

# Wekiva-Ocala Greenway

Lake, Orange, Seminole and Volusia Counties

## Critical Natural Lands

### Purpose for State Acquisition

The springs, rivers, lakes, swamps, and uplands stretching north from Orlando to the Ocala National Forest are an important refuge for the Florida black bear, as well as other wildlife such as the bald eagle, swallow-tailed kite, Florida scrub jay, and wading birds. The Wekiva-Ocala Greenway will protect these animals and the Wekiva and St. Johns River basins by protecting natural corridors connecting Wekiwa Springs State Park, Rock Springs Run State Reserve, the Lower Wekiva River State Reserve, and Hontoon Island State Park with the Ocala National Forest. It will also provide the people of the booming Orlando area with a large, nearby natural area in which to enjoy camping, fishing, swimming, hiking, canoeing, and other recreational pursuits. The Florida National Scenic Trail, a cross-Florida hiking and non-motorized trail, is also planned to cross this project. The trail is a congressionally designated national scenic trail.

### Managers

Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (BMK Ranch, Seminole Springs, St. Johns River and portions of the Wekiva-Ocala Connector); Florida Forest Service/FFS (aka Division of Forestry/DOF), Florida Department of

Agriculture and Consumer Services (Seminole Springs and portions of the Wekiva-Ocala Connector).

### General Description

This project provides an important link between Ocala National Forest and the extensive state holdings along the Wekiva River. It is habitat for many rare animal species including the Florida black bear, the Florida sandhill crane, bald eagle, Eastern indigo snake, Florida scrub jay, Sherman's fox squirrel, Florida scrub lizard and gopher tortoise. It incorporates most of the forested wetlands along the St. Johns and Wekiva Rivers between Orlando and the Ocala National Forest. The St. Johns River site consists of three large bottomlands and adjacent uplands between three existing state ownerships. The Seminole Springs/Woods site is reported to have 50-75 springs within its boundary. The Wekiva-Ocala Connector site provides a wildlife movement corridor between the Ocala National Forest and the other portions of the project along the Wekiva River.

### Public Use

The project sites are designated as state reserves or preserves and state forests, offering opportunities for canoeing, hiking, fishing and camping.

### Acquisition Planning

On 11/18/1994, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council (LAAC) approved combining the Seminole Springs/Woods, Wekiva-Ocala Connector, St. Johns River, and BMK Ranch projects and renaming the project Wekiva-Ocala Greenway. Based on GIS, the approximate total project acreage was 67,585 acres.

<b>Placed on List</b>	<b>1995</b>
<b>Project Area (GIS Acres)</b>	<b>81,170</b>
<b>Acres Acquired (GIS)</b>	<b>55,682*</b>
<b>at a Cost of</b>	<b>\$183,142,325*</b>
<b>Acres Remaining (GIS)</b>	<b>25,488</b>
<b>with Estimated (Tax Assessed) Value of</b>	<b>\$31,792,123</b>

\*Includes acreage and expenditures by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) and the Orlando-Orange County Transportation Authority.

<b>Wekiva-Ocala Greenway</b>	
FNAI Elements	
Florida Scrub-jay	G2/S2
Florida Black Bear	G5T2/S2
Swallow-tailed Kite	G5/S2
<i>Okeechobee Gourd</i>	G1/S1
Gopher Tortoise	G3/S3
Eastern Indigo Snake	G3/S3
Bald Eagle	G5/S3
<i>Florida Hasteola</i>	G1/S1
Seminole Spring Siltsnail	G1/S1
<i>Florida Willow</i>	G2/S2
<i>Star Anise</i>	G2/S2
Wakulla Springs Vari-colored	G2/S2
Microcaddisfly	
30 rare species are associated with the project	

## Wekiva-Ocala Greenway

Seminole Springs/Woods: Seminole Springs—core tracts include Strawn Tract, M.S. Carter (acquired), and Brumlick parcels (acquired through eminent domain). The Strawn tract is the largest and most significant ownership remaining to be acquired.

Wekiva-Ocala Connector: Core Tracts West—Maxwell and Holman (acquired), Shockley (acquired), Harper (acquired by SJRWMD 2,228 acres/2.1 million), Alger Enterprises (acquired), Fisch (acquired by SJRWMD), Southland Gardens (contingent upon the acquisition of Harper and Fisch), Clemmons (acquired), Blaskovic (acquired), Kittridge (acquired). Core Tracts East—Stetson University (acquired), Stein, Lenholt Farms, Francolino (acquired), Jung (acquired), and Hollywood Pines, Inc.

St. Johns River: New Garden Coal, the largest ownership, was acquired in 2005.

The BMK Ranch parcel has been acquired.

On 10/30/1995, the LAAC approved a fee-simple, ± 5,616-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by Eastern Marketing Inc, representative for several owners, consisted of multiple landowners and parcels, and a taxable value of approximately \$10,247,684. All tracts were designated as essential. In addition, the project phasing was removed.

On 10/30/1996, the LAAC approved a fee-simple, 425-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the Division of State Lands, consisted of seven landowners (Jung, Hollywood Pines, Miranda Trust, Overstreet, New Garden Coal, Seminole Springs, and Fisch), 12 parcels, and a taxable value of \$645,000.

Other acquisitions in the Wekiva Basin are Wekiva Buffers, Wekiva Springs State Park, Rock Springs Run, Lower Wekiva River State Park, Hontoon Island State Recreation Area, and Blue Spring State Park. These acquisitions total 18,400 acres.

On 7/18/1997, the LAAC approved a fee-simple, 128-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the landowner, Conway Kittredge, who already has 20 acres in the current project boundary. The addition has a taxable value of \$450,542 and any portion of the addition that is not needed for resource protection or management will be surplussed.

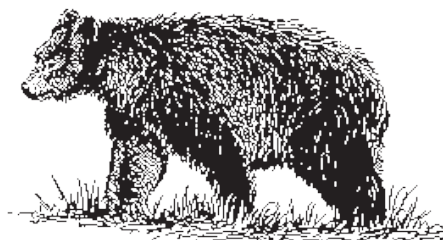
On 12/3/1998, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council (LAMAC) approved a fee-simple,

1,507-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the Division of Recreation and Parks, and consisted of 20 parcels with a total taxable value of \$1,224,358. At the time of the boundary addition, the parcels were owned by Neighborhood Lakes LTD and Lake Lerla LTD Partnership, and were designated as essential parcels. They were subsequently purchased by BARN, LLC. These parcels were acquired in a transaction approved by the Board of Trustees on 12/19/2006. The total acquisition area contained 1,584 acres.

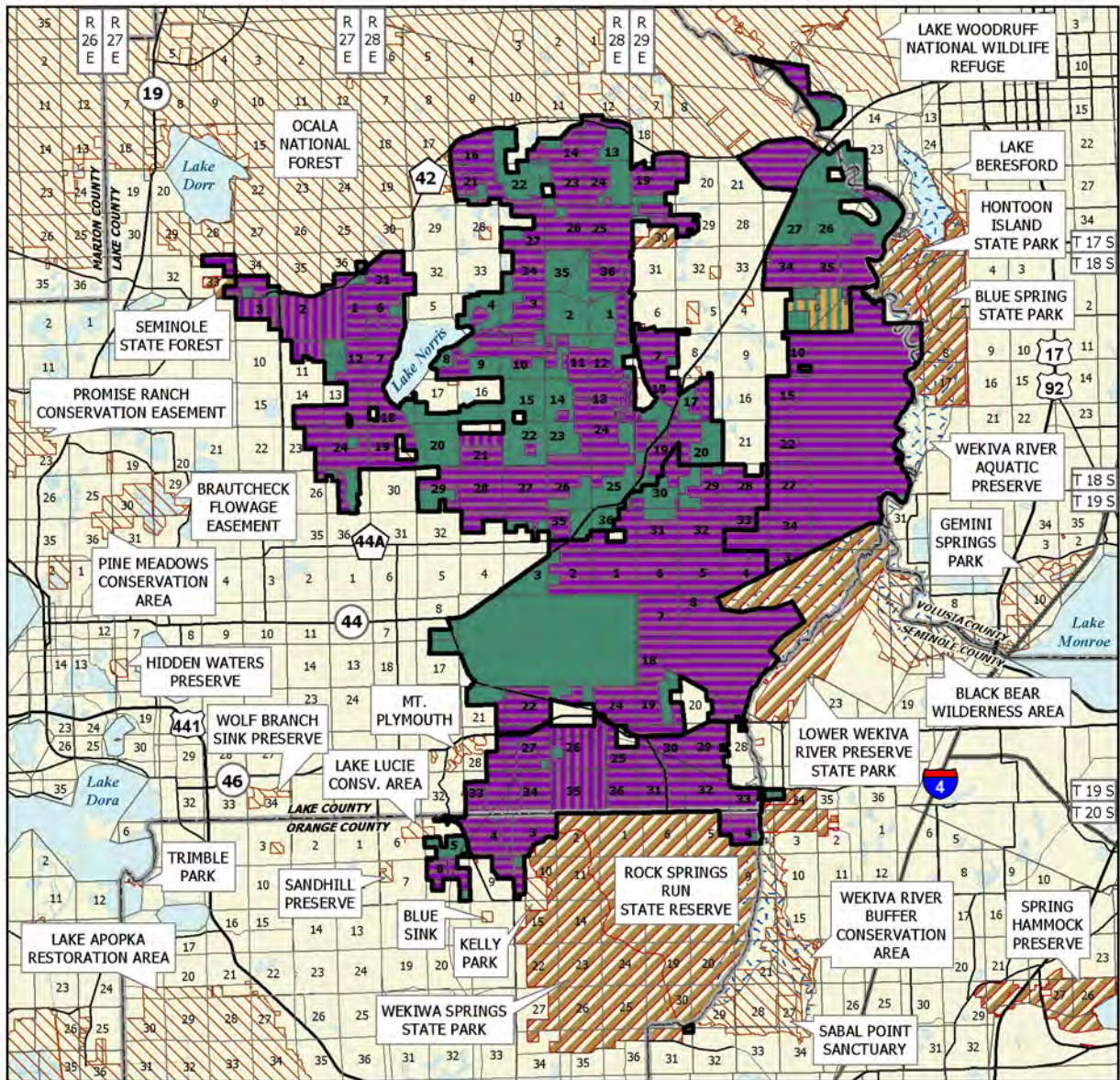
On 12/6/2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) approved a fee-simple, 5,455-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the Wekiva Basin Working Group, consisted of 14 sites, multiple landowners and parcels, 13 tracts, and a taxable value of \$9,972,067.

On 6/4/2004, the ARC approved a less-than-fee, 572-acre addition to the project boundary. The property was owned by Robert Maxwell, and consisted of two parcels with a taxable value of \$758,000. The boundary amendment was sponsored by the owner's representative, Roland Pacetti Realty. On August 15, 2006, the Board of Trustees approved the purchase of a conservation easement covering these two parcels.

On 12/8/2006 the ARC approved a fee-simple 77-acre addition in Lake County (a.k.a. the Ellis and Windsor tracts) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), consisted of two parcels with two owners (Natalie Windsor and Jerry Ellis) and has a 2006 taxable value of \$71,487. The Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) will manage the 17-acre Windsor tract as part of the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State park. The 60-acre Ellis tract will be managed by the FFS as part of the Seminole State Forest.



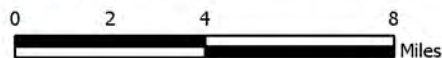




## WEKIVA-OCALA GREENWAY

### LAKE, ORANGE, SEMINOLE AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES

-  Florida Forever Sink BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Acquired for Conservation (Less-Than-Fee)
-  TNC Owned Lands Within Project
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  State Aquatic Preserves



JANUARY 2012



## Wekiva-Ocala Greenway

On 12/14/2007, ARC approved a fee-simple 675-acre addition, known as the Pine Plantation Addition, to the project boundary. It was sponsored by Henry Dean Esq., and consisted of five parcels, four landowners, and a taxable base of \$1,228,740. The Division of Recreation and Parks agreed to manage the parcels. The parcels have been designated essential. To date, 421 acres of this addition have been purchased.

On 9/30/2008, the Board of Trustees approved the purchase of 385 acres from Project Orlando LLC; Pines-traw Partners LLC; and Herscho Properties, Inc. This acquisition was for a portion of the Pine Plantation property. On November 20, 2008, the Board of Trustees approved a 36-acre purchase from Project Orlando LLC which was part of the boundary amendment that included the Pine Plantation property. On 10/3/2008, from the Division of State Lands (DSL) Florida Forever funds 345-acre parcel was purchased from Palmer ownership in Pine Plantation for \$24,930,304 (40 acres in the SE corner of the Palmer parcel was acquired by the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority for a future conveyance to Orange County for a park. In 11/2008, DSL Florida Forever funds were used to buy 35.7 acres of the Project Orlando, LLC ownership, for \$2,000,000. DRP will manage this site.

On 3/27/09, 307.17 acres were purchased for \$7,860,410 from the OOCEA for BARN, LLP parcel (payback of \$10M paid by the Authority--Neighborhood Lakes, Phase II).

### Coordination

TNC, Florida Communities Trust (FCT), Lake County Water Authority, SJRWMD, DOT, Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority are acquisition partners in this project.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway project are to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of this state or a larger geographic area; to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; to conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, in order to enhance or protect

significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect; to provide areas, including recreational trails, for natural-resource-based recreation; and to preserve significant archaeological or historical sites.

### Management Prospectus

**Qualifications for state designation** The large size, variety of forest resources, and diversity of the former Seminole Springs project and the western Wekiva-Ocala Connector make them highly desirable for management as a state forest. The quality of resources on the remainder of the project make them suitable for state preserves.

**Manager** The FFS proposes to manage the Seminole Springs and western connector portions of the project. The remainder will be managed by the DRP. The DRP may elect to assume management of the western portion of the Strawn property at a later date if it is purchased.

**Conditions affecting intensity of management** On the portion to be managed by the FFS, there are no known disturbances that will require extraordinary attention, so the level of management intensity is expected to be typical for a state forest. On the portion to be managed by the DRP, the BMK Ranch is a high-need management area, while the Eastern Connector of the former Wekiva-Ocala Connector project and the former St. Johns River project are low-need management areas. The BMK Ranch project anticipates a higher level of recreational use and development compatible with resource management than does the other properties.

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

About 8,000 acres have been purchased by the State of Florida and the SJWMD and have been assigned to the FFS for management as the Seminole State Forest (SSF). The FFS is currently providing for public access for low-intensity, non-facilities-related outdoor recreation. Initial activities include securing the site, providing public and fire management access, inventorying resources, and removing trash. The project's natural resources and threatened and endangered plants and animals will be inventoried to provide the basis for a management plan. Long-range plans for this property will generally be directed toward restoring disturbed areas to their original conditions, as far as possible, as well as protecting threatened and endangered species. An all-season burning program will use, whenever possible, existing roads, black lines,

foam lines and natural breaks to contain fires. Timber management will mostly involve improvement thinning and regeneration harvests. Plantations will be thinned and, where appropriate, reforested with species found in natural ecosystems. Stands will not have a targeted rotation age. Infrastructure will primarily be located in disturbed areas and will be the minimum required for management and public access. The DRP will promote recreation and environmental education. For the DRP, within the first year after acquisition, management activities will concentrate on site security, natural and cultural resource protection, and the development of a plan for long-term public use and resource management. **Revenue-generating potential** The FFS will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will provide a variable source of revenue, but the revenue-generating potential for this project is expected to be low. The DRP expects no significant revenue to be generated initially. After acquisition, it will probably be several years before any

significant public facilities are developed on the BMK Ranch properties, and public facilities will probably not be a major emphasis on the eastern connector properties. The amount of any future revenue will depend on the nature and extent of public use and facilities.

**Cooperators in management activities** The FFS will cooperate with and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government entities and interested parties as appropriate. The DRP recommends no local governments or others for management of its project area.

*Updated 2/27/2012*

**Management Cost Summary/DRP**

Category	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Source of Funds	SPTF/LATF/ CARL	SPTF/CARL	SPTF/CARL
Salary	\$0	\$0	\$0
OPS	\$425	\$425	\$425
Expense	\$5,739	\$5,739	\$5,739
OCO	\$0	\$0	\$0
FCO	\$38,798	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$44,962</b>	<b>\$6,164</b>	<b>\$6,164</b>

**Management Cost Summary/FFS (Seminole State Forest)**

Category	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$35,440	\$64,440	\$105,000
OPS	\$0	\$4,500	\$5,000
Expense	\$22,600	\$40,225	\$51,000
OCO	\$0	\$29,270	\$48,000
FCO	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$58,040</b>	<b>\$138,435</b>	<b>\$209,000</b>

**Management Cost Summary/FFS (Wekiva-Ocala Connector: West Corridor)**

Category	Startup	Recurring
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$28,140	\$28,140
OPS	\$0	\$0
Expense	\$20,000	\$15,000
OCO	\$90,400	\$4,500
FCO	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$138,540</b>	<b>\$47,640</b>