

Conservation Collier Visnich Property Interim Management Plan

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1.0 Purpose and Scope of the Interim Management Plan

The Visnich property was purchased by Collier County in July 2004 through funds from the Conservation Collier program. The property will be open to the public and will be managed only for conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources and for public outdoor recreation that will be compatible with the conservation, protection and enhancement of the site and its surrounding lands. A nature trail, benches, picnic tables and educational interpretive signs shall be provided for visitors.

This interim management plan is intended to identify the key management priorities and issues within the site and give direction for management 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.

Key Interim Management Objectives

1. Conservation land designation and prohibited activities signage
2. Invasive exotic vegetation removal and management
3. Enhancement and possible extension of existing rudimentary trails
4. Removal of physical barrier blocking Cocohatchee Creek
5. Installation of low fence along western boundary
6. Trash/Recycling bin pick up and disposal
7. Benches and picnic tables along trail
8. Interpretive and/or plant identification signs along trail and alligator sign along creek

2.0 Management Authority and Responsibilities

Collier County Parks and Recreation will manage the Visnich property as an extension of Veterans Community Park. The Parks and Recreation Department will provide staff time and the use of current Veterans Community Park vehicles and equipment, while the Conservation Collier program will fund any additional expenses associated with management.

3.0 Interim Site Plan

3.1 Location and Site Description

The Visnich property is located within Section 26 Township 48 Range 25 on the south side of Immokalee road on the east side of Veterans Park Drive in Collier County, Florida. The 3.64-acre site is comprised of upland scrub, pine flatwoods, live oak and cabbage palm plant communities. The live oak community is growing along the banks of the Cocahatchee Creek, which borders the southern and eastern edges of the property. The site is within the urban boundary of Collier County.

3.2 Signage

A sign denoting the property as conservation land, noting the hours of operation and also noting the prohibited activities within the preserve (citing ordinance 76-48) will be installed along the western edge of the property bordering Veterans Park Drive. A sign

prohibiting visitors from feeding or harassing alligators will be installed along the creek. Interpretive and/or plant identification signs will be placed along the trail.

3.3 Easements, Concessions or Leases

No easements, concessions or leases currently exist within the site, nor are any easements, concessions or leases proposed for the future.

Research will be conducted to determine who owns the property that lies beneath Cocohatchee Creek.

3.4 Structures

No structures are present on the site, however a black tarp is stretched across the creek restricting water flow to the west. It was placed there by an adjacent property owner, and it should be removed. Conservation Collier staff will request that party responsible for erecting the tarp remove it. If this does not occur, Parks and Recreation staff and/or Environmental Services staff will remove the obstruction. Future structures planned for the site include benches and picnic tables.

3.5 Surrounding and Adjacent Land Uses

The site is bordered by Cocohatchee Creek on the north and east boundary. Southwind Estates, a residential single-family home community, exists across Cocohatchee Creek. A conservation area belonging to the Southampton/Stonebridge development exists along the southern boundary of the property. Veterans Park Drive runs along the western edge of the property. Veterans Park Common PUD and Northside Medical Plaza PUD are directly across Veterans Park Drive; however, the Northside Medical Plaza PUD is currently undeveloped. Finally, Veteran's Park is adjacent to the southwest corner of the property.

4.0 Interim Management Objectives

4.1 Natural Resource Protection

Existing Vegetation:

Several different plant communities are present on the site, including:

FLUCCS 436 – Upland Scrub – characterized by those upland species that have regenerated after a disturbance, specifically, live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), beauty berry (*Callicarpa americana*), shining sumac (*Rhus copallina*) and brake fern (*Pteris vittata*).

FLUCCS 411 – Pine Flatwoods, characterized by slash pines (*Pinus elliotti*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) and a wide variety of herbs and brush

FLUCCS 427 – Live Oak – characterized by live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) and laurel oaks (*Quercus laurifolia*) and existing along the banks of Cocohatchee Creek

FLUCCS 428 – Cabbage Palm – characterized by a grove of cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*) along the banks of Cocohatchee Creek and scattered cabbage palms on the property

All existing native vegetation shall be retained with the exception of vegetation lost to trail maintenance and enhancement. The location of the trail shall have minimal impacts to natural resources on the site. A Vegetation Removal Permit will be obtained from the Collier County Environmental Services Department prior to the clearing of any vegetation.

Unique Natural Features:

Large mature oaks and cabbage palm groves with shoestring ferns (*Vittaria lineata*) exist along the shore of Cocohatchee Creek.

Possible Listed Species:

During the initial site visit to the property in August 2003, two federally listed fuzzy-wuzzy air plants (*Tillandsia pruinosa*) were observed, as well as three gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) burrows. Neighbors have reported observing a large alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) within the creek. Prior to writing the final management plan, Environmental Services and/or Parks and Recreation staff will conduct a more complete survey to determine whether other listed species exist on site. Specific management will then be addressed in the final management plan.

4.2 Site Security

Security shall be provided by the Collier County Sheriff's Office via routine patrols in the area. Collier County Parks and Recreation staff, in performance of site management activities, and park rangers shall periodically monitor the site for violations and security breaches. A sign will be posted at the trail entrance denoting the times the property will be open for public access.

4.3 Exotic Vegetation Removal and Maintenance Plan

Collier County Parks and Recreation and/or Environmental Services will contract out any necessary exotic vegetation removal and maintenance using Conservation Collier funds. Invasive exotics present are mostly in disturbed areas but are also at the creek bank and include: Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), earleaf acacia (*Acacia auriculiformis*), Cuban Laurel (*Ficus nitida*), wedelia (*Wedelia trilobata*), rosary pea (*Abrus precatorius*), melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) and java plum (*Syzygium cumini*). The exotic vegetation will be cut, treated and removed from site. Special care will be taken when removing exotics from the creek shoreline so as not to cause erosion of the bank. Native muscadine grape (*Vitis munsoniana*) is thick and becoming invasive in some areas of the site. Management of the vine to acceptable levels should be included in the maintenance

plan. Water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) and other possible nuisance aquatic vegetation will be treated as recommended by the Environmental Services Department so that the vegetation is kept to below nuisance levels. Collier County Aquatic Plant Control currently treats Cocohatchee Creek west of Veterans Park Drive. They have indicated that they would be willing to treat the creek east of Veterans Park Drive.

4.4 Cultural, Historical and Archeological Resource Protection

The Visnich property is not within an area of historical and archaeological probability, and no historical or archaeological sites appear to be present in the park. The County will notify the Division of Historical Resources immediately if evidence is found to suggest any archaeological or historic resources are present at the Visnich site. If such properties 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).

The collection of artifacts or the disturbance of archaeological and historic sites within the Visnich property will be prohibited unless prior authorization has been obtained from the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.

4.5 Public Access

Public parking is available at Veterans Community Park. After initial invasive exotic vegetation removal, Parks and Recreation and Environmental Services staff will determine final trail dimensions and placement. The existing rudimentary trails near the creek will be enhanced and mulched using melaleuca mulch. Whenever possible, any planned new sections of trail will be created through existing uplands that have been cleared of exotic vegetation.

A concrete or recycled plastic fence, mimicking a low split rail fence, will be erected along the western edge of the property that borders the Veterans Park Drive sidewalk. This fence will direct visitors to the main trail.

Future plans include picnic tables, benches, trash/recycling bins and interpretive and/or plant identification signs along the trail.

Until standards can be specifically designed for conservation lands, public access for Conservation Collier properties will be managed by the same standards as set forth within Collier County Ordinance # 76-48, as amended, which regulates the use of County parks.

4.6 Site Monitoring Plan

Maintenance of the site shall consist of trash removal, trail upkeep, invasive exotic/nuisance vegetation re-treatment and creek bank erosion monitoring. Collier County Parks and Recreation staff shall be responsible for property maintenance with tasks delegated to the Environmental Services Department and other County departments as deemed necessary. Collier County Parks and Recreation and/or Environmental Services staff shall develop a schedule for routine maintenance activities. The Conservation Collier program will fund any materials or contracted services required for management. Currently, the site contains very little if any garbage. Garbage and recycling bins shall be installed once trail enhancement is complete. Any garbage encountered during regular staff visits shall be removed from the site. Periodic patrols by the County Sheriff's Office and Code Enforcement staff will discourage illegal dumping and disposal. The creek bank shall be monitored for erosion during routine maintenance activities. In the case that severe erosion does occur, measures may need to be taken to stabilize the creek bank (i.e. rip-rapping the shoreline).

5.0 Exhibits

EXHIBIT 1: Location Map

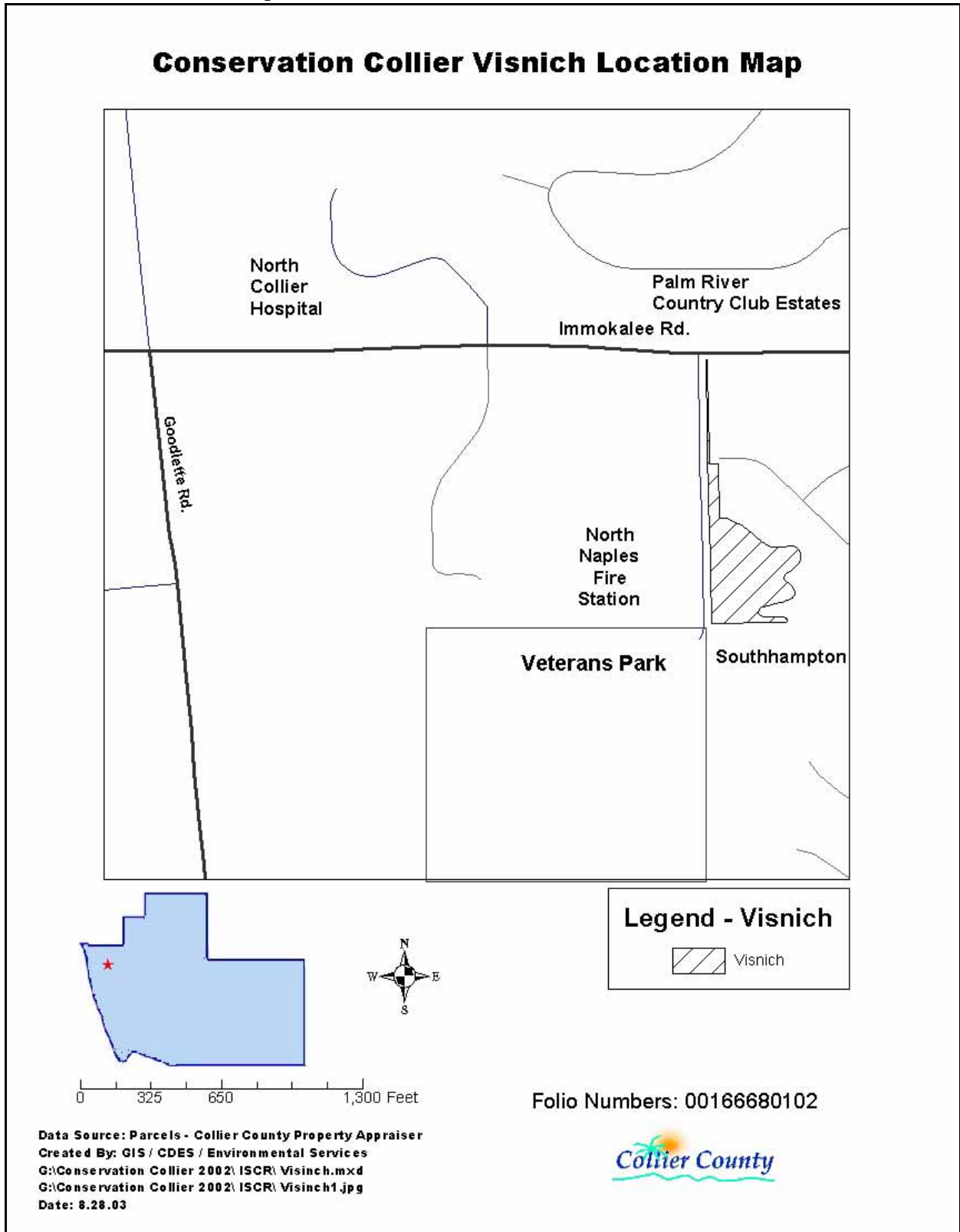
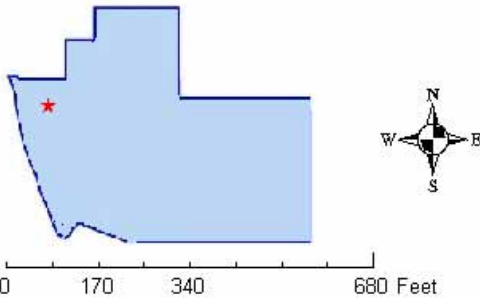


EXHIBIT 2: Aerial Map

Conservation Collier Visnich Location Map



Legend - Visnich

- Collier County Roads
- ▨ Visnich
- ▭ publish.MAIN.Pud

Folio Numbers: 00166680102

Data Source: Parcels - Collier County Property Appraiser
Created By: GIS / CDES / Environmental Services
G:\Conservation Collier 2002\ISCR\Visinch2.mxd
G:\Conservation Collier 2002\ISCR\Visinch2.jpg
Date: 8.28.03

EXHIBIT 3: Estimated Cost Table

Management Element	Initial Cost	Annual Recurring Costs	Comments
Exotics Control	\$6,400	\$1,000 (\$250 per acre)	Based on approx. 30% infestation, poison, cut and remove debris
Access Trails	\$954	\$477	Melaleuca mulch \$1.59 per bag – for area 3” X 2’(length) X 4’(width) – double cost for labor if contracted. Projection developed using estimated length of 1,200 feet
Benches/Picnic Tables	\$2,900	n/a	2 benches (\$650 each) and 2 (6’) picnic tables (\$800 each)
Trash Removal	\$800	t.b.d.	2 cement free standing garbage cans (\$400 each)
Conservation designation sign	\$600	n/a	One 3’X1.5’ – metal, white background, uninstalled
Interpretive signs	\$1,000	n/a	2 larger interpretive signs (\$500 each) or 10 small signs (\$100 each)
Total	\$12,654	\$1,477	

