Little Big Econ Canoe Launch

Land Management Plan

2021

LITTLE BIG ECON CANOE LAUNCH
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Little Big Econ Canoe Launch

Acres: 118

Location: Oviedo, Florida, Section 13, Township 21 South, Range 31 East

Dates of Acquisition: May 1, 2000

Key Resource Issues: This property is located along the Econlockhatchee River, and most of the plant communities remain relatively intact. The Little-Big Econ State Forest is located on the north boundary of the property. The Florida Trail connects this property in the northern section to the state forest.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

- **Security** – Unlike some of the other Natural Lands properties, there is no caretaker residing on this property. Natural Land's staff coordinate with the Seminole County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to report any disturbances on the property.
- **Fire** – There has historically been no prescribed burning on this property. Currently there are no plans to introduce fire to this area.
- **Invasive Species** – There are a number of invasive plant species on this property including coral ardisia and cogon grass.
- **Wildlife and Plants** – Species of interest are the American alligator, various wading birds, eastern diamondback rattlesnakes, and gopher tortoises.

Key Land Use/Recreation Issues: This wilderness area provides opportunities for a variety of recreational uses including hiking, kayaking/canoeing, fishing and wildlife viewing.

- **Access** – There are two main access areas, the north section connected through the state forest and a trail from Lockwood Blvd., and the south section along 419 and Willingham Rd.
- **Public recreation** - The property is open to the public for hiking, fishing, kayaking/canoeing, and biking.

Lee Econ Tract
Oviedo, Florida

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidelines for land management activities to be implemented within the Little Big Econ Canoe Launch over the next ten years. This is the first land management plan for this property.

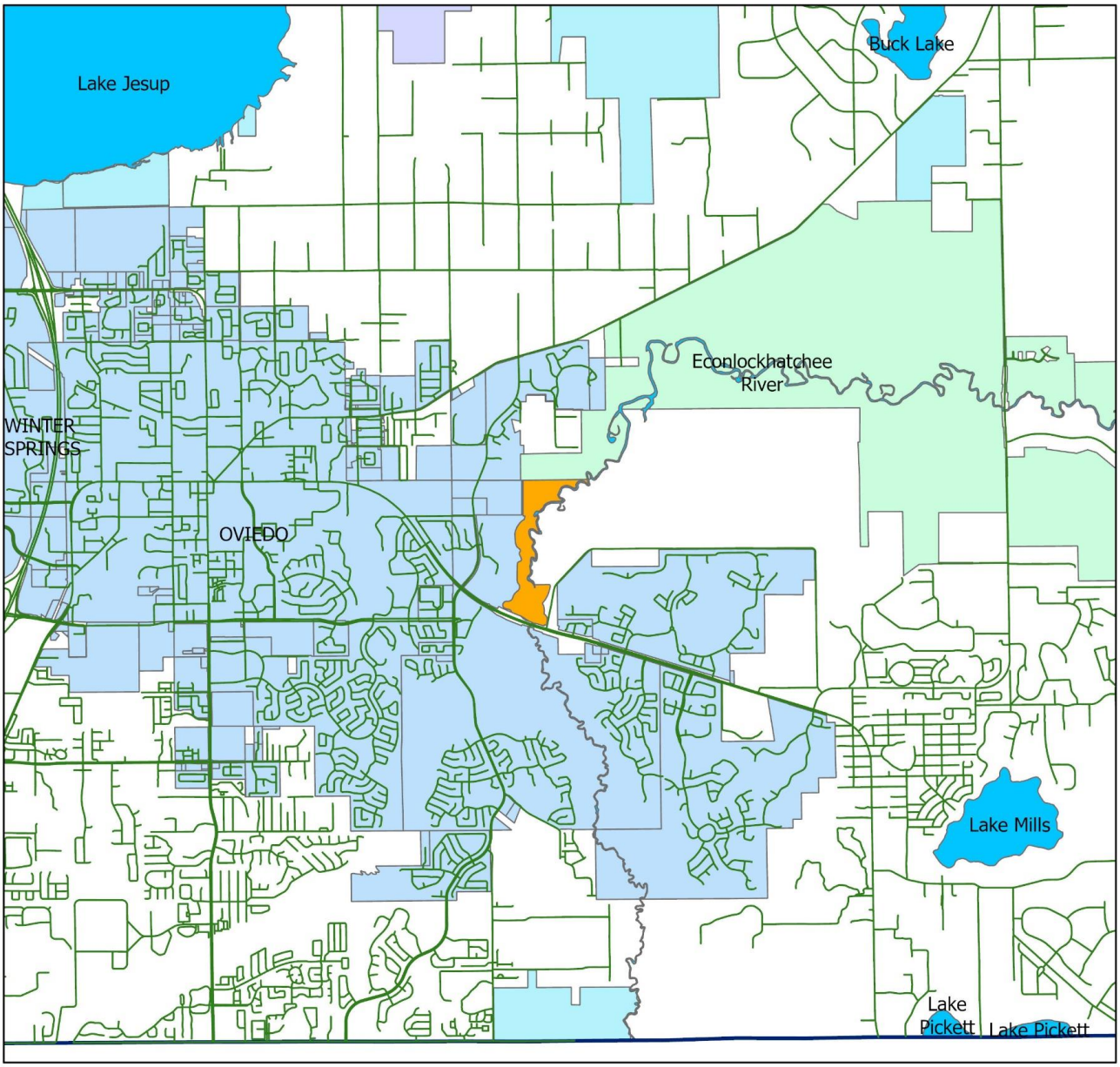
WILDERNESS AREA OVERVIEW

Regional Significance

Little Big Econ Canoe Launch (LBECL), also known Lee Econ Tract or the Lee Tract, is a 118-acre (GIS-measured acres) natural area located in the eastern portion of Seminole County. LBECL extends along the Econlockhatchee River from SR-419 to the south end of the Little-Big Econ State Forest. It helps form a wilderness corridor along the river that reaches south into Orange County. The property protects riparian habitat and provides an important canoe launch so that recreationalists can experience the section of the Econlockhatchee River between SR-419 and Snowhill Rd.

Acquisition History

In 2000, Seminole County entered into an acquisition agreement for the purchase of approximately 116.35 acres in Oviedo, Florida.



Little Big Econ Canoe Launch

Figure 1: Location Map

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

Legend

- Seminole County Preserved Lands
- Seminole County/Parks and Recreation
- FL Forest Service Preserved Lands
- SJRWMD Preserved Lands
- Little Big Econ Canoe Launch
- Water Bodies
- City Limits
- Streets

N W E S

NATURAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW

Natural Communities

There are three distinct natural communities that comprise the majority of this property. These are alluvial forest, hydric hammock, and mesic flatwoods. There are also smaller portions of other communities such as basin swamp, black water stream and mesic hammock. Plant communities and fire regimes are taken from FNAI, 2010.

Alluvial Forest

Alluvial forest is found bordering the Econlockhatchee River on the LBECL. The natural community lies within the floodplain of the river, and is influenced by the fluctuating water levels. The canopy includes swamp laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*), water hickory (*Carya aquatica*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*). This is not a fire dependent community and only burns under extreme drought conditions.

The alluvial forest on the property is in fair condition, but more degraded than many of the habitats on the property. Most of the invasive plant infestations at LBECL occur in this natural community, and continued removal efforts will improve this habitat.

Hydric Hammock

This habitat often exists in association with hardwood swamps, forming a transition to higher upland habitats or on areas of slightly higher elevation in broad flood plains. Tree species found in this habitat include the cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), laurel oak, water oak, and sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). Groundcover could include several ferns and vines such as cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), and trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*). Hydric hammocks occur on low, flat, wet sites where limestone may be near the surface. Soil is mostly level and poorly drained but very rich in organic composition. A normal hydrologic regime is critical in the development and maintenance of this habitat.

The hydric hammock at LBECL is interspersed with the alluvial forest and higher portions of the mesic hammock and mesic flatwoods. It is in good condition, and aside from a few invasive species, has an intact species composition.

Mesic Flatwoods

Mesic flatwoods habitat is characterized as an open canopy forest of pine trees with little to no understory but a dense ground cover of herbs and shrubs. Typical plant species found in mesic flatwoods are the slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*), longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), wiregrass, and gallberry (*Ilex glabra*).

Fire is an important physical factor in mesic flatwoods. Several plant and animal species depend on fire for their continued existence, and without it, mesic flatwoods will succeed into hardwood

dominated forests whose closed canopy can essentially eliminate the ground cover of herbs and shrubs.

The mesic flatwods at LBECL have succeeded into the more hardwood-dominated forests. Due to the small size of the communities, and lack of direct access to most of the property, restoration of this community is not a priority. Prescribed fire and/or mechanical treatment would be needed to restore this habitat.

Table 1. Approximate acreage for each plant community and percent uplands and wetlands.

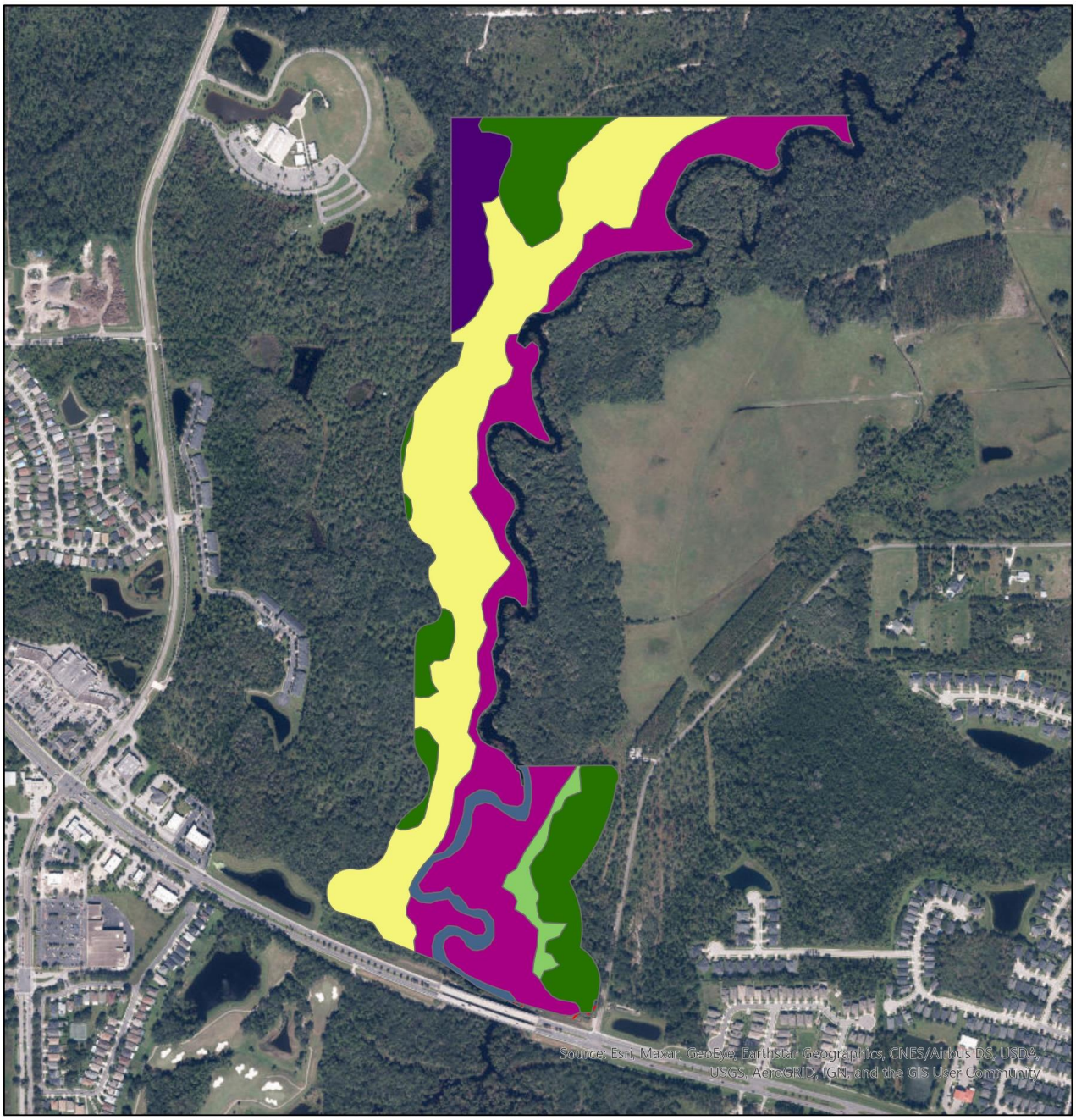
Community Type	Acres
Alluvial Forest	34.6
Basin Swamp	7.4
Blackwater Stream	3.7
Developed	.2
Hydric Hammock	44.3
Mesic Flatwoods	19.9
Mesic Hammock	2.9
Percent Wetlands	80
Percent Uplands	20

Wildlife

There are a number of rare and state listed species found on the property including gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), snowy egret (*Egretta thula*), and little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*). Other species observed on the property are white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), river otter (*Lutra canadensis*), and southeastern five-lined skink (*Plestiodon inexpectatus*).

Cultural Resources

According to Seminole County Code, Chapter 190, "*All cultural and archeological resources on Natural Lands are protected.*" A review of the publication "Cultural Resources Study of Seminole County, Florida: Archaeology Volumes I & II" indicates that there are no known archaeological or cultural sites on Little Big Econ Canoe Launch.



Little Big Econ Canoe Launch

Figure 2: Natural Communities Map

0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 Miles

N W E S

Legend

FNAI Natural Communities

- Alluvial forest
- Basin Swamp
- Developed
- Hydric Hammock
- Mesic Flatwoods
- Mesic Hammock
- Blackwater Stream

Soils

Basinger

The Basinger series consists of very deep, poorly drained and very poorly drained, rapidly permeable soils in sloughs, depressions, low flats, and poorly defined drainageways. They formed in sandy marine sediments.

Myakka

The Myakka series consists of very deep, very poorly or poorly drained, moderately rapid or moderately permeable soils that occur primarily in mesic flatwoods of peninsular Florida. They formed in sandy marine deposits.

Nittaw

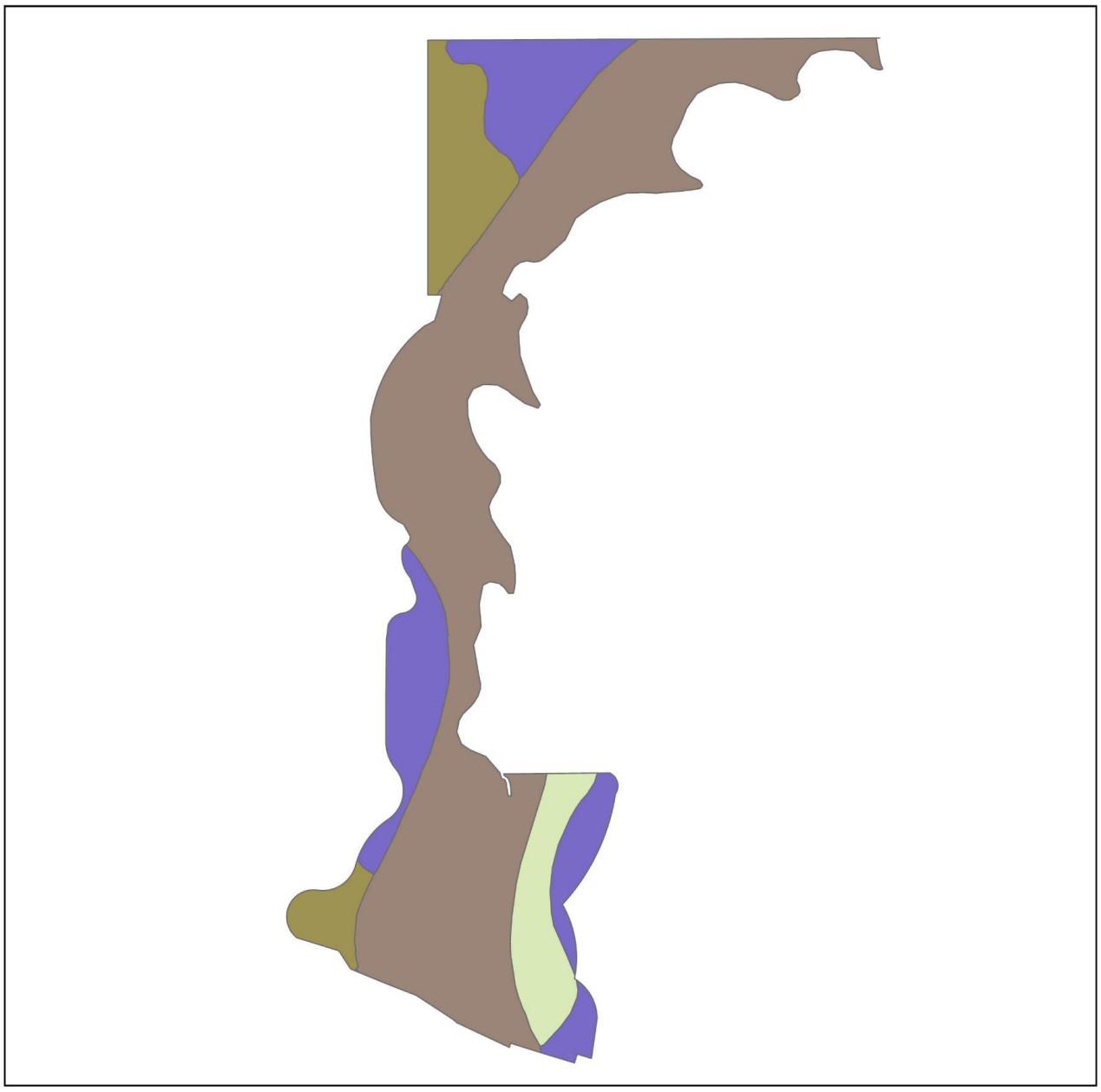
The Nittaw series consists of very poorly drained, slowly permeable soils that formed in thick deposits of clayey sediments of marine origin. These soils are in well defined drainageways, broad, nearly level swamps, and marshes of central and southern peninsular Florida. They are subject to flooding and water standing above the soil surface for 6 months or more in most years during late spring, summer and fall.

Pompano

The Pompano series consists of very deep, very poorly and poorly drained soils that formed in thick beds of sandy marine sediments. Pompano soils are on flatwoods, in low broad flats, and to a lesser extent, depressions, drainageways, and flood plains, on marine terraces.

Water Resources

The Econlockhatchee River is classified as an Outstanding Florida Water, and splits the property in half in the southern section, and forms the eastern boundary of the property in the northern section. The alluvial forest surrounding the river changes due to deposition and erosion of soil along the banks of the river. Water levels vary throughout the year as rain upstream can impact the river.



Little Big Econ Canoe Launch
Figure 3: Soil Map

Legend

BASINGER
NITTAW
MYAKKA
POMPANO

N
W
E
S

0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 Miles

IMPLEMENTATION

Integral to the goals and objectives for managing acquired lands in an acceptable manner are protection and restoration of those lands. An important element in protecting the resources is to prevent dumping, poaching, and other illegal activities. Appropriate land management activities, such as prescribed burning, forest management, and removal of exotics, should be continued to protect the viability of the site.

Rules and Regulations

Seminole County Code Chapter 190 Part 3 establishes the provisions relating to management and use of the properties acquired or managed by the Seminole County Natural Lands Program.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Monitoring

Monitoring natural resources is an important tool in gauging the overall health of an ecosystem. The Natural Lands Program developed a monitoring plan that encompasses all Wilderness Areas and Preserves, but did not include this property. There is currently no monitoring data established for this property, aside from invasive plants.

Monitoring Accomplishments

- Invasive plant populations recorded

Monitoring Strategies

- Establish baseline species data for the property

Restoration and Habitat Enhancement

There are currently no plans for restoration on this property.

Fire Management

Fire is an integral part of the Florida landscape. Before the influx of settlers, lightning fires would burn unimpeded through fire adaptive communities and landscapes until extinguished via changes in weather and/or fuel characteristics. Native Americans would also burn at various times of the year to attract wild game and to keep the landscape open for easy travel. Today, due to increased development pressures on conservation areas, fires must be managed under strict regulations and performed according to set criteria depending on the site.

The mesic flatwoods on this site are overgrown and disjunct, and would require mechanical treatment and fireline installation before prescribed fire is possible. Due the small size of, and

limited access to the units, this work is not a priority during the timeframe of this management plan. Use of prescribed fire on this site will be re-evaluated in the future.

Fire Strategies

- Currently, there are no plans to use fire as a management tool on this property due to the inaccessibility of the site.

Wildlife

Wildlife observations will continue to be added to the NLP database.

Wildlife Strategies

- Continue to record wildlife observations.
- Consider conducting a small staff bioblitz for baseline monitoring

Listed Species

There are a number of listed animal species found on this property.

Animals

A variety of listed wading birds use the river and oxbows to forage. These include the little blue heron and snowy egret. Other listed species include American alligator and gopher tortoise.

Listed Plant and Animal Strategies

- Begin monitoring for gopher tortoises.
- Record any new listed species and monitor if needed.

Invasive Species

Florida's climate is not only attractive to humans, but also to invasive exotic species. An invasive exotic species is defined as a species introduced to Florida, purposefully or accidentally, from a natural range outside of Florida with the ability to become established outside of cultivation and out-compete native species. Some examples of invasive exotic species in Florida include Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*), air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*), old world climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*), Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*), feral hog (*Sus scrofa*), Cuban brown anole (*Anolis segrei*), nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), Eurasian collared-dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), Cuban treefrog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*), and walking catfish (*Clarias batrachus*). The State of Florida spends millions of dollars each year either directly or indirectly through grants, trying to control invasive exotic species.

Since the impacts of invasive exotic species have both an environmental and economic impact, a non-governmental organization called the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (now the Florida Invasive Species Council) was formed. This organization provides a list of Florida's most invasive exotic species. The list is split into two categories: Category I species are those that are altering

native plant communities by displacing native species and Category II species are those that have increased in abundance or frequency but have not yet altered Florida plant communities to the extent shown by Category I species. LBECL has at least six invasive species in Category I.

Plants

Many of the infestations are found closer to the river and in the floodplain. *Imperata cyclindrica* (cogon grass) is probably the most prominent invasive species found on the property, and has infestations in all three management zones. It is found in larger, dense patches along the oxbow slopes surrounding the river. Coral ardisia is scattered on the east side of the river, and one plant was found on the other side of the river during the last survey. This area should be regularly monitored for larger infestations.

Chinese tallow is similar in that it is mainly found scattered around the east side of the property, but can also be found on the west side of the river, and regular monitoring will be necessary in this area. Skunk vine is only found on one peninsula near the parking area, and should be treated quickly before it can spread to other areas of the property. Caesar's weed and Peruvian primrosewillow are also present on the property, but are not considered priorities for management at this time. Staff can spray if time allows however.

The property was surveyed in 2021, and invasive species have an overall cover class of 3 (5-25%) throughout the property. None of the management zones are currently in a treatment rotation, and contractors will be needed for all management zones as the infestations (especially cogon grass) are too dense for staff to treat. Treatment of the east side of the river has been funded by FWC for the 2021-22 fiscal year, and staff may be able to do follow-up treatments without contractor assistance afterwards. Staff can also treat species not always covered by contractors, such as Caesar's weed or guinea grass. Because the west side of the river is not accessible by vehicle, treatments in this area will be limited.

Animals

The Natural Lands Program has contracted up to 6 nuisance feral hog removal agents at a time.

Invasive Plant and Animal Accomplishments

- 5 acres treated by NLP staff in 2021

Invasive Plant and Animal Strategies

- Keep all Category I invasive species under maintenance control
- Continue feral hog agent program

LAND USE MANAGEMENT

Public Access

Direct access is available from a small parking area on SR-419, which provides non-motor boat access to the river, and access to the southeast portion of the property. The western portion of the property can be accessed from the north boundary through the Little Big Econ State Forest, or by hiking the Florida Trail from a small parking area on Lockwood Blvd. that connects to the property.

Public Access Strategies

- Continue regular maintenance on public access area.
- Maintain signs.

Recreation

Resource-based recreational opportunities provided on this property include hiking, biking, canoeing/kayaking, and wildlife viewing. One trail on the southeast section of the property was created by an anonymous recreationalist, but the NLP will be maintaining and re-routing that trail in the future. The Florida Trail Association maintains the portion of the Florida Trail that runs through LBECL.

Recreation Strategies

- Continue regular maintenance on parking area and boat ramp
- Staff will take control of the trail in the southeast section of the property, mark and re-route civilian-created trail as needed

Environmental Education

Due to the lack of parking and direct access, there are currently no educational activities or plans to support an increase in educational activities on-site.

Security

Unlike other Natural Lands properties, there is no caretaker residing on this property. The security of LBECL will continue to be addressed through the existing partnerships with SCSO and FWC. All possible locations for access whether designated or not, are gated, regularly evaluated and methods for control considered. Security of the site will continue to be monitored and further corrective actions may be required.

Security Strategies

- Continue with current security


Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community
Little Big Econ Canoe Launch
Figure 4: Recreation Map
0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5
Miles
N
W
E
S
Legend
Safety Markers
Canoe Loop
Florida Trail
Old Fireline
Parking
Walk-thru Entrance

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