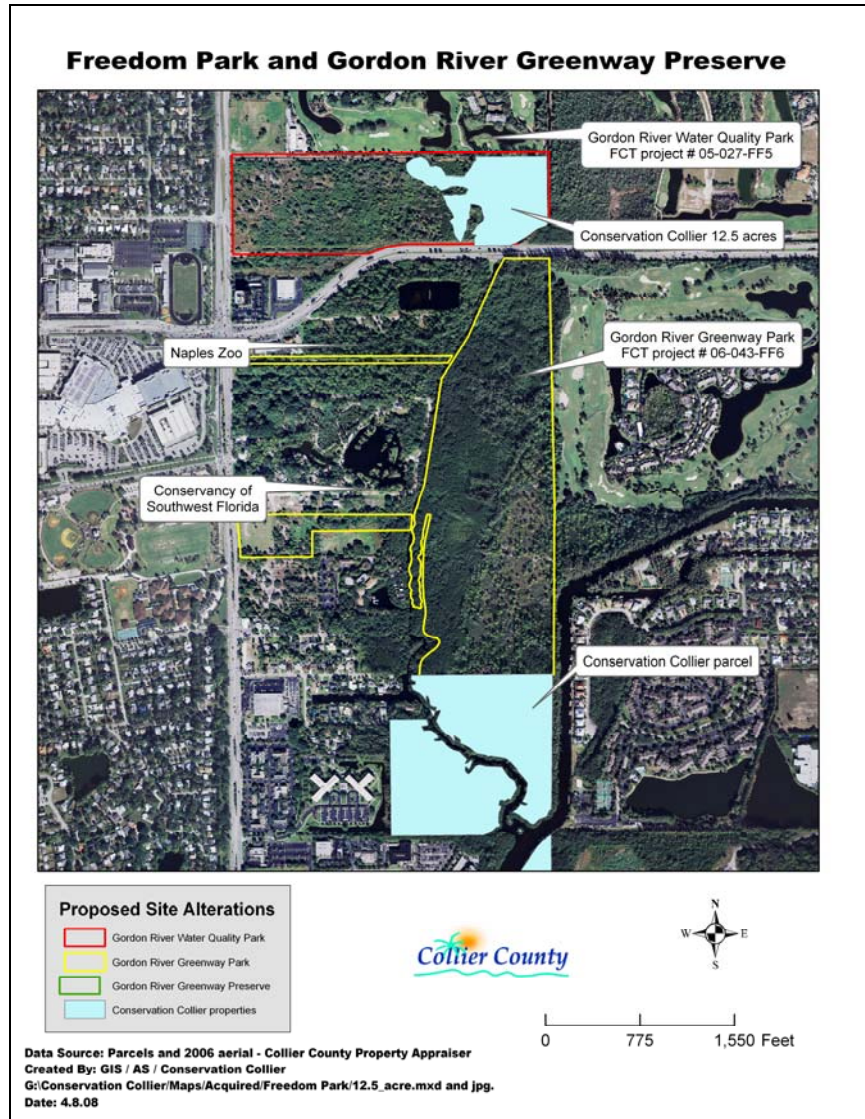


**Conservation Collier Land Acquisition Program**  
**Project Design Report**  
Date: April 14, 2008



**Property Owner:** Collier County

**Folio(s) and Size:** 12.5 +/- acres on eastern side of Freedom Park parcel; a portion of folio #138000222000, Section 27, Township 49 Range 25, Collier County, Florida

**Location:** Along Golden Gate Parkway, just east of its intersection with Goodlette Frank Road

**Internal Appraisal Amount:** \$ 56,300

**History of Project:**

Approved by BCC on A-List	Property purchased by Transportation Dept.	Gen Permit 11-00820-s issued by SFWMD	Transportation property in design stage	FCT 2006 grant cycle – Trans. awarded \$5.8 Million	Conservation Collier directed by BCC to pursue wetland portion	Conservation Easement placed over wetland portion	BCC approved on updated AAL	Statutory Deed to CCLAAC for recommendation
1/27/04	3/29/04	8/29/05	2005-2007	Sept. 2005	1/23/07	10/9/07	1/29/08	4/14/08

**Purpose of Project:** Conservation Collier

**Program Qualifications:**

The statutory deed covers 12.5 +/- acres of a parcel approximately 50 acres in size purchased by the Collier County Transportation Department in April 2004 for the Gordon River Water Quality Park (now know as the Freedom Park). The purpose of the acquisition was to develop a project for the purpose of filtering pollutants from surrounding stormwater runoff, providing flood protection and providing passive recreational and educational opportunities for citizens. The property was purchased by Collier County on March 29, 2004. A post acquisition grant from the Florida Communities Trust for \$5.8 million and with a \$1 million grant each year for 10 years from the Big Cypress Basin, an arm of the South Florida Water Management District, were awarded in 2005. Under the project permit and the FCT-required management plan, the eastern 12.5 acres are to be restored via exotic plant removal and native plant restoration. A boardwalk connecting with other areas of the property is to be installed to provide the recreational and educational component. Conservation Collier is envisioned to be the long term manager for this portion of the project in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Dept.

The 12.5 acres wetland portion of the Freedom Park Project fulfills Conservation Collier program qualifications by satisfying many applicable screening criteria. Criteria satisfied include presence of native habitat, potential for nature based recreation, protection of water resource values and wetland dependent and listed species habitat, connectivity and restoration potential. Those not satisfied are presence of significant biological/ecological values and vulnerability to development. The property is significantly impacted by exotics and little intact habitat remains. Additionally, the property is not vulnerable to development, having been under Conservation Designation by the City of Naples, in who’s jurisdiction it lies, and more recently, under conservation easement to South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) under Permit 11-00820-S-02.

Native vegetation currently present in the wetland portion of the Freedom Park Project consists primarily of laurel oak, slash pine, cabbage palm, swamp fern, and myrsine. Directly adjacent to the Gordon River are Red and white mangroves and leather fern. Exotic plants constitute a significant portion of the existing vegetation. Dominant exotic plant species are Brazilian pepper, earleaf acacia, downy rose-myrtle, and shoebutton ardisia. Exotic removal pursuant to the SFWMD permit is currently underway, with a

project for replanting native vegetation to be undertaken after the exotics are removed and the boardwalk installation is complete.

The wetland habitat, when restored, will provide appropriate habitat and foraging area for wetland dependent and listed species, which have been previously documented on this parcel. In 2002, a local environmental consulting firm, WilsonMiller, documented a snowy egret and little blue heron, both state-listed as Species of Special Concern (SSC) and a wood stork, listed by both the state and federal governments as Endangered. In 2003 staff observed a tricolored heron, listed by the State as a SSC. There is potential for other listed (and non-listed) wading birds to use the site and for the presence of alligators, listed as Threatened by the state and federal government.

The 12.5 acres wetland portion is directly adjacent on the east side to the approximately 65-acre preserve along the western edge of the Estuary at Grey Oaks and to a small, (under one acre) Collier County-owned conservation easement. Management of the 12.5 wetland acres for conservation will enhance and enlarge these connected conservation lands. Removal of exotic plants will eliminate seed source for re-infestation of both the 12.5-acre parcel and surrounding lands.

Parking will be provided at the north-west corner of the Freedom Park, where the boardwalk trails will begin. In the future, there is potential boardwalks and trails from this project site to be interconnected with the entire Gordon River Greenway Project. This will significantly enhance the aesthetic setting of Collier County by providing a naturally vegetated and highly visible public recreation and conservation area.

**Projected Management Activities:**

An overall management plan for the Freedom Park was developed in early 2007 by the Collier County Parks and Recreation (Parks) and the Stormwater Management (Stormwater) Departments. Yearly Annual Stewardship Reports are provided to FCT by Stormwater pursuant to grant requirements; the most recent one dated January 8, 2008. An interdepartmental agreement is in the process of being developed between Conservation Collier, Parks and Stormwater for the coordinated management of Freedom Park.

Conservation Collier's portions of management activities are projected to include the following:

- Provide appropriate signage identifying Conservation Collier involvement.
- Cost share with Parks and Recreation for the ongoing exotic plant maintenance after permit obligations are completed.
- Cost share for refurbishment projects with Parks and Stormwater if they affect the Conservation Collier wetland acreage – to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- Participate in educational programs to fulfill FCT educational programs commitments.
- Participate with Parks and Stormwater in FCT monitoring commitments.
- Participate with Parks and Stormwater in FCT Stewardship reports.