



Five Mile Creek Conservation Area

At A Glance...

- 199 acres
- Purchased 2009-2013
- Located in Land O' Lakes, FL
- Supports freshwater marsh, cypress swamp, and wet prairie.

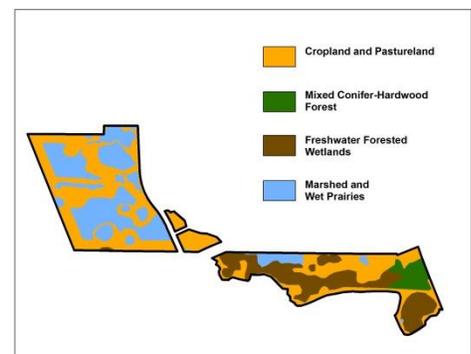


Background

The Five Mile Creek Conservation Area lies in central Pasco County, west of US 41, in the Starkey to Connerton ecological corridor. Northern and western portions of the property, deeded to the County through the development review process, were mined for aggregate which formed the bed of the nearby Suncoast Parkway. After mining ended, the resulting borrow pits formed new open-water habitats. Historical impacts also include extensive alteration of Five Mile Creek's flow, location and seasonality. Restoring the site to near-original hydrology, including the creek channel and floodplains, remains a long-term goal.

Characteristics

Remnant historical natural communities include open and canopied wetlands. In 2015, restoration in the northwest portion of the conservation area began with significant clearing of overgrown species, moving earth to partially recreate the creek's historical floodplain, and planting of wetland species.



Dominant natural communities of Five Mile Creek Conservation Area

Five Mile Creek Conservation Area

Despite impacts to the conservation area during mining, wetland wildlife species have been frequently observed – especially birds. Common yellowthroats, red-winged blackbirds, sedge wrens, and swamp sparrows nest in marsh vegetation and forage throughout the area. Wading birds, including listed species, are prominent. American alligators live and hunt in the lakes created by the borrow pits. Incursions by air potato, Cogon and torpedo grasses, alligator weed, Peruvian primrose-willow and Old-World climbing fern have not negated the area’s ability to support native wildlife. Restoration will continue to make more habitat available.

Management

Initial priorities focused on human use: trespassing and poaching. Feral hog removal was also imperative during early ownership. Management has now switched to overseeing mitigation efforts. Pasco County receives this mitigation, in the form of restoration, for impacts to wetlands elsewhere in the county – in this case, Thousand Oaks and Trinity Communities in New Port Richey. Further restoration should be forthcoming via other mitigation.



Value

Five Mile Creek Conservation Area provides a critical partial connection between Conner Preserve, Connerton conservation areas, and the Serenova tract of J.B Starkey Wilderness Preserve. Wetlands support a number of listed wading birds species, and restoration of the creek and its riparian edges will support movement of small and large mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.



For more information:

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