

**Florida Forever Decision Support Data**

**Documentation**

**Florida Natural Areas Inventory**

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## FLORIDA FOREVER DECISION SUPPORT DATA

The Florida Forever Decision Support Data consist of eight geographic data layers derived from the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment data layers. The Assessment, originally created in December 2000, is a set of geographic data for 15 natural resource types specifically targeted for protection by the Florida Forever program (G. Knight et al. 2000). Detailed descriptions of these data may be found in the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment Technical Report, Version 3.33 (FNAI 2011a) and overview maps of the Needs Assessment and Decision Support data are available online ([www.fnai.org](http://www.fnai.org)). Each data layer is divided into several priority classes to help focus conservation efforts. Although the original Needs Assessment data are useful for establishing baselines and measuring progress of the Florida Forever program, the scope and complexity of the data made interpretation difficult for decision-makers evaluating potential acquisition projects. The creation of the Florida Forever Decision Support Data is an effort to provide a more concise picture of the natural resources within projects and across the state and to eliminate redundancy among similar data. Based on recommendations of the Florida Forever Analysis working group some of the original Assessment data layers were combined into functional groups. In addition, some individual resource types were re-prioritized. Table 1 shows the original Conservation Needs Assessment data layers and the Florida Forever Decision Support data sets into which they are combined.

Several of the original Conservation Needs Assessment data layers are not included as part of the Florida Forever Decision Support Data. **Archaeological and Historical sites** (measures F1 and F2) were not included because cultural resource experts have not identified a method for prioritizing these sites in a quantifiable manner. Division of Historical Resources provides a separate evaluation of cultural resources on Florida Forever projects. **Imperiled species** (measure B6) and **forest land to maintain recharge** (measure G2) are not included because they are sufficiently captured by other data layers and will only be used in reporting progress of the Florida Forever program.

The Florida Forever Decision Support Data were designed for use in two primary analyses: 1) the Florida Forever Tool for Efficient Resource Acquisition and Conservation or F-TRAC (FNAI 2011b) and 2) the Single Resource Evaluation (FNAI 2011c). The data are used differently in each analysis but the primary purpose of both is to help inform acquisition decisions. Table 1 also identifies which data are used in each analysis.

Table 1. Derivation of the Florida Forever Decision Support Data from the original Conservation Needs Assessment and the analysis type that uses each data layer.

FL Forever Measure	Conservation Needs Assessment Data Layers	Decision Support Data Sets	Analysis Type
B1	Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas	Species	F-TRAC, Single Resource Evaluation
B2	FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
B4	Under-represented Ecosystems	Natural Communities	F-TRAC, Single Resource Evaluation
C6	Fragile Coastal Resources - Uplands		
B3	Significant Landscapes, Linkages, and Conservation Corridors	Landscapes	F-TRAC, Single Resource Evaluation*
B5	Landscape-sized Protection Areas		
C4	Natural Floodplain	Surface Waters	F-TRAC, Single Resource Evaluation
C5	Significant Surface Waters		
C7	Functional Wetlands	Wetlands	F-TRAC, Single Resource Evaluation
C6	Fragile Coastal Resources - Wetlands		
G1	Sustainable Forestry	Forestry	F-TRAC, Single Resource Evaluation
D3	Aquifer Recharge	Aquifer Recharge	F-TRAC, Single Resource Evaluation
E2	Recreational Trails	Trails Network	Single Resource Evaluation

\*The Landscapes data layer used for the F-TRAC analysis is a subset of the Ecological Greenways Network data layer (B3) and is described in this report. A separate analysis based on both Greenways and Large Landscapes (B5) was used for the Single Resource Evaluation, and is described in the Single Resource Evaluation report.

## Resource Descriptions

The following resource descriptions rely on knowledge of how some of the original Conservation Needs Assessment data layers were created. Please refer to the Conservation Needs Assessment Technical Report Version 3.33 (FNAI 2011) for complete descriptions of the original data from which the decision support data (described below) are derived.

### SPECIES

The current Species model is based on species information contained in the 2009 Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (SHCA) as modified for the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment (FNAI 2011) and the FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities (FNAIHAB) Version 3 data layers. The 2009 SHCAs identify areas of habitat that are essential to sustain a minimum viable population for focal species of terrestrial vertebrates that were not adequately protected on existing conservation lands. The SHCAs include habitat data for 62 terrestrial vertebrate species, primarily on private lands, and are prioritized into five priority classes based on rarity (FNAI State and Global ranks). The FNAIHAB layer was designed to identify areas important for species habitat based on both species rarity and species richness. FNAI mapped occurrence-based potential habitat

for 248 species of plants, invertebrates, and vertebrates, including aquatic species. Twenty-eight species were included in both the final SHCA and FNAI habitat analyses. In order to minimize redundancy between these two layers we combined the data following a rules-based approach as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Priority classes for the species decision support data layer.

Priority	Description	Acres
Priority 1	Priority 1 for SHCA or FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities	1,790,542
Priority 2	Priority 2 for FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities	650,493
Priority 3	Priority 2 for SHCA or Priority 3 for FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities	12,531,846
Priority 4	Priority 3 for SHCA or Priority 4 for FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities	5,550,397
Priority 5	Priority 4 for SHCA or Priority 5 for FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities	1,608,032
Priority 6	Priority 5 for SHCA or Priority 6 for FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities	1,478,180
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>23,609,490</b>

#### Species for F-TRAC

For the F-TRAC analysis only, the Florida Forever Expert Advisory Group was concerned that F-TRAC targets and weights do not apply equally to all species in the Species data layer, i.e. land acquisition targets for wide-ranging species could be less than for other species. The group recommended separating each priority class into wide-ranging species and all other species for the purpose of treating these differently in the F-TRAC analysis. We consulted with species experts to determine which species of those that were included in the FNAIHAB or SHCAs best fit the definition of wide-ranging. The following ten species were considered wide-ranging for the F-TRAC analysis: Eastern indigo snake, Florida panther, Florida black bear, crested caracara, woodstork, sandhill crane, swallow-tailed kite, short-tailed hawk, burrowing owl, Cooper’s hawk. For details on species acreages, targets and weights for F-TRAC please see the Florida Forever Tool for Efficient Resource Acquisition and Conservation: Model Documentation and Project Evaluation, November 2011 (FNAI 2011b).

#### **NATURAL COMMUNITIES**

The natural community data layer combines the natural community data from the under-represented ecosystems and fragile coastal resources – uplands. (Note that coastal wetlands are included in the Wetlands decision support data). All communities are mutually exclusive, e.g. coastal scrub is included with ‘Scrub’ but excluded from ‘Coastal Uplands’. The global rank of each natural community informs the single resource evaluation (FNAI 2011c).

#### Natural Communities for F-TRAC

For the F-TRAC analysis each natural community was prioritized based on natural quality using a Land Use Intensity index (LUI) developed by Tom Hctor at the University of Florida and the FNAI Potential Natural Areas (PNA). (For a description of LUI and PNA see the Wetlands data layer description later in this document). The exceptions to this were the two G1 communities, Upland Glade and Pine Rockland: Only 40 acres of Upland Glade have been identified in the state and all of these are considered Very High priority; remaining Pine Rockland is also very limited, and we assigned any patch ¼ acre or greater Very High priority and patches less than ¼ acre High priority. The prioritization criteria for all other communities varied depending on whether the natural community tends primarily to exist in small or large patches. Small patch

communities are Coastal Uplands, Scrub, Seepage Slope, Rockland Hammock, and Sandhill Upland Lake. Large patch communities are Dry Prairie, Sandhill, Pine Flatwoods, and Upland Hardwood Forest. Priority values of Very High, High and Moderate were assigned to areas based on the LUI (Table 3). Higher LUI values correspond to more natural land uses. Some medium and low priorities were then increased if the area overlapped with high quality FNAI Potential Natural Areas (PNA 1-4; Table 3). Table 4 shows the statewide acreages for each natural community by priority value. For more information about how this data layer was used in F-TRAC please see the Florida Forever Tool for Efficient Resource Acquisition and Conservation: Model Documentation and Project Evaluation, November 2011 (FNAI 2011b).

Table 3. Prioritization criteria for under-represented natural communities

Land Use Intensity Index Value (LUI)	Small Patch Communities		Large Extent Communities	
	Priority based on LUI	Priority based on PNA 1-4 Bonus	Priority based on LUI	Priority based on PNA 1-4 Bonus
8 - 10	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very High
7	Very High	Very High	High	Very High
6	High	Very High	High	Very High
5	High	Very High	Moderate	High
4	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
1 - 3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Table 4. Natural community type, G-rank, priority class and acreage for natural community decision support data.

Global Rank	Natural Community - Priority	Acres
G1	Upland Glade - Very High	40
G1	Pine Rockland - Very High	16,628
G1	Pine Rockland - High	8
G2	Scrub - Very High	485,363
G2	Scrub - High	19,548
G2	Scrub - Moderate	5,913
G2	Tropical Hammock - Very High	18,079
G2	Tropical Hammock - High	848
G2	Tropical Hammock - Moderate	258
G2	Dry Prairie - Very High	147,545
G2	Dry Prairie - High	6,272
G2	Dry Prairie - Moderate	237
G2	Seepage Slope - Very High	6,596
G2	Seepage Slope - High	18
G2	Seepage Slope - Moderate	1
G3	Sandhill - Very High	747,718
G3	Sandhill - High	52,227
G3	Sandhill - Moderate	14,316
G3	Sandhill Upland Lake - Very High	56,790
G3	Sandhill Upland Lake - High	12,031
G3	Sandhill Upland Lake - Moderate	1,830
G3	Coastal Upland - Very High	77,183

G3	Coastal Upland - High	10,325
G3	Coastal Upland - Moderate	2,353
G4	Pine Flatwoods - Very High	1,998,050
G4	Pine Flatwoods - High	205,757
G4	Pine Flatwoods - Moderate	72,357
G5	Upland Hardwood Forest - Very High	261,856
G5	Upland Hardwood Forest - High	128,572
G5	Upland Hardwood Forest - Moderate	38,491

## LANDSCAPES

### Landscapes for Single Resource Evaluation

The Landscapes Decision Support Data includes the Ecological Greenways as revised by Tom Hctor in 2008 for the Critical Lands and Water Identification Project and the Landscape-sized Protection Areas data layer. These datasets formerly were combined to create an overall Landscapes Decision Support Data layer; now, however, they are retained as separate layers but used in concert to provide a single resource evaluation of projects based on Landscapes.

The Ecological Greenways Network was prioritized into 8 priority classes based on the following criteria:

- 1) Potential importance for maintaining or restoring populations of wide-ranging species (e.g., Florida black bear and Florida panther)
- 2) Importance for maintaining a statewide, connected reserve network from south Florida through the panhandle.
- 3) Other important landscape linkages that provide additional opportunities to maintain statewide connectivity especially in support of higher priority linkages.
- 4) Importance as a riparian corridor to protect water resources, provide functional habitat gradients, and to possibly provide connectivity to areas within other states.

The top two priorities, Critical Linkages 1 and 2, were selected based on several factors, including how critical an area is to completing a connection in the Network and between existing conservation lands; the threat of land conversion; and the feasibility of acquisition. For a detailed report on critical linkages, please contact Tom Hctor, Geoplan Center, University of Florida.

For Landscape-sized Protection Areas, instead of evaluating projects based on a statewide data layer like Ecological Greenways, we apply a rules-based method for scoring each individual Florida Forever project based on its potential contribution to large landscapes. Detailed methodology for the large landscapes evaluation method may be found in the Conservation Needs Assessment Technical Report Version 3.33 (FNAI 2011a).

For a complete description of how the Ecological Greenways and Landscape-sized Protection Areas are used to assign a single resource rank to projects for Landscapes please see the Single Resource Evaluation Documentation (FNAI 2011c)

### Landscapes for F-TRAC

This section describes a data layer used only in the F-TRAC analysis. This data layer was not used for the Landscapes Single Resource Evaluation described above.

Prior to Fall 2011, Landscapes had not been included in the F-TRAC analysis, primarily because a major emphasis of Landscapes is to achieve connectivity through important landscape corridors across the state. F-TRAC, based on the MARXAN simulation tool, is unable to assess spatial connectivity. The current analysis focuses on a subset of the Ecological Greenways network known as Critical Linkages, and assigns conservation priorities within those linkages in a manner that approaches the goals of achieving connectivity.

Greenways Critical Linkages (both priorities 1 and 2) were prioritized by three inputs: cost distance from managed area "hubs"; interior distance from corridor edge; and land cover. Managed area "hubs" are defined as contiguous managed area regions 10,000 acres and larger.

**Cost Distance** from managed area hubs is similar to a buffer of the hubs, but traces distance only through critical linkages. The highest values are areas within critical linkages that are closest to managed area hubs. Areas within critical linkages that are farthest from hubs (by tracing a path through the critical linkage corridor, not straight line distance) get the lowest score.

**Interior buffer** is a simple Euclidian buffer within the critical linkage corridors from the outside of the corridor in to the middle. The furthest distance from corridor edge receives the highest score (center of corridor), while the edges receive the lowest score.

**Land cover** is classified within the critical linkages using a 5-class system: natural, plantation & unimproved pasture, improved pasture & field crops, intensive agriculture, and developed. Natural receives the highest score while developed receives the lowest.

All three inputs were classed to a common scale and overlaid with the following weights: cost distance X 3, interior buffer X 2, land cover X 1. The resulting value surface was classed into six priorities with acreages roughly corresponding to the magnitude of area in other F-TRAC input classes (Table 5). For more information about how this data layer was used in F-TRAC please see the Florida Forever Tool for Efficient Resource Acquisition and Conservation: Model Documentation and Project Evaluation, November 2011 (FNAI 2011b).

Table 5. Priority Class acreages for Greenways Critical Linkages, prioritized for F-TRAC.

Priority	Acres
Priority 1	424,181
Priority 2	842,683
Priority 3	812,323
Priority 4	639,723
Priority 5	439,747
Priority 6	255,236

### **SURFACE WATERS**

The significant surface water protection and natural floodplain data sets were combined into a single data layer with 7 priority classes. An explanation of the two original data sets is required to understand the combined priorities.

The significant surface water data identifies significant surface waters of the state, which include the following: Outstanding Florida Waters, National Scenic Waters and National Estuaries, shellfish harvesting areas, seagrass beds, springs, water supply and waters important for imperiled fish. We created 7 prioritized sub-models based on the waters listed above. These sub-models were combined into a single surface water model with 6 priority classes as shown in Table 6. Detailed methodology for the surface water model may be found in the Conservation Needs Assessment Technical Report Version 3.33 (FNAI 2011a).

Table 6. Priority classes and acreages for the significant surface waters data layer.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Priority 1	1,202,050
Priority 2	7,333,560
Priority 3	2,345,550
Priority 4	11,464,620
Priority 5	2,095,250
Priority 6	4,729,060
Priority 7	2,527,570
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31,697,660</b>

Natural floodplain was identified using 2003 FWC Landsat land cover data and to a lesser degree Water Management District land cover data. Detailed methodology for the floodplain data layer may be found in the Conservation Needs Assessment Technical Report Version 3.33 (FNAI 2011a). These data were prioritized based on the degree of “naturalness” of the floodplain, which was estimated through the use of FNAI Potential Natural Areas (PNA). The PNAs are ranked from P1 to P4 based on size, perceived quality, and type of natural community present. PNAs with these ranks were grouped into “high quality” natural areas. Floodplains within these areas were assigned the highest priority (Priority 1). PNAs ranked P5 are areas that do not meet the criteria for P1 – P4 but are nonetheless believed to be ecologically viable tracts of land representative of Florida’s natural ecosystems. Floodplains that occur within P5 areas were assigned Priority 2. Floodplains outside of PNAs were assigned Priority 3. Table 7 shows the priority classes for floodplain.

Table 7. Priority classes and acreages for natural floodplain data.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Priority 1 (floodplain within PNA 1-4)	1,380,430
Priority 2 (floodplain within PNA 5)	449,440
Priority 3 (floodplain outside PNAs)	687,770
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,517,640</b>

Table 8 shows how the floodplain and significant surface water data sets were combined into the surface waters decision support data layer and describes the seven resulting priority classes.

Table 8. Priority classes for the surface waters decision support data layer.

Priority	Description	Acres
Priority 1	Priority 1 or 2 surface water <i>and</i> Priority 1 floodplain; OR Priority 1 surface water <i>and</i> Priority 2 floodplain	688,220
Priority 2	Priority 1 floodplain (no surface water); OR Priority 1 surface water (no floodplain); OR Priority 1 floodplain <i>and</i> Priority 3-6 surface water; OR Priority 2 floodplain <i>and</i> Priority 2 surface water; OR Priority 1 surface water <i>and</i> Priority 3 floodplain	1,909,190
Priority 3	Priority 2 floodplain (no surface water); OR Priority 2 surface water (no floodplain); OR Priority 2 floodplain <i>and</i> Priority 3-6 surface water; OR Priority 3 floodplain <i>and</i> Priority 2-3 surface water	7,036,440
Priority 4	Priority 3 floodplain (no surface water); OR Priority 3 surface water (no floodplain); OR Priority 3 floodplain <i>and</i> Priority 4-6 surface water	2,283,260
Priority 5	Priority 4 surface water (no floodplain)	10,659,880
Priority 6	Priority 5 surface water (no floodplain)	2,010,060
Priority 7	Priority 6 surface water (no floodplain)	7,134,700
TOTAL		31,721,750

## WETLANDS

The wetlands data layer is based on wetlands identified in the Cooperative Land Cover (FNAI 2010). Wetlands were assigned priorities based on natural quality using a Land Use Intensity index (LUI) developed by Tom Hoctor at the University of Florida and the FNAI Potential Natural Areas (PNA).

The LUI characterizes the intensity of land use across the state on a scale of 1 – 10 with 10 being the least intense (most natural). Intensity is based on a multi-scale neighborhood analysis of five general categories of land use: natural, semi-natural (such as rangelands and pine plantation), improved pasture, agricultural/low-intensity development, and high intensity development. The assumption is that areas dominated by high intensity land uses are more likely to have severe ecological threats and much lower ecological integrity than areas dominated by natural land cover.

The PNAs are ranked from P1 to P4 based on size, perceived quality, and type of natural community present. PNAs with these ranks were grouped into “high quality” natural areas. PNAs ranked P5 are areas that do not meet the criteria for P1 – P4 but are nonetheless believed to be ecologically viable tracts of land representative of Florida’s natural ecosystems.

Table 9 shows how both the LUI and PNAs were applied to help refine the prioritization of functional wetlands. Table 10 lists the wetland priorities and their acreages.

Table 9. Prioritization method for wetlands based on Land Use Intensity index and FNAI Potential Natural Areas.

Land Use Intensity Index	PNA 1 - 4	PNA 5	Non-PNA
10 ( <i>lowest intensity</i> )	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 2
9	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 3
8	Priority 3	Priority 3	Priority 4
7	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 4
6	Priority 4	Priority 4	Priority 5
5	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6
4	Priority 5	Priority 6	Priority 6
1 - 3	Priority 6	Priority 6	Priority 6

Table 10. Priority classes and acreages for wetlands decision support data.

Priority	Acres
Priority 1	5,051,380
Priority 2	1,954,970
Priority 3	2,310,350
Priority 4	1,425,480
Priority 5	298,040
Priority 6	286,430
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,326,650</b>

## TRAILS NETWORK

A Trail Opportunities Network was developed as part of the Florida Greenways and Trails System to identify a set of potential trail corridors that provide a connected set of linear recreational opportunities statewide (Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Florida Greenways Coordinating Council 1998, 2004). The Trails Network is designed to provide opportunities to move along trails systems from major city to major city and from those urban areas to sites of historic, cultural and ecological significance. The trail opportunities are composed of sub-network corridors for hiking, multi-use, and paddling. Version 3.3 is based on the 2008 Update and Prioritization of Florida’s Trail Network (Goodison et al. 2008; <http://www.floridatrailnetwork.com/download.html>).

For the Florida Forever Decision Support Data we combined the sub-network corridors for hiking and multi-use into a single prioritized set of corridors; paddling trails were excluded. If trail types overlapped, the segment retained the priority of the highest ranked segment. Because the original corridors are 4 km wide, analyses based on trails can be calculated in acres or kilometers. One acre of trail corridor approximates 1 m of linear trail segment. Table 11 lists the trail priorities and their linear corridor distances.

Table 11. Priority classes and acreages for trails network decision support data.

Priority	Description	KM
Priority 1	High Priority designation based on recreation potential	6,310
Priority 2	Medium Priority designation based on recreation potential	2,440
Priority 3	Low Priority designation based on recreation potential	3,840
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>12,590</b>

### SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

The Sustainable Forestry data layer identifies existing pinelands (natural and planted) and former pinelands that are potentially available for forest management. Prioritization is based on 4 criteria set by the Division of Forestry: whether trees are natural or planted, size of tract, distance to market, and hydrology. Large tracts of natural pine on mesic soils (versus very dry or wet) that are within 50 miles of a mill receive the highest score and priority. Former pinelands that currently do not have trees receive the lowest priority. Detailed methodology for the sustainable model may be found in the Conservation Needs Assessment Technical Report Version 3.33 (FNAI 2011a). Table 12 describes the justification and lists acreage for each priority class.

Table 12. Descriptions, scores, and acreages for the priority classes of the forestry data layer.

Priority Class	Scores	Description	Total Acres
Priority 1	950-990	Contains at least the top scores for all criteria except Hydrology and at least the middle score for Hydrology.	1,685,620
Priority 2	737-894	Contains at least the middle scores for three of the criteria and top score for Size or Distance to Market	2,278,850
Priority 3	522-693	Contains at least the middle scores for all criteria except Hydrology.	4,991,590
Priority 4	273-495	Contains remainder of pinelands not captured above.	39,920
Priority 5	N/A	Potential pinelands	3,609,380
<b>Total</b>			<b>12,605,370</b>

### AQUIFER RECHARGE

The aquifer recharge base data layer was developed by Advanced Geospatial, Inc. (AGI) and further prioritized by FNAI in consult with AGI and Florida Geological Survey. The priority classes are based on the following data inputs: soil hydraulic conductivity, proximity to karst features, depth to water and overburden, overlap with Springs Protection Areas and overlap with buffers to public water supply wells. Detailed methodology for the aquifer recharge model may be found in the Conservation Needs Assessment Technical Report Version 3.33 (FNAI 2011a). Table 13 lists the recharge priorities and acreages.

Table 13. Priority classes and acreages for aquifer recharge decision support data.

Priority	Description	Acres
Priority 1	Very High Priority designation based on aquifer recharge potential & vulnerability	1,005,960
Priority 2	High Priority designation based on aquifer recharge potential & vulnerability	3,253,840
Priority 3	Medium-High Priority designation based on aquifer recharge potential & vulnerability	6,226,790
Priority 4	Medium Priority designation based on aquifer recharge potential & vulnerability	7,579,290
Priority 5	Medium-Low Priority designation based on aquifer recharge potential & vulnerability	6,736,140
Priority 6	Low Priority designation based on aquifer recharge potential & vulnerability	8,626,370
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>33,428,390</b>

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