

Managing Native Landscapes on Private lands in the Florida Panther Focus Area

A Payment for Ecosystem Services Concept



Florida Panther Recovery Implementation Team

Role of Private Lands in Panther Recovery

- 50% of occupied panther range under private ownership within the Focus Area
- Management of native habitats on private lands in Florida is essential just as it is for public lands
- Maintaining quality wildlife habitats can be a liability if the panthers prey on their livestock



Challenges Facing Private landowners

- Economic Pressure
 - Profitability of most ranching operations
 - Contributes to land conversion
- Calf Depredation
 - Panther range expansion and population growth on private lands
 - Losses contribute further to Financial burden
 - Threatens previous collaborative efforts
- No Trust in Government
 - Endangered Species Consultation and associated Regulation
 - Inhibits some ranching practices
 - “Public support is critical to attainment of recovery goals and reintroduction efforts. Political and social issues will be the most difficult aspects of panther recovery...”(2008 Recovery Plan)

Payment for Ecosystem Services

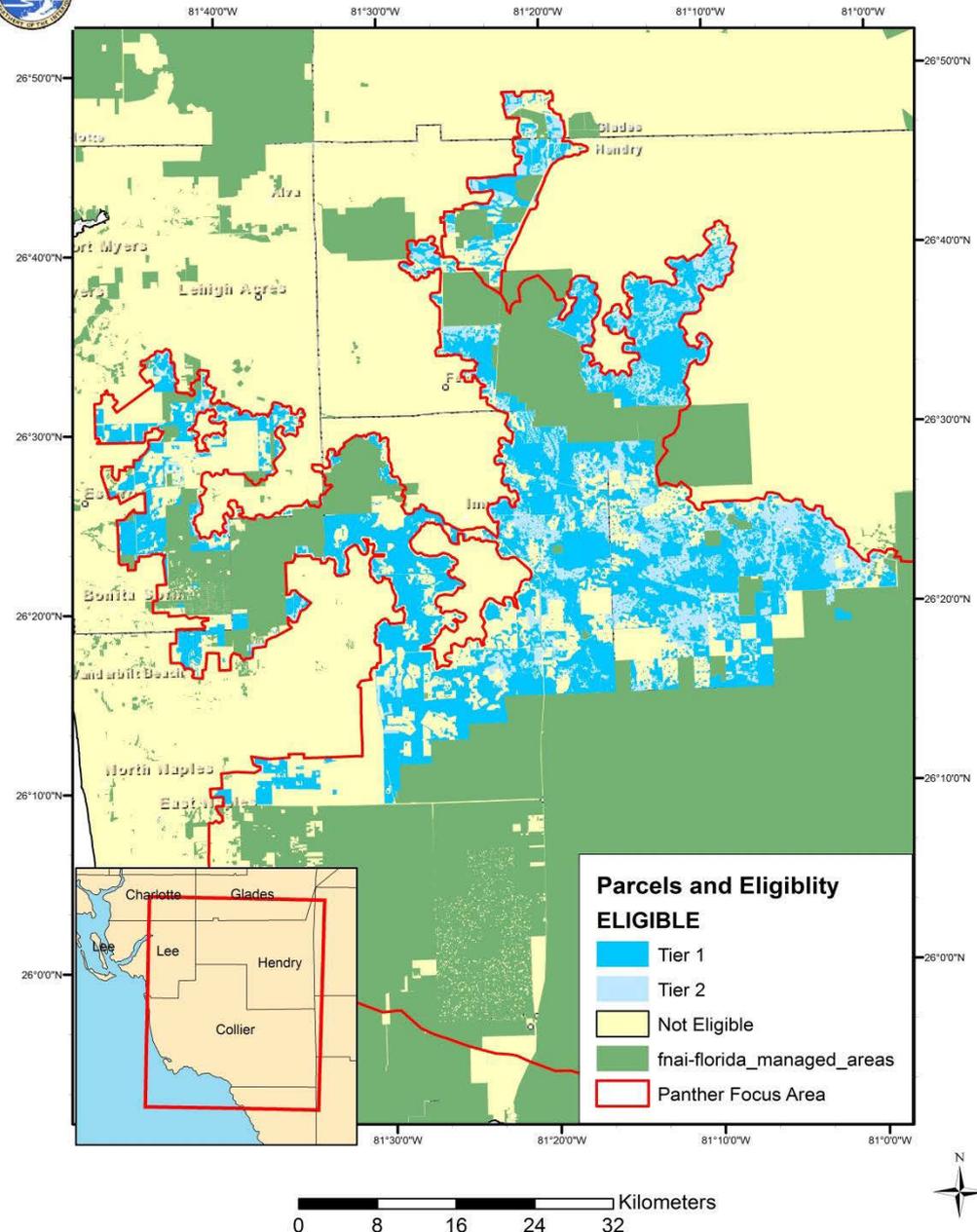
- Why?
 - To provide incentives for private landowners to manage habitat for endangered wildlife
 - Many species benefit from management
 - Cost less than purchasing easements or title to the land, yet protects the land from conversion for a short period of time. (buys us time for recovery)
 - A proactive approach to the various challenges landowners face.

Where

- Pilot (phase 1) Primary and Dispersal zones >50 acres
- Secondary zone and areas north of Caloosahatchee River would be developed in subsequent phases pending success of the program and available funding.
- Used FNAI Land Use Classifications to sort eligible habitats
- 3 categories - Tier 1, Tier 2 and Not Eligible

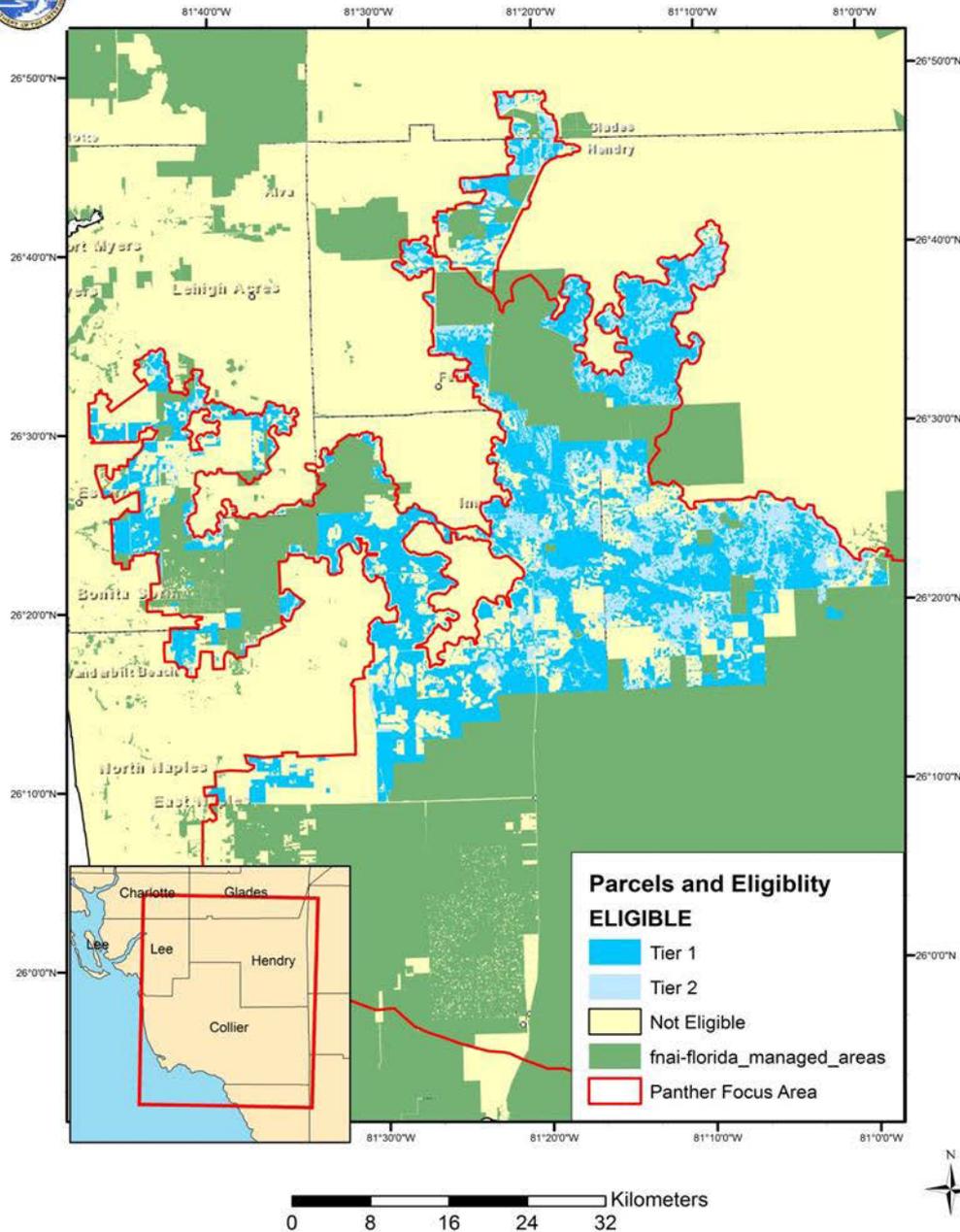


Lands Eligible For PES Within Primary and Dispersal Zones





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Determining Land Eligibility

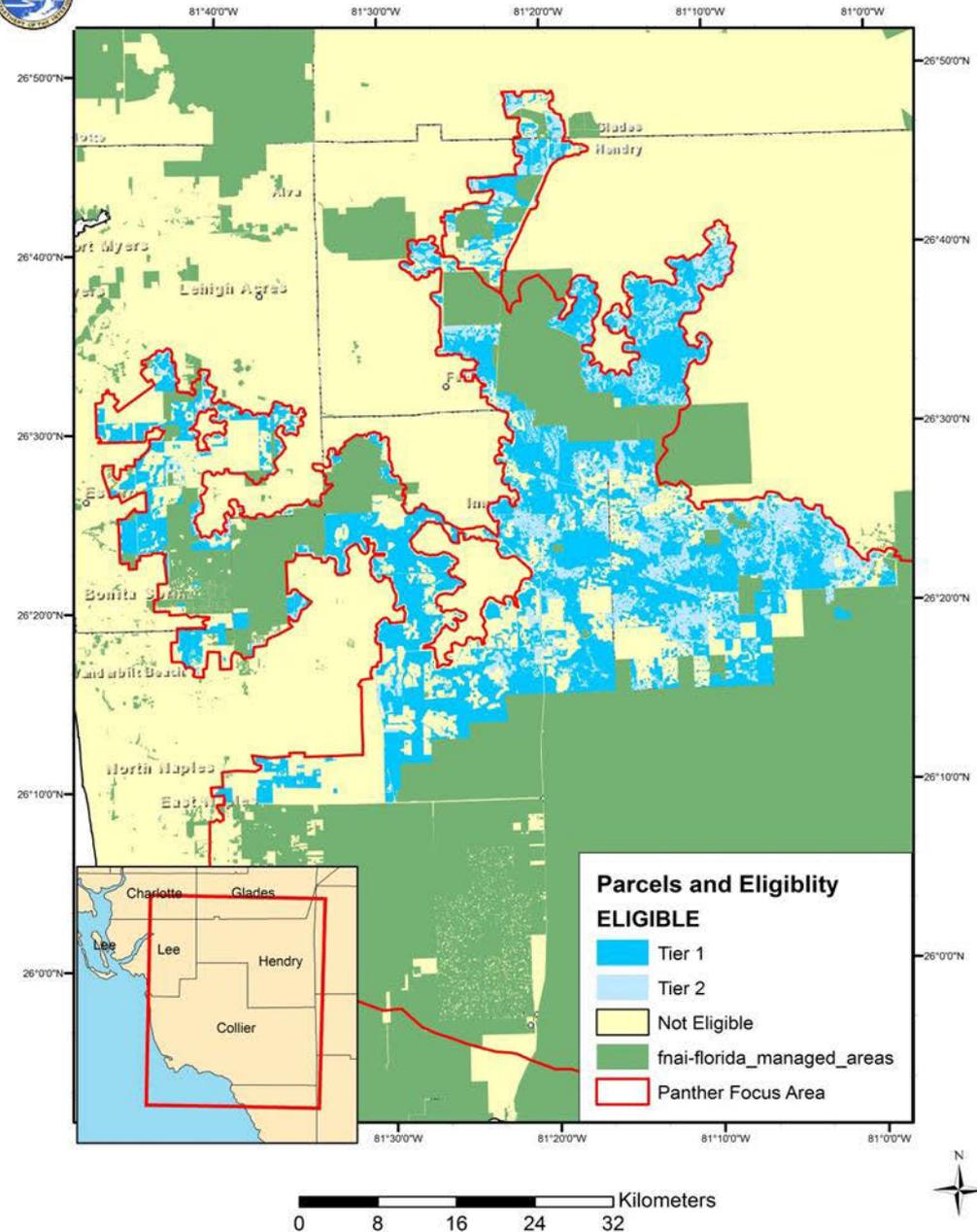
- Are the lands in the Primary or Dispersal Panther Focus Area, North of I-75 and over 50 acres?
- Are the lands part of a conservation Easement or Mitigation Bank?
- Will panthers use the area as feeding, resting, or denning habitat?
- Is the habitat natural or could it be restored to be habitat by removing invasive plants?
- 5. Are there land management practices that can be implemented to improve habitat?

Pilot Program (Phase 1)

- Eligible acres = 259,735
- Goal for Pilot is 10%
 - Tier 1 = 19,054 acres
 - Tier 2 = 6,920 acres
- Participant selection criteria is (to be determined)



Lands Eligible For PES Within Primary and Dispersal Zones



Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

- Already Established and Supported Program
- Develop WCEA- 10 year agreement
- 50/50 cost share
- Easy Payment Process
- No Eligibility Requirements



IT IS HARD TO START A FIRE WITH ONE STICK OF WOOD



BUT...IF YOU COULD EVER GET THE FIRE WOOD TOGETHER IN ONE PILE...

Panther PES

- What?

Practices that benefit panther habitat

- Prescribed fire/roller chopping
- Invasive species management
- Prescribed grazing

- How?

Costs based on current program funding (average of 2 federal programs and 2 private consultants) and landowner costs

Practice	total/acre	50:50 share
Rx Burning/mowing/roller chopping	\$97.00	\$49.00
Invasive spp. Mgmt.	\$250.00	\$125.00
Rx Grazing	\$8.00	\$4.00

Cost Calculation

Burning/mowing (\$49 per acre x 2 burns over 10 years) = \$98/acre

Invasive control (1 txt over 10 years)= \$125 /acre

Total= \$223 /acre over 10 years = **\$22.30 /acre/ year**

Example of a 7,000 acre Ranch:

(5000ac Tier 1, 1,000ac tier 2 and 1,000ac Not eligible)

- \$22.3/acre/year Tier 1. + \$4.00/acre/year Tier 2
- [5,000 acres*\$22.3=\$111,500]
- [1,000 acres *\$4.00= 4,000]
- 111,500 + 4,000 = \$115,500per year

If 10% of pilot area were enrolled it would cost \$452,584 /year

Next steps

- Make adjustments to the concept based on public input we here today.
- Determine if concept is a viable alternative with agency leadership
- Determine sources of funding
- Develop a proposal for funding



Discussion

- What are your thoughts about this concept?



USFWS

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

- Deliver voluntary on-the-ground habitat improvement projects on private lands for the benefit of Federal trust species.
- Promote and implement habitat improvement projects that benefit Federal trust species;
- Provide conservation leadership
- Promote partnerships
- Focus on private land projects that complement activities on National Wildlife Refuge System lands .
- Develop Wildlife Cooperative Extension Agreements and Project Plan with recipient (landowner OR Lessee)

Available Programs

- **Incentive Programs**
 - **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**
 - **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**
 - **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program**
 - **FFWCC**
 - **Landowner Assistance Program**
 - **USFWS**
 - **Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program**
- **Easement Programs**
 - **USDA NRCS**
 - **Wetland Reserve Program**
 - **Grassland Reserve Program**
 - **Farm and Ranchland Protection Program**
 - **FL DACS**
 - **Rural and Family Lands Protection Program**
- **Depredation Compensation Programs**
 - **FSA Livestock Indemnity Program (2014 Farm bill)**
 - **Conservancy of SW FL (2013 pilot)**