

# Baldwin Bay/St. Mary's River

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Duval and Nassau Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2002
<i>Project Acres</i>	9,131
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	734
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	8,397
<i>2021 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$33,805,221

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Baldwin Bay/St. Mary's River project will preserve stands of relatively intact old growth forests and flatwoods, supporting ecological connections between Cary State Forest, Jennings State Forest, the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project and the St. Mary's River. The project will also connect to the Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail, increasing recreational opportunities for trail users.

## General Description

The Baldwin Bay/St. Mary's River project is in Nassau and Duval counties and is proposed for fee simple acquisition. The proposal is characterized by its bottomland forests and wet flatwoods that contain numerous old growth trees. These communities have high species diversity and would provide habitat for numerous rare species. Portions of the property have been converted to pine plantation, but several of these areas have intact ground cover. The project borders Cary State Forest and the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project.

## FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4

## Public Use

If acquired, the project has potential for a variety of forest related recreational activities. Access to the St. Mary's River could allow activities such as canoeing, swimming, bird watching, environmental education, nature study and photography.

Due to the connectivity with the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project and Cary State Forest, this project contributes to governmental efforts to protect and restore the regional land and water resources.



The project has potential for diverse forms of resource-based recreation. For areas acquired in fee, the project could accommodate such activities as hiking, environmental education, camping, bicycling and horseback riding.

### Acquisition Planning

#### **2002**

On December 5, 2002, the Baldwin Bay/St. Mary's River project was added to the 2003 Florida Forever project list. The project had an estimated tax assessed value of \$3,587,753. The essential parcels were identified as the Baldwin Bay LLC, Brandy Branch LLC, International Paper and International Paper Realty ownerships. The parcels are being offered fee simple.

#### **2006**

On December 8, 2006, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved moving the project from Group B to Group A of the Florida Forever Priority List.

#### **2011**

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

#### **2014**

On October 15, 2014, the Brandy Branch Mitigation Bank and associated permanent conservation easement were established within the project boundary.

### Coordination

Portions of this project may be acquired in partnership with Duval County. The St. Johns River Water Management District is also interested in acquisition of the project.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary land management goal for the Florida Forest Service is to restore, maintain and protect all native ecosystems in perpetuity; to integrate compatible human use; and to ensure long-term viability of populations and species considered rare. This ecosystem approach will guide the Florida Forest Service's management activities on this project.

### Manager(s)

The Florida Forest Service is the proposed manager for the project with a multiple-use management regime consistent with the state forest system. Management will accomplish the goals and measures for this project.

### Management Prospectus

#### **Qualifications for State Designation**

This project meets goals and measures for significant landscapes, increasing natural resource-based recreation and restoring such natural functions such as protection of the floodplain, surface waters and functional wetland systems. This project also has a great prospect for sustainable forestry.





### Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

There are major restoration challenges that will need to be addressed if the Baldwin Bay/St. Mary's River proposal is purchased. The hydrology of the entire site is affected by logging roads and ditches. The decreased hydroperiod has allowed exotic and upland species to encroach into wetlands, particularly in the areas around Baldwin Bay and in the wet flatwoods and dome swamps that are surrounded by pine plantations. To restore normal hydrology, ditches will need to be filled and plugged and roads closed and lowered to grade.

Much of this site (59 percent) has been converted to intensive silviculture. Recent clearcuts and slash piles mar the landscape. Intensive site preparation activities such as roller chopping and bedding have severely disturbed the ground vegetation and soils. Fire suppression has led to woody species encroachment and deep needle litter build-up in the understories of some of the pine plantations.

Invasive exotic species were documented on the Baldwin Bay/St. Mary's River site but can be controlled with reasonable effort if pursued soon. Chinese tallow tree (*Sapium sebiferum*), Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), and Cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) were observed. There were also numerous signs of feral hogs digging within the site.

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

Once the project area is acquired and assigned to the Florida Forest Service, public access will be provided for low intensity outdoor recreation activities. The Florida Forest Service proposes to manage the site as a part of Cary State Forest; Jacksonville District personnel will carry out management activities and coordinate public access and use.

### Revenue-generating Potential

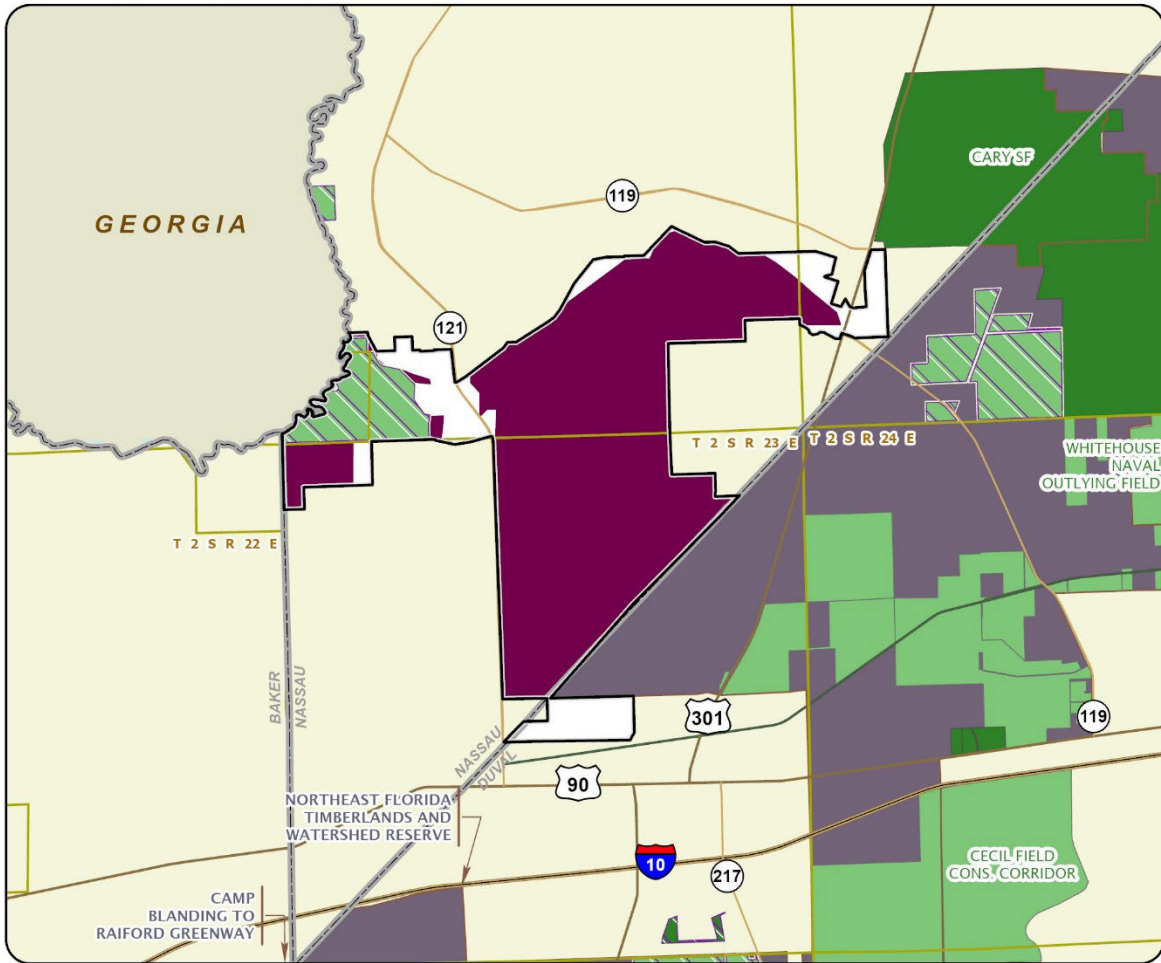
As mentioned above, timber sales will be conducted as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will primarily take place in pine stands and will provide a variable source of revenue. Due to the existing condition of the timber resource on the property, revenue generating potential of this project is expected to be low to medium.

#### Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	not available
Salary (X FTE)	\$231,839	not available
Expense	\$140,000	not available
OCO	\$354,600	not available
TOTAL	\$726,439	not available

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





### BALDWIN BAY/ST. MARYS RIVER

#### DUVAL AND NASSAU COUNTIES

