

Conservation Collier Red Maple Swamp Preserve



Extended Interim Management Plan

Third Extension

Prepared By:
Collier County's Conservation Collier Program
Parks & Recreation Department
3300 Santa Barbara Blvd.
Naples, FL 34116

April 2018

Table of Contents

1.0 Purpose and Scope of the Interim Management Plan.....	3
2.0 Management Authority and Responsibilities	3
3.0 Interim Site Plan	3
3.1 Location and Site Description	3
3.2 Signage.....	4
3.3 Easements, Concessions or Leases	4
3.4 Structures.....	4
3.5 Surrounding and Adjacent Land Uses.....	4
4.0 Interim Management Objectives	4
4.1 Natural Resource Protection.....	4
4.2 Site Security.....	5
4.3 Exotic Vegetation Removal and Maintenance Plan.....	5
4.4 Exotic Animal Plan	
4.5 Cultural, Historical and Archaeological Resource Protection.....	5
4.6 Public Access.....	6
4.7 Site Monitoring Plan.....	6
4.8 Partnerships.....	6
5.0 Exhibits.....	7
EXHIBIT 1: Location Map	
EXHIBIT 2: Aerial Map	
EXHIBIT 3: Estimated Cost Table	
EXHIBIT 4: Implementation Timeline	

1.0 Purpose and Scope of the Interim Management Plan

Red Maple Swamp Preserve is one of two multi-parcel projects undertaken by the Conservation Collier Program. The Red Maple Swamp Preserve project boundary encompasses 107 parcels totaling 305.69 acres within North Golden Gate Estates (NGGE) Unit 53. As of April 2018, 75 parcels or 209.11 acres (68%) have been acquired by Conservation Collier in a checkerboard fashion throughout the project area. Although the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approved the remaining 32 parcels totaling 96.58 acres for acquisition subject to land values and to being offered as a “very good deal,” acquisitions in general by Conservation Collier were suspended in January 2011, and no additional properties within this area have been acquired through fee simple purchase since that time. Conservation Collier requested a market study and appraisal in July 2017 that valued these parcels at \$5,500 to \$6,000 per acre. As of December 2017, the Property Appraiser is valuing parcels within NGGE Unit 53 at \$3,520 per acre.

Conservation Collier will continue to pursue the acquisition of all approved parcels within the Red Maple Swamp Preserve project area as means to do so present themselves. There are three potential ways for properties to come under County ownership:

- Outright acquisition
- Offsite alternatives to the Land Development Code’s Off-site native vegetation retention requirements (LDC, Sec 3.05.07 H.1.f.iii.) offer a way for properties within multi-parcel projects to be acquired and donated to Conservation Collier in lieu of developers retaining vegetation onsite at development projects.
- Current proposals being considered as part of the County’s Watershed Management Plan involve development of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program and a Watershed Mitigation Program in the North Golden Gate Estates, which could result in some parcels being stripped of development rights and deeded to Conservation Collier.

If properties cannot be acquired using the above means, or if it becomes apparent that few properties can be acquired in this manner, Conservation Collier staff will seek to exercise a provision of the Conservation Collier ordinance (2007-65, Section 14.7) that allows for the exchange of lands within and between multi-parcel projects in accordance with the goals of the Program. The objective of any such exchanges will be to consolidate the areas owned by Collier County under the Conservation Collier Program into one contiguous area. All acquired properties will be managed only for conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources and for public outdoor recreation that will be compatible with the conservation, protection and enhancement of the site and its surrounding lands. Public use of the site will not be practical until more contiguous properties within the Red Maple Swamp Preserve project boundary can be acquired.

This interim management plan is intended to update the key management priorities and issues within the site and give direction for management through 2020. This document is intended to be the precursor to a final management plan, which will provide more specific aspects of site management once a contiguous block of 100 acquired acres can be assembled.

Key Interim Management Objectives

1. Protect and manage the native habitat on site
2. Explore opportunities for grant funding and partnerships

Action Plan

- 1a. Treat and manage invasive exotic plants within the 53.9 acres of contiguous County owned land along the western boundary of the preserve, within the 39.3 acres of contiguous County owned land along the eastern boundary of the preserve, and within any LDC donation parcels.
- 1b. Treat and manage high density old world climbing fern populations located within any acquired properties.
- 2a. Seek opportunities for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Upland Plant Management Program and US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners Program grant funding
- 2b. Seek opportunities with South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed Land and Water Trust (CREW) for partnership management assistance.

2.0 Management Authority and Responsibilities

The Collier County Parks and Recreation Department will be solely responsible for managing the Red Maple Swamp Preserve, but will seek to obtain grants and partnerships for management activities.

3.0 Interim Site Plan

3.1 Location and Site Description

Red Maple Swamp Preserve is located north of Immokalee Road and west of Wilson Boulevard in Section 8 Township 48 Range 27 within Collier County, Florida. It is comprised of wetland hardwood forests. Approximately 209.11 acres of the 305.69-acre unit are currently owned by Collier County. Red Maple Swamp Preserve is located within the Golden Gate Estates boundary of Collier County.

3.2 Signage

Signs denoting parcels as Conservation Collier Land will be installed as contiguous parcels of 20 acres or more are acquired.

3.3 Easements, Concessions or Leases

There are sixty-foot (60') platted Right of Way easements dedicated for public right of way, including utilities, along 41st Ave. NE and Shady Hollow Blvd. No other easements, concessions or leases currently exist within the site. In the future, well easements may be proposed for locations along both of these roadways with pipelines to be located in existing easements. The Conservation Collier Ordinance (2002-63) prohibits use, infrastructure or improvements inconsistent with the purposes of the program or not provided by an approved management plan. There are well easements along Shady Hollow Blvd. for future alignment of wells with the Northeast Water Treatment Plant. Preliminary studies indicated that these sites may be viable but currently

there are no wells in place. The location of well easements will be included in a future management plan. There are no other easements, concessions or leases proposed for the future, unless they further conservation objectives, such as a conservation easement.

3.4 Structures

No structures are present on the site at this time. No structures, except potentially municipal well structures, will be erected within the time span of this interim management plan.

3.5 Surrounding and Adjacent Land Uses

Red Maple Swamp Preserve is adjacent to SFWMD lands to the north and west. A 43 acre Collier County-owned, un-restored, fallow agricultural, mitigation parcel also exists to the north of the preserve. To the east, the preserve is bordered by Estates zoned property that is mostly undeveloped and to the south by Phase II of the Twin Eagles Development.

4.0 Interim Management Objectives

4.1 Natural Resource Protection

Existing Vegetation:

The following native plants have been observed within the preserve: red maple (*Acer rubrum*), cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), willow (*Salix* spp.), bay (*Persea* spp.), cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) and dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*). Invasive exotic plants, Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) and old world climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*), were also observed on some of the parcels.

Unique Natural Features:

Red Maple Swamp Preserve is an excellent example of a wetland hardwood forest community and contains many mature red maples in areas outside of those historically farmed. Even previously farmed areas show significant red maple re-growth.

Possible Listed Species:

Wild coco (*Elophia alta*) **FDA threatened**, royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) **FDA commercially exploited** and white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) **FFWCC species of special concern** have been observed within the acquired properties. Listed orchid species, wood storks (*Mycteria Americana*) and snail kites (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) could potentially be found there.

4.2 Site Security

Staff has been advised that ATV riders use a trail along the west side of NGGE Unit 53, accessing it by both 41st Avenue NW and Shady Hollow Blvd. Staff will post properties where ATV use is occurring with “No Unauthorized Vehicles” signs and arrangements will be made for law enforcement to occasionally visit and monitor activities. Fencing

will not be addressed unless trespass becomes a major issue and a contiguous block of 100 acquired acres can be assembled within the preserve.

4.3 Exotic Vegetation Removal and Maintenance Plan

Invasive exotic plant species observed include: Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), creeping signalgrass (*Urochloa plantaginea*), air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) and old world climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*).

LDC donation parcels are initially treated for invasive, exotic vegetation prior to donation, and a management endowment is included with each donation parcel. Conservation Collier will only actively manage invasive, exotic vegetation within LDC donation parcels, within the 39.3 acres of contiguous County owned land along the eastern boundary of the preserve, and within the 53.9 contiguous acres along the western edge of the preserve that are adjacent to SFWMD lands until more contiguous acreage can be acquired. All observed invasive exotic vegetation in this section will be treated and managed. High density infestations of old world climbing fern will be treated when located on any acquired property within Red Maple Swamp Preserve.

Staff will pursue grant funding for exotic plant maintenance.

4.4 Exotic Animal Plan

In March 2015, a SFWMD staff member observed a large black and white tegu lizard (*Salvator merianae*) crossing Shady Hollow Blvd. Members of the SW Florida Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) attempted to trap the lizard, but were unsuccessful. In July 2015, CISMA members set up camera traps on Conservation Collier and SFWMD land adjacent to Shady Hollow Blvd., and in August 2015, the CISMA organized a tegu lizard rapid response survey for lands surrounding the location of the initial sighting. Conservation Collier staff will continue to coordinate with CISMA members to monitor and/or trap exotic animals within Red Maple Swamp Preserve.



Black and White Tegu Lizard – March 18, 2015, Shady Hollow Blvd.
Photo courtesy of Joe Bozzo

4.5 Cultural, Historical and Archeological Resource Protection

Red Maple Swamp Preserve is not within an area of historical and archaeological probability, and no historical or archaeological sites appear to be present in the property. The County will notify the Division of Historical Resources immediately if evidence is found to suggest any archaeological or historic resources are present on County-owned lands. If such properties are identified on-site, staff shall cordon off the area, and a professional survey and assessment shall be instituted. The archaeologist shall prepare a report outlining results of the assessments and issue recommendations to County staff about management of any sites discovered, per provisions of the Land Development Code Section 2.2.25. This report shall be sent to the Division of Historical Resources. The County shall cooperate fully with direction from the Division of Historical Resources on the protection and management of archaeological and historical resources. The management of these resources will comply with the provisions of Chapter 267, Florida Statutes, specifically Sections 267.061 2 (a) and (b).

The collection of artifacts or the disturbance of archaeological and historic sites within the Red Maple Swamp Preserve will be prohibited unless prior authorization has been obtained from the Collier County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.

4.6 Public Access

The SFWMD Bird Rookery Swamp parking area and trails are located at 1295 Shady Hollow Blvd., across the street and to the east of the 53.9 contiguous eastern acres proposed for management in the Red Maple Swamp project area. During the Red Maple Swamp Preserve final management plan development, County staff will meet with CREW Land and Water Trust staff and SFWMD staff to determine whether it would be feasible to create a seasonal trail within Red Maple Swamp Preserve that could be accessed from the Bird Rookery Swamp parking area. The Bird Rookery Swamp portion of the CREW Wildlife and Environmental Area (WEA) adjacent to Red Maple Swamp Preserve is closed to hunting. Therefore, incorporating Red Maple Swamp Preserve into the CREW WEA to facilitate hunting would not be feasible at this time.

4.7 Site Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of the site shall consist of a walk-through by staff at semi-annual intervals. Conservation Collier shall be responsible for exotic plant treatment with tasks contracted out as deemed necessary. Prior to any land management activities, photo monitoring points will also be established at strategic locations within the project area to monitor vegetation communities.

4.8 Partnerships

SFWMD staff has indicated that they are open to the potential for expanding the CREW project boundaries around NGGE Unit 53, or portions thereof, and there may be opportunity for management assistance once a larger area of contiguous parcels is acquired. County staff has also had discussions with CREW about the possibility of CREW acquiring and conveying NGGE Unit 53 properties over to Collier County. A

letter went out to private owners within NGGE Unit 53 in 2012 from the CREW Trust asking if there was interest in selling; however, no positive response was returned.

5.0 Exhibits

EXHIBIT 1: Location Map

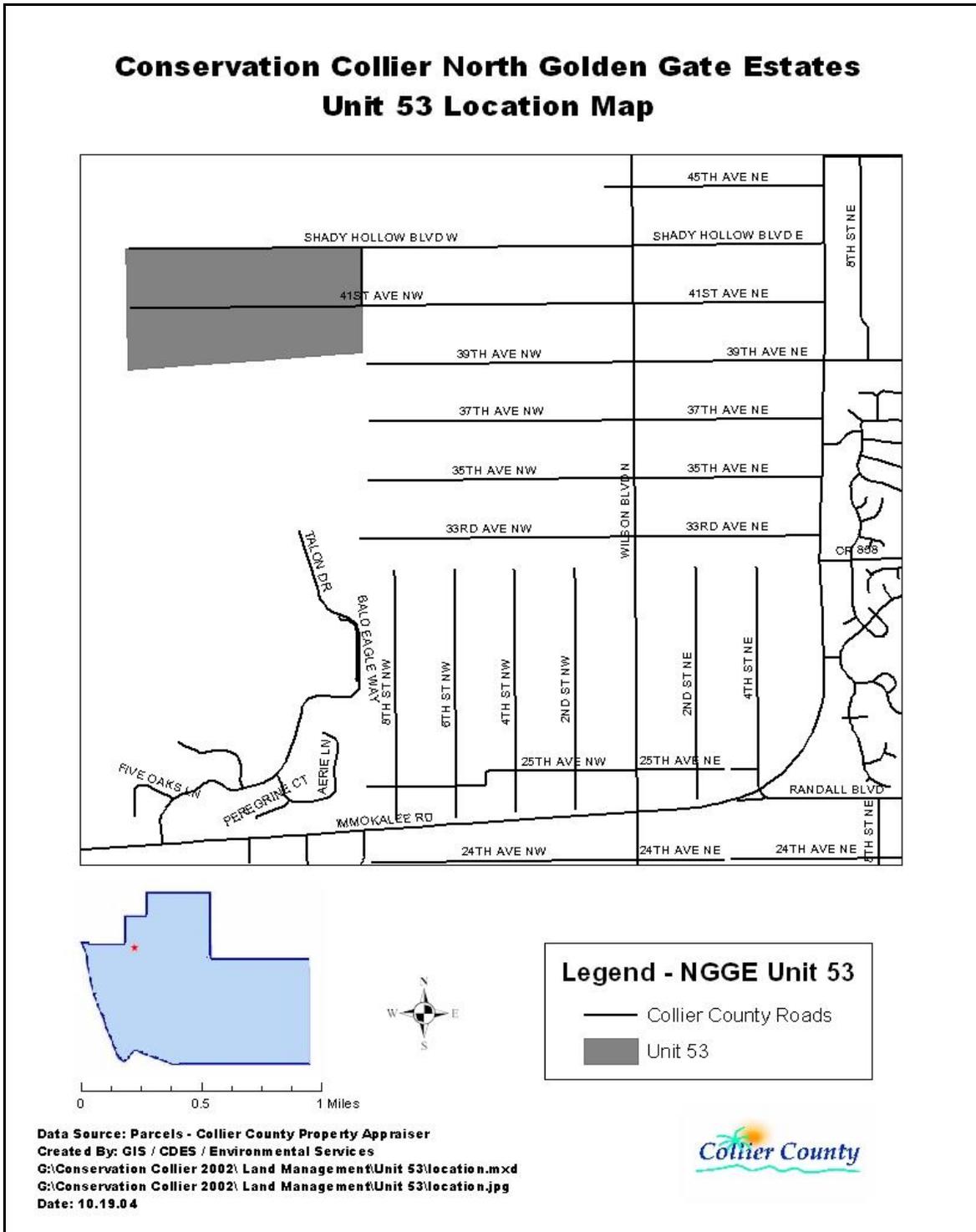


EXHIBIT 2: Aerial Map

Conservation Collier: Red Maple Swamp Preserve



EXHIBIT 3: Estimated Cost Table

Management Element	Initial Cost	Annual Recurring Costs	Comments
Exotics Control		\$14,000 - \$28,000	Staff will seek FWC funding for maintenance of invasive exotics
Conservation Collier signs	\$650		2 (2'X3') with posts and hardware
"No Unauthorized Vehicles" signs	\$150		2 (20" X 28") signs and posts
Total	\$800	\$14,000-\$28,000	

EXHIBIT 4: Estimated Implementation Time Line

	Monitoring Site Visit	Seek Partnerships	Exotic Plant Treatment	Completion of final management plan (or update of interim management plan if acquired parcels are still scattered)
Jan-18	x		x	
April-18		x		
July-18	x			
Jan-19	x		x	
April-19		x		
July-19	x			
Jan-20	x		x	
April=20		x		x