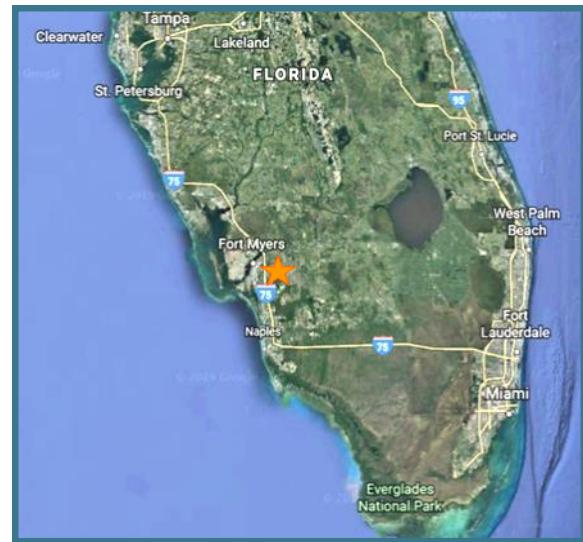


Wild Turkey Strand Preserve Restoration

FISH, WILDLIFE, & HABITAT RESTORATION



Summary

Wild Turkey Strand is a 3,105-acre area preserve, consisting of several plant communities including freshwater wetland, pine flatwoods, prairie, hammock, and swamp. The area provides critical habitat for wood stork, roseate spoonbill, bald eagle, gopher tortoise, Florida panther, and over 100 other recorded wildlife species. In addition, over 500 plant species have been documented at the preserve including three state-listed species.

During World War II the preserve was used as a U.S. military training base. Some historic infrastructure from the army air field remains on the preserve today. Additionally, parts of the preserve were historically used as crop fields and cattle ranches, as well as for hunting and illegal dumping. The Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP) will be working together with Lee County and other partners to fund a portion of this 400 acre hydrological and habitat restoration project of former agricultural land within Wild Turkey Strand Preserve and the Lee County Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DRGR) Zone that is a part of the Charlotte Harbor estuaries area to provide enhanced wetland and upland habitat, improved water quality, and restored hydroperiods and ecosystem function.

Location: Lee County, FL

Partners: Lee County Dept. of Parks & Recreation, Conservation 20/20 Program

Implemented: Beginning 2022

Status: Ongoing

CHNEP Cost: \$129,213

Funding Source: Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) 2021 National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grant (NEP CWG), Environmental Protection Agency

2019 CHNEP Plan Activity: 
Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat
Protection 2.2: Encourage management of public lands and public conservation easements to protect, restore, and create native plant and animal communities.
Hydrological Restoration 2.2: Increase fresh surface water and groundwater availability to support healthy natural systems.

COASTAL & HEARTLAND NATIONAL ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

Relevance

Long term management, preservation and restoration activities within this region are guided by the CHNEP 2019 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The project will address all four priority pillars of the CCMP, including Hydrological Restoration, Water Quality Improvement, Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Restoration, and Public Outreach. The project will increase the area of restored wetland habitat and reduce nutrient loading, return natural patterns of quantity, timing and distribution, increase retention time for natural filtration of agricultural runoff from surrounding agricultural operations, and increase fresh surface water and groundwater availability to support healthy natural systems. Documented listed species at the preserve will directly benefit from this project. Additionally, the project will provide public engagement through guided walks and interpretive signage on the trail that educates visitors about water quality issues, land management practices, native plant and wildlife species, and the value of wetlands.

Impact

The completion of this project will provide restored habitat as well as improved water quality and ecosystem function for the target wetland plant communities. Both water depth and hydroperiod should increase throughout the project area and outfall wetlands. This will expand the extent of existing wetlands and will change the vegetation structure in other areas to sustain aquatic wildlife. Breeding habitat for amphibians and birds, foraging habitat for wading birds and reptiles, freshwater drinking source for other wildlife, and surface water for aquifer recharge are some of the anticipated benefits.

The project will enhance the quality of wildlife habitat for by restoring an abandoned developed area within a public preserve to a natural state.



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Uniting Central and Southwest Florida to protect water and wildlife