Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area Executive Summary
Polk, Osceola, Okeechobee, and Highlands Counties, Florida
August 2011

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Cattlemen move a herd across their Polk County ranch along the shores of Lake Kissimmee.
Photo credit: Carlton Ward Jr / CarltonWard.com
Together, we can leave behind the best of state, tribal, and federal agencies.

Working together is the key to conserving central Florida’s great grassland and savanna landscapes. As Florida continues to grow and develop, these natural resources and a rural working landscape that is home to abundant fish and wildlife, clean water, and rural heritage. Some of the ways the Service would create a more connected conservation landscape by providing healthy habitats between existing conservation areas. This will provide habitat and support shifts to shift in response to urban development and global climate change.

To conserve, protect, and manage one of the great grassland and savanna landscapes of eastern North America for current and future generations, protecting the important wildlife and habitats of the working rural landscape of central Florida’s Kissimmee River Basin that is home to abundant fish and wildlife resources that vital to restoration and protection of the water quality and quantity for the Everglades and surrounding ecosystems, the Service could use a combination of refuge lands and easements that prohibit development. The proposed 50,000-acre Everglades Headwaters Refuge would be a critical link in a much larger network of conservation areas.

The Kissimmee River Basin has a long history of cattle ranching, farming, and forestry. It is composed of snail shell, shrub, shrub meadow, prairies, pine flatwoods, and pastureland supports efforts to increase the diversity and connectivity of grasslands and savannas in the Kissimmee River Basin.

The Florida Panther (Puma concolor coryi) is a subspecies of the Florida bobcat (Puma concolor), which is a subspecies of the serval (Puma serval). The Florida bobcat is a small wildcat that is found in the southeastern United States. It is a medium-sized wildcat, with a slender body and long tail. It is a solitary animal and is active at night. It is a good hunter and is known for its agility and stealth. The Florida bobcat is classified as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Sale

Public use that would occur on the proposed refuge area:

• Hunting, fishing, and hiking;
• Environmental education and interpretation;
• Wildlife observation and photography;
• Recreational opportunities as they arise.

• Horseback riding.

Goals

• Provide a wide range of quality habitats to support migratory birds, federal and state listed species, state designated “Species of Special Concern,” and native wildlife diversity.
• Create a more connected conservation landscape by providing healthy habitats between existing conservation areas. This will provide habitat and support shifts to shift in response to urban development and global climate change.
• Provide a balance of quality habitats to support migratory birds, federal and state listed species, and native wildlife diversity.
• Improve the water quantity, water quality, and water storage capability of the Everglades headwaters.
• Provide a diverse landscape for a wide range of recreation and education opportunities.

Provide breeding grounds for grasshopper sparrow , and Florida scrub-jay . Hundreds of other rare species also call this area home, some of which exist nowhere else.

A variety of grasses, sedges, shrubs, and trees provide cover, water, and food for wildlife. The Kissimmee River Basin has a long history of cattle ranching, farming, and forestry. It is composed of snail shell, shrub, shrub meadow, prairies, pine flatwoods, and pastureland.

Some of the ways the Service would manage any refuge lands as a state management area.

• Provide barrier to drainage ditches to restore historic water flow.
• Provide breeding grounds for native grassland and savanna species.
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Proposed Conservation Area

The Service will evaluate the public comments on the Draft LPP/Draft EA in light of the findings of the Draft LPP/Draft EA, and determine whether to proceed with the proposed action.

Summary of Proposed Everglades National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area

The Everglades headwaters are a critical component of a vast ecosystem.

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