

# Volusia Conservation Corridor

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Flagler and Volusia Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2001
<i>Project Acres</i>	80,423
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	62,705
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$76,566,247
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	17,718
<i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$85,352,158

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Volusia Conservation Corridor project will provide a continuous corridor of environmentally significant land from the Tiger Bay State Forest, through the central wetlands and flatwoods of Volusia County, to the marshes of the St. Johns River. The project will also increase natural resource-based public recreation and education opportunities. The project will help ensure that enough water is available to meet the current and future needs of natural systems and the citizens of the state.

## General Description

The project is in central Volusia County and southern Flagler County, stretching from north of State Road 44 south to the St. Johns River. It is generally low and wet, consisting of alternating flatwoods and swamp; these habitats occupy the northwest/southeast-trending ridge and swale topography on the eastern edge of DeLand Ridge. Natural communities within the project boundary include basin swamp, hydric hammock, mesic flatwoods, scrub and dome swamp. The project also includes the drainages of Deep Creek and Lake Ashby canal, which both empty into the St. Johns River. Some areas contain moderate to good recharge to the Florida aquifer, mainly occurring through rainfall.

## FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>Rugel's pawpaw</i>	G1/S1
<i>lake-side sunflower</i>	G1G2/S1S2
Florida sandhill crane	G5T2/S2
<i>large-flowered rosemary</i>	G3/S3
Wood stork	G4/S2
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3



## Public Use

Fee acquisition areas have the potential of providing a variety of resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities including, but not necessarily limited to, hiking, nature study, horseback riding, bicycling, camping, picnicking, freshwater fishing and hunting. Further review may reflect cabins to be suitable, particularly if a combination of lands is acquired that would allow for a more complete park or environmental education center atmosphere.

## Acquisition Planning

### **2000**

On November 28, 2000, the St. Johns River Water Management District acquired the Fourth Volusia tract (417.4 acres) of the Longleaf Pine Preserve, all of which would be in the project boundary when it was created.

### **2001**

On January 25, 2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added the Volusia Conservation Corridor project to Group B of the 2001 Florida Forever Priority List. The fee-simple and less-than-fee acquisition, sponsored by the St. Johns River Water Management District, consisted of approximately 33,503 acres and multiple owners. Essential parcels were defined as Leffler Co., Le Fils Corp. (easement acquired), Julia Menard (acquired), GJPS Lukas Inc., Jonathan S. Lukas, Gertrude G. Lukas, Donald Ray Fore (acquired), Norman N. Fore (acquired), Marvin Kelley Fore (acquired), Mark Fore et al., Lynda Russell Schroeder and JAS Properties LTD ownerships.

### **2002**

On June 6, 2002, the Acquisition and Restoration Council moved the project to Group A of the 2002 Florida Forever Priority list.

On June 14, 2002, the St. Johns River Water Management District and Volusia County split the acquisition of the Menard parcels (1,347.03 acres) in the Wiregrass Prairie Preserve.

On July 30, 2002, the St. Johns River Water Management District established the Plum Creek Rayonier/Hutton conservation easement (4,780.44 acres) and Plum Creek Volusia/Pineland conservation easement (6,947.09 acres).

On August 15, 2002, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a less-than-fee 11,723-acre and fee-simple 7,654-acre addition to the project boundary. This addition, sponsored by the St. Johns River Water Management District, consisted of two owners, Plum Creek and Rayonier.

### **2003**

On February 28, 2003, the St. Johns River Water Management District established three conservation easements in the project boundary: Hartford Ranch (461.89 acres; all in the project), Marvin K. Fore (741.92 acres total; 687.8 acres in the project) and W. T. Ranch (349.35 acres total; 346.35 acres in the project). The Marvin K. Fore and W. T. Ranch conservation easements were secured with Florida Forever funding.

On March 12, 2003, Volusia County joined the St. Johns River Water Management District as a co-owner of the Plum Creek Rayonier/Hutton and Plum Creek Volusia/Pineland conservation easements.





On June 6, 2003, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a less-than-fee addition to the project boundary in Flagler and Volusia counties. The 26,740-acre addition, sponsored by the St. Johns River Water Management District, consisted of one owner, Plum Creek Timberlands LP.

On October 31, 2003, the Fore Children (124.57 acres) and Norman M. Fore (691.5 acres) conservation easements were established using Florida Forever and Volusia Forever funds.

#### **2004**

On May 20, 2004, the first two Le Files conservation easements (1,722.8 acres) were established by the St. Johns River Water Management District and Volusia County, of which 1,645.09 acres are within the project boundary. The St. Johns River Water Management District used Florida Forever funds for their part of the acquisition.

In December 2004, Volusia County, with assistance from the St. Johns River Water Management District and U.S. Department of Agriculture, acquired a 1,711-acre conservation easement over the Le Files Corporation property.

#### **2005**

On September 27, 2005, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the removal of 686 acres from the project boundary at the request of the landowner, E.C. Lunsford.

In November 2005, Volusia County acquired the Lunsford Tract (1,644 acres) of the Longleaf Pine Preserve.

#### **2007**

In April 2007, the St. Johns River Water Management District and Volusia County acquired 2,272 acres as a joint acquisition. Each partner owns an undivided 50 percent interest in the property acquired from State Road 44 Properties, LLC.

On May 23, 2007, Volusia County acquired the Amy Brooks parcel of Wiregrass Prairie Preserve. The total acreage for the Wiregrass Prairie Preserve grew to 1,423.23 acres, with 911.92 acres in the project boundary.

#### **2008**

On May 8, 2008, Volusia County established the Marvin Fore conservation easement (152.42 acres), with 9.9 acres inside the project boundary.

#### **2009**

On December 29, 2009, the St. Johns River Water Management District purchased 324.35 acres fee simple, leaving 25 acres in the W. T. Ranch conservation easement. The St. Johns River Water Management District also purchased 2,996 acres adjacent to the W. T. Ranch purchase. These acres were combined to create the Palm Bluff Conservation Area. Approximately 2,466 acres of the total 3,321 acres in the Palm Bluff Conservation area are within the project boundary.

#### **2010**

On July 23, 2010, the St. Johns River Water Management District established an additional Le Files conservation easement (9.73 acres).

On December 15, 2010, Volusia County closed on the 4,806-acre Leffler Ranch. The county will manage the property.





## **2011**

On May 27, 2011, the St. Johns River Water Management District acquired the Kemcho Tract (3,200 acres) of Deep Creek Preserve with Florida Forever funding.

On October 18, 2011, the St. Johns River Water Management District established an additional Le Files conservation easement (2.28 acres).

On November 22, 2011, the St. Johns River Water Management District purchased the Lukas Ranch Conservation Easement (1,093 acres) from Jonathan S. Lukas, as Trustee of the Jonathan S. Lukas Trust Agreement, for \$1,912,697.50; the acquisition was comprised of a donation valued at \$478,174.37 from the seller, \$956,348.75 from a U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program grant, and \$478,174.38 from the St. Johns River Water Management District.

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council placed the project in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

## **2012**

In April 2012, Volusia County and the St. Johns River Water Management District signed a management agreement for the county to manage the Kemcho Tract of Deep Creek Preserve.

## **2022**

On July 12, 2022, Volusia County and the St. Johns River Water Management District purchased 857 acres in the Palm Bluff Conservation Area with Volusia Forever funds.

In 2022, Volusia County and the St. Johns River Water Management District established a 425-acre conservation easement in the Palm Bluff Conservation Area with Volusia Forever funds.

## **2023**

On April 14, 2023, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the addition of the Carter Quail Ranch project proposal (1,344 acres) in Volusia County to the project boundary.

## **Coordination**

The St. Johns River Water Management District, Florida Forest Service, Volusia County and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are acquisition partners. Volusia County passed two bond measures in 2000 that will generate approximately \$80 million for open space land acquisition, historic preservation and improvements over 20 years.

## **Management Policy Statement**

The primary goals of management of the project are to conserve and protect significant water resources in a priority water resource caution area, as well as important ecosystems that benefit significant natural resources.





## **Manager(s)**

The St. Johns River Water Management District and Volusia County are the recommended managers.

## **Management Prospectus**

### **Qualifications for State Designation**

The need to protect water resources within the caution area, combined with the restorable pine plantations, makes it desirable for management by the St. Johns River Water Management District.

### **Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

The wildfires of 1998 impacted properties within the project, but most of the affected areas have been salvaged and replanted. Consequently, there are no known major disturbances that will require extraordinary attention, so management intensity is expected to be typical for water management district lands.

### **Management Implementation, Public Access, Site Security and Protection of Infrastructure**

Once the core area is acquired, the St. Johns River Water Management District will provide public access for low intensity, non-facilities related to outdoor recreation. Initial activities will include securing the site, providing public and fire management access, inventorying resources and removing trash. The St. Johns River Water Management District will provide access to the public while protecting sensitive resources. The site's natural resources and threatened and endangered plants and animals will be inventoried to provide the basis for a management plan. Long-range plans for the project will be directed toward restoring disturbed areas to their original conditions, as well as protecting threatened and endangered species. Some of the pinelands have been degraded by timbering and wildfire and will require restoration. An all-season burning program will use existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks to contain fires.

Timber management will mostly involve improvement thinning and regeneration harvests. Plantations will be thinned and, where appropriate, reforested with native species. Stands will not have a targeted rotation age. Infrastructure will primarily be in disturbed areas and will be the minimum required for management and public access.

### **Revenue-generating Potential**

The St. Johns River Water Management District will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will provide a variable source of revenue, but the revenue-generating potential for the project is expected to be low.

### **Cooperators in Management Activities**

The St. Johns River Water Management District will cooperate with Volusia County and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government entities and interested parties as appropriate.



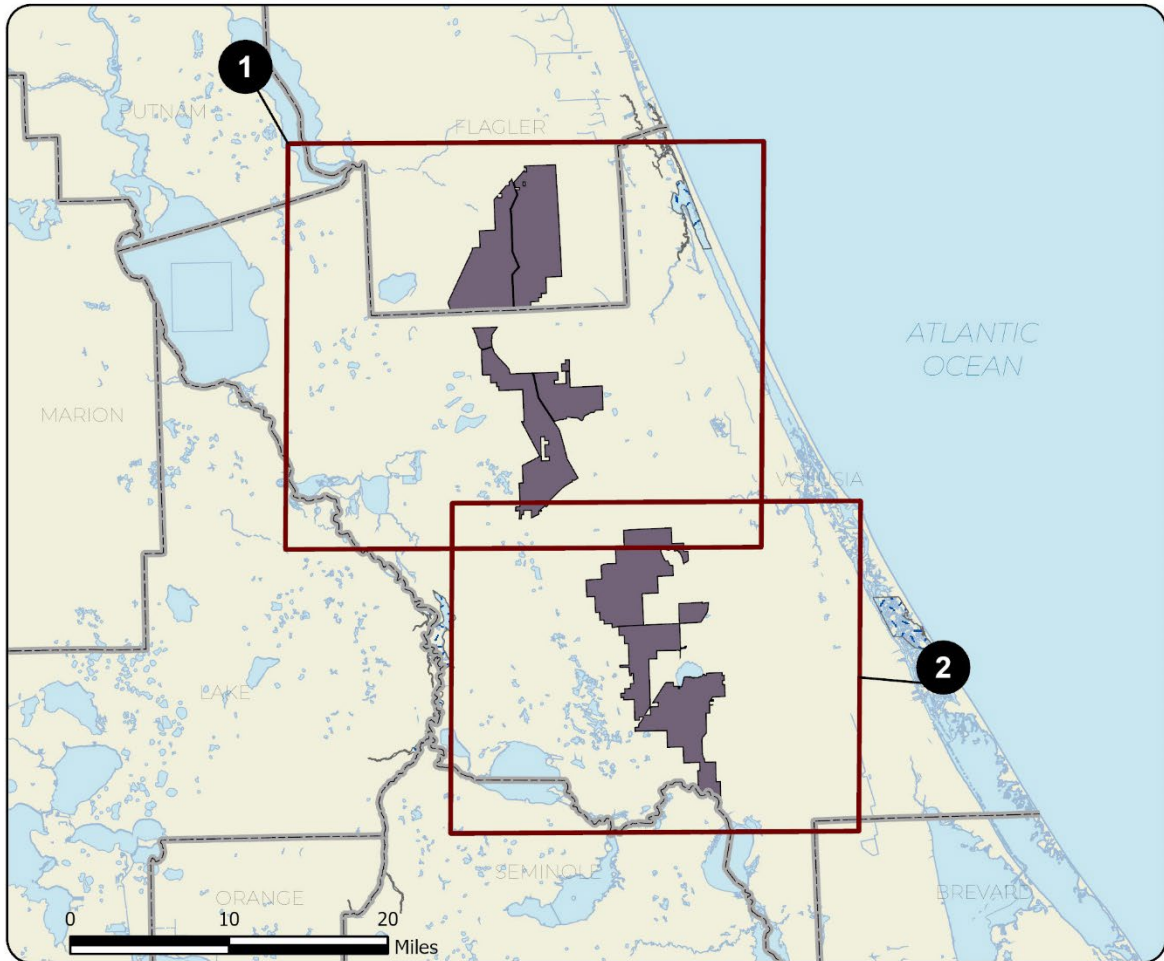


Management Cost Summary

<u>SJRWMD</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	WMLTF	WMLTF
Salary	\$45,000	\$45,000
OPS	\$0	\$0
Expense	\$80,000	\$80,000
OCO	\$20,000	\$60,000
FCO	\$100,000	\$0
TOTAL	\$245,000	\$185,000

*Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted*

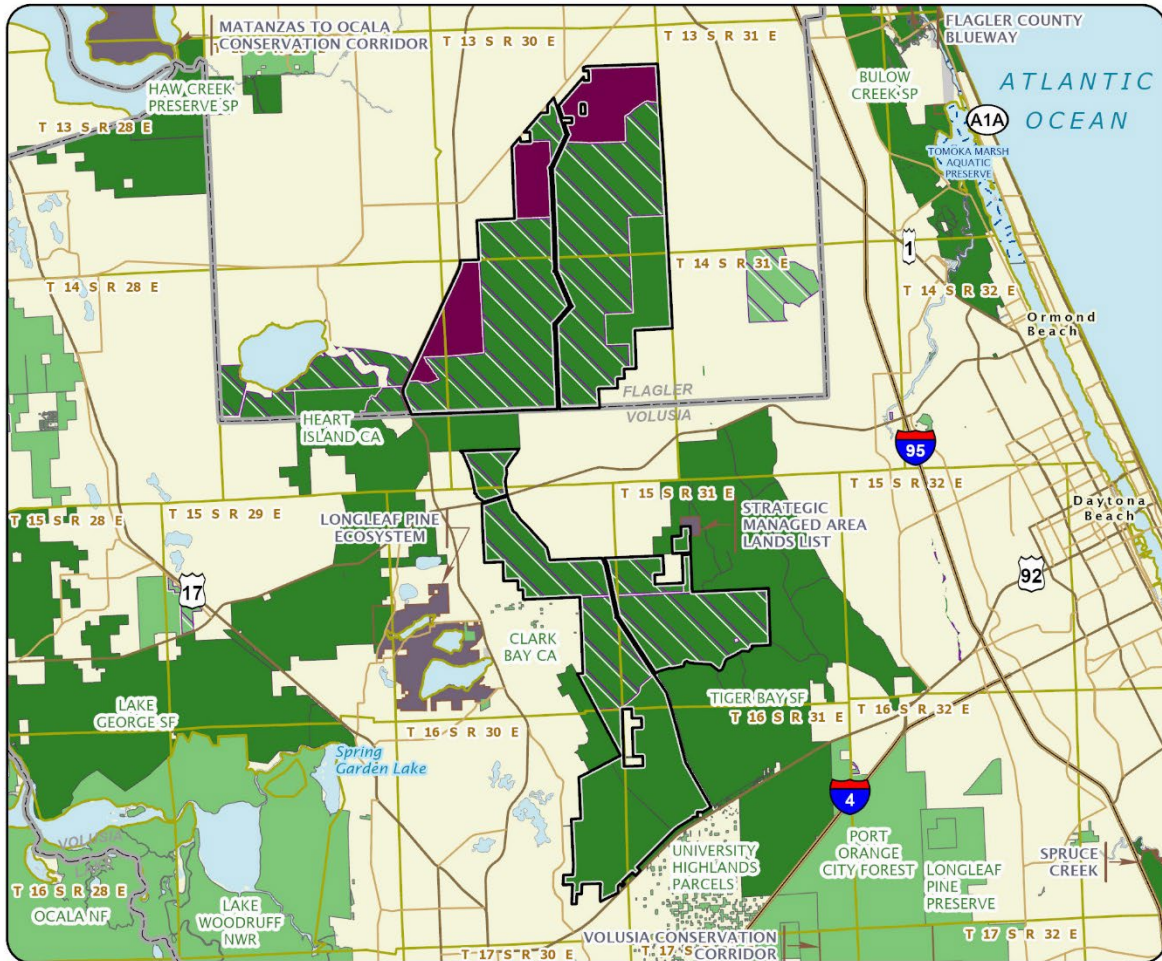




### VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: OVERVIEW

#### FLAGLER AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES



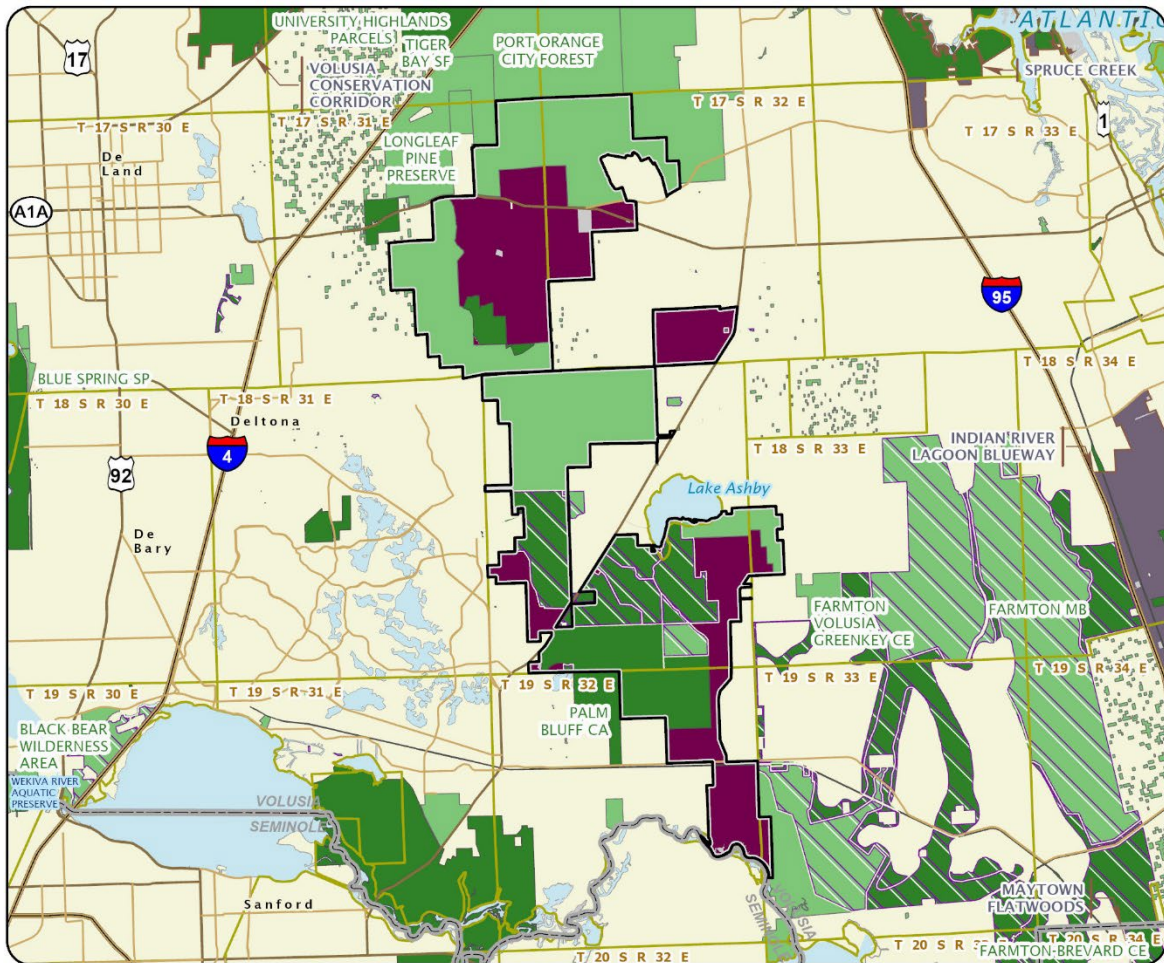


### VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: MAP 1

#### FLAGLER AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES







**VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: MAP 2**

**VOLUSIA COUNTY**

