

# Fort Basinger Long-Term Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

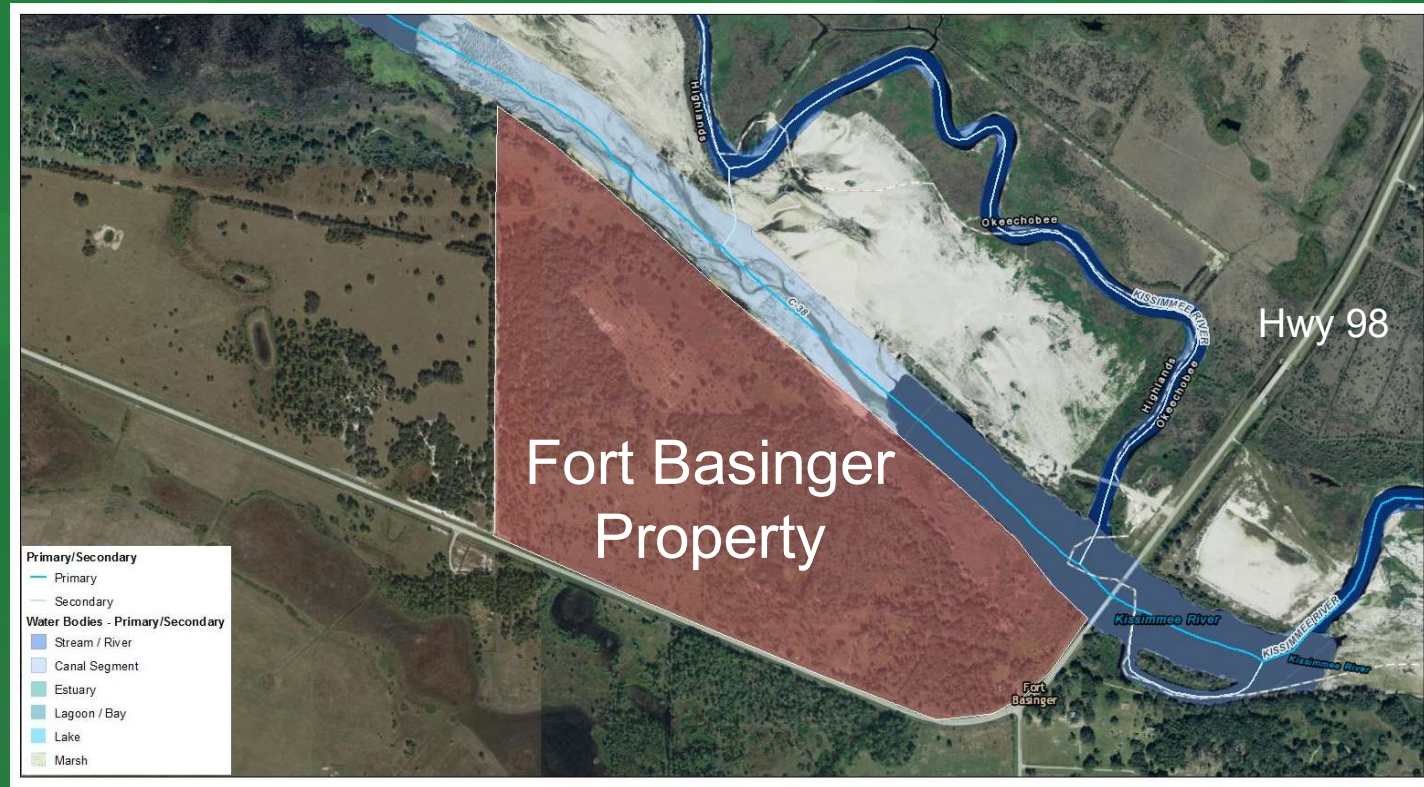
Brian Garrett  
Operations & Maintenance Wildlife Coordinator  
Land Stewardship Section  
South Florida Water Management District

WRAC  
Recreational Issues Forum  
December 17, 2018



## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- Fort Basinger is 264 acres located on the Kissimmee River (C-38) in Highlands County.
- Part of the KR Public Use Area.
- Open to public use including hunting.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- Fort Basinger was permitted by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) as a Long-term Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site during 2017.
- With this permit designation, Fort Basinger will provide the District with a location to relocate gopher tortoises.



## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- This will save the District and taxpayers approximately \$177,000, since the cost to relocate tortoises to other recipient sites can range from \$800 and \$1,200 per tortoise.
- The permit allows the District to be able to relocate 177 tortoises onto this site.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- The site is only available to internal District projects, tortoises from non-District projects are not accepted.
- All tortoises coming onto the property are permitted by FWC.
- All tortoises are marked with permanent unique markings to identify which projects the tortoises came from.



## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- The District has relocated eight tortoises to the site already.
- As the District relocates more tortoises they will likely become a more common sight on the property.
- Remember that gopher tortoises are a threatened species in the state of Florida. Visitors should not pick up, remove, kill, harm, or harass any gopher tortoises or damage burrows.
- Utilizing the gopher tortoise recipient site is compatible with the current public uses including hunting.



## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site



- The gopher tortoises come from many District water resource projects and sometime they come from levees.
- Gopher tortoise burrows can be as much as 10 to 15 feet below the surface of the ground & can be as long as 25 to 30 feet in length. Thus, the presence of tortoises in levees can weaken them.

## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- Fort Basinger like all of the District's Kissimmee River properties is managed by the Land Stewardship Section.
- There are some specific gopher tortoise types of land management, but most of the management would occur even if it was not a gopher tortoise recipient site.





## Fort Basinger Gopher Tortoise Recipient Site

- During 2018, the District constructed a buried fence around the recipient site. The area inside the fence is approximately 180 acres.
- The fence is buried 18 inches into the ground to prevent tortoises from digging out of the area
- There are three walkover gates that the District has created to allow access onto the property.





