CONSERVANCY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Protecting Southwest Florida's unique natural environment and quality of life...now and forever.

SOCIAL LINK:
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Priorities for Acquisition/Easements

- “Devil’s Garden” in Hendry
- “Fisheating Creek” in Glades and Highlands
- “Caloosahatchee Ecoscape” in Glades and Hendry
- Eastern Collier Rural Lands Stewardship Area (portions not already protected)
- “Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed” in Lee and Collier (portions not already protected)
- “Eden Oak” in Lee
- “Half Circle L Ranch” in Collier and Hendry (portions not already protected)
- “Panther Glades” & “12 Mile Slough” in Hendry
- Making the connection between S. Florida and north of I-4
Hot pink shows the properties in Southwest Florida we will be highlighting in our presentation.

Cream represents already managed lands.
Devil’s Garden

Acquiring parcels in this Florida Forever project will help increase protection of Florida’s biodiversity at the species, natural community, and landscape levels.

Protection of these lands will help reduce panther road kill mortality.

CONSERVANCY of Southwest Florida
OUR WATER, LAND, WILDLIFE, FUTURE.
Devil’s Garden

The Devil’s Garden parcels contain essential habitat for the Florida panther.

Primary zone - 4,001 acres
Secondary zone - 38,688 acres
Devil’s Garden
CR835 Hot Spot

There is a significant stretch of this road with high panther mortality.

To the west is the Devil’s Garden FF project lands that have not yet been acquired.

To the east are managed public lands.

Recommend 2-4 sections (640 acres each) along road.
Florida Panther Recovery Implementation Team

Transportation SubTeam

- Core Team Liaison: Elizabeth Fleming, Defenders of Wildlife
- SubTeam Chair: Amber Crooks, Conservancy of Southwest Florida
- Katasha Cornwell, Florida Department of Transportation
- Terry Gilbert, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Darrell Land, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Meredith Budd on behalf of Nancy Payton, Florida Wildlife Federation
- Gwen Pipkin, Florida Department of Transportation
- Don Scott, Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Brent Setchell, Florida Department of Transportation
- Dan Smith, University of Central Florida
- John Wrublik, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

http://www.fws.gov/verobeach/FloridaPantherRITTransportation.html
Devil’s Garden
Keri Road Sand Mine

This parcel is adjacent to Keri Road, which has been identified as a panther road kill hot spot.
Keri Road Sand Mine

Size: 886 acres  
Owner: Alico, Inc.  
Status: Obtained Hendry County zoning permit & FDEP ERP for mining  
Location: Within the Devil’s Garden Florida Forever project boundary and adjacent to the Okaloacoochee Slough (OK Slough)  
- Parcel is important for protection of wetland and upland habitat and for the survival and recovery of species listed under the ESA, including the Florida panther  
- 75% of the site is primary panther habitat  
- The number and frequency of panther road mortalities along Keri Road are evidence that the OK Slough area is a key corridor for large mammals, including the Florida panther and black bear  
- Least Cost Pathways confirm Keri Road bisects a major north-south corridor  
- Considered an Essential Parcel Remaining for acquisition

ACQUIRED!
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Considered an Essential Parcel Remaining for acquisition.
Fisheating Creek

Only undammed tributary to Lake Okeechobee

The Fisheating Creek Ecosystem creates connectivity between Lake Okeechobee, Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area, and could link to Dispersal Zone/Caloosa Ecoscape.
Fisheating Creek

The area is important for use by listed species such as the Florida panther

(99,545 acres in North Panther Area)
In order to preserve Florida panthers and other wide-ranging species bears, landscape linkages must be protected.

Although large areas are protected to the south within Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida panther recovery depends on protecting the habitat core in south Florida as well as links to central Florida.
Essential for Panther dispersal

Dispersal Zone - 7,539 acres

Secondary Zone - 2,021 acres
The RLSA is a County overlay

Participation in the program is voluntary, but there is significant existing legal protection built into the program for the lands shaded blue and green.
Policy 5.1: To protect water quality and quantity and maintenance of the natural water regime in areas mapped as FSAs on the Overlay Map prior to the time that they are designated as SSAs under the Stewardship Credit Program. **Residential Uses, General Conditional Uses, Earth Mining and Processing Uses, and Recreational Uses (layers 1-4) as listed in the Matrix shall be eliminated in FSAs.**

Policy 5.3: To protect water quality and quantity and maintenance of the natural water regime and to protect listed animal and plant species and their habitats in areas mapped as FSAs, HSAs, and WRAs on the Overlay Map that are not within the ACSC, if a property owner proposes to utilize such land for a non-agricultural purpose under the Baseline Standards,

1. **Site clearing and alteration shall be limited to 20% of the property** and nonpermeable surfaces shall not exceed 50% of any such area.

**ACSC:** Site Alteration

a. Site alteration shall be limited to ten percent (10%) of the total site size, and installation of nonpermeable surfaces shall not exceed fifty percent (50%) of any such area. However, a minimum of two thousand, five hundred (2,500) square feet may be altered on any permitted site.
Current Participation in the RLSA Program

As part of the RLSA program, landowners can take advantage of the TDR component of the RLSA.

To date, over 55,000 acres of FSAs, HSAs and WRAs are designated as SSAs, allowing them to submit applications to build towns and villages elsewhere in the RLSA.
Eastern Collier County
Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

Much of the land already receiving substantial protection from intensification at the local level is being offered at the federal level as mitigation for the HCP/individual projects.

HCP proposes approximately 107,000 acres of preservation land in exchange for 45,000 acres of development.

In reality, a significant amount of this land is already protected through local and state regulations.
The majority of the RLSA is primary panther habitat.

Our goal is to protect the primary panther habitat most vulnerable to development.

Such vulnerable lands are those outside of protection through the RLSA, ACSC and HCP.
This map shows the areas that are Florida Wildlife Corridor Tiers 1-3 but not protected by a Collier County program or the proposed HCP.

These are the lands that should be targeted for acquisition.

These lands are vulnerable to development, with intensification already approved on some of these parcels at the local level.
Specific Target Parcels:
We’ve identified 5 separate areas that are primary panther habitat and not protected by Collier County policies or the proposed HCP.

These acquisitions would provide connectivity in and through the RLSA.
This parcel provides important opportunities for protection of the panther, black bear, and other endangered and threatened species. We recommend acquiring the portion of this property not already protected by Collier County policies.
Located within primary habitat zones for both the Florida panther and the black bear, the project complements the ongoing conservation efforts in this region for these and numerous other species.
State and federal land acquisition should focus on targeting the CREW Headwaters (added in 2016) and smaller parcel within the CREW boundary not already protected by the RLSA or offered as mitigation for the HCP.
Eden Oak

County zoning application, as well as past efforts for wetland permitting (withdrawn at present).

Landowner has expressed willingness to sell
Eden Oak

Is on the Lee Conservation 20/20 acquisition list

Currently, the offer price from Lee County is less than the asking price (asking price is $9 million)
Eden Oak

While there is still much to be learned about smalltooth sawfish life history, it is well understood that red mangroves and shallow euryhaline waters are of critical importance to the nursery within the Charlotte Harbor/Caloosahatchee recovery unit and specifically to the adjacent pupping hot spot.

The habitats in and around the Eden Oak project are irreplaceable.
Eden Oak

Not only is the site sawfish critical habitat, but it helps support one of the few known nursery hotspots.

Blue indicates the Eden Oak area.
The Eden Oak project will adversely affect the mangrove forest and an impounded emergent marsh community. The mangrove forest within the proposed project’s footprint is an important habitat feature and is adjacent to three National Wildlife Refuges and the Caloosahatchee River. Based on the uniqueness of mangrove forest and the aquatic resource value these communities provide, the Service considers these habitats to be Resource Category 1, with no loss of habitat value, since these unique areas cannot be replaced and no net loss of in-kind habitat value is recommended. The impounded emergent marsh community is considered by the Service to be a Resource Category 2. The goal for Resource Category 2 habitat is no net loss of in-kind habitat value. Thus, a habitat in this category can be replaced only by the same type of habitat (i.e., in-kind mitigation).

Based upon the discussion and in accordance with the procedural requirements of the 1992 404(q) Memorandum of Agreement, Part IV, 3(a) between our agencies, we are advising you that the proposed work may result in substantial and unacceptable impacts to an ARNI and we recommend denial of this project as proposed. We recommend the applicant modify their project plan in a manner that reduces impacts to ARNI using the various approaches described above.
Eden Oak

Eden Oak abuts other managed lands (shown in the cream color)

While not Tier 1-3, Eden Oak is unique enough and important enough to be mentioned

All possibilities for acquisition should be pursued
Panther Glades

Forms a connection between Devil’s Garden, Half Circle L Ranch, and Save Our Everglades Florida Forever projects, linking OK Slough State Forest and the Big Cypress National Preserve.

Important for large mammal connectivity
Important to many wildlife species, particularly the Florida panther and the Florida black bear that require extensive areas of habitat to maintain viable populations.

Primary Zone – 36,937 acres
Secondary Zone – 2,458 acres
12 Mile Slough

Adds to established core lands near the OK Slough and Devil’s Garden
12 Mile Slough

Provides connectivity for wide ranging species like the Florida panther and the black bear

Primary Zone - 6,307 acres
Secondary Zone - 104 acres
Dispersal Zone - 1,740 acres
Permeability at I-4

Wildlife Permeability along Interstate 4
Report by PRIT Transportation Subteam
June 2020

Remaining Opportunities along I-4 (from west to east) – See Table 1 below

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Completed Projects – See Table 2 below

E. Volusia County - Tiger Bay State Forest
Permeability at I-4

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Linking South Florida to North of I-4

South Florida and I-4 are well studied, areas in between need further review.

Least Cost Pathways report is forthcoming from the PRIT Transportation Subteam.

Crossing Recommendations

• FDOT District 1 has identified priorities near Fisheating Creek, SR29, and I-4
• FDOT is advancing improvements at I-75 Alligator Alley

Additional needs:
• I-4 additional improvements at Hilochee
• SR29 north of FPNWR (A) and south of I-75 (M)
• US41 near CR92 (N), Turner River (C)
• CR846 additional improvements (B)
• CR835 (H) and CR846 (L) once land acquired
Crossing Recommendations

Additional needs:
- Smith et al recommendations for structures in eastern Collier County

Smith et al., 2006
Eastern Collier County Wildlife Movement Study:
SR29, CR846, and CR858 Wildlife Crossing Project Final Report
Thank You