

CONSERVATION COLLIER

2022

ANNUAL

REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

Responsibilities

The Conservation Collier Program (Program) is responsible for implementing the mandate of the electorate of Collier County as provided by public referendum vote in November 2002, and again in November 2006 confirming that mandate, to levy a 0.25 mill ad valorem property tax for a period not to exceed 10 years for acquisition. Once acquired, protection, restoration, and management of environmentally sensitive lands in Collier County continues in perpetuity for the benefit of present and future generations. Most recently, on November 3, 2020, the electorate voted to implement another 10-year ad valorem tax not-to-exceed 0.25 mill. The implementation of this ad valorem tax started in FY22 (October 2022).

Lands Inventory

Conservation Collier has been in existence for 21 years. In that time, the Program has acquired 4,670 acres in twenty-two different locations for a cost of \$111,078,500. Thirteen (13) Conservation Collier preserves are currently open for public use with signs, trails and benches installed.

Program Costs FY22

Program expenses for FY22 totaled \$2,072,804 including land management costs for all preserves of \$763,747, program administration and acquisition operations costs of \$151,276, and land acquisition costs of \$1,157,780 for land acquisition. In addition, FY22 funding assistance, in the amount of \$187,175, was received for land management.

The Net Operating expenses for FY22 was \$915,023. The increase in budget was due to the acquisition of new preserves and the initial costs for exotic vegetation removal.

Public Activities

Public activities at preserves during FY22 included adult and youth hunts, hiking, camping, biking, horseback riding, volunteering, guided hikes, and presentations.

Looking Ahead

Staff is working diligently to open the Rattlesnake Hammock Preserve acquired in August 2020. Opening of this preserve is dependent on initial removal of exotic vegetation, permitting, and trail and parking lot installation.

The FY23 budget included a Conservation Collier Program tax levy of .25 mil that generated approximately \$30,577,600 for acquisition and management.

FY24 budget will be proposed to include a Conservation Collier Program tax levy of up to .25 mil that would generate additional funding for acquisitions.

Please accept this report on the activities of Conservation Collier calendar year 2022.



Railhead Scrub Preserve photo by staff member Molly DuVall

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The primary purpose of the CCLAAC, as defined by the Conservation Collier Ordinance, has been to assist the Board in establishing an Active Properties Acquisition List with qualified purchase recommendations consistent with the goals of Conservation Collier. During 2022 there were 9 active members. Membership of the CCLAAC is intended to be comprised of broad and balanced representation of the interests of Collier County citizens, including:

- Environmental, land management, and conservation interests
- Agricultural and business interests
- Educational interests
- General civic and citizen interests throughout the county.

Members serving as of during 2022, and their backgrounds and areas of expertise are:

William Poteet, Jr. - Chairman through January 2023 (Business Interest) Re-appointed for a



sixth term in February 2020, Mr. Poteet is a local realtor and business owner who has been a member of the CCLAAC since its inception in March 2003. He has served as Chairman of the CCLAAC since August 2005 with unanimous re-election as Chair each year. He also served as a member of the Outreach Subcommittee and as Chairman of the Ordinance, Policy, and Rules Subcommittee during active acquisition phases. He currently serves as the Chair of the Lands Evaluation and Management Subcommittee. Mr.

Poteet is an outstanding leader, assisting with the development of many program policies. Bill concluded his 20 years of service with his last meeting on February 1, 2023. We thank Bill for his contributions!



Michele Lenhard -Vice Chair now Chair as of January 2023 (Educational/General Civic/Ecology/Conservation) Ms. Lenhard was reappointed on February 22, 2022, for a 3-year term. Ms. Lenhard relocated to Collier County 9 years ago from Ridgewood, NJ. She currently serves as the Naturalist Program Chair for the Friends of Barefoot Beach having completed the Florida Master Naturalist Program training. While living in New Jersey she served on the local Board of Education for many years. During her tenure on the Board, she was the liaison to several State educational initiatives and achieved certification as a Master Board Member from New Jersey School Boards. She and her husband owned and operated a records and information management company as well as several commercial real estate entities in New Jersey. Michele's educational background is in environmental science. Early in her career she worked in the scientific instrument industry.



Gary Bromley - (General Civic/Citizen) Mr. Bromley was reappointed on February 9, 2021, for a 3-year term. Mr. Bromley has lived in Collier County for 4 years, originally from Westchester, NY, where he served as an environmental educator. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in social science work and is currently retired. This is Mr. Bromley's first time serving on a county board, but he is a member of the League of Women voters where he participates on the Environmental and Government Committees. He has also participated in efforts to place constitutional amendments on voter ballots and has participated with the Stone crab Alliance on environmental issues.



Brittany Patterson-Weber - (Environmental/Conservation/Education) Ms. Patterson-Weber was reappointed on February 11, 2021, for a 3-year term. She is currently the Vice President of Education & Interpretation at Naples Botanical Garden, and a member of the Garden's executive team. She has spent the last 20 years in Florida and the Caribbean working in environmental education as both an educator and program/center Director at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium (Ft. Myers), Pigeon Key Marine Science Foundation (Marathon), South Seas Island Resort (Captive), and Ambassadors of the Environment by Jean-Michel Cousteau at the Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman. She also has done graduate work in Agricultural Extension Education. She has collaborated closely with professional partners like Collier County Public Schools, Collier County Pollution Control, and Rookery Bay's Coastal Training Program to educate both adults and children about living in Southwest Florida's environment.





Karyn Allman - (Environmental & Conservation/Ecology/Land Management) Ms. Allman was appointed on September 28, 2021, for a 3-year term. Karyn is a Biologist/Ecologist who has lived in Collier County for over 15 years. She has a master's degree in Conservation Biology from the University of Kent Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology. Karyn grew up in Maine and spent her life exploring the outdoors as a part of her professional and personal life. She is a Professional Wetland Scientist (PWS), and recently worked as a Land Manager for Lee County Parks and Recreation Conservation 2020 program for almost 5 years. Currently, Karyn is a lead Scientist for the South Florida Water Management District, helping to restore over 6,000 acres of citrus groves in Hendry County into wetlands.



Rhys Watkins - (Conservation/Real Estate) Mr. Watkins was appointed on June 14, 2022, for a 3-year term. Rhys was born and raised in Collier County where he spent time learning about the natural beauty of Collier County through exploring the Big Cypress Preserve and the Ten Thousand Islands. His first involvement with Conservation Collier came as a volunteer while in middle school for the original campaign to pass the referendum in 2002. Rhys currently works in real estate and investments in Naples and has prior experience in the hospitality industry in Naples and the defense industry in Washington, D.C. Rhys has a master's degree in business administration and a bachelor's degree in mathematics.



Ron Clark - (Environmental/Conservation/Ecology/Land Management) Mr. Clark was appointed on February 22, 2022, for a 3-year term. Ron has a Bachelor of Science in Resource Management and is a retired Chief of Natural and Cultural Resources for Big Cypress National Preserve following a 44-year career with the National Park Service that included assignments in ten national park units throughout the country. Ron arrived in south Florida in 1989 as an Environmental Specialist and in 1995 began to undertake his role as Principal Advisor and Supervisor of the team of scientists and technicians of the Preserve's Natural and Cultural Resource Management programs. Ron has also served on the US Fish and Wildlife Service Florida Panther Recovery Team, is a past Chair of the National Parks Service Southeast Region Natural Resource Advisory Committee and volunteered in a six-year program as a Senior Technical Advisor for the US Agency of International Development to protect orangutan and hawksbill sea turtles on Borneo. Currently, Ron is the Lands Evaluation & Management Subcommittee Chair for the Land Acquisition Advisory Committee.



John Courtright - (General Civic/Conservation/Environmental) Mr. Courtright was appointed on September 13, 2022, for a 3-year term. John retired November 2009 from Miami-Dade Fire & Rescue Department. He worked for 30 years as a Fire Fighter/Paramedic. John volunteers with Big Cypress National Preserve, CREW Trust, Paddle Florida, Conservation Collier, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, UF-IFAS and Collier County. John has been a resident of Collier County since 1986.

PROGRAM LANDS ACQUISITION STATUS

The FY22 budget included a Conservation Collier Program tax levy of .25 mil that generated \$26,188,806. Consistent with Ordinance 2002-63 as amended, twenty-five (25) percent of annual gross tax receipts were deposited into the Conservation Collier Management Trust Fund to provide for long-term management of lands managed by the Conservation Collier Program. The balance of tax receipts was deposited into the Conservation Collier Acquisition Trust Fund for use in acquiring environmentally sensitive lands. Of the \$26,188,800 tax levy generated, \$14,065,100 was allocated for Acquisition in FY22.

Moving forward, Acquisition Cycle 11 started in February 2022 after approval of the FY23 Budget Policy. The Cycle started knowing that acquisition funds would be available after October 2022 in FY23. The FY23 budget includes a Conservation Collier Program tax levy of .25 mil that will generate up to \$30,577,640 with \$ \$20,576,000 of that as new funding for acquisition.

Status of Acquisition Cycles:

Cycle 10 Active Acquisition List was presented to the Board of County Commissioners on January 25, 2022. The Board requested staff to obtain appraisals and perform due diligence on the A and B-list properties on the Active Acquisition List. Twenty properties totaling 321 acres have been acquired for Cycle 10. Cycle 11A properties were recommended by the Board on December 13, 2022.

A separate document *Active Acquisition List Status* is provided companion to the Annual Report providing the current status of Acquisition within Cycles 10 and 11.

PROGRAM LAND MANAGEMENT STATUS

Management Funds are used to restore and maintain natural lands through activities including:

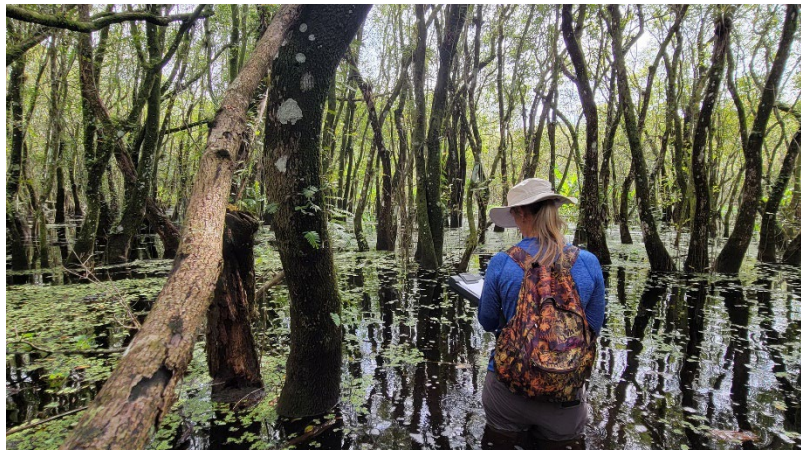
- Trail Maintenance
- Treatment and Removal of Exotic Plant Species
- Restoration of native plant communities through plantings
- Preserve Security and Resource Protection
- Prescribed Burning
- Vegetation Mowing



Prescribed burn on Conservation Collier Preserves
by *Molly DuVall*



Staff conducting hurricane recovery on
Conservation Collier Preserves by *Clif Maehr*



Staff assessing application property for acquisition by *Mitchell Barazowski*



Volunteers and Partners *by various photographers*

All preserves except for Camp Keais Strand are actively managed. Camp Keais is not currently accessible for management. Table 2 below (page 11) provides the status of each preserve including whether it is open to the public.

Table 1. Preserve Status

Preserve Name	Preserve Acreage	Preserve Status
Alligator Flag Preserve	18.46	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails
Camp Keais Strand Preserve	32.50	Resource Protection
Caracara Prairie Preserve	367.70	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails
Cocohatchee Creek Preserve	3.64	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails
Dr. Robert H. Gore III Preserve	172.80	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails
Fred W. Coyle Freedom Park	11.64	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails, Boardwalk, Parking, Restrooms
Gordon River Greenway	50.51	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails, Boardwalk, Parking, Restrooms
HHH Ranch Property	252.00	Resource Protection - may provide public access in future
Logan Woods Preserve	6.78	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails
McIlvane Marsh Preserve	380.90	Resource Protection
Nancy Payton Preserve	71.00	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails, Parking
Otter Mound Preserve	2.45	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails, Parking
Panther Walk Preserve	9.55	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails
Pepper Ranch Preserve	2,511.90	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails, Parking, Restrooms, Visitor Center, Biking
Railhead Scrub Preserve	135.36	Resource Protection - will open when road is built

Rattlesnake Hammock Preserve	37.16	Resource Protection - in process of permitting parking lot for public access
Red Maple Swamp Preserve	237.43	Resource Protection - may provide public access in future
Redroot Preserve	9.26	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails
Rivers Road Preserve	96.14	<u>OPEN</u> - Trails, Parking
Shell Island Preserve	111.88	Resource Protection - adjacent to State lands with boardwalk
Wet Woods Preserve	26.77	Resource Protection
Winchester Head Preserve	95.84	Resource Protection - may provide public access in future when more parcels acquired
TOTAL PROGRAM ACREAGE	4,641.67	

For more information about the Conservation Collier preserves go to:

www.ConservationCollier.com

PROGRAM FINANCIAL STATUS

Conservation Collier spent approximately \$111,078,447 on properties between 2003 and 2022, acquiring and managing 4,641 acres in 22 locations throughout Collier County. Acquisition and management funds are generated annually for up to another 10 years (starting from FY22) from an ad valorem property tax of up to .25 mil, or \$25 for each \$100,000 in taxable property value for property owners in Collier County. Additional income is derived from investment and banking interest, grants, cattle leases, hunt fees, and the sale of Panther Habitat Units (PHUs).

The Conservation Collier Program utilizes five active funds (172, 174, 179, 673, and 674,) to manage Program financial resources.

- **Fund 172, Land Acquisition Fund:** for property acquisition activity.
- **Fund 174, Land Maintenance Trust Fund:** the primary Conservation Collier operating and maintenance fund. This fund also contains long-term Conservation Collier Maintenance Trust reserves.
- **Fund 179, Conservation Collier Capital Improvement Fund 179:** significant infrastructure improvements are managed through the .
- **Fund 673, Pepper Ranch Conservation Bank:** was created in October 2018 to hold funds for the Conservation Bank at this preserve.
- **Fund 674, Caracara Preserve** endowment funds and Caracara Preserve maintenance costs are accounted for in Caracara Preserve Trust .

Sustained low interest rates and resulting low earnings on Conservation Collier Trust Funds are an ongoing financial concern. In FY14 and FY15 using conservative projections, a Ten-Year Financial Plan was developed which focused on reducing and containing expenditures, establishing a combined Conservation Collier Program minimum fund balance of \$40,000,000. The Program will continue to have the \$32 million as the reserve “floor” with the goal of funding the management of the preserves in perpetuity.

Since FY21 the Program has a new funding source of an ad valorem property tax of up to .25 mil for 10 years. Section 6.1.e. of the Ordinance provides that up to seventy-five percent (75%) of all revenues collected for Conservation Collier may be used for acquisition. Section 7.2.a. of

the Ordinance provides that management funds shall be no less than twenty-five percent (25%) of revenues collected in one year.

With the goal of funding the management of the preserves in perpetuity with the ad valorem tax collected within the established 10-year period(s), the established minimum Conservation Collier Program fund balance will be reviewed and adjusted after each acquisition cycle. Annual preserve management operating expenses will be programed at or below annual revenues from interest, leases, and other revenue to ensure this minimum fund balance is maintained.

Table 2. Land Maintenance Expenses 5-year Average

Conservation Collier Program Land Maintenance Expense & Funding Sources (5 Year Average)	
Land Maintenance Expenses	Actual
Average Acres (FY18-FY22)	4,307
Maint Exp/Acre (CC Program funded)	\$148.90
Maint Exp/Acre (Grant funded)	\$36.55
Combined Maint Cost/Acre	\$185.45
Average Annual Land Maintenance Expense	\$798,733
Funding Sources	
CC Program Interest Earnings	\$446,370
Leases & Other Sources	\$44,842
PHU Sales	\$303,690
Sub Total	\$794,903
Grant Sources	\$157,424
Average Annual Funding Sources	\$952,327
Coverage ratio including average PHU proceeds	119.23%
(1) does not include LDC Program off-site preserve maintenance contributions because they are intended to provide perpetual maintenance funding. Off-Site preserve maintenance contributions have averaged \$54,289 during the FY18-FY22 period.	
Coverage ratio without average PHU proceeds	81%

Table 3. – Summary of Conservation Collier Financial Activity for FY22**FY 22 Budget to Actual Comparison**

Funds 172, 174, 179, 673, 674

Expenditures	Adopted Budget	Amended Budget	Commitment	Actual	% Consumed
Personal Services	430,700	560,105	-	558,084	99.6%
Operating expenses	852,700	898,700	132,962	469,601	67.0%
Capital Outlay	230,000	269,646	1,500	5,639	2.6%
Land Acquisitions	14,258,100	14,219,924	-	1,039,480	7.3%
Transfers	10,680,200	10,690,200	-	-	0.0%
Reserves	40,555,200	40,419,871	-	-	0.0%
EXPENSE Total	67,006,900	67,058,446	134,462	2,072,804	3.1%

Sources	Adopted Budget	Amended Budget	Commitment	Actual	% Consumed
Operating Rev.	(26,239,400)	(26,239,400)	-	(25,246,892)	96.2%
PHU Sales	-	-	-	-	n/a
Interest	(435,900)	(435,900)	-	(320,547)	73.5%
Dev. Contribution	(26,700)	(26,700)	-	(300,183)	1124.3%
Carry Forward	(31,756,800)	(31,808,346)	-	-	0.0%
Transfers	(9,883,900)	(9,883,900)	-	(10,086,757)	102.1%
Revenue Res.	1,335,800	1,335,800	-	-	0.0%
Revenues	(67,006,900)	(67,058,446)	-	(35,954,379)	53.6%

Expenditures	Adopted Budget	Amended Budget	Commitment	Actual	% Consumed
Program Administration	241,250	272,338	40,300	151,276	70.3%
Land Acquisitions	14,258,100	14,219,924	-	1,157,780	8.1%
Preserve Mgt	1,184,300	1,337,175	94,162	763,747	64.2%
EXPENSE Total	15,683,650	15,829,437	134,462	2,072,804	13.1%

CONSERVATION COLLIER PROGRAMS

Events, and Community/Educational Outreach

Pepper Ranch Hunt Program

Two separate hunt programs exist at Pepper Ranch Preserve - a public hunt program that is open to all Collier County residents, regardless of age, and an FWC sponsored youth hunt program that is open to children aged 12-17 (12-15 for youth turkey hunts). Although children from Collier County are given first choice of youth hunt participation, youth hunts are open to all Florida youths if openings cannot be filled by Collier County residents. Hogs are considered a nuisance species and are hunted without limit. Staff conducts annual deer surveys to set quotas.

2022-2023 Hunt Season

A total of 8 hunts are scheduled at Pepper Ranch Preserve during the 2022-2023 hunting season, which is still ongoing including 5 public and 3 youth hunts. Three (3) of the public hunts are hog hunts, 1 for deer and 1 for turkey. Youth hunts include 1 deer hunt, 1 turkey hunt and 1 squirrel/rabbit hunt.

Eighty-six (86) applications were received for the public hunting season. So far, 16 public hunter permits have been utilized. A total of 3 deer, 7 turkey, 6 grey squirrel and 4 hog have been harvested to date from the public deer hunt, public turkey hunt, youth turkey hunts, public hog hunts, and youth squirrel/rabbit hunt that have taken place during the 2022-2023 hunting season.

Caracara Prairie Preserve Hunt Program

Caracara Prairie Preserve is established as part the Corkscrew Marsh Unit of the CREW Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA). This allows for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regulated public hunting for hog and spring turkey to occur within Caracara Prairie Preserve as part of the CREW Corkscrew Marsh Unit. FWC manages these hunts and data is captured for the entire WEA without separating out the Caracara Prairie harvest data from the rest of the Corkscrew Marsh Unit. To date, 2 turkeys have been harvested from the CREW Marsh Unit of the CREW WEA. As a regulation change this year, check stations are not staffed or harvests recorded outside of turkey season as the unit does not permit deer harvest.

MITIGATION PROGRAMS

Conservation Collier has followed 2007 Board direction (6/26/07, Agenda Item 10A) in pursuing both wetland and Panther Habitat Unit (PHU) mitigation credit for those properties where the opportunity exists. Wetland mitigation credits have not been economical for the Program to pursue. The costs associated with wetland mitigation bank establishment within Conservation Collier lands are high, because only hydrologic restoration can provide the “lift” or “functional gain” necessary to generate credits. Credits are not provided by state or federal agencies for exotic vegetation removal since this restoration activity is already required as part of the Conservation Collier Program. The Program has pursued Panther Habitat Unit (PHU) mitigation credits at Caracara Prairie and Pepper Ranch preserves.

Caracara Prairie Preserve - All PHU credits have been consumed. The Conservation Collier Program received a total of \$1,301,600 in revenue over FY14 and FY15 for the PHU credits. This revenue is estimated to fund 25% of routine management costs and 100% of costs associated with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) PHU mitigation requirements.

Pepper Ranch Preserve - The Pepper Ranch Preserve Panther Habitat Conservation Bank was certified by the USFWS on January 29, 2019. The Panther Habitat Conservation Bank allows multiple County projects to be mitigated through the preservation and enhancement of Pepper Ranch Preserve. The agreement provided for 8,669 PHU credits expected to be used for development of future County projects at a cost savings of \$1,077,123.25.

Since 2019, 2,527.59 PHUs have been purchased from County Divisions to mitigate for four different County projects generating a total of \$1,518,450 in revenue. There are currently 6,141.41 PHUs remaining in the Conservation Bank. Interest generated from the dedicated Conservation Bank Trust Fund is allocated annually for exotic vegetation removal and restoration of the Conservation Bank portions of the Pepper Ranch Preserve.



GRANTS AND FUNDING ASSISTANCE

Conservation Collier has actively pursued grants and funding assistance for both acquisition and management purposes. Currently, there have been no awards for land acquisition, but many for management, primarily for the removal of invasive, exotic species but also for needed equipment and plant community restoration. Exotic removal grants and funding assistance have come from state and federal government agencies, including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Partners Program) and the State of Florida through the Invasive Plant Management Section. The table below shows the amount of funding assistance obtained during 2022. Conservation Collier has had approximately 17% of all land management activities funded through grants. The total value of grants awarded to the Program for land management since 2003 is \$1,294,586.

Preserve	Agency	Grant or Funding Assistance	Amount Awarded	Fiscal Year Funding Assistance
Mcllvane Marsh	State	Funding Assistance	\$84,956	2022
Pepper Ranch	State	Funding Assistance	\$102,219	2022
		Total 2022	\$187,175	

VOLUNTEERS

During 2022, Conservation Collier was the grateful recipient of 2,485 volunteer hours.

Volunteer tasks accomplished include:

- Preserve monitoring and maintenance
- Trail (including mountain bike trails) creation and maintenance
- FWC Youth Hunt guides
- Wildlife surveys
- Vegetation management
- Restoration Plantings
- Workdays to assist with Special Projects

Conservation Collier continues to partner with local Scout troops to enhance preserve amenities on public trails.

Conservation Collier Volunteer Workdays include restoration plantings of native shrubs and trees with community partners to enhance plant diversity and wildlife habitat. Two such workdays to highlight include a marsh restoration and native tree volunteer workday at the Rattlesnake Hammock Preserve thanks to community partners, neighbors and Oracle employees.



Marsh Restoration Planting at Rattlesnake Hammock Preserve photo by Molly DuVall



Tree Planting Workday at Rattlesnake Hammock Preserve with Oracle photo by Molly DuVall

2023 OBJECTIVES

1. Acquire newly approved lands as part of Acquisition Cycle 11 and place them under management.
2. Continue to accept donation properties under the Land Development Code Offsite Preservation Option.
3. Continue to develop public access for acquired properties as directed by the Board of County Commissioners.
4. Continue to implement land management practices at all preserves as outlined in each Board-approved Land Management Plan.
5. Continue to implement the Collier County Hunt Program at the Pepper Ranch Preserve.
6. Secure grant funding and funding assistance wherever possible.
7. Look for any and all ways to reduce expenditures without sacrificing quality of land management and public access amenities.
8. Continue to pursue mitigation opportunities on acquired lands.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A. 2022 Map of Conservation Collier Program Lands

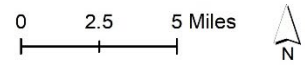
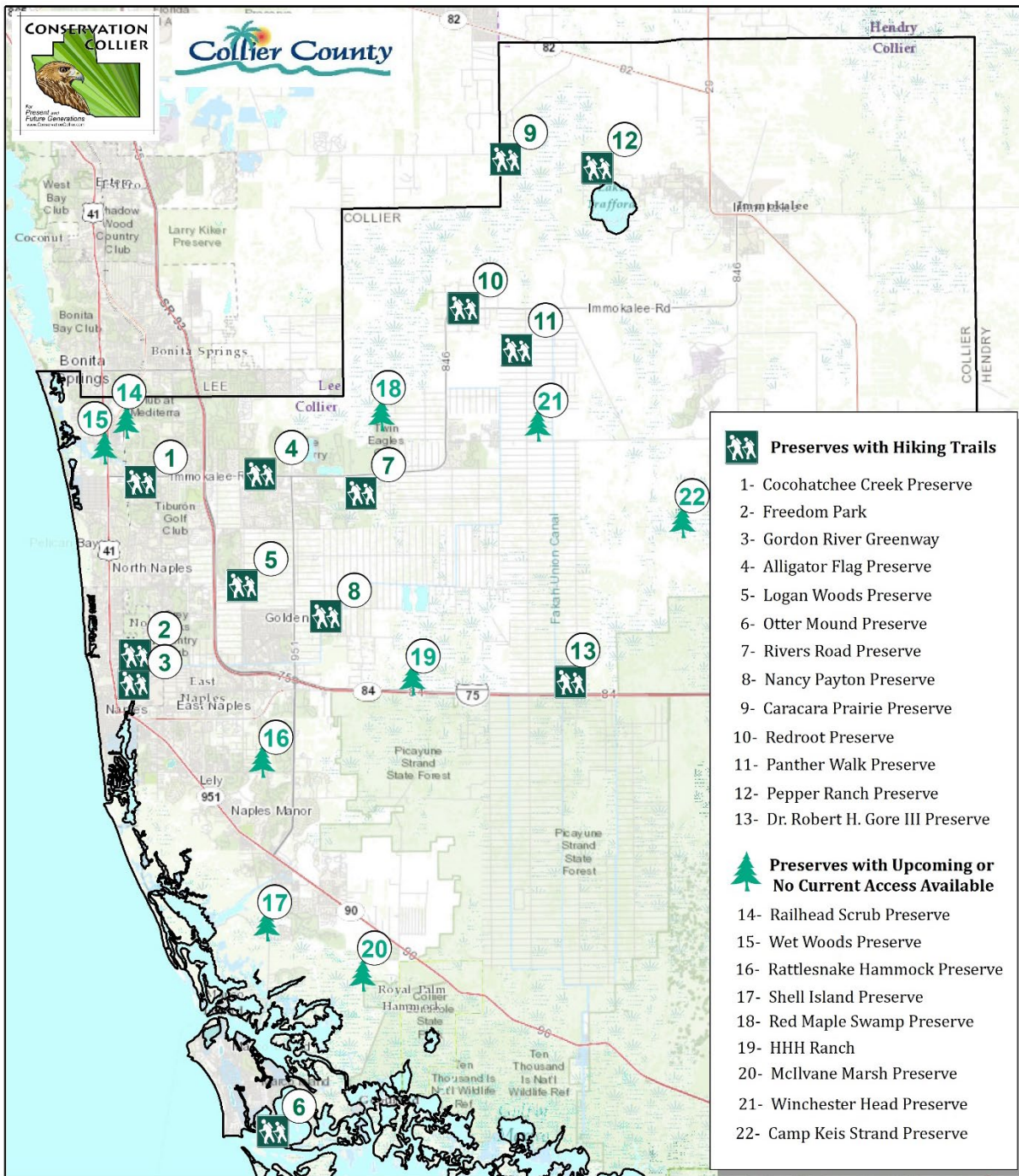


Exhibit B. Conservation Collier Preserves by Commission District

