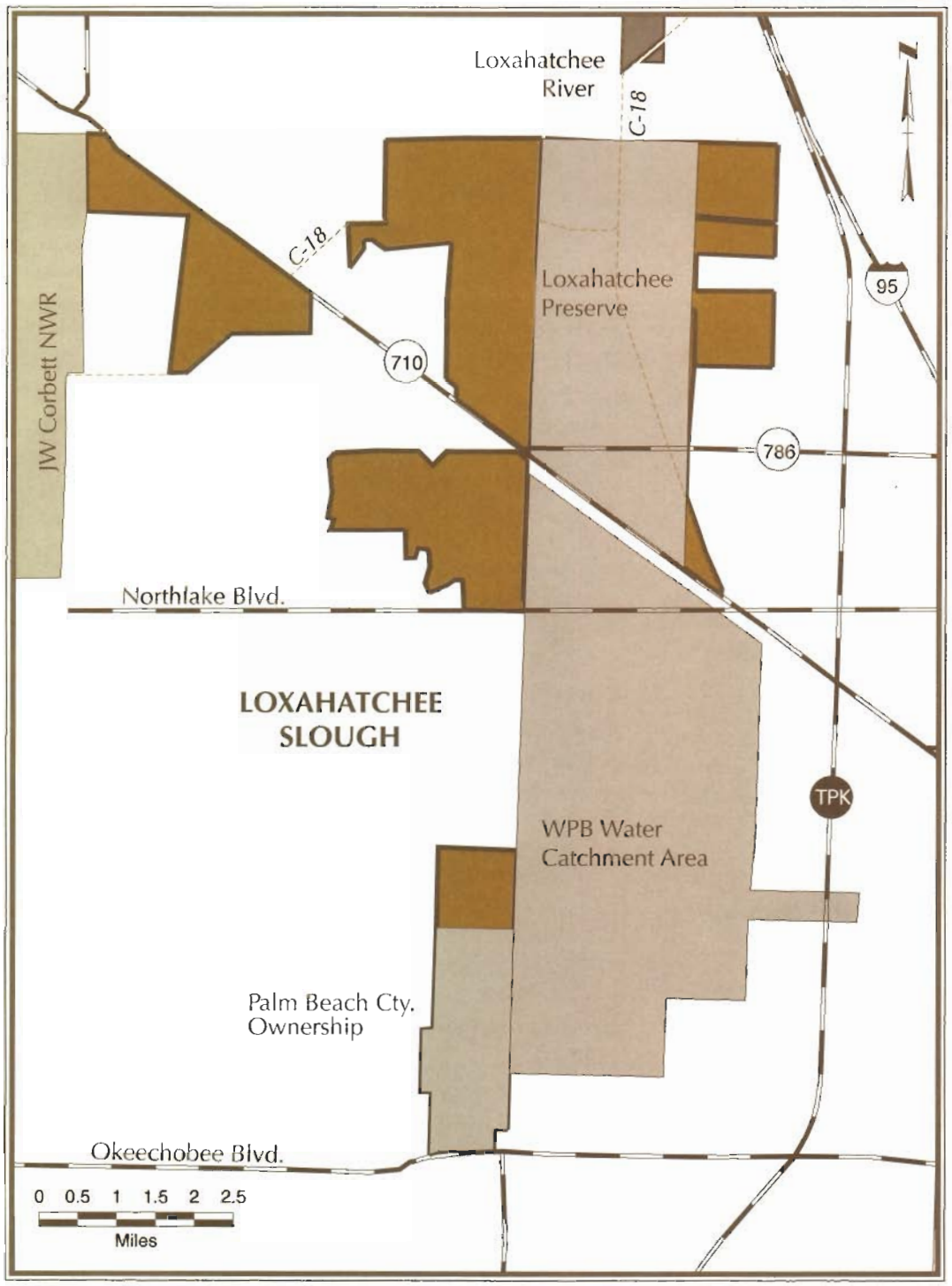
The project area is in relatively good condition. Exotic vegetation is invading the site due to overdrainage on adjacent parcels. The exotics appear to be a controllable amount, but would require regular attention. Drainage swales and ditches exist, but their impacts are correctable. Hydrologic restoration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

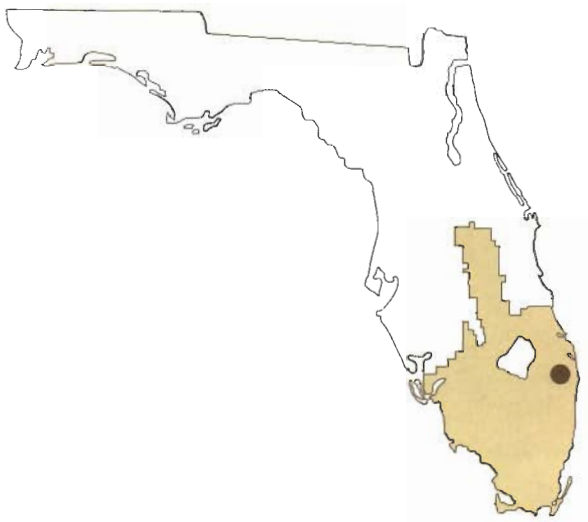
Its proximity to a large metropolitan area will lend this area to heavy public use. Hiking and equestrian trails could be developed in conjunction with local citizens groups. Environmental education would also be an expected use.



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
1996 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.

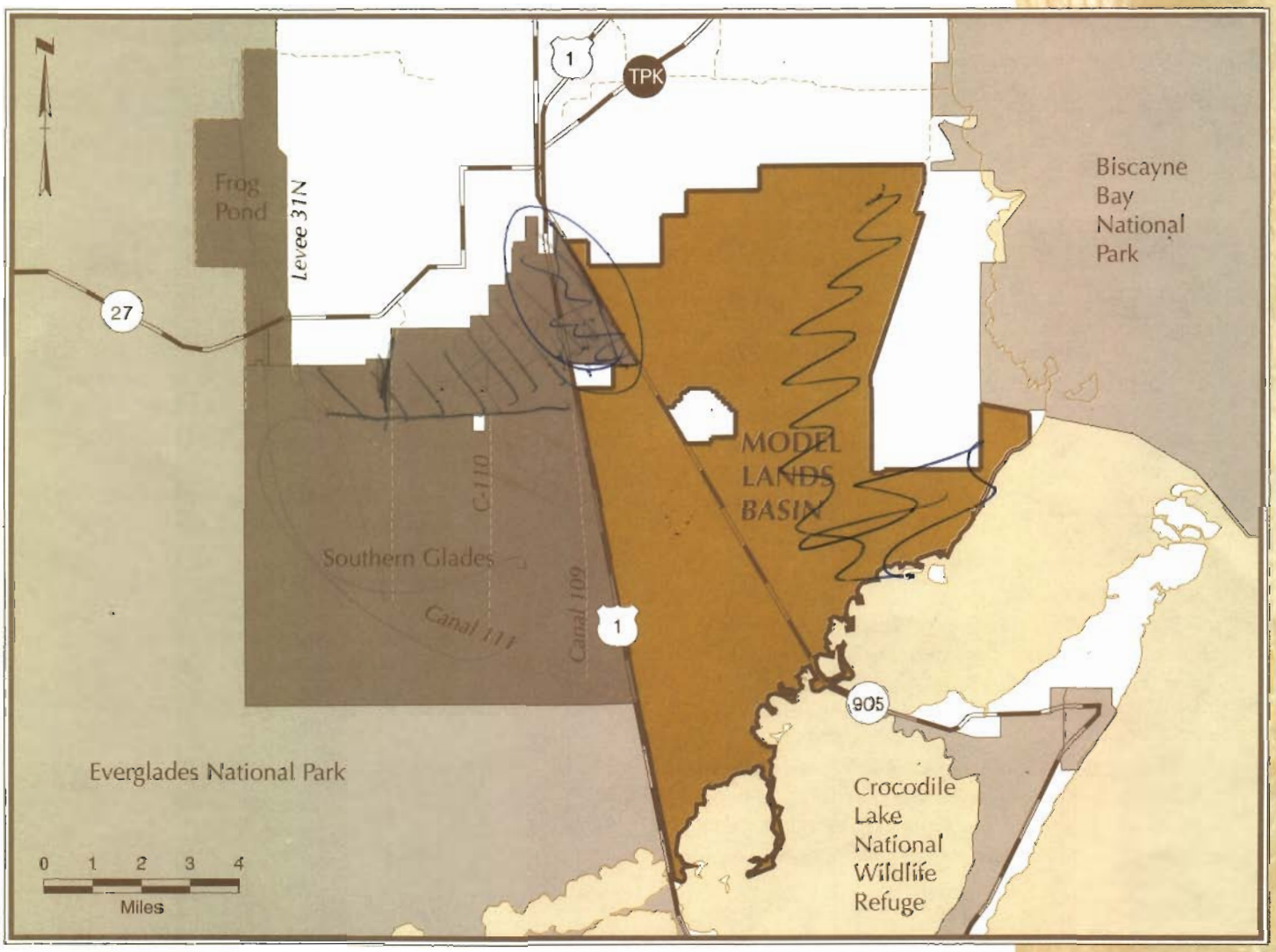
Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

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

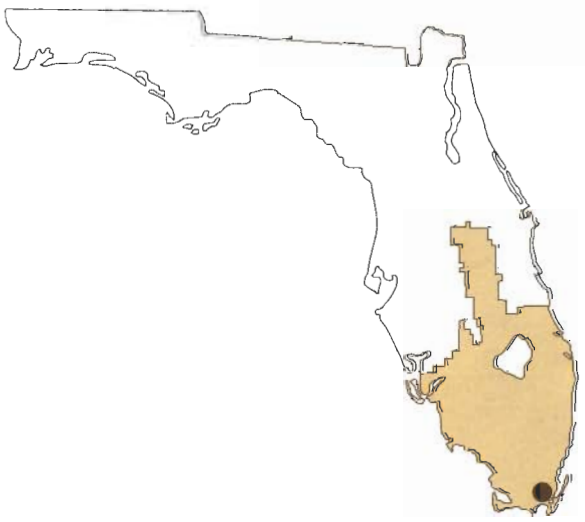
This tract is surprisingly open and, for the dedicated hiker, would provide the opportunity to explore a rather unique part of Florida. There is excellent opportunity for use of the extensive shoreline, by boaters and fishermen.



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
1996 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	400	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		

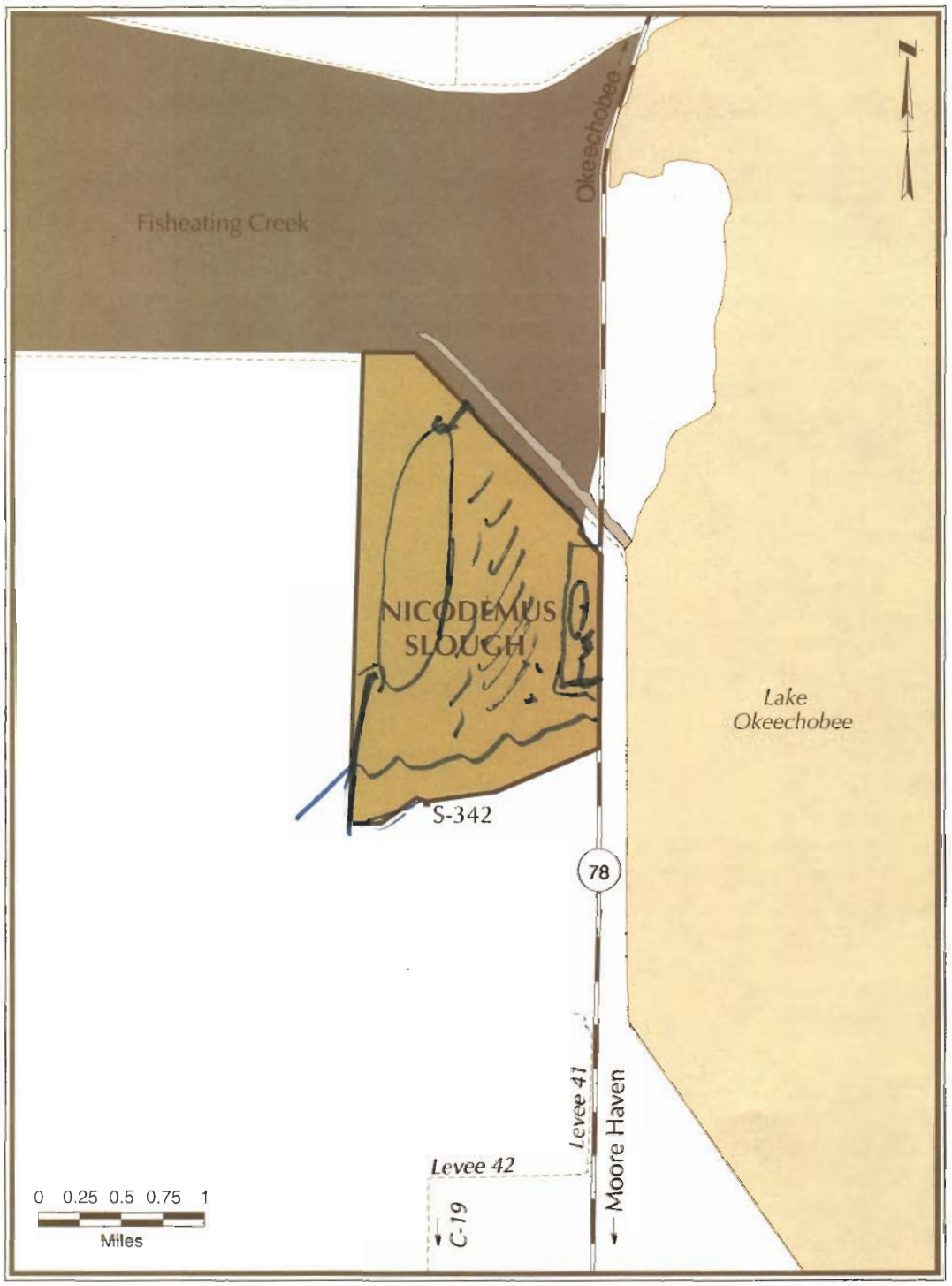
Planning

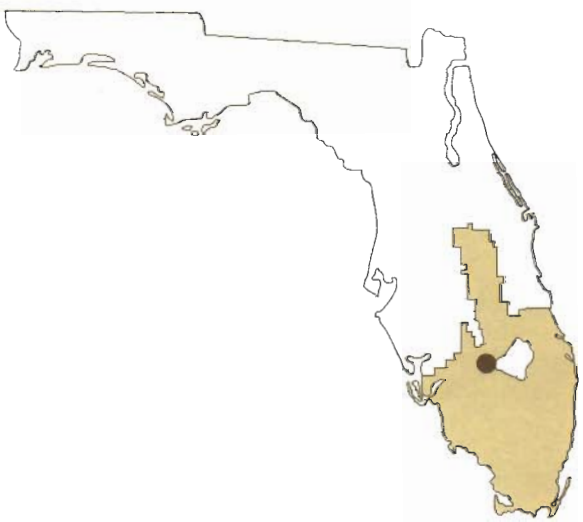
	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning		•
Hydrologic Restoration Plan	•	

County:
Glades

Acres Acquired (SOR):
2,219 acres

Acres Acquired (District):
10.4 acres





SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 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

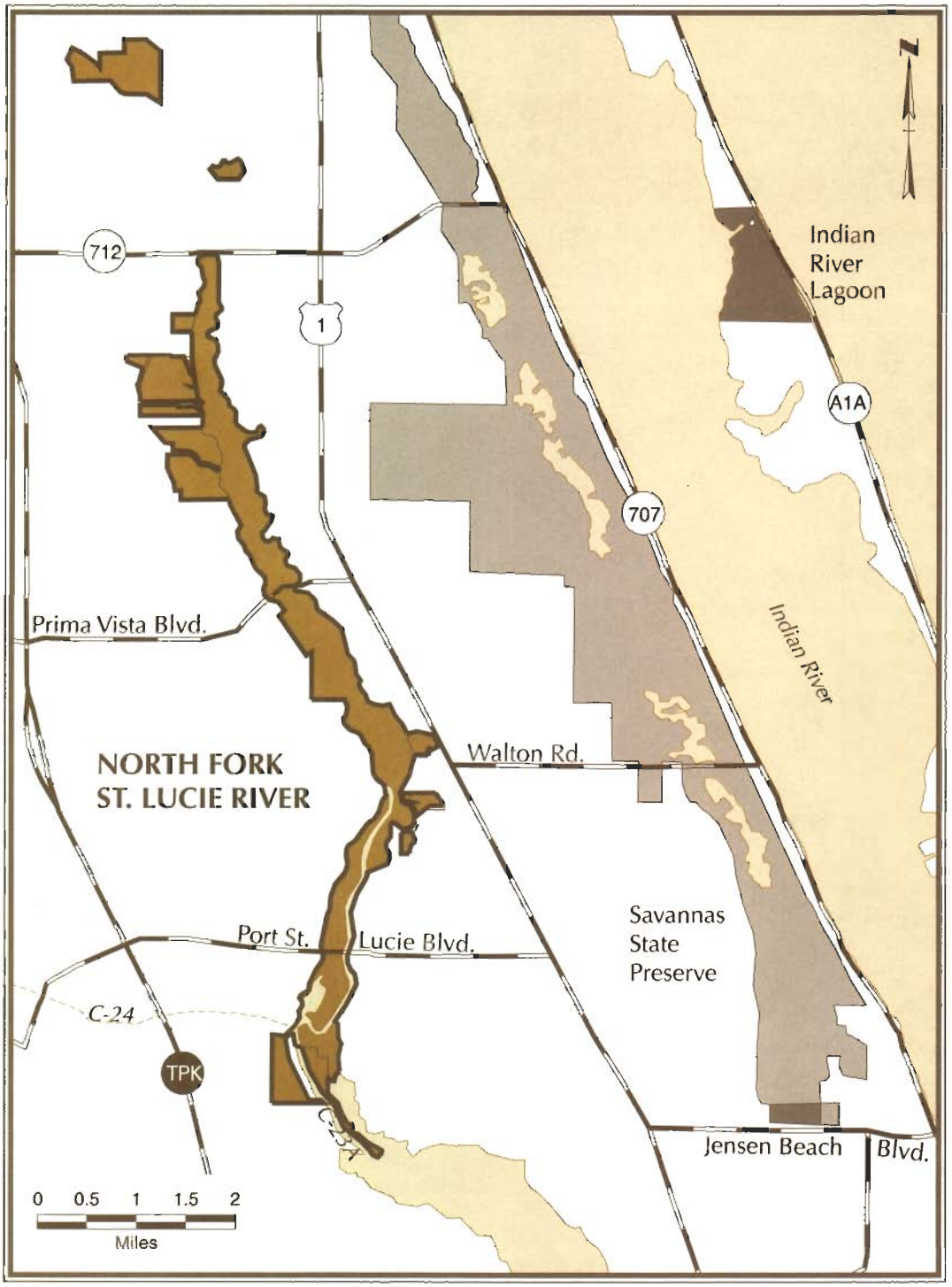
This stretch is included within the North Fork St. Lucie River Aquatic Preserve and is classified as Outstanding Florida Water. In addition to the river flood plain, the project includes approximately 175 acres of high quality uplands, such as high hammock, pine flatwoods and sand pine scrub.

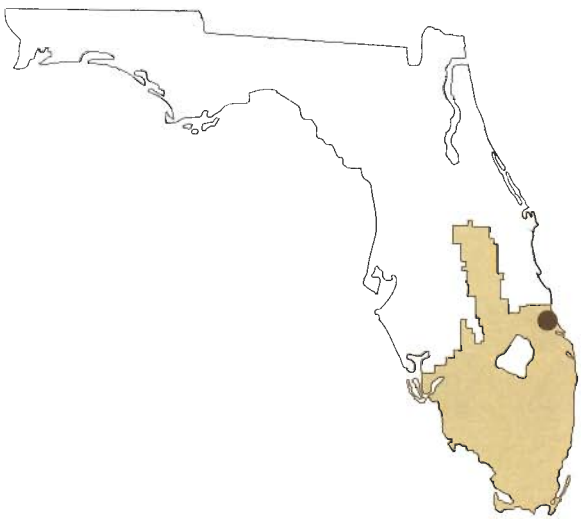
Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

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.





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1996 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

County:
St. Lucie

Total Project Area:
2,800 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous

292

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

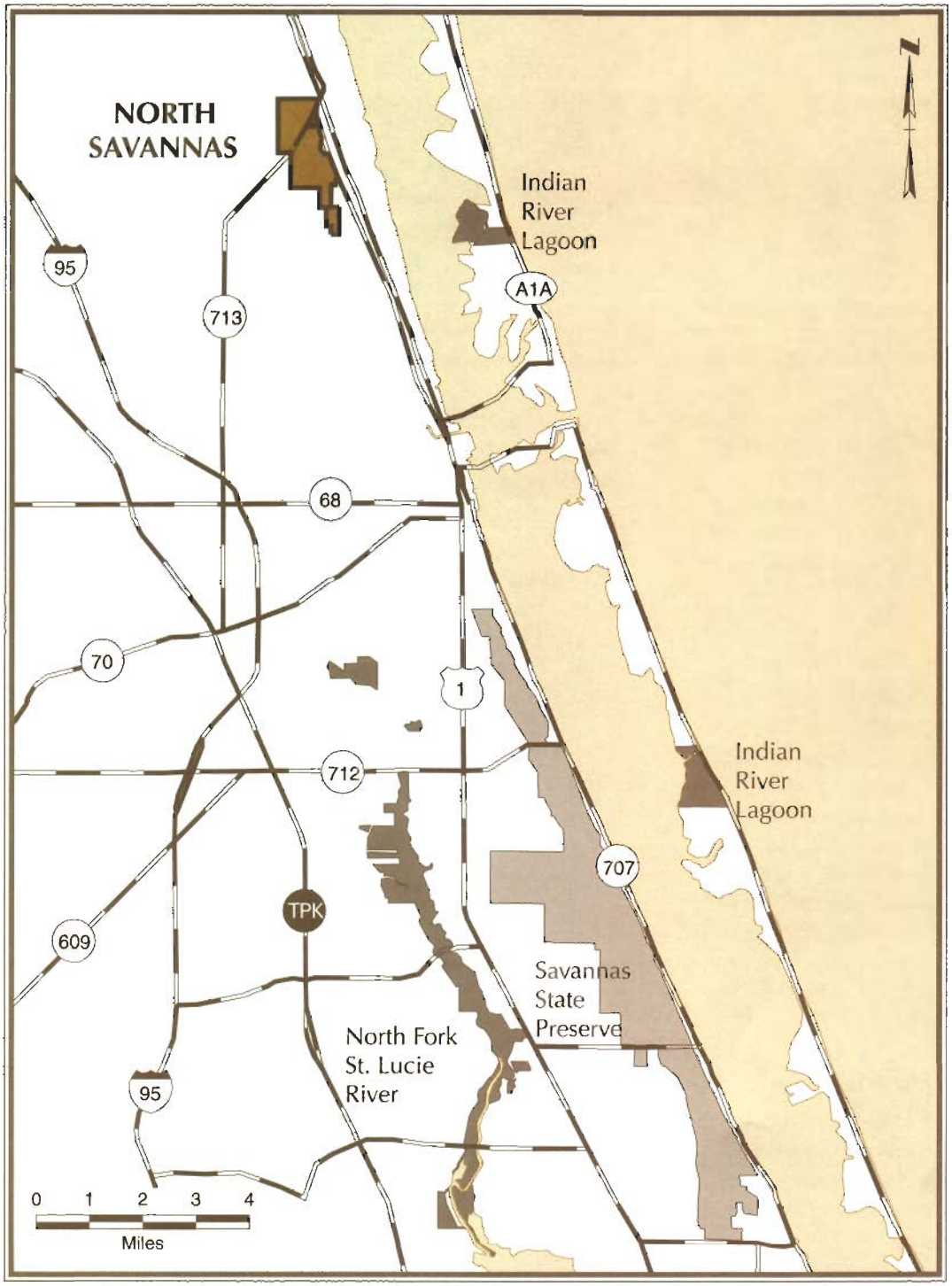
The site is in relatively good condition; however, numerous shellrock roads cross an old platted portion Removal of the old roads would probably benefit sheetflow.

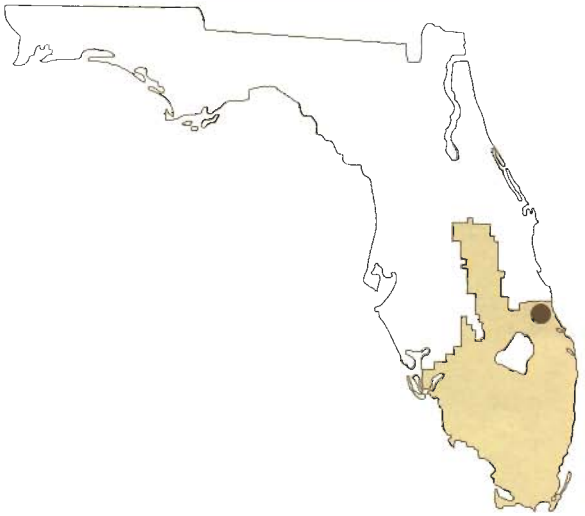
Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

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.





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1996 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

County:
St. Lucie

Total Project Area:
930 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous

Okaloacoochee Slough

General Description

Okaloacoochee Slough includes more than 29,000 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.

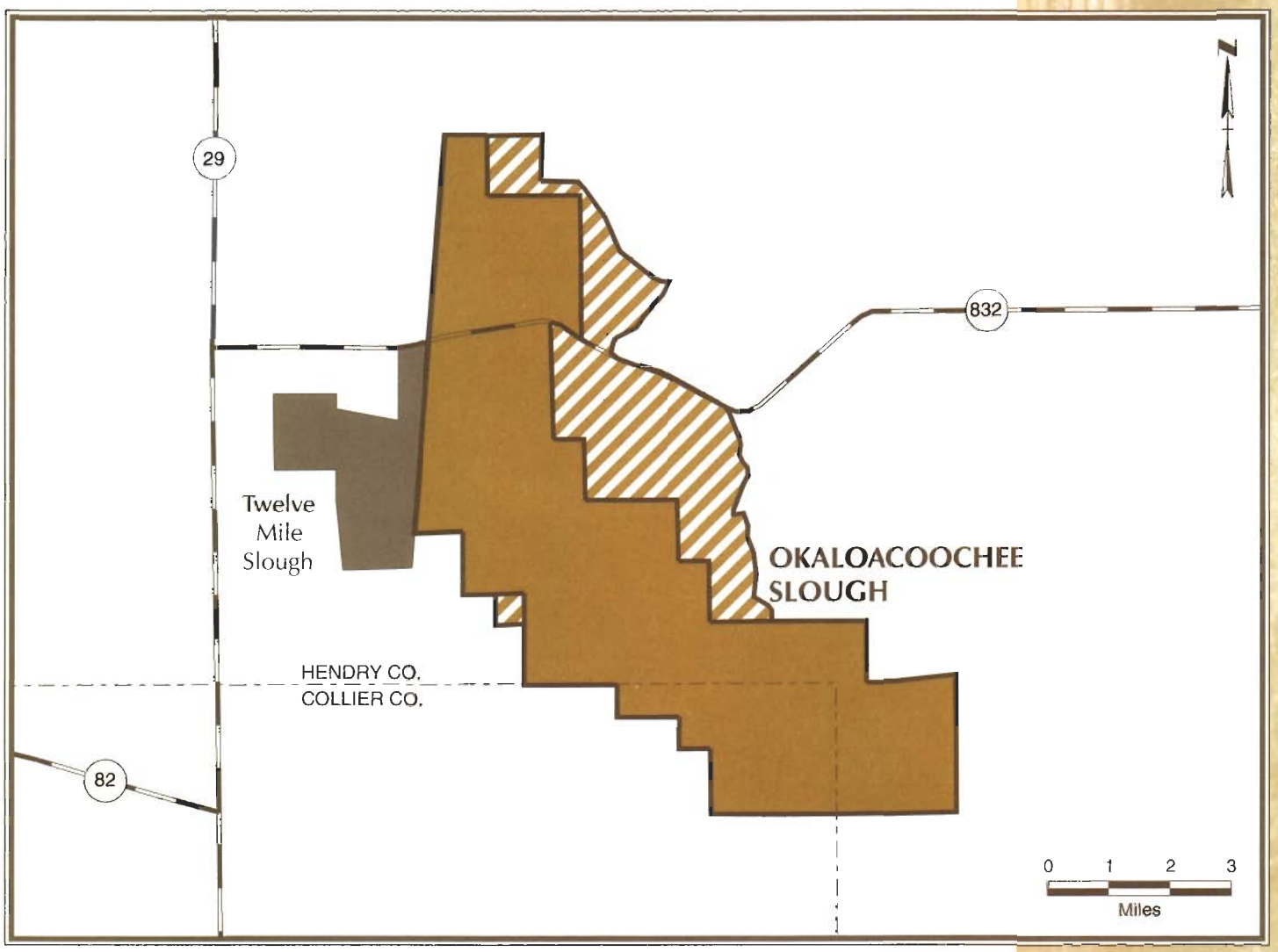
The diversity of community types provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Many wading birds would be expected to use the wetlands as feeding areas, including wood storks and numerous hawks.

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

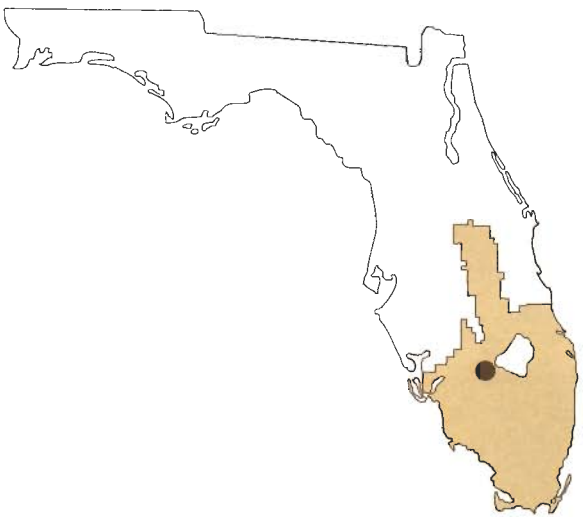
The diversity of community types and remote setting would make this a hiking and wilderness camping destination. The property is currently leased for hunting, and it is likely that public hunts could be conducted.



County:
Hendry

Total Project Area:
29,800 acres

Number of Owners:
One



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 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.

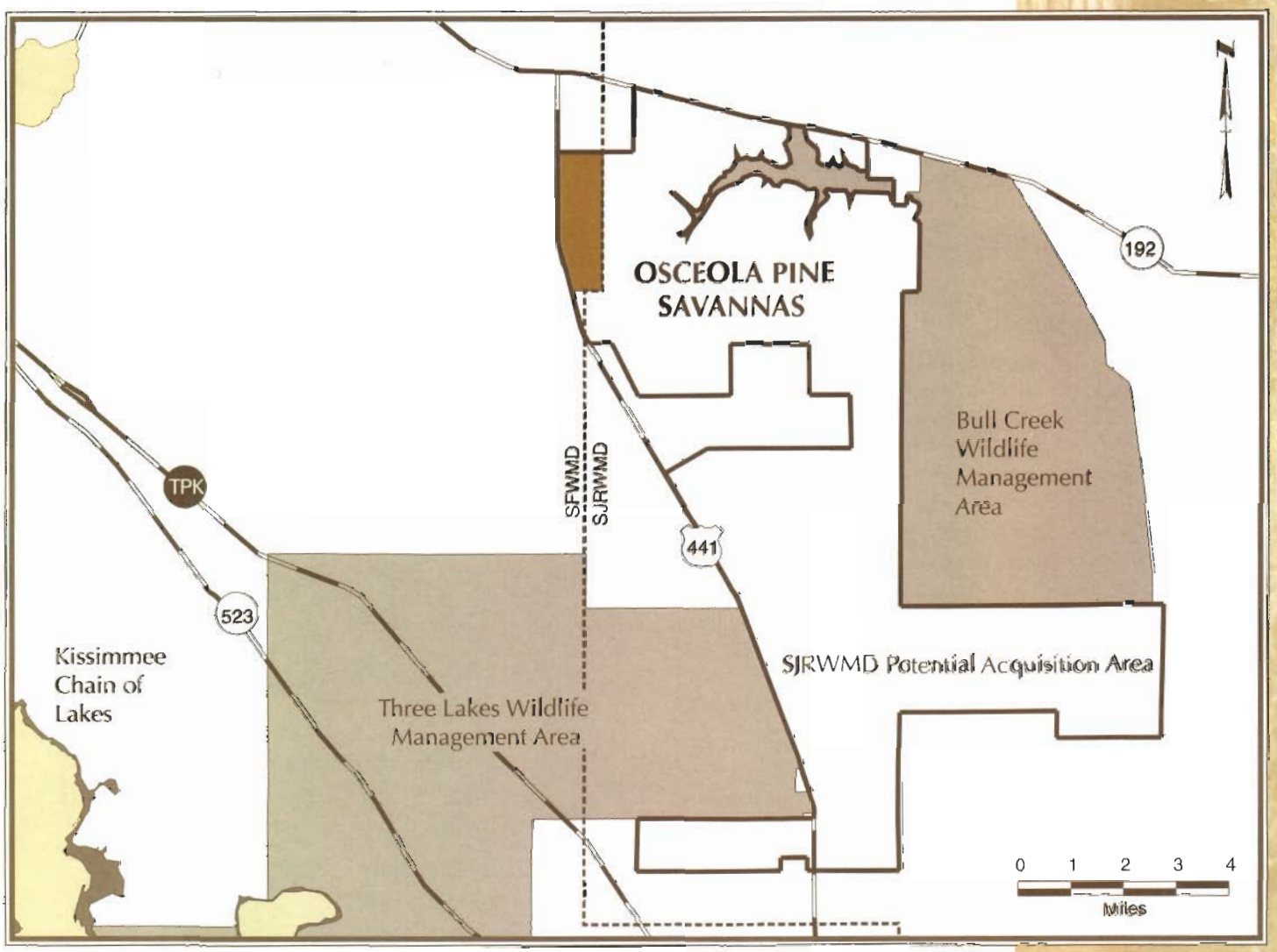
Acquisition of Osceola Pine Savannas would provide a key link connecting Bull creek Wildlife Management Area with Three Lakes WMA, creating a protected corridor in excess of 117,000 acres. Several listed species, including the red-cockaded woodpecker, have colonies on adjacent protected lands. Protecting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

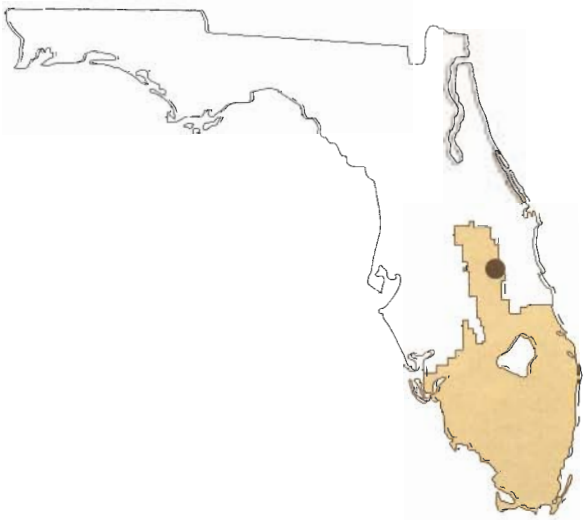
This site offers excellent recreational opportunities. Hiking, wilderness camping, nature appreciation, horseback riding, and hunting are all likely uses.



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
- 1996 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		5,000
Mowing/Chopping	10	
Restoration		•

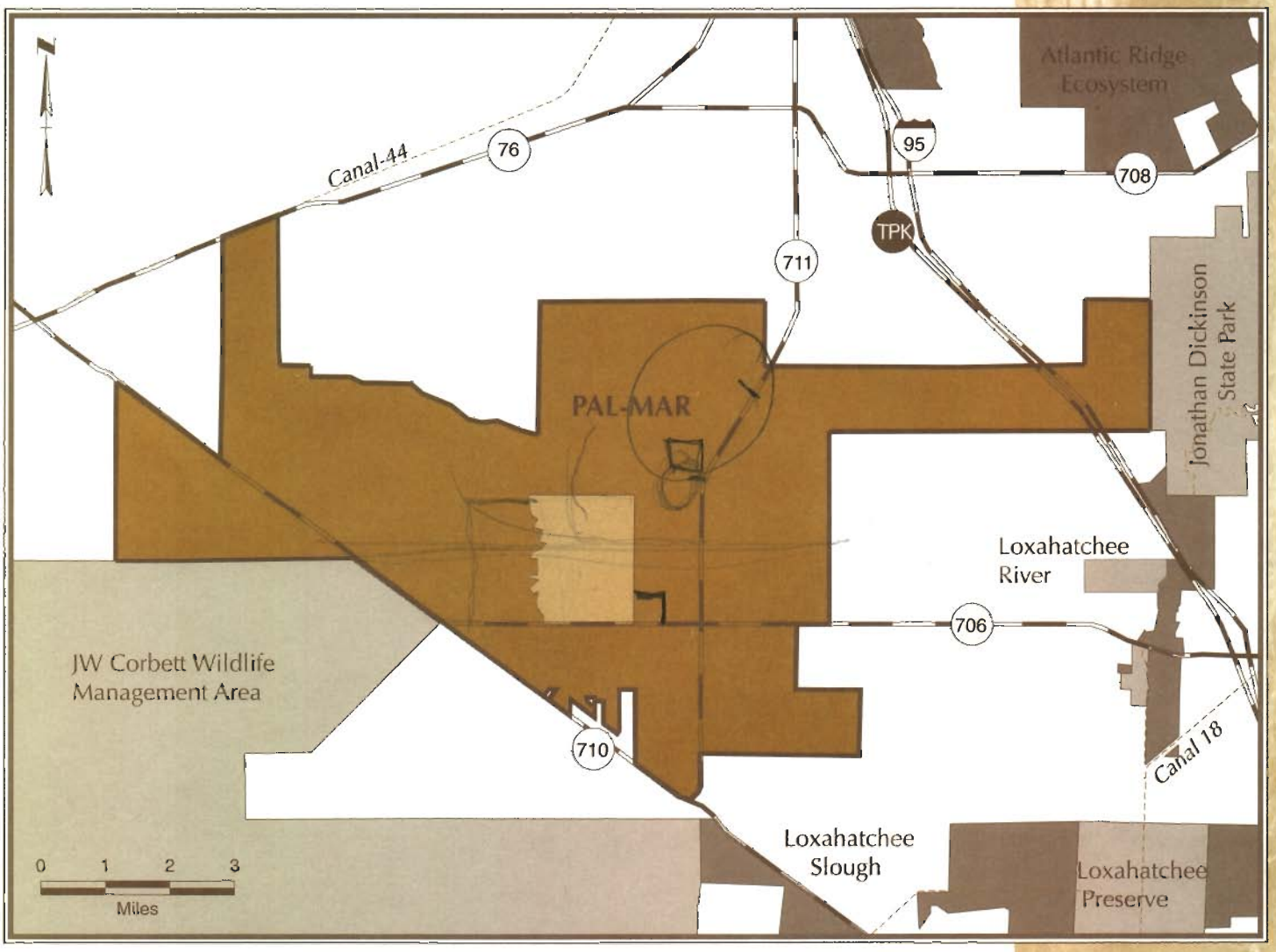
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal	•	
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
Private	•	

Public Use

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

Planning

	Ongoing	Complete
Conceptual Planning	•	
Hydrologic Restoration Plan		



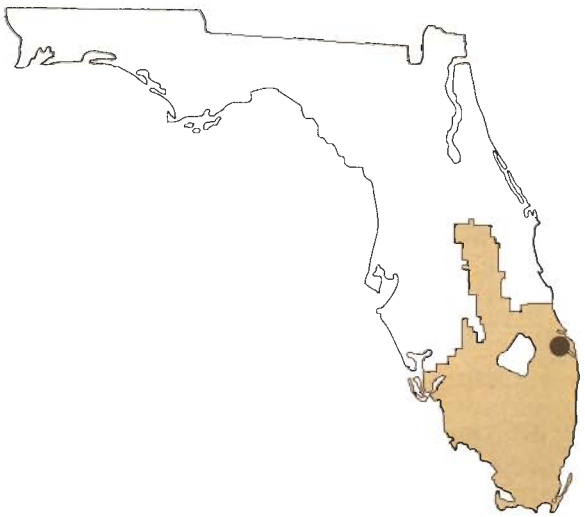
Counties:
Martin and Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
37,314 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,922

Land Cost:
$922,073

Acres Remaining:
35,392



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 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

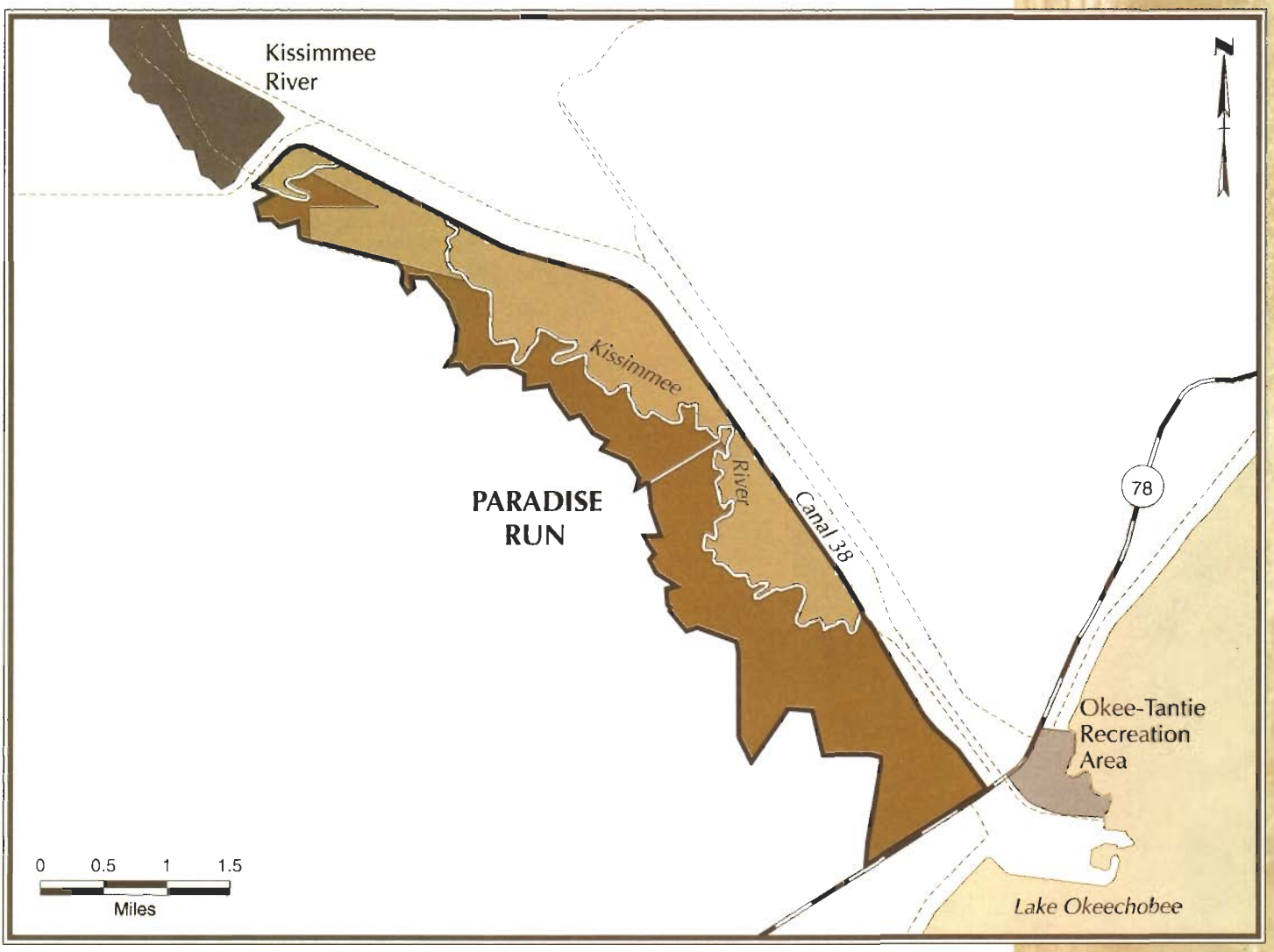
Since water levels in Paradise Run will not be affected by Kissimmee River restoration, other structural methods will have to be employed to provide a continuous flow of water to the reach. It appears that several engineering solutions exist. To date, time and funds have not been available to explore 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.

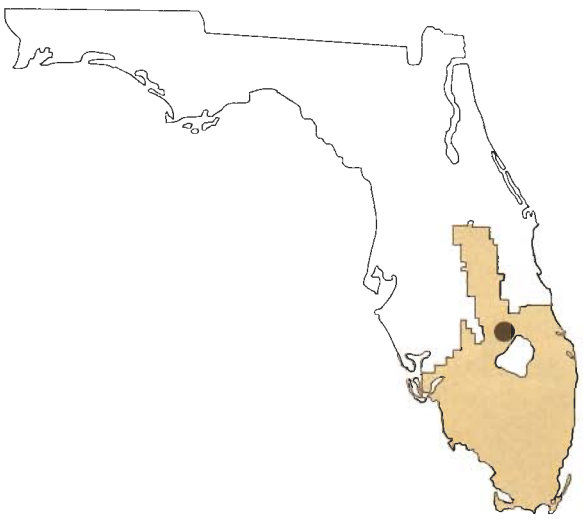


Counties:
Glades and Okeechobee

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
1996 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Parker-Poinciana

General Description

Parker-Poinciana covers approximately 1,970 acres in Osceola and Polk Counties. It lies between the Disney Wilderness Preserve and District-owned lands already acquired as part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes SOR project along the north shore of Lake Hatchineha. It contains a variety of community types, including mesic flatwoods, a large cypress/bay head, logged-over flatwoods, and hydric hammock along the Lake Hatchineha shoreline. This tract has been permitted by the District and DEP for residential development. The present land use is cattle grazing.

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

The project drains south to Lake Hatchineha via London Creek. The property contains numerous small cypress domes, as well as one large dome of several hundred acres. Shallow ditches and swales have been excavated to drain the wetlands and increase the amount of grazable pasture. Several of these ditches extend to the edge of Disney Wilderness Preserve and impact that site. Acquisition would enable these drainages to be blocked. This property contains a variety of upland and wetland communities, and is directly connected with other protected lands. Land previously purchased by the District that connects with this tract includes more than one mile of shoreline on Lake Hatchineha.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

Many of the wetlands on site have been connected with shallow ditches and swales, but most of these areas should be easily restorable with earthen ditch plugs, which would also stop the overdrainage of Disney Wilderness Preserve. Exotic vegetation does not appear to be a problem. There are several hunting cabins and campsites, but no permanent residences. The site has been regularly burned, but probably on a cycle to promote the growth of non-native pasture grasses. The implementation of growing season prescribed fires at the Disney Wilderness Preserve is transforming many former pastures into wiregrass-dominated understories.

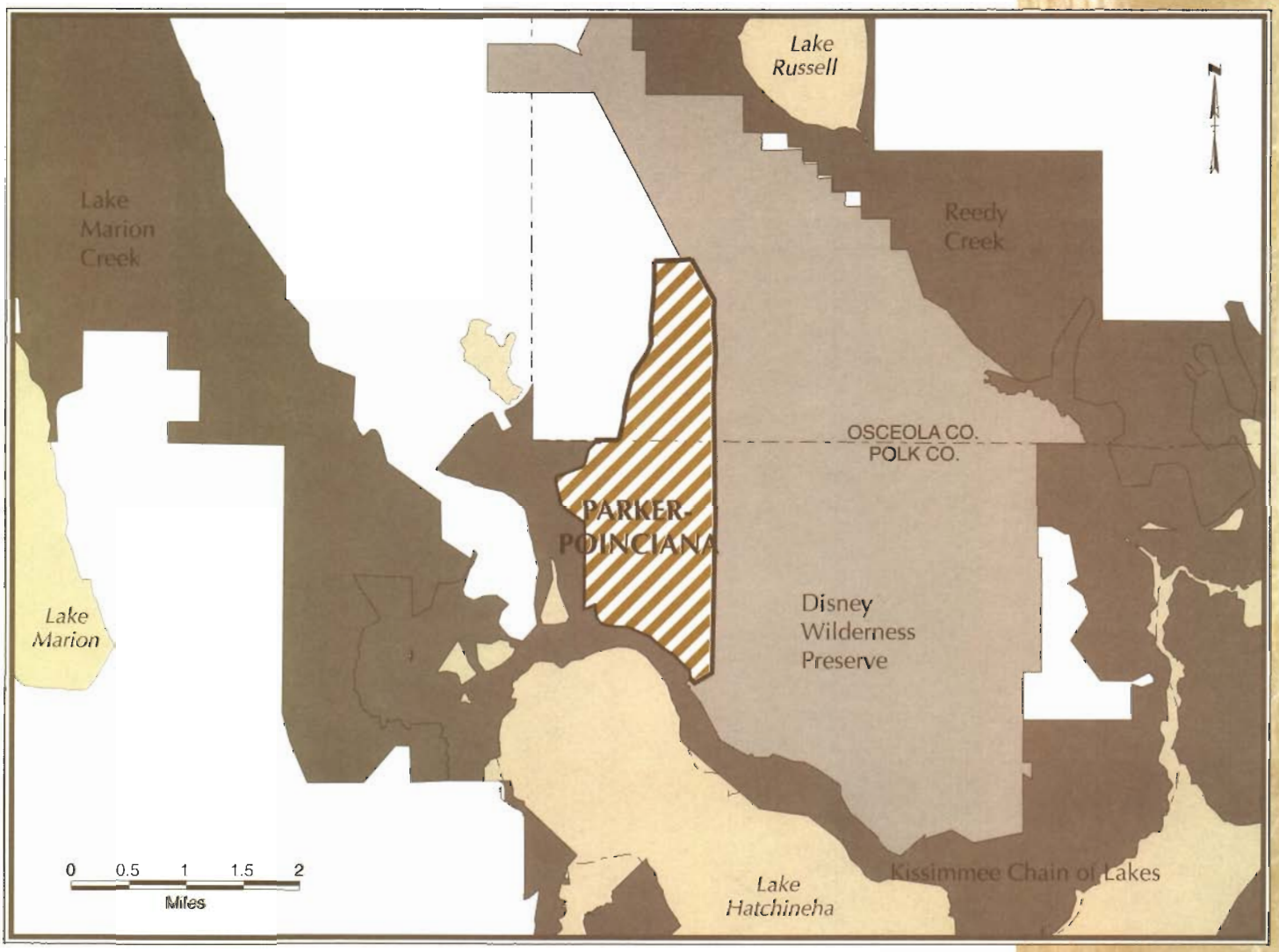
The diversity of community types and proximity to other large, undisturbed tracts of land creates excellent habitat for a wide variety of game and non-game wildlife species. Deer, turkey, sandhill cranes, Sherman's fox squirrel, scrub jays, gopher tortoises, and many species of wading birds have all been observed.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

It is proposed that the property be managed by The Nature Conservancy, in conjunction with their management of Disney Wilderness Preserve. The project would be developed as a mitigation bank by TNC. Hydrologic restoration and reestablishment of a longleaf pine/wiregrass community would be the major management goals.

Recreation Potential

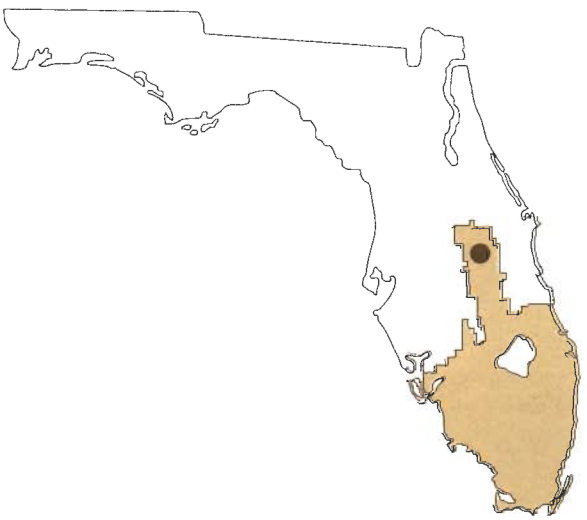
An access road runs north-south through the property, with numerous arterial woods roads. The property has excellent public use potential. It is very accessible, and contains a variety of habitats where hiking, wilderness camping, and horseback riding are possible.



Counties:
Osceola/Polk

Total Project Area:
1,970 acres

Number of Owners:
One



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 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

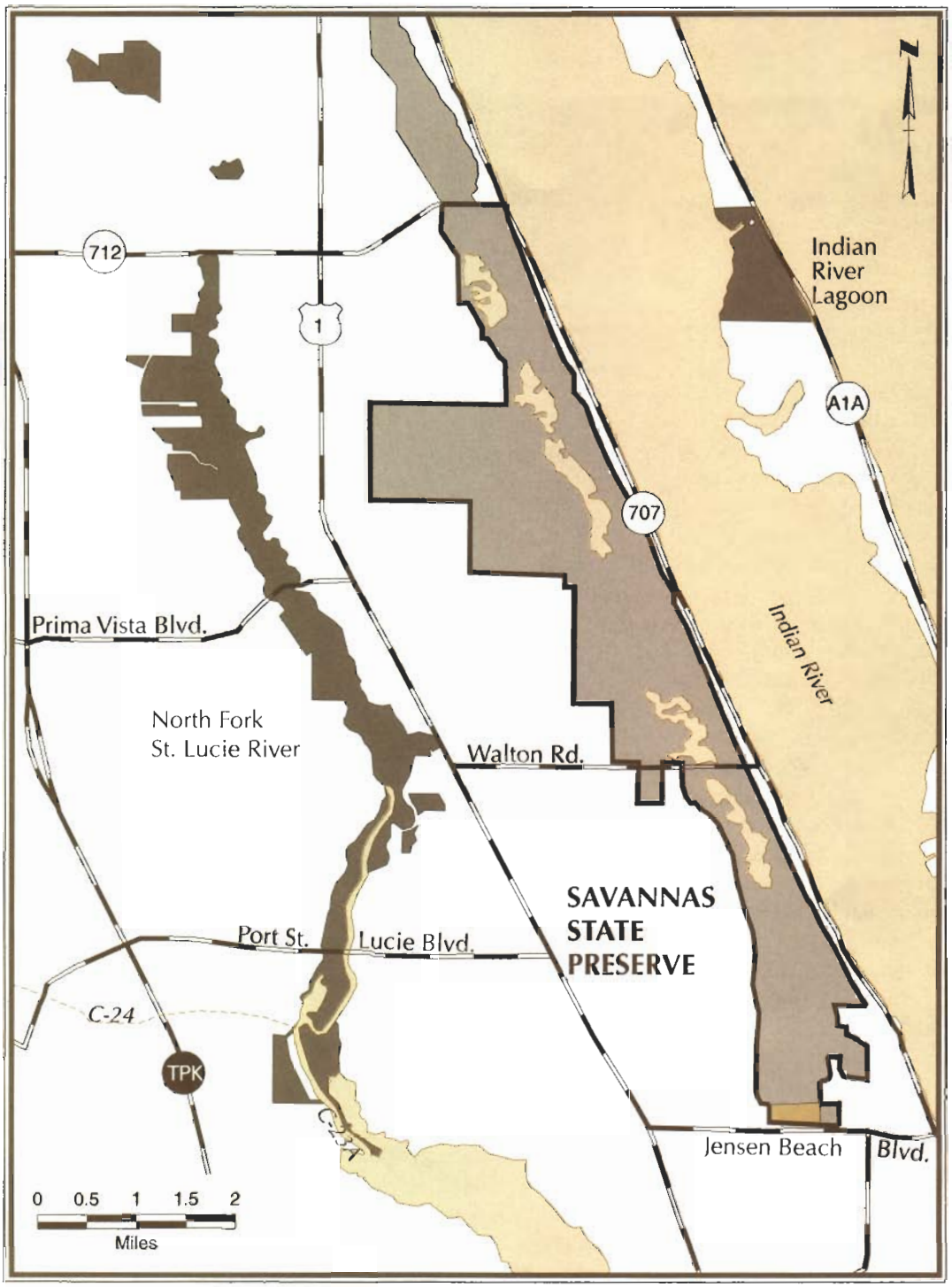
The Savannas is one of the most unique and endangered natural systems in the District. It is a remnant coastal wetland system, which historically extended along most of the Southeast Florida coast. Most of the area is in its natural state, thus eliminating the need for restoration. The wetlands are highly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



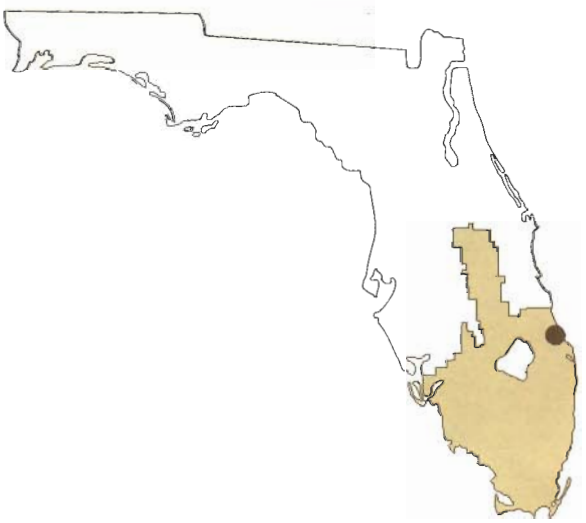
Counties:
Martin and St. Lucie

Total Project Area:
5,900 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
77

Land Cost:
$3,100,000

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 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.

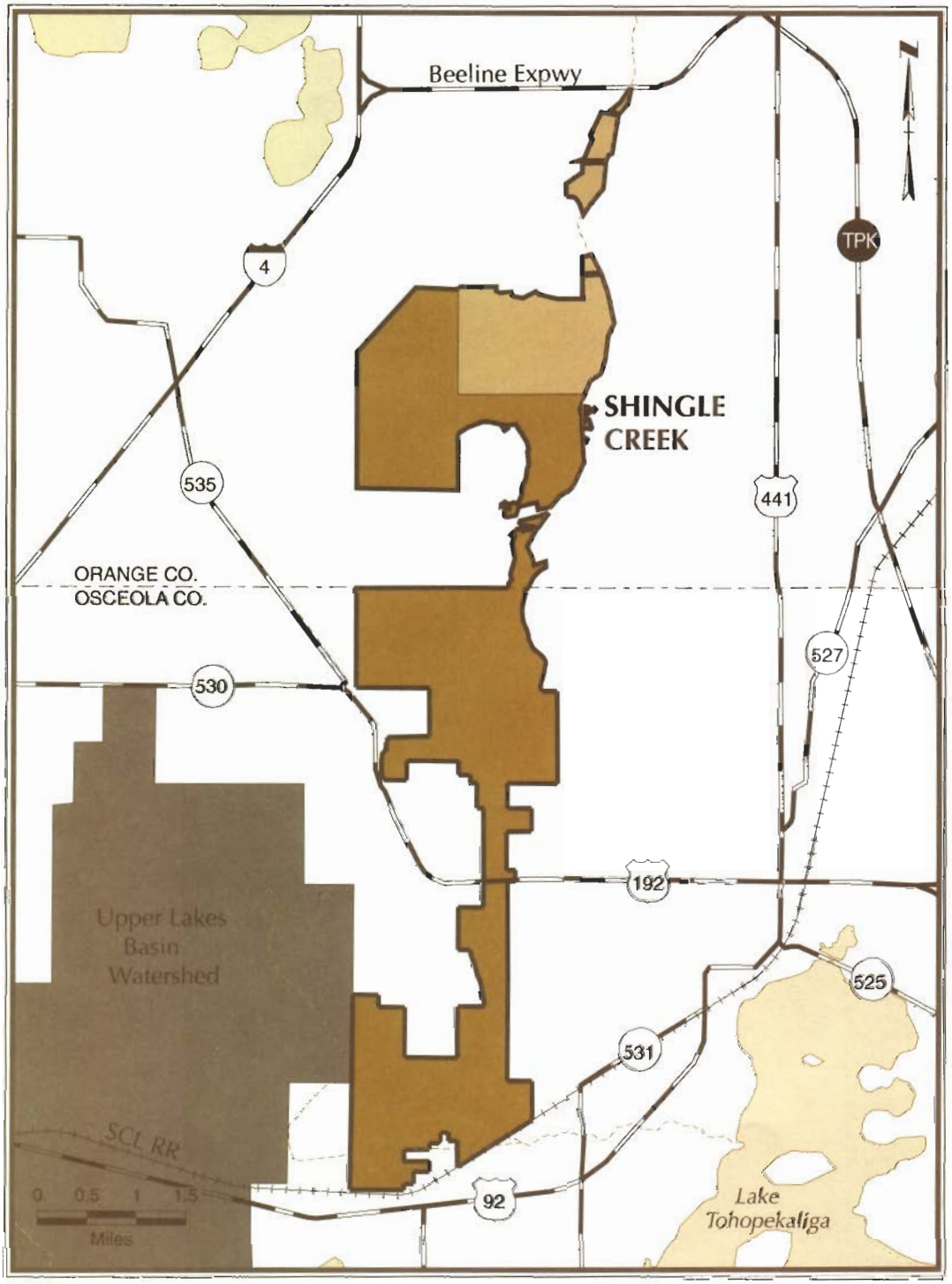
District-owned lands are dominated by forested wetlands, which are not fire dependent communities. If additional uplands are acquired in the future, fire management plans will be developed. Primrose willow appears to be the only nuisance exotic present on District-owned lands. The majority is along rights-of-way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



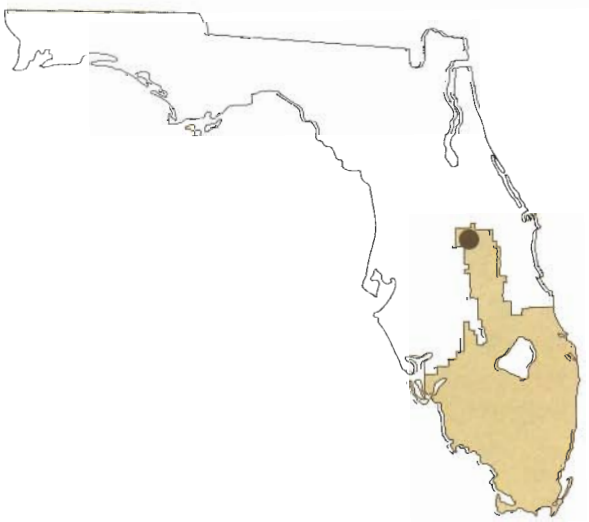
Counties:
Orange and Osceola

Total Project Area:
7,655 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
1,132

Land Cost:
$1,344,400

Acres Remaining:
6,523



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 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. During the 1996 plan period the District acquired twenty acres of the project lands.

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	Ongoing	Proposed
Exotic Control	•	
Fire Management		
Mowing/Chopping		
Restoration	•	

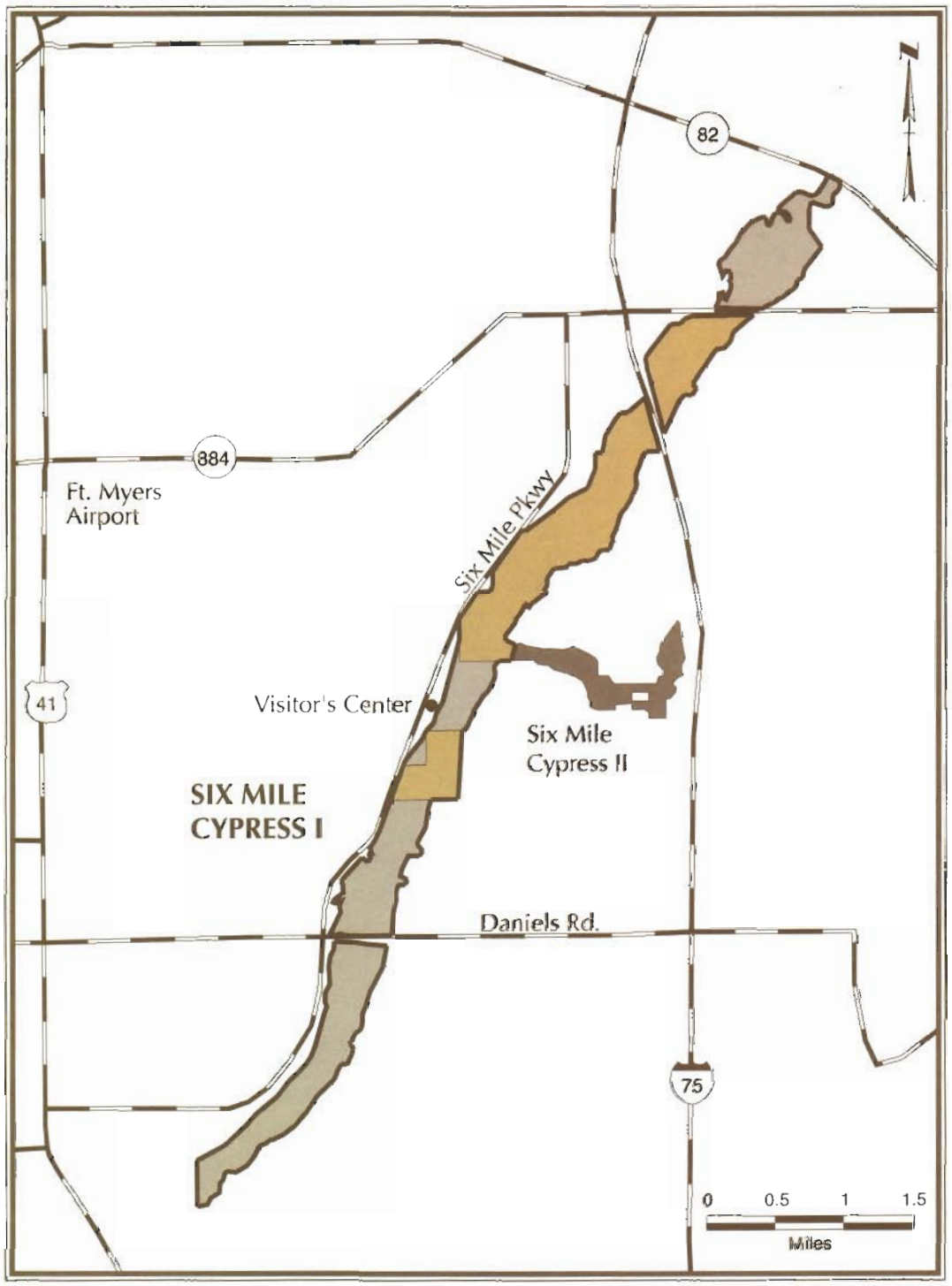
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		•
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting		•
Security		
County	•	

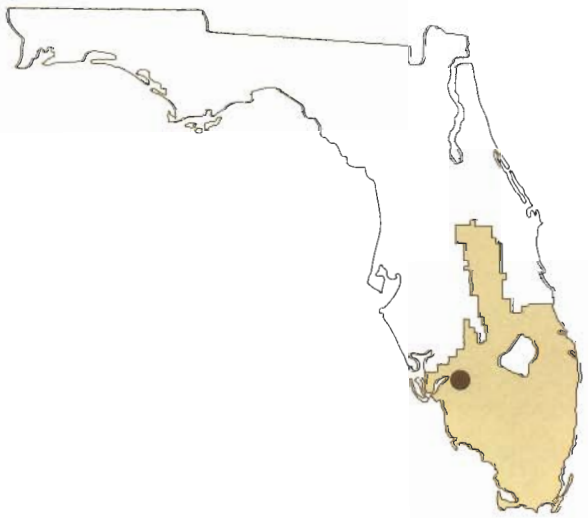
Public Use

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

Planning

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





SOR Lands Acquired to Date

Potential Acquisition Areas

Other Conservation Areas

Other SOR Projects

1996 Project Additions

SOR Project Boundary

County:
Lee

Total Project Area:
1,741 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
839

Land Cost (SOR):
$1,975,321

Acres Acquired by Others:
966.73

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.

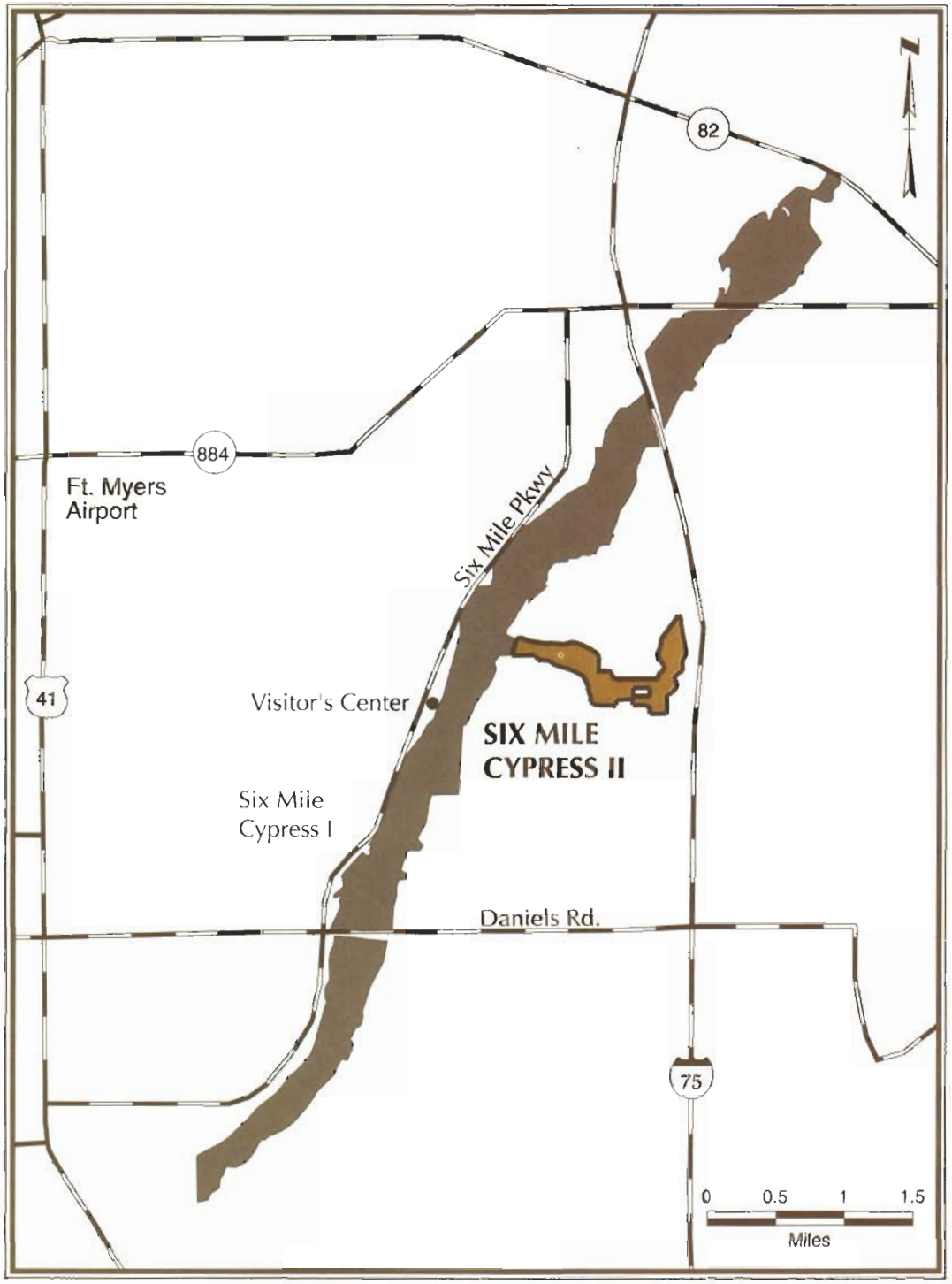
Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

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

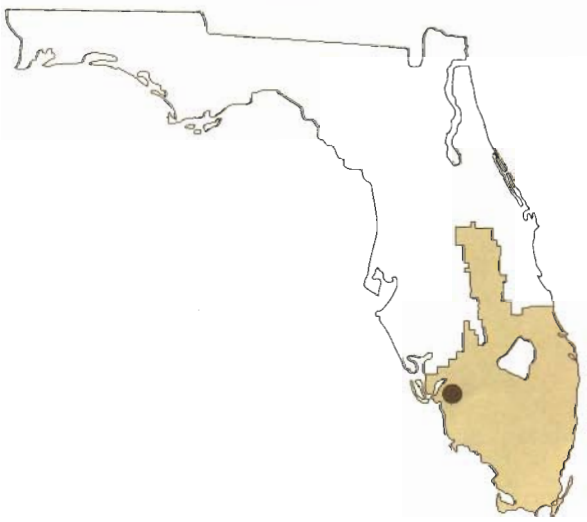
The slough has been used informally for both active and passive recreational activities for many years. The continuation of passive activities, such as fishing, picnicking, photography and nature observation, will be encouraged in appropriate locations within the preserve. Interpretive facilities consisting 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
1996 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.

During the 1996 plan period the District acquired eighty one acres of project lands. This property is located east of the river.

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	30
Fire Management	52	
Mowing/Chopping	50	100
Restoration		

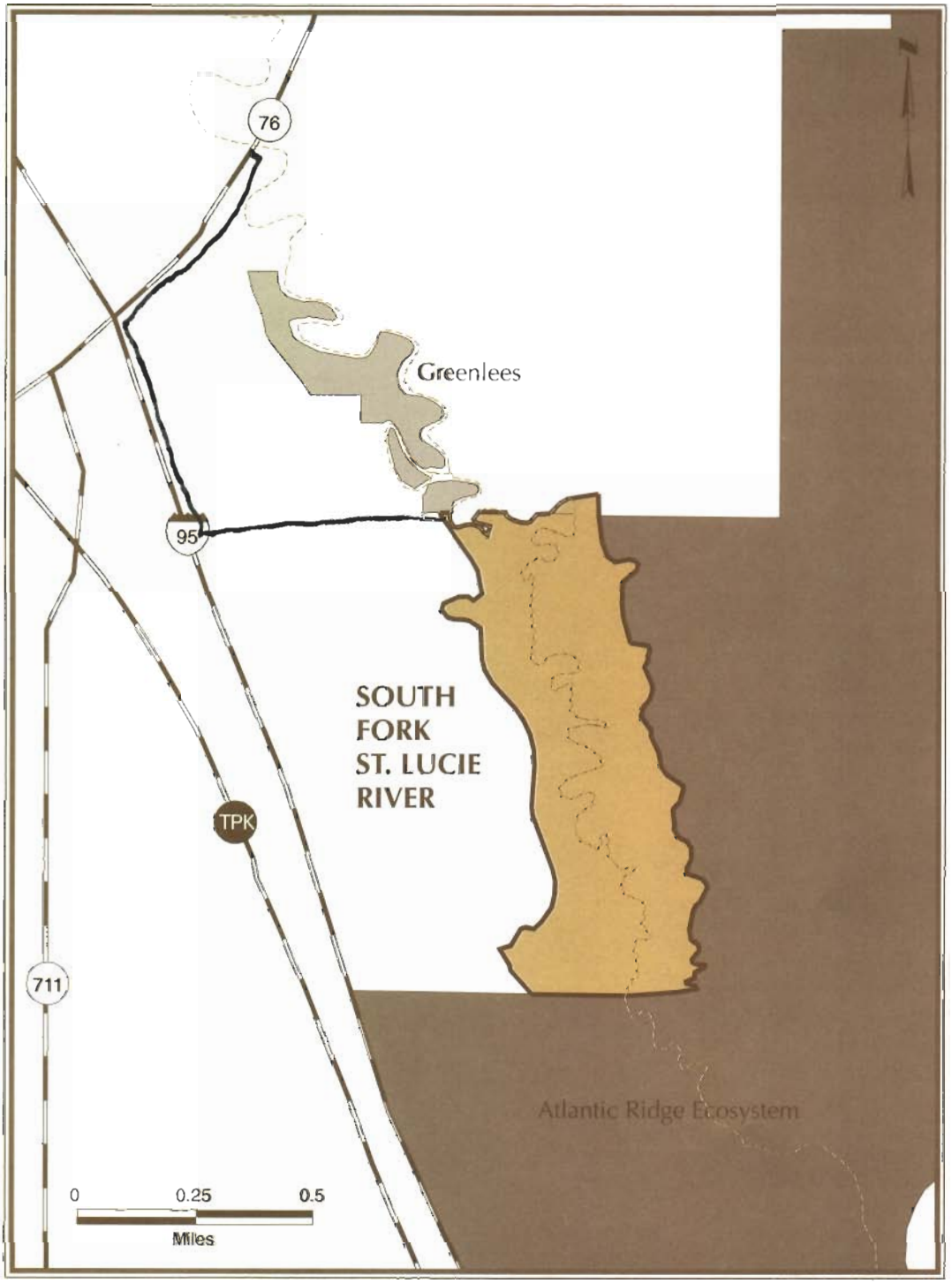
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting		•
Security		
Private	•	

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		

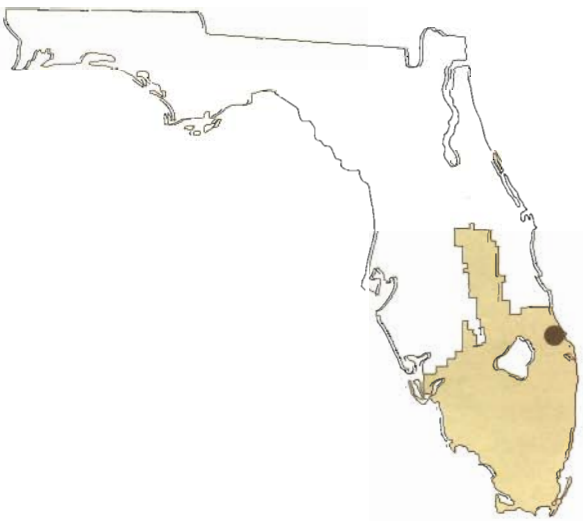


County:
Martin

Total Project Area:
184 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
184

Land Cost:
$2,480,000



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 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 1996, the project boundaries were modified to include two tracts totalling 100 acres. One tract of twenty acres is added due to current ownership, allowing the District to acquire the project lands by overcoming the objection at splitting ownership. The other eighty acres is cleared of exotic vegetation and is proposed, by the owner, to be added to the project at no cost to the District. During the 1996 plan year the District acquired ten acres within the project.

Project Vision

It is the District's goal is 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	8,357 trees	yearly
Fire Management	0	2,500
Mowing/Chopping		
Restoration	4.25 miles	

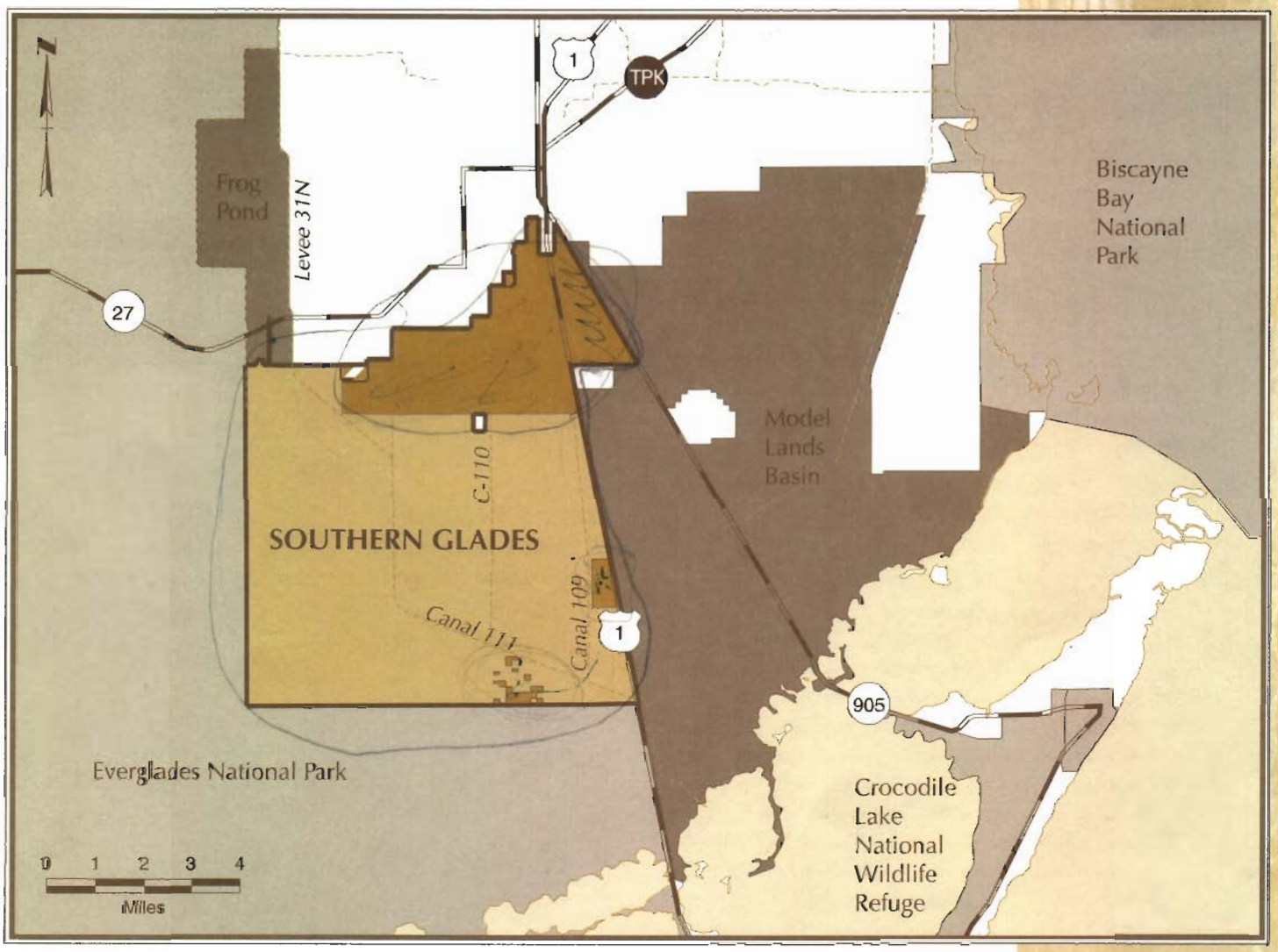
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up	•	
Waste Removal	•	
Fencing/Posting	•	
Security		
GFC	•	

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		



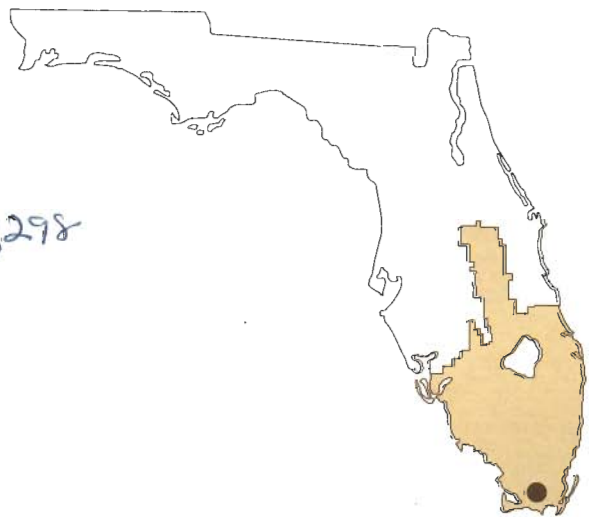
County:
Dade

Total Project Area:
37,600 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
30,134 + 164 = 30,298

Land Cost:
$9,943,302

Acres Remaining:
7,466



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Stairstep Mitigation Area

General Description

The Stairstep project, (Corkscrew Mitigation Bank) is located off Corkscrew Road in southern Lee County, approximately four and three quarters (4.75) miles east of the junction with Alico Road and seven and one-half (7.5) miles east of I-75. The northern boundary is adjacent to an area established as mitigation for impacts associated with the Southwest Florida International Airport, the Stairstep Mitigation Project.

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

The project lands are situated next to the headwater's basin of the Flint Pen Strand, known as Imperial Marsh. Presently, runoff from the southern two-thirds of the property is drained via ditches and swales directly to the upper portion of the strand south of Corkscrew Road. Preservation of existing wetlands and restoration of degraded wetlands on the property would help maintain wet season runoff near the headwaters of the strand to the north of Corkscrew Road. These headwaters have been identified as a possible location for public water supply wellfields, and several existing wellfields are located in the vicinity. Retention of additional surface water in this area would improve recharge to the surficial aquifer supplying those wellfields and would provide additional flood control benefits downstream. Restoring wetlands on the property would contribute to improved water quality of surface runoff flowing into the strand and eventually to Estero Bay.

Potential for Restoring and/or Protecting Natural State and Condition

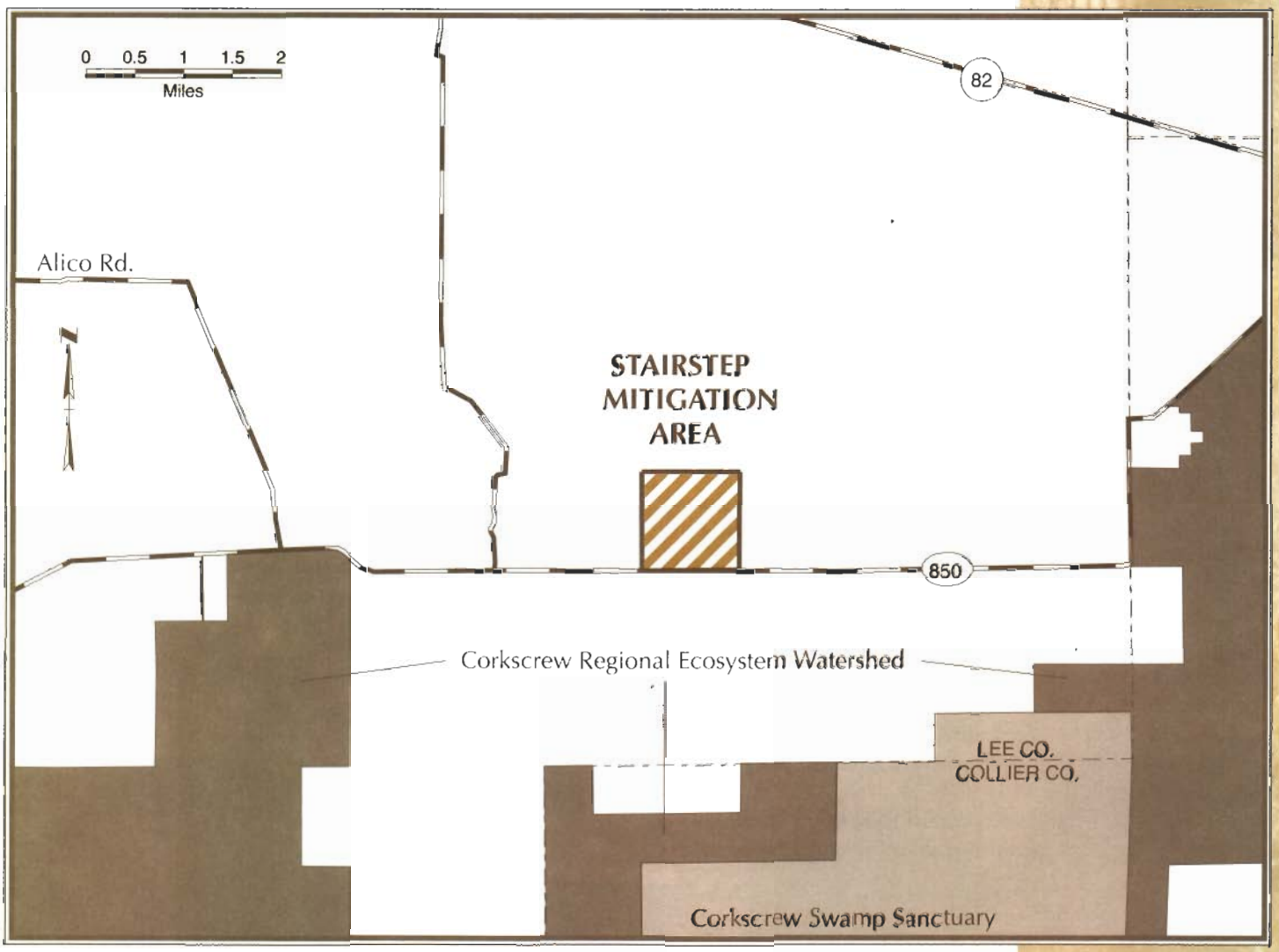
The property is located adjacent to one of the highest quality ecosystems and wildlife corridors in eastern Lee Country. The goal of the restoration plan is to reclaim the historic natural system existing on the site before drainage, development, agriculture or other human induced activities. Through hydrologic restoration, removal of exotic plant species, and regeneration of plant species indigenous to the natural system and fire management, the historic ecological communities can be restored. The benefit of undertaking such an effort is improved wildlife habitat value, and improved water quality and flood protection to the site and region.

Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

The management mission is to restore and maintain the ecological functions and values of the site. Fire management and exotic plant control are the primary land management challenges on the Stairstep project. Additional management issues that must be considered include cattle grazing, fencing, endangered species protection, public use development and road and trail maintenance.

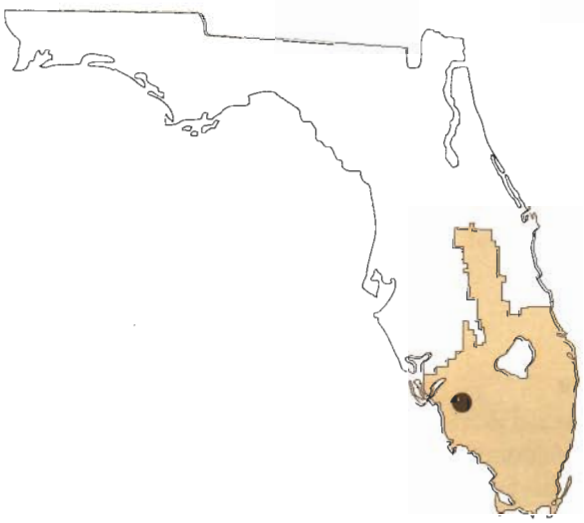
Public Recreation

This site offers opportunity for a trailhead to serve a hiking system that could tie into the larger mitigation project to the north. The lands may offer opportunity for environmental education.



Counties:
Lee

Total Project Area:
632 acres



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 Project Additions
- SOR Project Boundary

Stormwater Treatment Areas

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. During the 1996 plan year the District acquired 835 acres.

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.

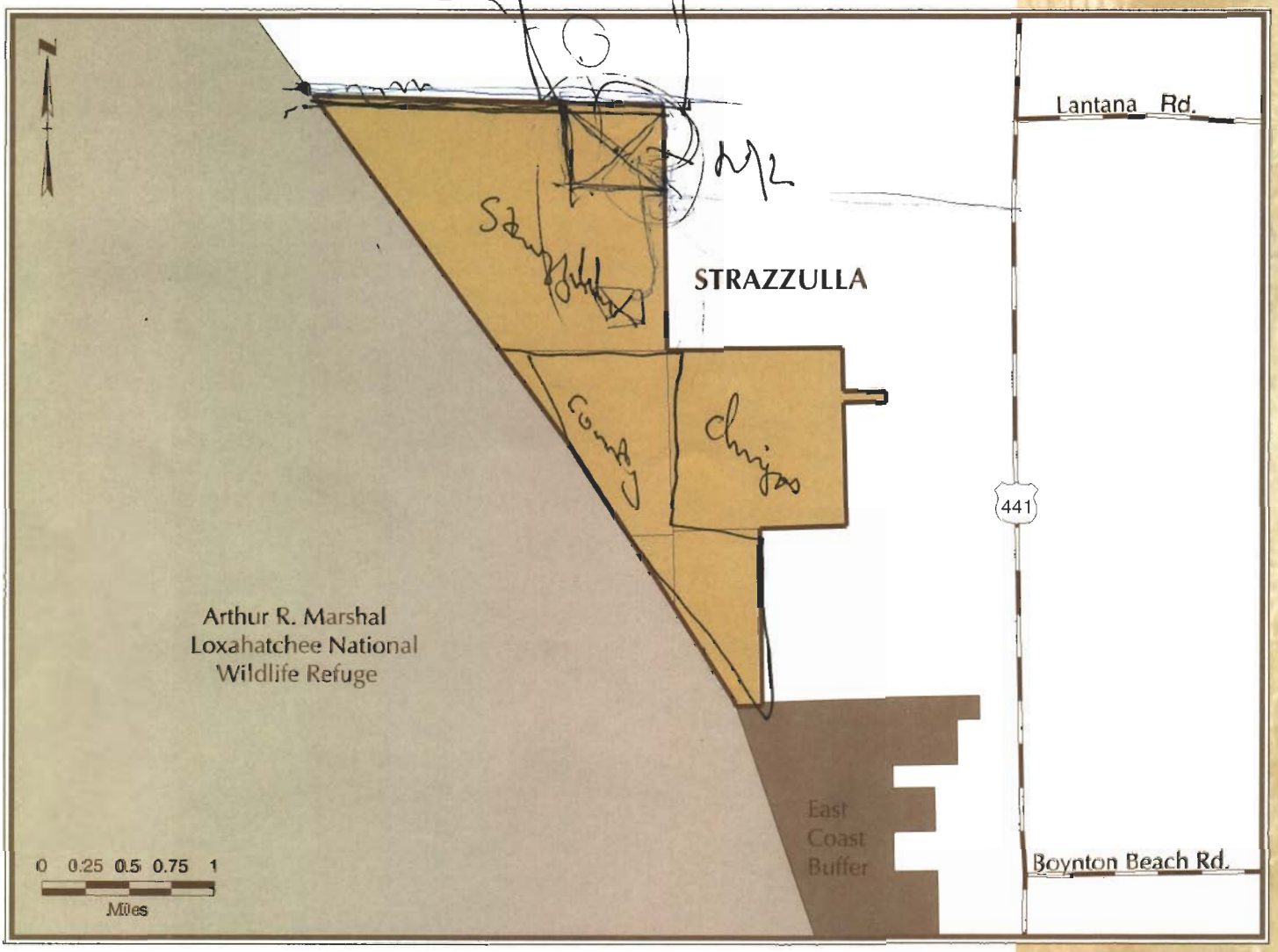
An investigation was made to determine the feasibility of diverting pumped stormwater away from the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and onto the exotic-infested portion of the SOR tract. It was hoped that the plan would provide the SOR property with needed water, while providing an acceptable level 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.



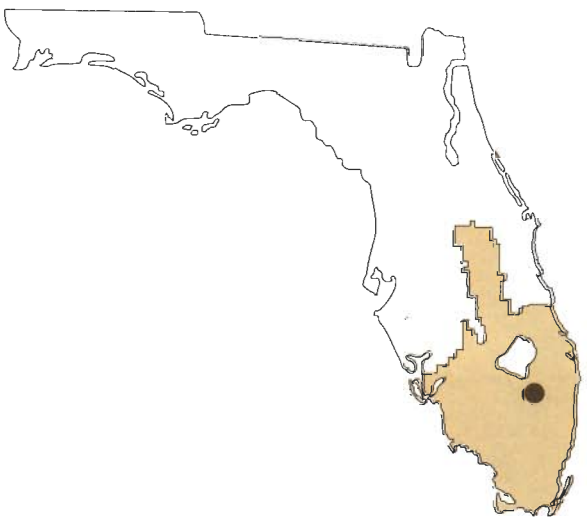
County:
Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
2,961 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
2,322.5

Acres Remaining:
0

Project Area Acquired Prior to SOR:
638.59 acres



- SOR Lands Acquired to Date
- Potential Acquisition Areas
- Other Conservation Areas
- Other SOR Projects
- 1996 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	10	10
Fire Management	30	0
Mowing/Chopping	•	•
Restoration	1	•

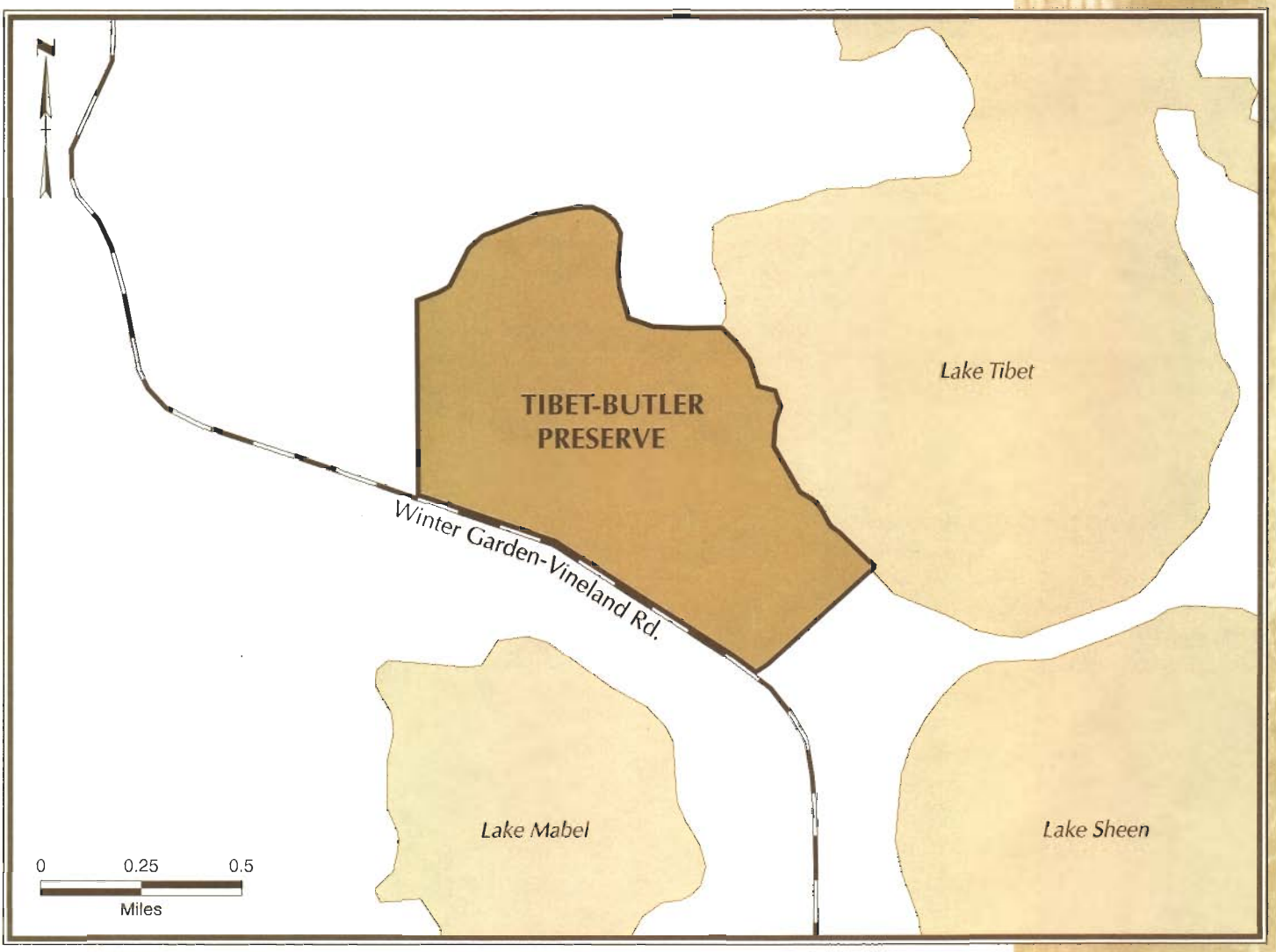
	Ongoing	Complete
General Clean-up		•
Waste Removal		•
Fencing/Posting		•
Security		
County	•	

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		

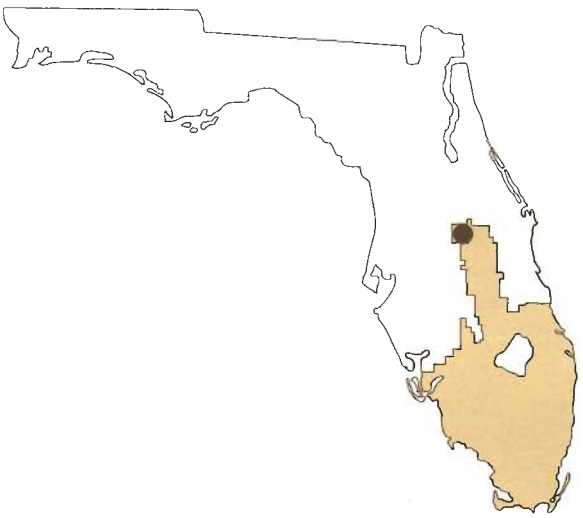


County:
Orange

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
1996 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.

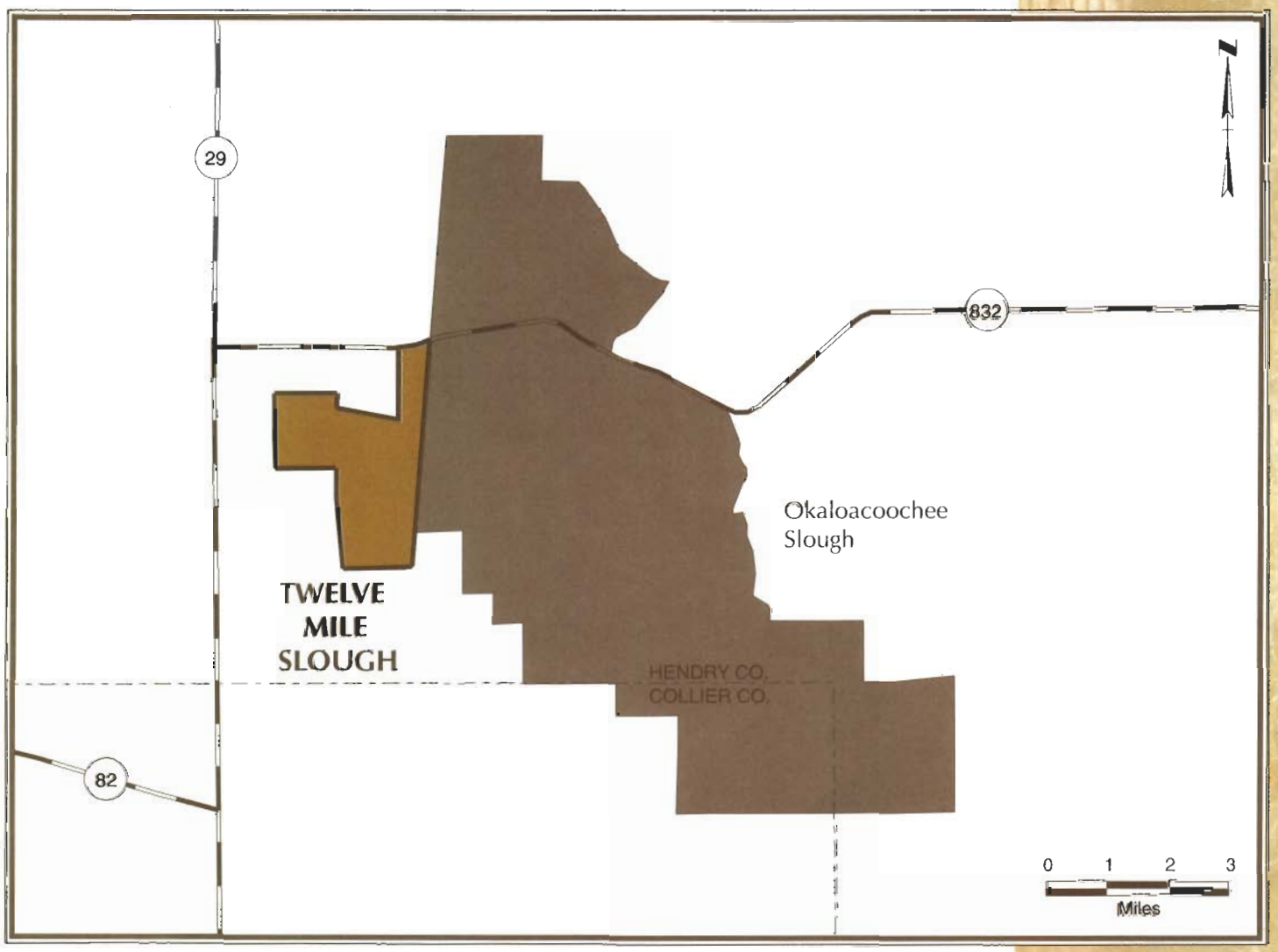
Potential for Managing and Maintaining in an Environmentally Acceptable Manner

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

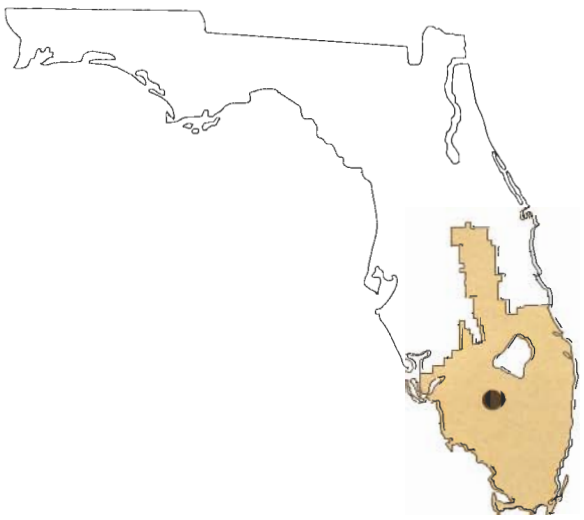
The mixture of habitat types would make this an interesting area for hiking trail development. However, its remoteness would probably make its use limited. An abandoned CSX Railroad grade runs adjacent to the property and lends opportunities for a "Rails to Trails" conversion, which could connect with 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
- 1996 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 11,087 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.

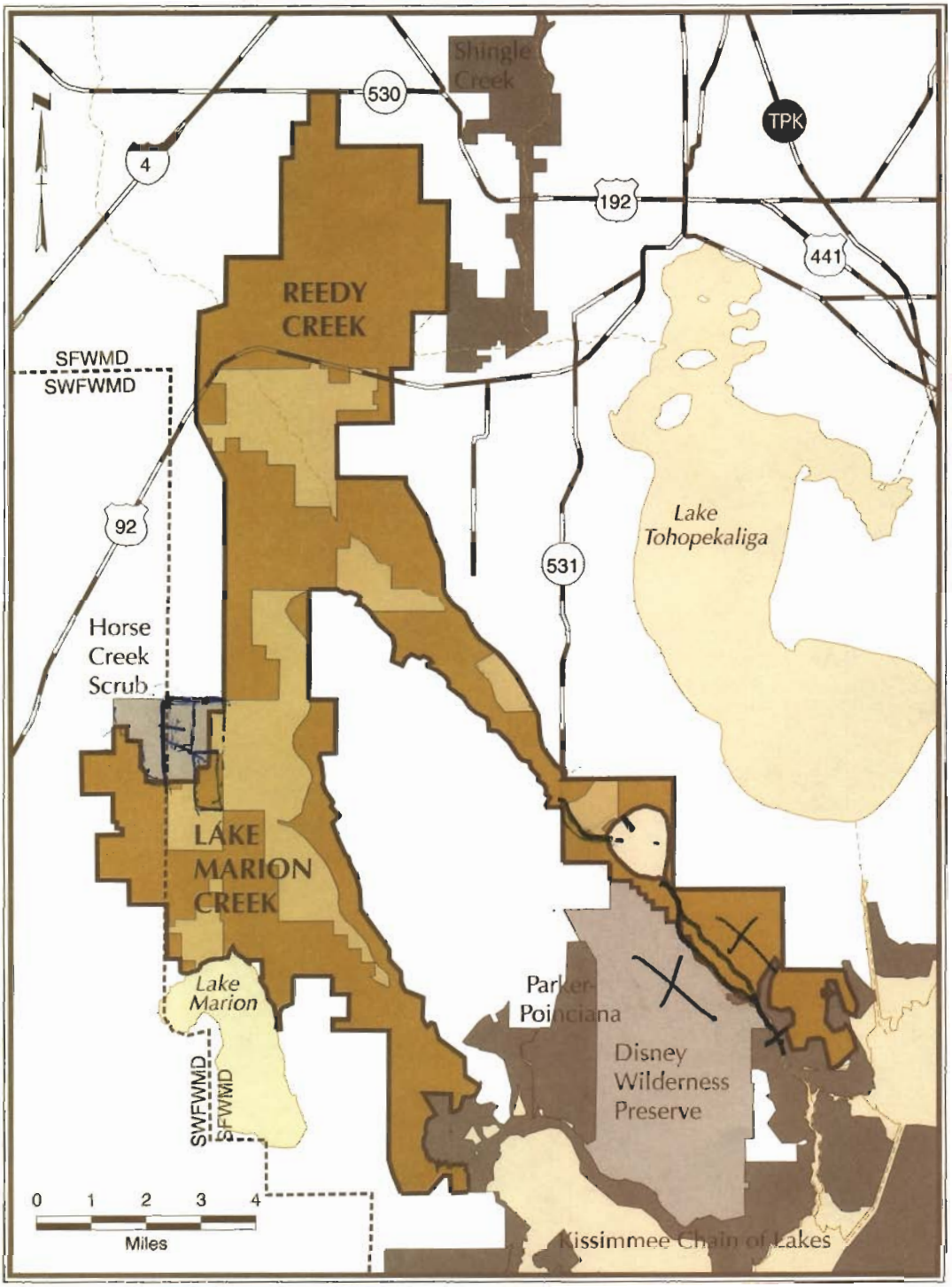
The natural habitats within the Lake Marion Creek area are generally in good condition although some scrub areas have been destroyed through land development activities. The size of the property and the deep swamps allows the interior portions to remain buffered from activities along the ridge.

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.



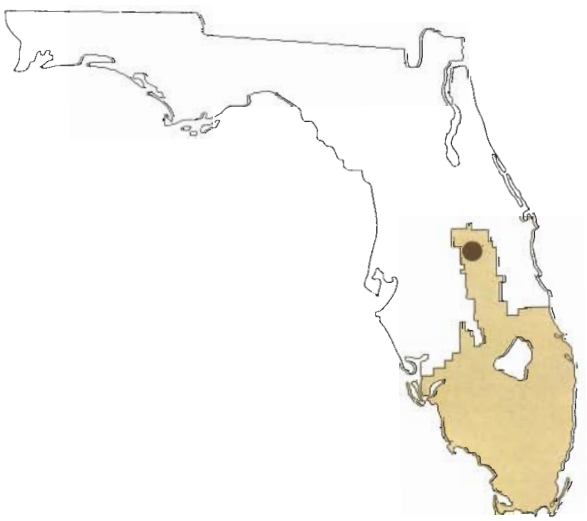
Counties:
Osceola and Polk

Total Project Area:
43,500 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
11,087 acres

Acres Remaining:
32,412 acres

Number of Owners:
Numerous



SOR Lands Acquired to Date
Potential Acquisition Areas
Other Conservation Areas
Other SOR Projects
1996 Project Additions
SOR Project Boundary

Water Conservation Areas

General Description

The three Water Conservation Areas (WCAs) 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

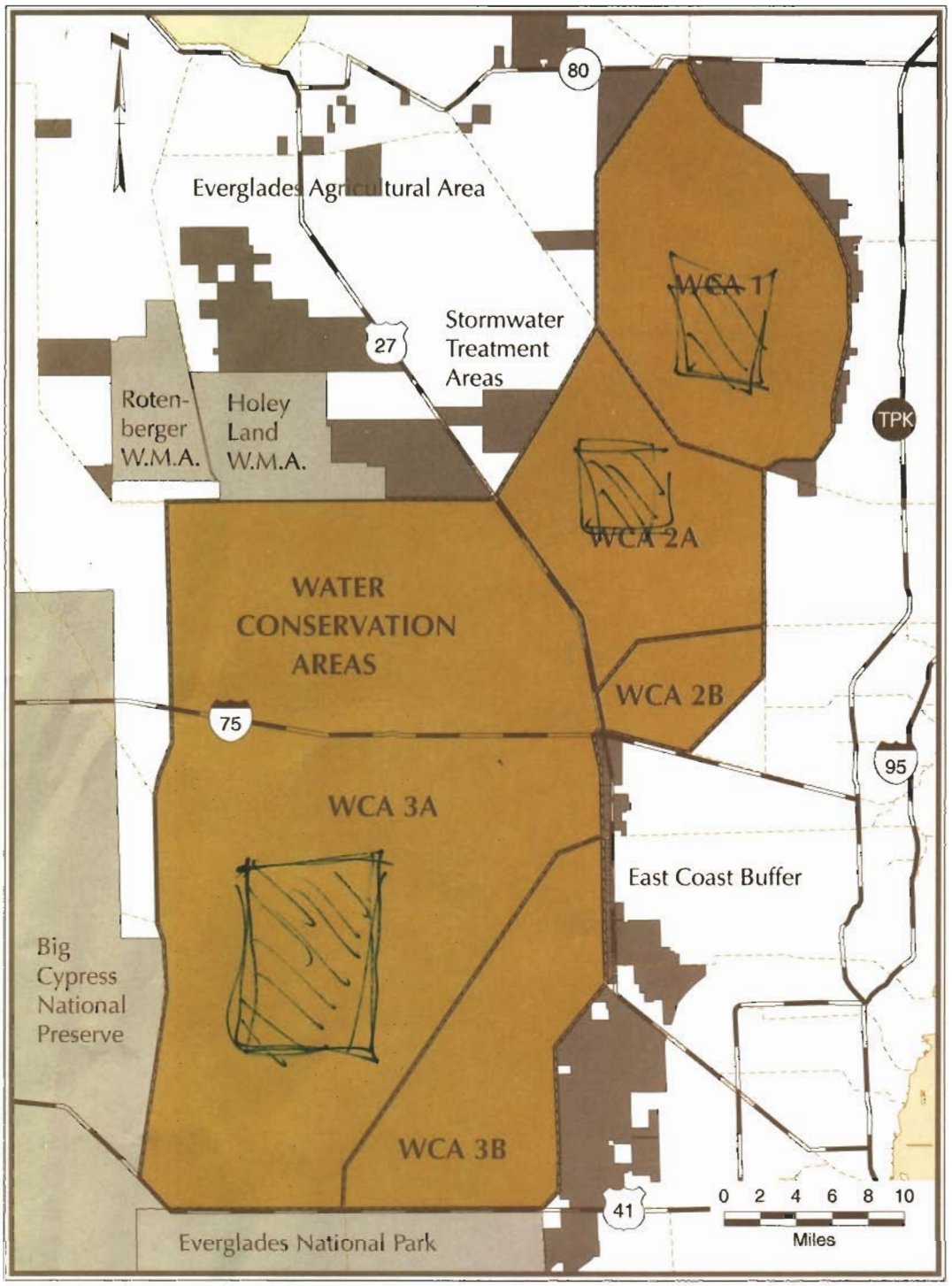
The District and the US Army Corps of Engineers have been regulating water levels in the three Water Conservation Areas, in accordance with criteria initially established in the 1950s and modified at various times over the years to meet changing conditions. The general purpose of the schedules is to 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.



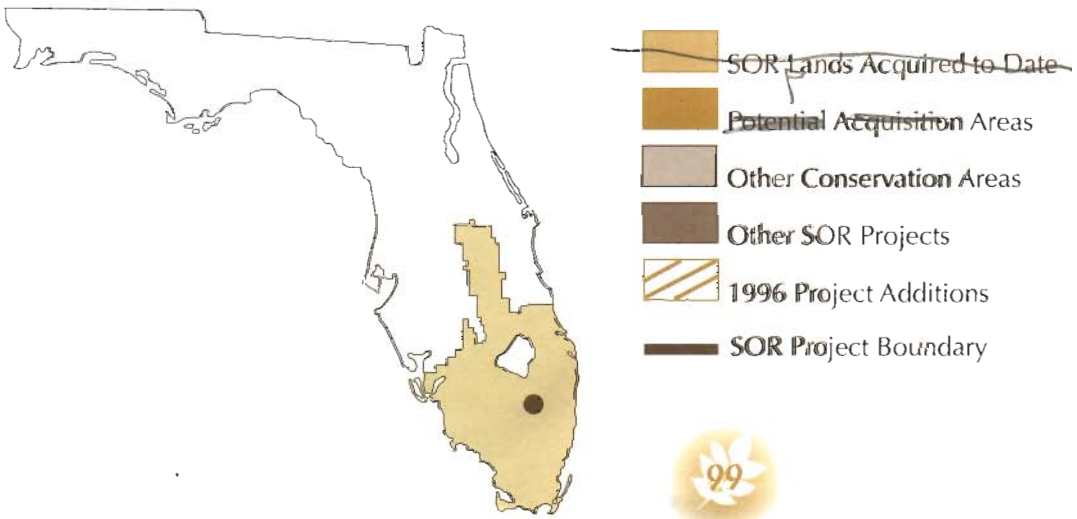
Counties:
Broward, Dade and Palm Beach

Total Project Area:
256,000 acres

Total Acres Acquired:
43,081

Land Cost:
$7,994,653

Acres Remaining:
212,900



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):

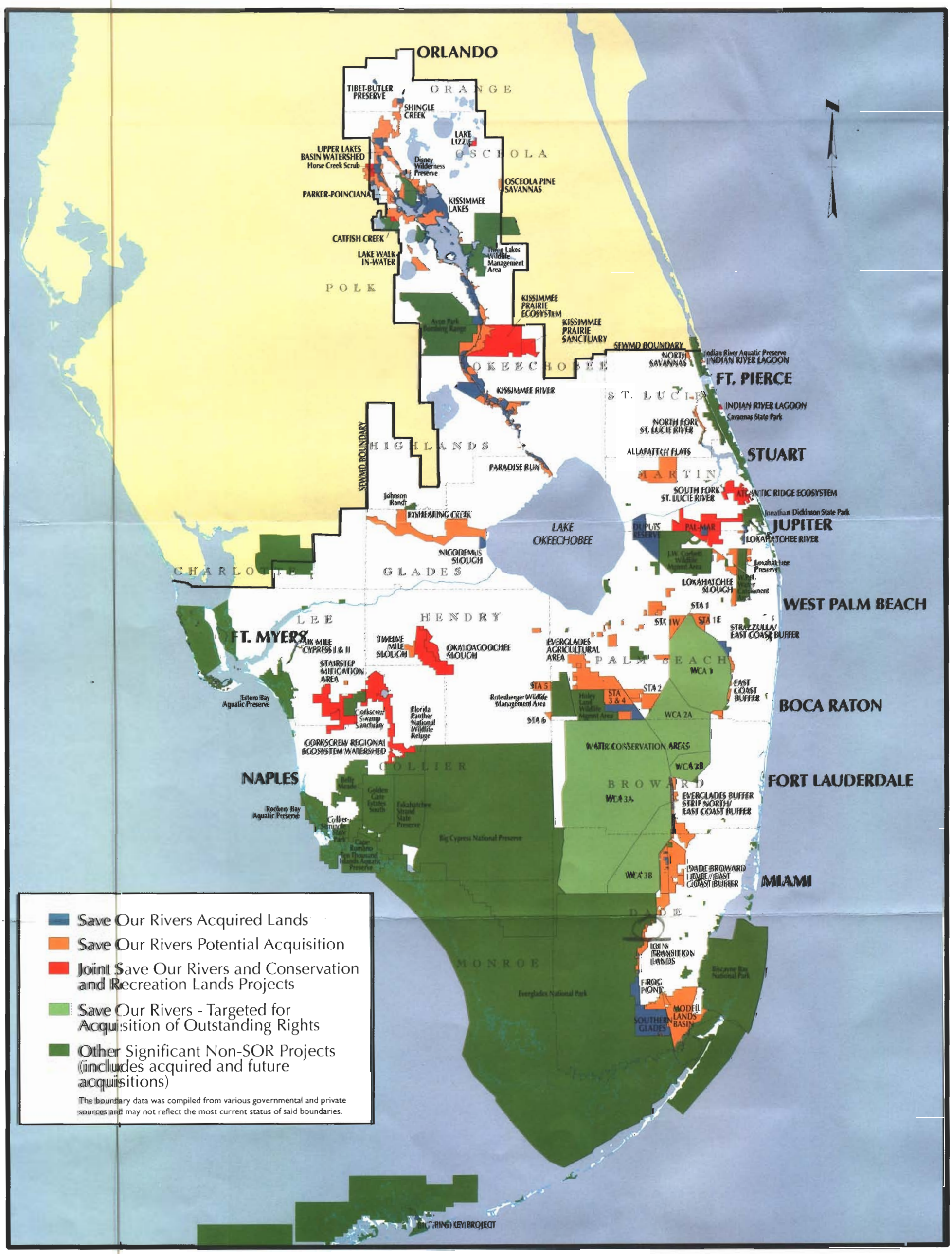
Save Our Rivers

Land For Waters' Sake

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Save Our Rivers Status Map



South Florida Water Management District

Save Our Rivers Five Year Plan

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Save Our Rivers
SOR
Land For Waters' Sake

Save Our Rivers

SOR

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