

**AGENDA**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT TRUST FUND**  
**September 30, 2025**  
**Attachments to the items below can be viewed at the following link:**  
**[floridadep.gov/cab/cab/content/agendas](http://floridadep.gov/cab/cab/content/agendas)**

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**Item 4B**      **Bar-B Ranch, Inc. Option Agreement/ Conservation Easement/ Monitoring Agency Designation/ Management Policy Statement Confirmation/ Bar-B Ranch Florida Forever Project**

**REQUEST:** Consideration of (1) an option agreement to acquire a conservation easement over approximately 1,670 acres within the Bar-B Ranch Florida Forever project from Bar-B Ranch, Inc.; (2) designation of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Environmental Services as the monitoring agency; and (3) confirmation of the management policy statement.

**VOTING REQUIREMENT FOR APPROVAL:** Two members, one of whom is the Governor, when four members are voting; or any two members, when three members are voting.

**COUNTY:** Martin

**LOCATION:** Sections 01, 02, 11, and 12, Township 39 South, Range 39 East

**CONSIDERATION:** \$17,169,200 (If approved, the Board of Trustees' consideration could be reduced by up to a total of \$5,000,000 from Martin County funding. The Board of Trustees' portion would be \$12,169,200 or 69 percent.)

| <u>PARCEL</u>     | <u>ACRES</u> | <u>APPRAISED BY</u>            |                               | <u>APPROVED<br/>VALUE</u> | <u>SELLER'S<br/>PURCHASE<br/>PRICE</u> | <u>TRUSTEES'<br/>PURCHASE<br/>PRICE</u> | <u>OPTION<br/>DATE</u>         |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                   |              | <u>Holden<br/>(04/03/2025)</u> | <u>Jones<br/>(04/03/2025)</u> |                           |                                        |                                         |                                |
| Bar-B Ranch, Inc. | 1,670        | \$17,520,000                   | \$14,800,000                  | \$17,520,000              | \$*                                    | \$17,169,200**<br>(98%)                 | 150 days after<br>BOT approval |

\*Property was purchased in 1948, price is unknown.

\*\*\$10,281 per acre.

**STAFF REMARKS:** The subject parcel is located within the Bar-B Ranch Florida Forever project, ranked number 33 in the Florida Forever Critical Natural Lands project category, approved by the Board of Trustees on March 5, 2025. The project contains 1,910 acres and will be substantially complete if the subject property is acquired.

**Project Description**

The Bar-B Ranch Florida Forever project protects the hydrologic connection between the St. Johns River and Everglades watershed while providing valuable wildlife habitat and preserving wildlife corridors extending from South Florida to Central Florida. The project also provides an opportunity for the restoration of naturally occurring water storage that will benefit the water quality of the St. Lucie River Estuary, Indian River Lagoon, Lake Okeechobee, and the Florida Everglades.

**Property Description**

The 1,670-acre subject property has been owned and operated as a cattle ranch for several decades and currently has approximately 250 head of cattle. Bar-B Ranch is located west of Interstate 95 and is directly adjacent to both the C-44 Stormwater Treatment Area and the Allapattah Flats Wildlife Management Area, to the west. The subject property is part of the hydrologic connection between the St. Johns River and the Everglades watershed. Bar-B Ranch is a critical restoration area designated

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for shallow water storage to support the improvement of downstream water quality in the St. Lucie River Estuary and the Indian River Lagoon. The property has been identified for acquisition as a part of the Indian River Lagoon-South project, a key component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

Bar-B Ranch is characterized by improved and semi-improved pasture with some mesic and hydric pine flatwoods, wet prairies, and depression marshes. Rare species documented or reported on the subject property include common wild-pine, wood stork, little blue heron, tricolored heron, and roseate spoonbill. The subject property lies within a wildlife corridor of the Florida Ecological Greenway Network.

**Prohibited Uses**

Under the proposed conservation easement, the subject property will be restricted in perpetuity by the provisions of the easement, a summary of which includes, but is not limited to, the following prohibited uses:

- Dumping of trash, waste, hazardous materials, and soil will be prohibited;
- Exploration and extraction by grantor for oil, gas, minerals, peat, muck, limestone, etc., by means of surface exploratory and extractors operations, except as reasonably necessary to combat erosion or flooding, or except as necessary and lawfully permitted for the conduct of permitted activities;
- Activities detrimental to drainage, flood control, water conservation, erosion control, soil conservation, or fish and wildlife preservation will be prohibited, unless needed for maintenance as provided in the easement;
- Acts or uses detrimental to the preservation of any historical, or archaeological area, will be prohibited;
- There shall be no planting of nuisance exotic or non-native plants;
- Commercial and industrial activities will be prohibited, except as may be incidental to the exercise of grantor's reserved rights in Article V of the conservation easement;
- New construction or placing of temporary or permanent structures or buildings on the property will be prohibited except as may be necessary for maintenance, normal operation, or emergency situations;
- Construction of new roads or jeep trails will be prohibited;
- No operation of motorized vehicles except on established trails and roads unless necessary to protect or enhance the conservation values of the property; for emergency purposes; for cattle ranching purposes; and to access, hunt or to retrieve game hunted legally;
- Current agricultural uses shall not be converted to more intense agricultural uses, and natural areas shall remain natural areas;
- Spring recharge areas must use best management practices (BMPs) for fertilizer use, as established by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and agriculture activities within 100 feet of sinkholes, springs, and other karst features are prohibited;
- Actions or activities that may be expected to adversely affect threatened or endangered species is prohibited;

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- Signs, billboards, or outdoor advertising is prohibited except signs designating the property as conservation lands protected by the State of Florida or reasonable directional or postal signs;
- No commercial water wells on the property;
- No commercial timber harvesting; and
- There shall be no mitigation banks established on the property.

**Owner's Rights Retained**

The proposed conservation easement will allow the owner to retain certain rights. The summary of owner's rights includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- The right to observe, maintain, photograph, fish, hunt, and introduce and stock native fish or wildlife, to use the property for non-commercial, passive, resource-based recreation not inconsistent with the purpose of the easement. Grantor shall continue to own hunting and fishing rights;
- The right to conduct controlled and prescribed burns with proper authorization;
- The right to mortgage the property;
- The right to contest taxes;
- The right to continue to use, maintain, repair, and reconstruct, but not relocate all existing buildings as depicted on the Baseline Documentation Report (BDR);
- The right to host relocated endangered, threatened, or special concern of native Florida species;
- The right to maintain or restore the existing natural habitat communities per the BDR;
- The right to maintain a commercial cattle operation in accordance with BMPs;
- The right to engage in silviculture in areas depicted in the BDR according to BMPs;
- The right to cultivate and harvest hay, seed, and sod from improved pasture areas; provided, however, at least 75 percent of the improved pasture area shall remain unharvested for sod in any one calendar year;
- The right, in the silvicultural or agricultural areas as depicted in the BDR, to construct such additional agricultural structures as may be required for its agricultural operations, such as stables, equipment barns, and tool sheds, so long as such structures do not significantly impair the conservation values of the property and do not exceed 20,000 cumulative square feet;
- The right to utilize brush management practices such as mowing, roller-chopping, or aeration to maintain or enhance any natural area provided such activity is conducted in a manner consistent with BMPs published by any agency for such management activity. Any brush management seeking to convert habitat to more intensive agricultural use is prohibited;
- The right to maintain and construct perimeter fencing of the property;
- The right to participate in programs or projects that benefit from, enhance and/or manage the environmental attributes or permissible agricultural uses of the property and that may also be of economic benefit to the Grantor, so long as participation in such programs is consistent with or complements the Conservation Purposes;

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- The right to maintain existing food plots for game as indicated in the BDR and the right to create new food plots for game in improved pasture only; and
- The right to divide the property for sale or other disposition by Grantor into a total of no more than two parcels and shall be no less than 200 acres.

**Mortgages and Liens**

All mortgages and liens will be satisfied at the time of closing. On June 22, 1999, the Board of Trustees approved a staff recommendation to delegate to the Department the authority to review and evaluate marketability issues as they arise on all Chapter 259, F.S., acquisitions and to resolve them appropriately. Therefore, the Department will review, evaluate, and implement an appropriate resolution for any title issues that arise prior to closing.

**Closing Information**

A title insurance commitment, a survey, and an environmental site assessment will be provided by the buyer prior to closing.

**Monitoring Agency**

The subject property will be monitored by the Department's Office of Environmental Services, who currently monitors 200 conservation easements protecting 364,117 acres.

**Management Policy Statement**

Section 259.032(7)(d), F.S., requires that the Board of Trustees, concurrent with its approval of the initial acquisition agreement within a project, evaluate and amend, as appropriate, the management policy statement for the proposed project as provided by section 259.035, F.S., consistent with the purposes for which the lands are acquired. The Department recommends the Board of Trustees confirm the management policy statement as follows:

As a proposed conservation easement or other less-than-fee interest, the subject property will be managed by the private landowner with restrictions under the agreement. The purchase of the development rights, the prohibition of any further conversion of existing natural areas to agriculture uses, and limited public access will likely be the primary focus of the conservation easement.

**Comprehensive Plan**

This acquisition is consistent with section 187.201(9), F.S., the Natural Systems and Recreational Lands' section of the State Comprehensive Plan.

(Attachment 4B)

**RECOMMEND: APPROVAL**

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