

Wild Turkey Strand Preserve: A Conservation 20/20 Acquisition

Stewardship Update

On July 31, 2008, the Conservation 20/20 Program recently purchased 508 acres of environmentally lands that may be adjacent to some of your homes. This acquisition is the second Conservation 20/20 property to be honored in the Legacy Program. Through the Legacy Program, this addition has been officially named the “Elizabeth and Thomas Morrison Tract” of the Wild Turkey Strand Preserve. An additional 34 acres was acquired by Lee County DOT for future road improvements.

At least five distinct native plant communities are found on the property: pine flatwoods, mesic (wet) pine flatwoods, wet prairie, cypress domes, and depressional marshes. The large diversity of native plant communities can sustain a wide diversity of plant and animal species including many listed species. Although very little of the natural landscape has been cleared, there are scattered invasive, exotic pest plants.

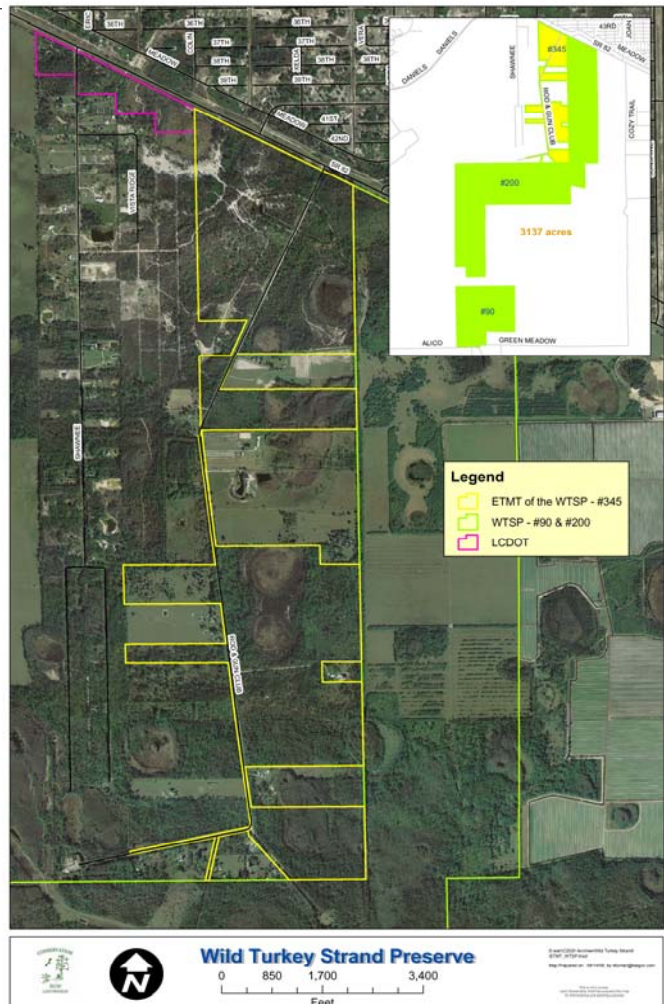
Current Restoration Work

Since March 2008, existing areas of WTSP (#200) had a contractor working with the Caloosahatchee District—Florida Division of Forestry on a restoration project to remove large melaleuca trees and thin dense pine trees locations (in & outside the wildfire area). Most of this project was completed by the end of August.

Now concerning the newly acquired parcel (“Elizabeth and Thomas Morrison Tract” of the Wild Turkey Strand Preserve), last year portions of it were also damaged from an intense wildfire that burned through pine flatwoods and cypress communities that were also infested with the invasive exotic melaleuca tree, a highly flammable and fire tolerant plant. Those of you that live on Rod & Gun Club Road experienced this wildfire and now view the many dead trees remaining.

We are very excited to have an opportunity to have the majority of melaleuca trees removed from several of our Conservation 20/20 preserves for free in the upcoming months! They will be cut down and turned into mulch. As you can imagine, the timing is wonderful considering the current tightening of budgets. Orange River Preserve and Gator Hole Preserve have been completed and next on the list is Wild Turkey Strand Preserve!

This project should begin in September and while this contractor is on-site primarily removing melaleuca trees, they have agreed to also remove dead pine trees, vegetation from around portions of the perimeter boundary line and thin out some of the smaller pine trees from crowded (dense) interior areas. These are important land stewardship tasks for habitat restoration efforts necessary to return the forest to a healthier open, uneven-aged stand and to prepare the area for future prescribed burns.



Benefits of thinning the pines include:

- * Sunlight reaching the forest floor that encourages a more diverse groundcover of grasses, wildflowers and other plants.
- * Less intense fires (whether lightning-caused or prescribed).
- * Better habitat for listed species like gopher tortoises and fox squirrels that prefer open pine forests.
- * More water and nutrients available for the remaining pines.
- * Lower risk of pine beetles damaging the forest.

Trees that are crowded together, weak and diseased will be targeted.

What this work means for you:

- ↳ The view from your home and neighborhood will change and might take awhile to get used to.
- ↳ The danger of wildfire will be reduced with the removal of melaleuca which is highly flammable.
- ↳ Over time, as with our other large restoration projects, there will likely be an increase in plant diversity and wildlife use.
- ↳ The smoke produced from future staff conducted prescribed fires will be greatly reduced.
- ↳ This work, which normally would cost thousands of dollars, will be conducted for free which means your tax dollars are being saved!

To learn more about
Wild Turkey Strand
and other Lee County
preserves

Visit our website!
www.conservation2020.org

To volunteer, have questions
answered or to schedule a
group field trip or
presentation, please contact

Sherry Furnari
Conservation 20/20
Land Stewardship Coordinator
(239) 533-7454

sfurnari@leegov.com

Volunteer Opportunities!

Do you have some spare time to help us out
with the Preserve?

Do you belong to a group or community
organization that can give us a hand for a day
or would consider “adopting” the Preserve?

Here are some needs that we could use some
assistance with:

- 👤 Exotic plant removal and maintenance.
- 👤 Looking for and reporting the location certain
invasive exotic plant that we are targeting.
- 👤 Recording wildlife seen at the Preserve or even
frogs or nocturnal birds that you may hear
calling at night
- 👤 Trash removal (both ongoing and probably one
group workday with the help of 20/20 staff).
- 👤 Taking regular photographs of restoration
progress that we can post on our website and
keep for our records.
- 👤 Trail trimming.
- 👤 Fence patrol and repair.