

# **Conservation Collier Program Dr. Robert H. Gore III Preserve Interim Management Plan**



Prepared By:  
Collier County: Parks and Recreation Division  
Conservation Collier Program  
3300 Santa Barbara Blvd., Naples, FL 34116

September 2019  
*Approved by Board of County Commissioners January 28, 2020*

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## **1.0 Purpose and Scope of the Interim Management Plan**

The Robert H. Gore III Preserve (Gore Preserve), composed of 5 parcels totaling 171.2 acres, was acquired by the Collier County Conservation Collier Program on November 19, 2018 and will be managed for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of natural resource and for public outdoor recreation that will be compatible with the conservation, protection and enhancement of the site and surrounding lands.

This Interim Management Plan is intended to identify the key management priorities within the preserve and provide direction for management activities for the next two years. This document is meant to be the precursor to a Final Management Plan, which will outline more specific aspects of site management and public use and undergo updating on a 5-year interval. The Final Management Plan for this preserve is scheduled to be completed July 2021 and will replace this Interim Management Plan once approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC).

### *Key Interim Management Objectives*

1. Protect, manage and restore (as appropriate) the native plant communities on site.

#### **Action Plan**

- 1a.** Map, treat, monitor, and manage invasive, exotic vegetation.
- 1b.** Assess the need for exotic mulching activities on the perimeter of the property
- 1c.** Assess the need for native vegetation restoration.
- 1d.** Develop a preserve plant list and record notable species observations.

2. Determine necessary actions to provide recreational opportunities within the preserve.

#### **Action Plan**

- 2a.** Map, ground truth, and develop Phase I portions of a greater conceptual trail system within one year of acquisition.
- 2b.** Determine suitability of various public use methods given trail conditions and adjacent natural resources.

3. Collaborate with Cypress Cove Conservancy 501(c)(3) regarding preserve planning and outreach/educational materials

#### **Action Plan**

- 3a.** Develop and finalize a memorandum of agreement between Collier County and the non-profit partner group, Cypress Cove Conservancy within one year from the Cypress Cove Conservancy acquiring the private 10-acre parcel.
- 3b.** Communicate and seek input regarding public use and trail system planning with the organization.
- 3c.** Collaborate on environmental, educational, and historical outreach information and signage provided within the preserve.

4. Explore opportunities for grant funding and partnerships

#### **Action Plan**

- 4a.** Explore possible exotic vegetation removal funding assistance opportunities from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Upland Plant Management Section.

- 4b. Explore possible acquisition funding assistance opportunities from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Florida Communities Trust Program.
- 5. Provide opportunities for community stakeholder discussion and feedback for the preserve’s Final Management Plan

**Action Plan**

- 5a. Notify surrounding property owners and other potential stakeholders of the purchase and meet with interested community members to receive input on management plan.
- 5b. Coordinate with local community groups to assist in trail development and preserve maintenance.

- 6. Preserve Use Ordinance

**Action Plan**

- 6a. The Preserve Use Ordinance No. 2011-38, passed by the Collier County Board of County Commissioners, will apply to the Dr. Robert H. Gore III Preserve.

**2.0 Management Authority and Responsibilities**

The Robert H. Gore III Preserve was officially named in November 2018. The Preserve is included within the portfolio of properties assigned to the Collier County Conservation Collier Program within the Collier County Parks and Recreation Division. Conservation Collier Program staff are responsible for direct management of all preserve lands and will seek to cooperate and form partnerships with local, state and federal agencies for management assistance and to obtain various types of grant funding assistance for management activities when possible.

**3.0 Site Description**

**3.1 Location and Site Description**

The Gore Preserve is located adjacent to and directly west of Desoto Blvd in Section 33, Township 49S, and Range 28E within the Northern Golden Gate Estates. The properties may be accessed via 38<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. The total acreage is 171.2 acres. The property is composed of Pine Flatwood, Dry Prairie, Mixed Wetland Hardwoods, Inland Ponds and Sloughs and Cypress.

Current parcel folios are as follows:

<b>41500040008</b>
<b>41506600002</b>
<b>41616920009</b>
<b>41506800006</b>

**3.2 Signage**

Temporary signs identifying the property as a Conservation Collier Preserve have been posted along DeSoto Blvd. Once the parking area and Phase 1 trailhead have been developed, a formal preserve name sign will be erected for visitors.

**3.3 Easements, Concessions or Leases**

No known easements exist at this time over 38<sup>th</sup> or 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. There are no concessions or leases on the parcels or proposed for the future, unless they further conservation objectives, such as a conservation easement.

**3.4 Structures**

There are currently no known wells, septic tanks or other type of structures on the property.

**3.5 Surrounding and Adjacent Land Uses**

The Dr. Robert H. Gore III Preserve is located directly west of Desoto Blvd, between 36 Ave SE and Interstate I-75. The property may be accessed via the planned public access trailhead located off of 40<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. Single family homes exist along the northern, western, and eastern boundary of the preserve as well as adjacent to interior preserve units. The non-profit Cypress Cove Conservancy purchased an interior ten-acre parcel in the center of the Gore Preserve in June 2019 which includes Dr. Robert H. Gore’s former residence. The environmental-education based non-profit plans to repurpose the existing residence for use as an education center for the public and the centerpiece of environmental programming and nature-based recreational opportunities on the property in the years to come.

**4.0 Interim Management Objectives**

**4.1 Natural Resource Protection**

**Existing Vegetation:**

Eight types of intact native plant communities have been documented; including Pine Flatwoods, Cabbage Palm, Inland Ponds and Sloughs, Mixed Wetland Hardwoods, and Cypress

**Characterization of Plant Communities present:**

FLUCCS	Ground cover	Midstory	Canopy
411 – pine flatwoods	grasses, palmetto St. John’s-wort primrose willow twinflower bachelor button beautyberry meadow beauty goldenrod musky mint tickseed	wax myrtle bay saltbush myrsine shining sumac	slash pine
428 – cabbage palm	grasses, ferns and forbs, poison ivy vines, wild coffee, dog fennel	cabbage palm	cabbage palm, slash pine
616 - inland ponds and sloughs	Swamp fern, maidencane, pickerel weed, sagittaria	hog plum, rag weed, salt bush	pond apple, cypress, pop ash
617- mixed wetland hardwoods	Swamp fern, frog- fruit,blue porterweed	Dog fennel, beauty berry, myrsine	Red maple, pop ash, red bay, laurel oak
621- cypress	swamp fern, chain fern, smilax	cabbage palm, salt brush, stiff dogwood	cypress, cabbage palm, red bay

**Unique Natural Features:**

The site contains five observed native plant communities and outstanding examples of native cypress communities. The Gore Preserve is atop a well-field protection zone and contributes to both the Surficial and Lower Tamiami Aquifers.

**Listed Plant Species**

Listed plant species found on site include stiff-leaved wild pine (*Tillandsia fasciculata*), giant airplant (*Tillandsia utriculata*) and reflexed wild pine (*Tillandsia balbisiana*).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Protection Status
		FDACS
Royal fern	<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	Commercially Exploited
Stiff-leaved wild-pine, Cardinal airplant	<i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i>	Endangered
Reflexed wild-pine, Northern needleleaf	<i>Tillandsia balbisiana</i>	Threatened
Giant airplant	<i>Tillandsia utriculata</i>	Endangered
Giant sword fern	<i>Nephrolepis biserrata</i>	Threatened

T: threatened, E: endangered C: commercially exploited

**Wildlife Species Observed on Site:**

Animal	Common Name	Scientific Name	Protection Status
BIRDS	mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	
	turkey vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	
	red-shouldered hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	
	black vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>	
	wild turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	
	common ground-dove	<i>Columbina passerina</i>	
	red-bellied woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>	
	downy woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	
	blue jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	
	white-eyed vireo	<i>Vireo griseus</i>	
	Northern cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	
	great-crested flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>	
	blue-grey gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>	
	swallow-tailed kite	<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>	
	pileated woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	
	house wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	
	Caroline wren	<i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>	
	little blue heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	State-Threatened
	great blue heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	
	great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	
MAMMALS	white-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	
	Florida black bear	<i>Ursus americanus</i>	

	Florida panther	<i>Puma concolor coryi</i>	Federally-Endangered
	Eastern spotted skunk	<i>Spilogale putorius</i>	
	raccoon	<i>Procyon lotor</i>	
	Virginia opossum	<i>Didelphis virginiana</i>	
	nine-banded armadillo	<i>Dasyus novemcinctus</i>	
	hispid cotton rat	<i>Sigmodon hispidus</i>	
	grey squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	
REPTILES	Cottonmouth/ Water Moccasin	<i>Agkistrodon piscivorous conanti</i>	
	Crayfish	Order Decapoda	
	brown anole	<i>Anolis sagrei</i>	
	green anole	<i>Anolis carolinensis</i>	*Exotic
INSECTS	queen butterfly	<i>Danaus gilippus</i>	
	zebra longwing	<i>Heliconius charithonia</i>	
	monarch butterfly	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	
	gulf fritillary	<i>Agraulis vanillae</i>	
	green darner	<i>Anax junius</i>	
	Eastern pondhawk	<i>Erythemis simplicicollis</i>	

**4.2 Site Security**

The Gore Preserve provides important wildlife corridor linkages with surrounding conservation lands, therefore fencing that would impede wildlife movements through the preserve and throughout the greater area would not be desirable. Due to the remote location of the preserve, illegal dumping along the roadways is a potential concern. Preserve boundaries will be monitored to limit illegal dumping and off-road vehicle trespass. All future public access trail planning will consider opportunities to limit unwanted off-road vehicle trespass.

**4.3 Exotic Vegetation Removal and Maintenance Plan**

Exotic invasive plants present include Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), earleaf acacia (*Acacia auriculiformis*), ceasar’s weed (*Urena lobata*), citrus (*Citus spp.*), air potato (*Dioscorea builbifera*), lantana (*Lantana camera*), old world climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*), Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), arrowhead (*Syngonium podophyllum*), and balsam apple (*Momordica charantia*).

The initial cost of exotic removal would be substantial due to the amount present and density of the vegetation. Based on cost estimates provided by a contractor who routinely contracts with the County for exotic removal, costs for the level of infestation observed would be about \$80,000 - \$150,000 to treat exotics with herbicide in place and to mow along the proposed hiking trails. It

would cost approximately \$50,000 to mechanically mow the Brazilian pepper along the roadside edges of the preserve boundary in selected locations to improve aesthetics and facilitate greater access for land management activities. Costs for follow-up maintenance done on a bi-annual or annual would remain similar for 1-4 years until the seed bank has been depleted and the management units can transition into a maintenance treatment rotation schedule.

Staff may apply for federal and state funding assistance to assist in the costs of invasive, exotic plant removal in areas of the preserve.

The Conservation Collier Program staff will hire contractors to treat the exotic vegetation on the site. Staff will seek assistance from the surrounding community for potential volunteers to supplement contracted exotic maintenance.

#### **4.4 Debris Removal**

Staff will monitor the preserve boundaries for signs of illegal dumping and erect educational signage and work collaboratively with the Collier County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) to address repeat offenses. Currently, there is no indication of debris removal needs within the preserve boundary. Staff will utilize volunteers and contractors to address debris removal issues as they arise.

#### **4.5 Cultural, Historical and Archeological Resource Protection**

The Gore Preserve is not within an area of historical and archaeological probability, and no historical or archaeological sites appear to be present on the property. While conducting pre-acquisition site visits, staff were made aware of the presence of several "pointer trees" throughout the property that may have indigenous cultural origins. The County will notify the Division of Historical Resources immediately if evidence is found to suggest any archaeological or historic resources are discovered. If such resources are identified on-site, staff shall cordon off the area, and a professional survey and assessment shall be instituted. The archaeologist shall prepare a report outlining results of the assessments and issue recommendations to County staff about management of any sites discovered, per provisions of the Land Development Code Section 2.2.25. This report shall be sent to the Division of Historical Resources. The County shall cooperate fully with direction from the Division of Historical Resources on the protection and management of archaeological and historical resources. The management of these resources will comply with the provisions of Chapter 267, Florida Statutes, specifically Sections 267.061 2 (a) and (b).

#### **4.6 Listed Species Protection**

Staff will evaluate needs for protection if any listed wildlife species are found on the property. The locations where listed species are routinely observed will be identified using a global positioning system (GPS) device and mapped to allow staff to monitor them. Staff will also utilize passive monitoring techniques of preserve usage by listed species to document occurrence.

Care will be taken when exotic removal treatment occurs to avoid areas with listed plants and to avoid non-target damage with herbicides. Wildlife surveys will be carried out ahead of any major site remediations to determine possible impacts to listed or nesting species.



#### **4.7 Public Access**

Given the extent of the current Brazilian pepper infestation within the preserve, public access via special request will be difficult to grant until the initial phase of hiking trails are in place. A conceptual hiking trail plan is underway for the preserve and will be established through development of a Final Management Plan. The American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and safety concerns will need to be met before the site can officially be open to the public. No public hunting is allowed within the Gore Preserve due to the limited acreage and proximity of adjacent homesites.

#### **4.8 Site Monitoring and Long-Term Management Plan**

Monitoring of the site shall consist of invasive exotic vegetation re-treatment and listed-species population surveying. While fire dependent communities exist within the preserve, prescribed fire will not be utilized as an initial management tool for the preserve due to the proximity of adjacent homesites and historic fire suppression in the surrounding area that has greatly elevated fuel levels. Collier County shall be responsible for property maintenance with tasks contracted out as deemed necessary and management partnerships sought with the surrounding community. The site will be monitored for exotic vegetation re-growth semi-annually for two years following initial treatment. After two years, exotic vegetation will be monitored on a yearly basis.

#### **4.9 Partnerships**

Staff will seek out partnership opportunities for conservation, protection, education, and funding opportunities. Staff will explore possible land management funding assistance programs for the preserve. These may include but are not limited to grants offered by the USFWS South Florida Coastal Ecosystems Program, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (Conservation Collier Cooperative Agreement Modification would be required), the U.S. Department of Agriculture and/or FWC Upland Weed Management Working Group Funding.

Conservation Collier Program staff will continue to build a strong partnership with members of the non-profit Cypress Cover Conservancy to enhance environmental education program offerings and awareness of this up and coming resource for the residents and visitors of Collier County.

Staff will also coordinate with the Collier County Scouts BSA and Girl Scouts of the USA for possible trail enhancement projects.

5.0 Exhibits

EXHIBIT 1: Location

Dr. Robert H. Gore III Preserve Location Map

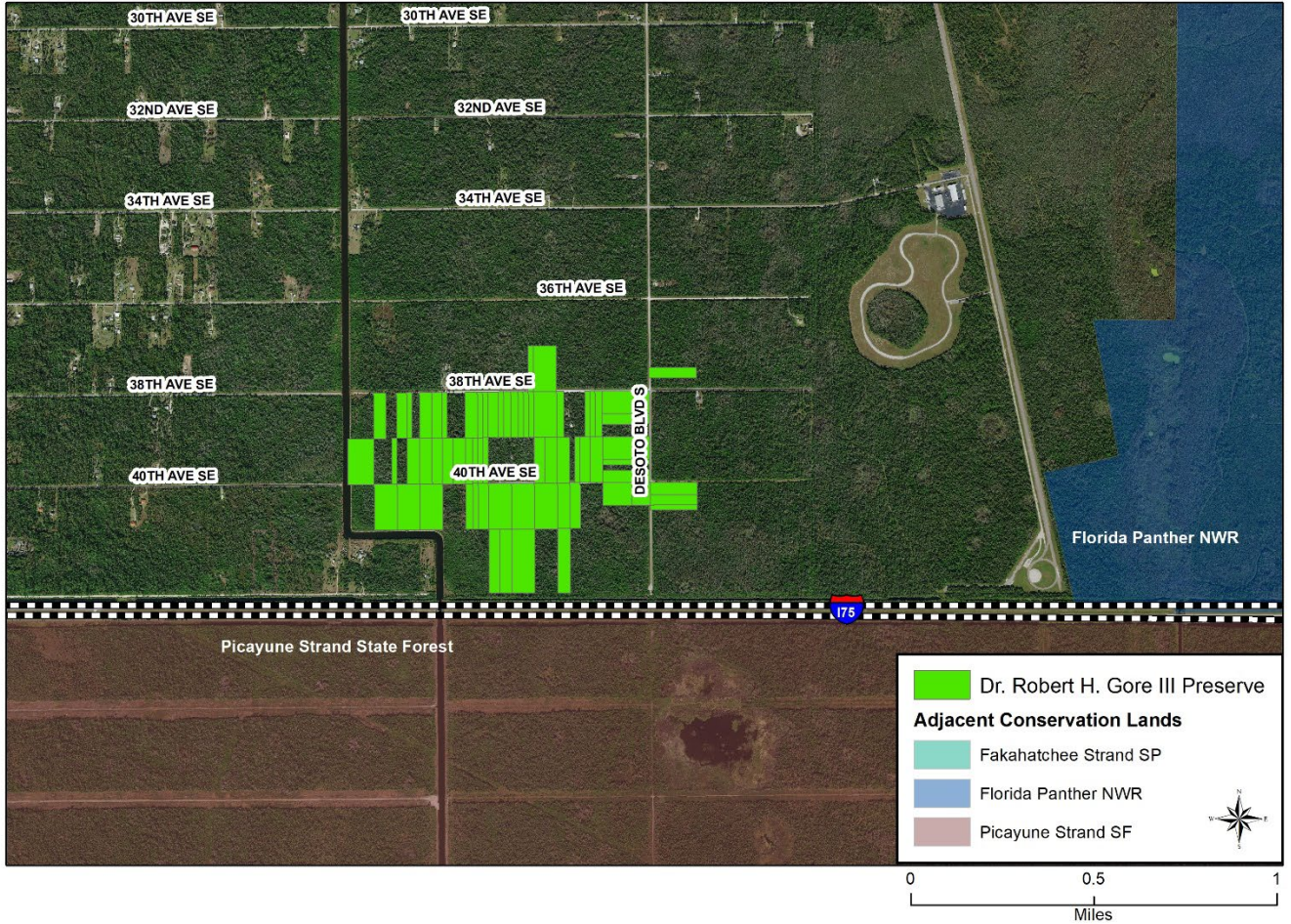


EXHIBIT 2: 2009 Aerial Map

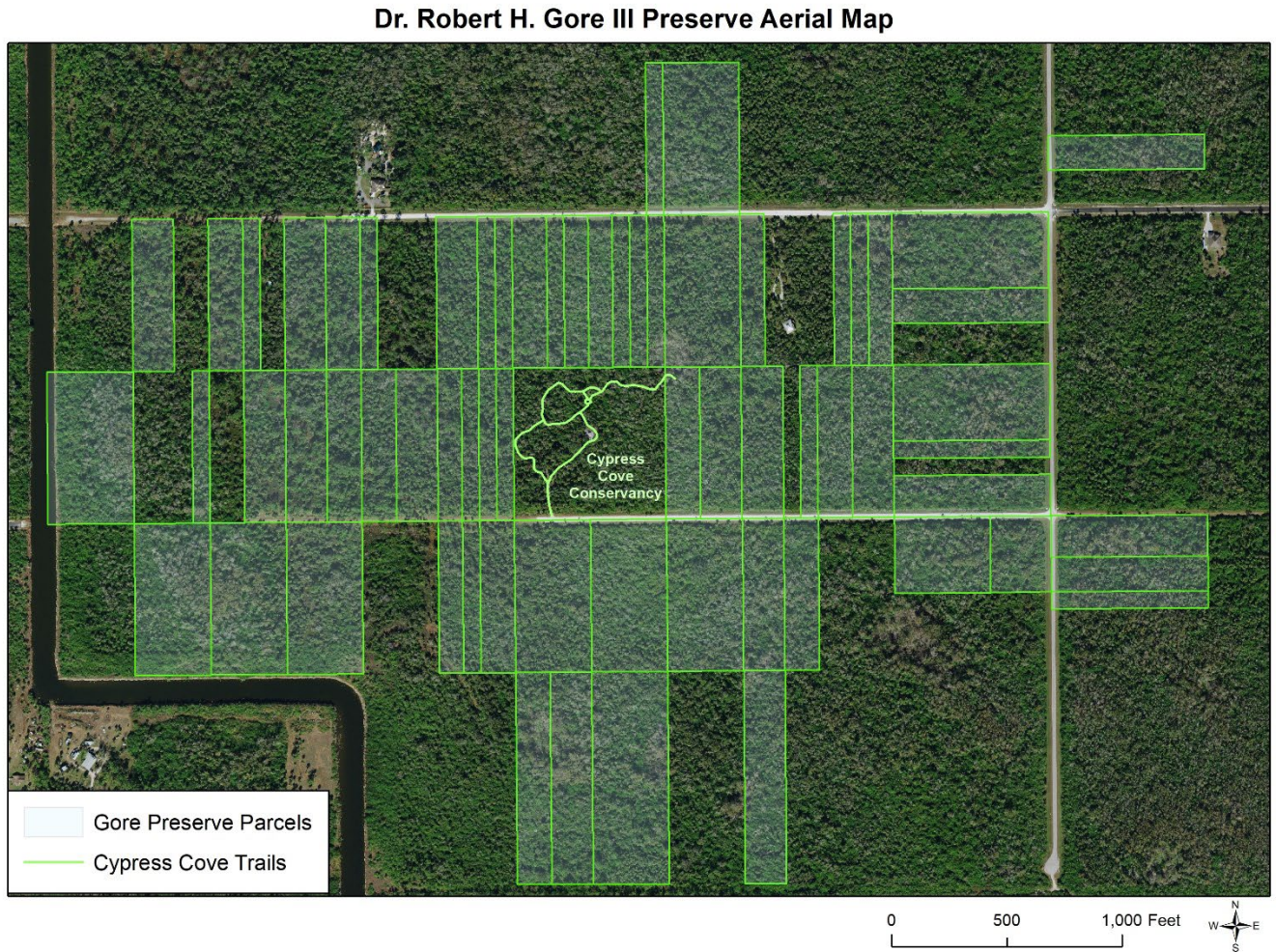


EXHIBIT 3: Estimated Cost Table

Management Element	Initial Cost	Annual Recurring Costs	Comments
<b>Exotics Control</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	Recurring costs are high due to the dense areas of Brazilian pepper
<b>Trash and Debris Removal</b>	<b>\$10,000 +</b>	<b>n/a</b>	Estimate Only. Based on quote for debris removal at Railhead Scrub Preserve
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$160,000 +</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	

**t.b.d. To be determined; cost estimates have not been finalized.**

EXHIBIT 4: Estimated Implementation Time Line

	N O V 1 8	D E C 1 8	J A N 1 9	F E B 1 9	M A R 1 9	A P R 1 9	M A Y 1 9	J U N 1 9	J U L 1 9	A U G 1 9	S E P 1 9	O C T 1 9	N O V 1 9	D E C 1 9	J A N 2 0	F E B 2 0	M A R 2 0	A P R 2 0	M A Y 2 0	J U N 2 0	J U L 2 0	A U G 2 0	S E P 2 0	O C T 2 0	N O V 2 0
Explore exotic vegetation grants				x	x	x																			
Determine what actions necessary to open site for public use and develop timeline for opening									x	x	x														
Initial Invasive Exotic vegetation removal												x	x	x				x	x						
Completion of final management plan																									x

- Exotics removal must be completed prior to determining what actions are necessary to open the site for public use. Timing may also be dependent on whether grant funding is awarded to assist in removal costs.