

Approved by the Acquisition and Restoration Committee on October 23, 2024

Evaluating Parcels for Acquisition through the Seminole Forever Program

The Acquisition and Restoration Committee’s (“ARC”) process of identifying parcels for acquisition through the Seminole Forever program consists of two phases. In Phase 1, parcels are numerically scored based on five criteria detailed in the Seminole Forever Ordinance, with a maximum possible score of 40 points. Phase 2 involves evaluating additional special considerations and potential difficulties in managing the parcel over the long term. Up to 10 additional points are eligible from a comprehensive assessment of the eight factors in Phase 2.

Notwithstanding how a parcel is evaluated in this process, ARC, in accordance with Section 190.209, Seminole County Code, retains full discretion in determining whether the parcel qualifies for the Seminole Forever Program. ARC’s final decision on whether to recommend a parcel for purchase is based on its comprehensive judgement, ensuring that the best interests of the program are served.

Scores from the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) and the Florida Ecological Greenway Network (FEGN) may be subject to adjustment based on additional information, including but not limited to assessments of community rarity, native plant cover, biological diversity, and connectedness to other conservation lands.

Phase 1: Scoring Criteria for Selecting Properties for Acquisition (40 Total Points)
Unless otherwise specified, the highest score that applies to the proposed parcel should be used for each section.

(1) Vulnerability to development – this section has a total maximum score of 4 points

Future Land Use - Proposed categories of uses for lands in Seminole County such as residential, commercial, agriculture, recreation, conservation, and education are depicted on a map that depicts Future Land Use designations and allowable intensities for unincorporated portions of the county ([Sem County FLU map](#)). Rural land uses are those with one or fewer dwelling units per acre; all others are Urban.

- i. The property has a Future Land Use designated as Urban. **2 points.**
- ii. The property has a Future Land Use designated as Rural. **1 point.**
- iii. The property has a Future Land Use of Conservation, is in the Wekiva River Protection Area, the Econlockhatchee River Protection Overlay, or a Wellfield Protection Area. **0 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

Adjacent Development Pressure (the additional point is only eligible for sites characterized by i. or ii. above)

- i. Existing infrastructure including roads, sewer, or utilities are available for development of the property, or the property is adjacent to a municipality and therefore could be annexed. **2 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

(2) Diversity of species and habitats – this section has a total maximum score of 15 points

Listed Species - Species determined to be Threatened or Endangered by the state of Florida (per Rule 68A-27.003, Florida Administrative Code for animals, and Rule 5B-40 FAC for plants), or the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (per the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended). ([FWC and US FWS Listed Species](#)).

Umbrella Species - A species whose conservation protects many other species in the ecosystem. The 2019 Florida Black Bear Management Plan ([Management Plan](#)) states that Florida black bears are recognized as an umbrella species because conserving large areas for bears also conserves habitat for many other species.

- i. The property is not conducive for Listed Species or notable Umbrella Species such as the Florida black bear. **0 points.**
- ii. The property has potential for Listed Species or notable Umbrella Species, including after restoration, but the value of the habitat is low. **1 point.**
- iii. The property has moderate potential for Listed Species or notable Umbrella Species, including after restoration. **2 points.**
- iv. The property has high potential for Listed Species or notable Umbrella Species, including after restoration. **3 points.**
- v. The property has high potential for Listed Species or notable Umbrella Species, without the need for restoration. **4 points.**
- vi. The property has excellent habitat for several Listed Species or notable Umbrella Species, or ideal habitat for a few Listed Species or notable Umbrella Species, without the need for restoration. **5 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

Community Rarity – the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) has assigned a ranking for natural communities in Florida to depict their relative rarity. Rankings are based on the total area represented by the community in the state, the geographic range, ecological fragility, relative threat of destruction, etc. The rankings range from Critically Impaired (S1, which do not occur in Seminole County), to demonstrably secure in Florida (S5). ([2010 FNAI Communities Guide](#)).

- i. At least 25% of the property contains natural communities ranked by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) as S4, S3, or S2. **1 point.**
- ii. At least 25% of the property contains natural communities ranked by the FNAI as S3 or S2. **2 points**
- iii. At least 25% of the property contains natural communities ranked by the FNAI as S2 or there is a sinkhole, seepage slope, spring, or limestone outcrop on the property. **3 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

Native Plant Cover – the FNAI Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida ([2010 FNAI Communities Guide](#)) provides a general summary of the plants expected to occur in the natural communities of Florida. This metric assesses the coverage of expected plant assemblages in the natural communities of the parcel under review.

- i. FNAI native plant communities are not vegetated by the expected plant species (e.g. infiltrated by invasive plants, have relatively low species diversity, missing key species, etc.) or constitute < 25% of the property. **0 points.**
- ii. FNAI native plant communities are vegetated by the expected plant species and constitute 25% to 50% of the property. **1 point.**
- iii. FNAI native plant communities are vegetated by the expected plant species and constitute 50% to 75% of the property. **2 points.**
- iv. FNAI native plant communities are vegetated by the expected plant species and exceed 75 % of the property. **3 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

Biological Diversity: FNAI Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (SHCA) - developed by FWC to identify the minimum amount of land needed to ensure protection of Florida's biological diversity. SHCAs include habitat data for 62 terrestrial vertebrate species and are prioritized into five classes based on the rarity of the species predicted to occur. ([FNAI Summary of FL Forever Maps](#)).

- i. The property has no Priority SHCA. **0 points**
- ii. The property predominantly consists of Priority 5 SHCA. **1 point.**
- iii. The property predominantly consists of Priority 4 SHCA. **2 points.**
- iv. The property includes some Priority 3 SHCA. **3 points.**
- v. The property includes some Priority 2 SHCA or lies adjacent to a Priority 1 SHCA. **4 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

(3) Connectedness to other conservation lands – this section has a total maximum score of 6 points

The Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN) is a statewide database that identifies an ecological network of public and private conservation lands across the state. The FEGN identifies opportunities for protecting areas that would maintain priority species habitat and ecosystem services. The values in the data layer represent priority levels 1 – 5, where Priority 1 is the highest. ([FNAI summary of FEGN](#)).

- i. The property is isolated from other natural communities or working landscapes, such as agriculture or silviculture. **0 points.**
- ii. The property is functionally connected to other natural communities or working landscapes, such as agriculture or silviculture in private or public ownership. **1 point.**
- iii. The property includes FEGN Priority 5 habitats. **2 points.** If adjacent to FEGN Priority 5, **1 point.**
- iv. The property includes FEGN Priority 4 habitats. **4 points.** If adjacent to FEGN Priority 4, **3 points.**
- v. The property is included in the FNAI Florida Wildlife Corridor (FEGN Priority 1 – 3). **6 points.** If adjacent to FEGN Priority 1-3, **5 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

(4) Potential uses for passive recreation or environmental education – this section has a total maximum score of 10 points

- i. Because of issues related to access, sensitive natural communities, or wildlife affected by disturbance, the site offers limited, or no, opportunities for resource-based recreation. **0 points.**
- ii. After acquisition, the property will have legal access for environmental education; resource-based passive recreation such as fishing, hiking, equestrian, photography, nature study, canoeing, paddleboarding, and kayaking; or passive recreation including walking trails, community gardens, seating, picnic areas, sustainable agriculture, and hunting under limited circumstances. **1-10 points, depending on the extent and quality of the potential recreation or environmental education experience.**

(5) Existence of important water resources, including whether the property protects or recharges groundwater, enhances the water quality, provides flood protection, protects the aquifer, or has high functioning wetlands – this section has a total maximum score of 5 points

Comments related to the assigned score:

Groundwater Recharge and Unique Ecological Features

Flow-ways and Floodplain

- i. The property includes or is adjacent to a lake, creek, or river and/or is within the 100-year floodplain. **1 point.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

Groundwater Recharge

- i. More than 25% of the property is characterized by medium or high groundwater recharge as depicted by the St. Johns River Water Management District Upper Floridan Aquifer Groundwater Recharge Map. **1-2 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

Wetlands

- i. On-site wetlands are degraded due to changes in vegetation or hydrology and cannot be effectively restored. **0 points.**
- ii. On-site wetlands are degraded due to changes in vegetation or hydrology, but they can be effectively restored. **1 point.**
- iii. On-site wetlands generally have intact hydrology and vegetation consistent with their historical characteristics. **2 points.**

Comments related to the assigned score:

Phase 2: Special considerations. Up to 10 additional points based on the comprehensive assessment of all eight factors.

Size of the Parcel

The parcel is of sufficient size or configuration to be of substantial ecological or recreational value by itself or in the context of other natural lands in the vicinity.

Public Interest

Consider information from public comments that has been conveyed to County staff.

Cultural Resources

The property contains an archeological site or significant historical resources.

Potential for Matching Funds or Partnerships

There is a reasonable expectation of matching funds or partnerships from other sources to assist in the acquisition or management of the property.

Management Considerations

Characteristics of the property make it particularly efficient to manage natural resources, including restoration, or maintain and secure the property for its intended purposes.

Comments related to the assigned score:
