Conservation Collier Land Acquisition Program
Project Design Report

Robert H. Gore III Estate
Date: July 10, 2018

Property Owner: Paul A. Gore, Trustee / Robert H. Gore III Estate
Folio(s): See attached List
Location: North Golden Gate Estates Units 91, 91A, Replat 91A, 92 and 92A
Size: 65 parcels/168.87 acres
Collier County Appraiser Value: $321,421

History of Project:

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<td>March 2007</td>
<td>1/25/11</td>
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Project remained on the “B” Category on the Board-approved Active Acquisition List.

Project Selected for the “A” category, #4 priority, on the Active Acquisition List (AAL) by CCLAAC

Purpose of Project: Environmental Conservation – Conservation Collier Program

History: This project was initially proposed in 2007, when the owner was still living. Dr. Gore had assembled the offered folios over many years and had used the property, which he called Naithloriendun, as his residence and to host environmental educational activities in partnership with Edison Community College. In 2007 he offered 8 parcels/25.76 acres as part of the I-75 Project. In 2009, Dr Gore increased the offered area to 183.52 acres and...
in 2010 he again increased it to 197.66 acres. The project was placed in the “B” Category of the Active Acquisition List and remained there between 2008 and 2011, when buying ceased. Dr. Gore passed away in February 2017 and his heirs offered the property again to Conservation Collier. The offering initially consisted of 69 folios. Most were contiguous, but 4 were non-continuous. By the time of the properties’ approval in 2018, two of the non-contiguous parcels had been sold, including one 6.39-acre non-contiguous parcel adjacent to another non-contiguous 5-acre parcel. After learning of the sale, the Conservation Collier Land Acquisition Advisory Committee (CCLAAC) decided not to recommend the remaining 5-acre non-contiguous parcel for purchase either, choosing to recommend only the contiguous parcels, and one nearly contiguous parcel for acquisition. The current project includes 65 parcels/168.87 acres. The 10 acre-homesite located in the center of the project is currently under contract to the Cypress Cove Conservancy, a local non-profit environmental organization, for use as an Environmental Learning Center.

Program Qualifications: The Gore project met 5 out of 6 Initial Screening Criteria identified in the Conservation Collier Ordinance, No. 2007-65, as amended, including presence of native habitat, potential for nature-based recreational and educational opportunities, protection of water resource values and wetland dependent species habitat, presence of significant biological/ecological values, listed species habitat, connectivity and restoration potential.

The Gore Project contains areas of intact native plant communities, including mixed wetland hardwoods, cypress, and hardwood hammocks scattered within. In 1996 the property was designated as a Stewardship Forest by the Florida Forest Service. This is a program that works with private landowners to assess timber, wildlife, soil and water, recreation, aesthetics and forest resources, and collaborates to plan stewardship of natural lands. The Gore properties were one of the first Stewardship Forests in the local area and they remained in the program between 1996 and 2011, when foresters could no longer reach Dr. Gore.

The project area is approximately 75% wetlands, with the remaining 25% a seasonal wetland. Significant areas of karst have been observed on the property. Karst is an area of limestone terrain characterized by sinkholes, caverns and underground streams, and is a wetland indicator. Plant communities found on the property are consistent with mapped soils and provide habitat for wetland dependent species. The area of these properties is mapped by the South Florida Water Management District as contributing 43’ to 56” annually of water to the Surficial Aquifer System, and can be expected to contribute to the attenuation of area flood waters. Hydrologic indicators such as karst topography, cypress knees, and water marks on buttressed cypress trees provide evidence of seasonal flooding. The many mature cypress trees found on the property indicate that the area has historically contained wetlands.

Invasive exotic plant species are present in significant amounts, up to 95% along roadsides and at the homesite parcel. Interior areas appear to be infested at approximately 15% to 35%. The primary invasive exotic plant is Brazilian pepper (Schinus terebinthifolius), but other species are also present, including air potato (Dioscorea bulbifera), lantana (Lantana...
camara), arrowhead (Syngonium podophyllum), and balsam apple (Momordica chantaria). Others are likely also present.

The property contains protected species of plants, including giant sword fern (Nephrolepis biserrata) and several listed bromeliads in the Tillandsia genus. A neighbor and environmental professional who is familiar with the property reported 5 native orchid species present. The same neighbor has seen 5 panthers on the property since 2014, including a panther with kittens, dozens of Florida black bears, including females with cubs, and numerous other wildlife. The observed habitat and location would support the presence of Everglades mink (Neovison vison evergladensis), Florida brown snake, (Storeria victa), tricolor heron (Egretta tricolor), and little blue heron (Egretta caerulea), all state-protected species.

These properties are within an historic wetland area that connects on the east with the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (FPNWR) via the old Ford Test Track. The Gore properties would enhance the FPNWR by acting as a buffer and providing a reasonably large sized wild land addition north of I-75. There are wildlife underpasses at the adjacent Faka Union and nearby Miller canals creating an ecological link south under I-75 to the Picayune Strand State Forest. A little over 2 miles to the west are the North Belle Meade sending lands. The Gore project is within the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Primary Panther habitat zone.

Potential public uses include hiking, nature photography, bird watching, and environmental education to be provided by partner Cypress Cove Conservancy. The Cypress Cove Conservancy will acquire and maintain Dr. Gore’s home as a Nature Center and offer environmental education, while Conservation Collier will maintain the remainder of the project area, including existing and future trails.

**Zoning, Growth Management and Land Use Overlays:** The Gore project parcels are entirely within the Northern Golden Gate Estates. The zoning classification for all the parcels is Estates (E), a rural residential classification. There are no additional land use overlays applicable.

**Projected Management Activities:** No hydrologic changes are necessary to maintain wetland characteristics on the project site. Projected management activities include the removal of invasive exotic plants, the development of an Interim Land Management Plan within 90 days, development of a Final Management Plan within 2 years, development of public access to selected portions of the property, and exploration to use portions of the property for wetland and panther habitat mitigation activities.