

# Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest

Less-Than-Fee

Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2014
<i>Project Acres</i>	100,383
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	12,413
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	87,971
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$328,698,967

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest project would preserve working forest lands and provide resource protection for the Escambia River watershed. The project will enhance coordination and completion of adjacent conservation land acquisitions and increase the amount of forest land available for sustainable resource management. The project will support state water quality and quantity by maintaining the quality and natural functions of the land, water and wetland systems.

## General Description

The Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest project is in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. The Lower Escambia River Water Management Area bisects the two main tracts of the proposal. The Perdido River Water Management Area is about 6 miles south of the proposal in Escambia County. Two of the easternmost tracts of the proposal are adjacent to the western boundary of Blackwater River State Forest. These two tracts are adjacent to the Wolfe Creek Forest Florida Forever Project, which, in conjunction with the Clear Creek/Whiting Field Florida Forever Project, would form a continuous corridor between Blackwater River State Forest and Naval Air Station Whiting Field. State Road 89 passes through the proposal area.

The property has been managed for commercial timber production and, to a much lesser extent, private hunting, fishing, camping and other outdoor recreation. Prescribed fire is used to prepare the land for planting, particularly of longleaf pine stands. If a conservation easement is established on the property, the application outlines a plan to plant longleaf pine stands for the purposes of ecological restoration and sustainable forestry with a five-year rotation of prescribed fire. The proposed project is located on the Escambia Terraced Lands and on the western side of the Blackwater Hills (uplands that are underlain by sand, gravel, silt and clay).





A small, fragmented proportion of the upland areas (totaling less than 450 acres) remains as upland pine in somewhat natural condition. Before it was converted to pine plantations, upland pine was the dominant natural community within the proposed project. Bottomland forest is the most extensive natural community within the project boundary, occurring as a closed-canopy forest on terraces and levees in floodplains of larger streams and rivers. Loblolly pine had been planted on the upper slopes of the community, creating moderately dense pine stands.

Agricultural land and pastures comprise only a small part of the proposal and include food plots for wildlife. Other ruderal areas include cemeteries, utility rights-of-way, sand pits, clearings and successional hardwood forests that often develop between planted pine stands and adjacent agricultural land.

Rare plants such as the Florida flame azalea (*Rhododendron austrinum*) and white-top pitcher plant (*Sarracenia leucophylla*) are found in the forest. Rare animals that have been documented on-site include gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*), little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*), swallow-tailed kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) and Bachman’s sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*).

Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Narrow pigtoe	G1G2/S1
Choctaw bean	G2G3/S1S2
Escambia map turtle	G2/S2
Gulf lilliput	G2/S2
Gulf crayfish	G4/S1
<i>Turk's cap lily*</i>	G5/S1
Harlequin darter	G5/S1
Alligator snapping turtle	G3/S3
<i>Florida flame azalea*</i>	G3/S3
<i>hairy-peduncled beaksedge*</i>	G3/S3
<i>*Plant species are in italics</i>	

**Public Use**

Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. However, the owner has indicated an interest in making the site available for some limited research or educational efforts.





### Acquisition Planning

The Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest was submitted as a conservation easement by The Conservation Fund and Resource Management Services, LLC; Resource Management Services, LLC is a timber investment and management organization that conducts silvicultural operations on multiple continents.

#### **2014**

On August 15, 2014, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) voted to approve the evaluation of this proposal.

On December 12, 2014, ARC voted to add this project to the Less-than-Fee category.

#### **2021**

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) acquired 2,115 acres fee simple from Evergreen Timberco FL, LLC to be managed by the Florida Forest Service as an addition to Blackwater River State Forest.

#### **2024**

In April 2024, ARC approved the addition of one parcel totaling approximately 170.80 acres in Santa Rosa County.

In November 2024, ARC approved the addition of nine parcels totaling approximately 668.27 acres in Santa Rosa County.

#### **2025**

On June 30, 2025, DEP acquired a 5,827.97-acre conservation easement in Santa Rosa County from Shades Mountain Timber Co. FL, LLC.

### Coordination

There were no confirmed acquisition partners when this project was added. However, the landowner is in contact with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service to match some federal funding with Florida Forever funding. The applicants may explore other less-than-fee acquisition opportunities as well. The landowner is interested in phased acquisition.

### Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest would be managed by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.

### Manager(s)

If acquired less-than-fee, management responsibility of the Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm



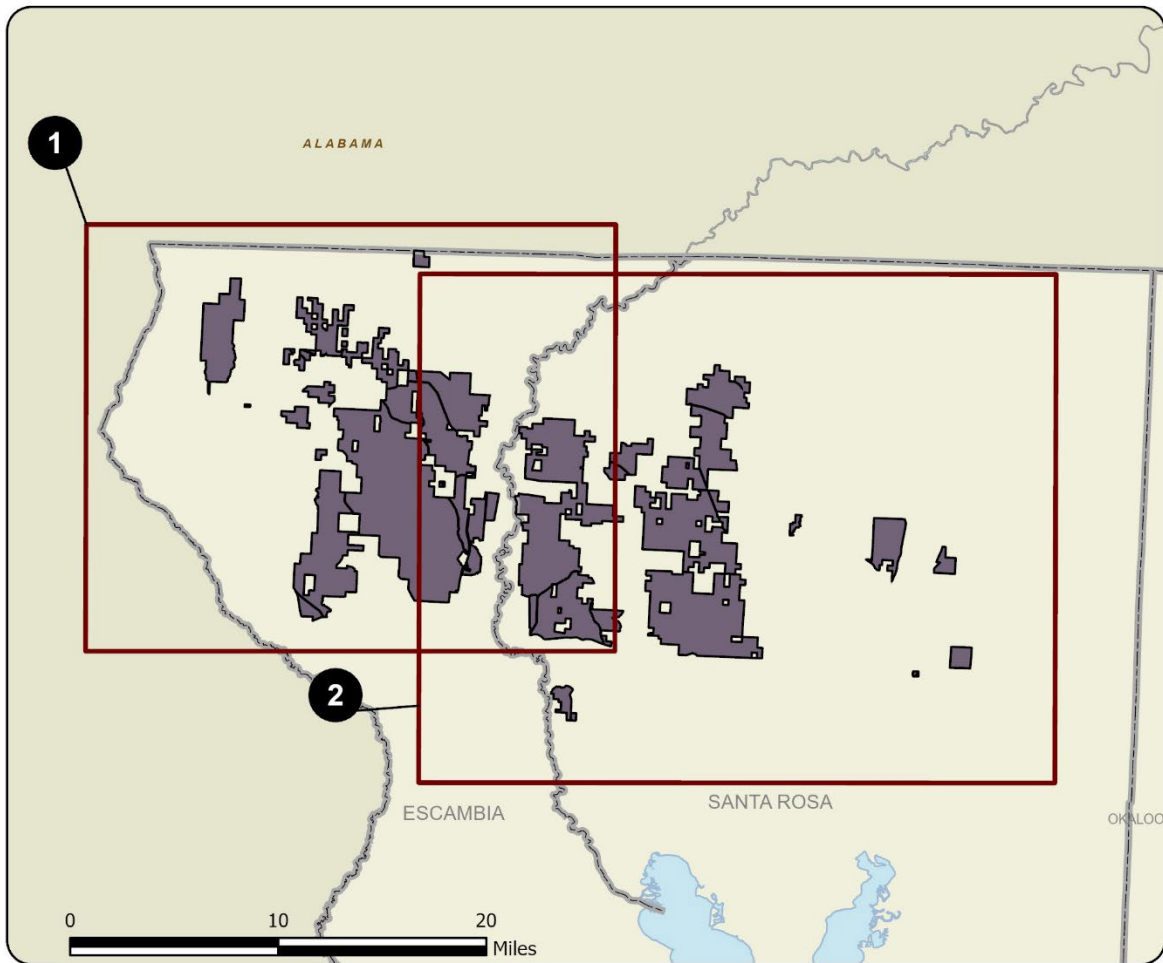


continued compliance with the conditions of the conservation easement would be coordinated by DEP's Division of State Lands.

### Management Prospectus

DEP's Division of State Lands will periodically monitor the conservation easement, while the management will be conducted by the property owner.

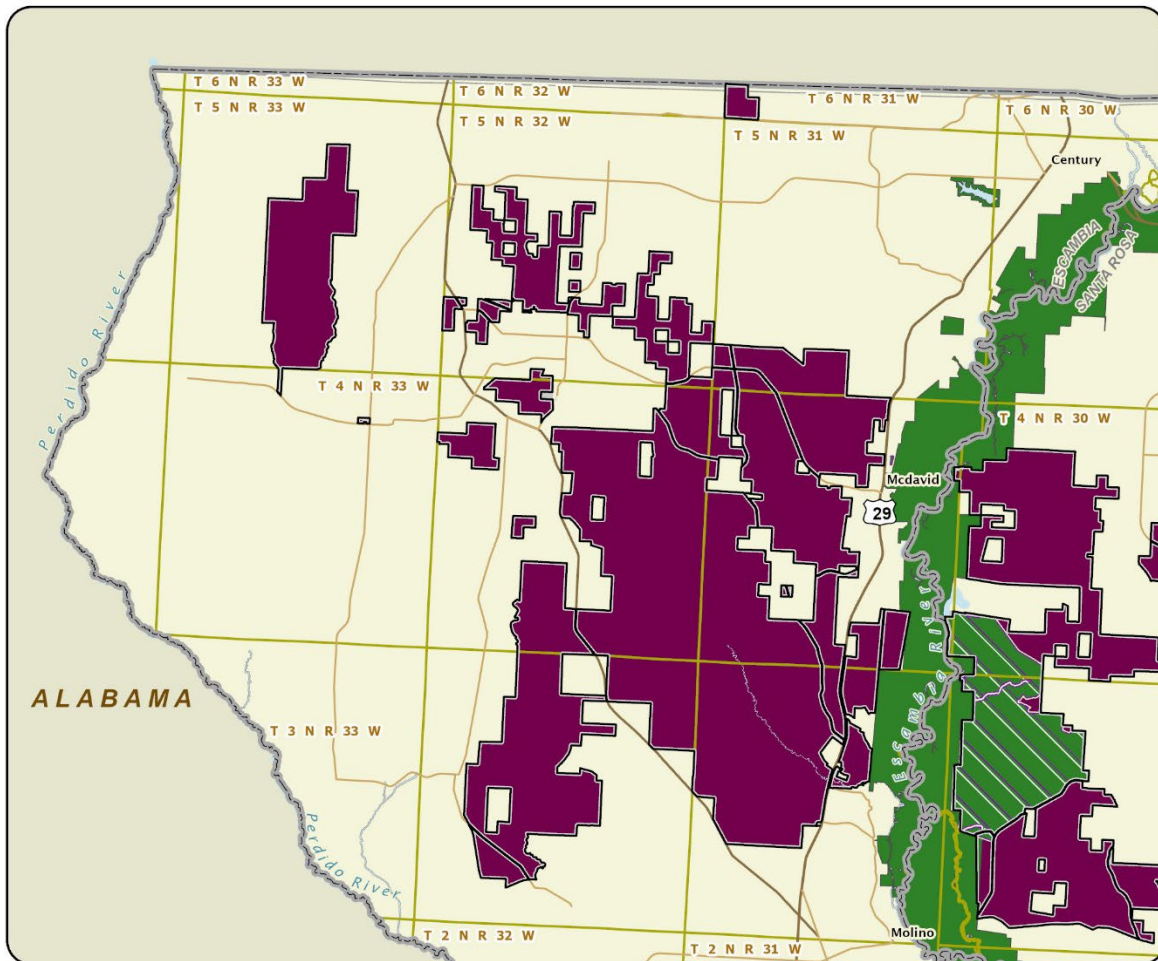




### COASTAL HEADWATERS LONGLEAF FOREST: OVERVIEW

ESCAMBIA AND SANTA ROSA COUNTIES

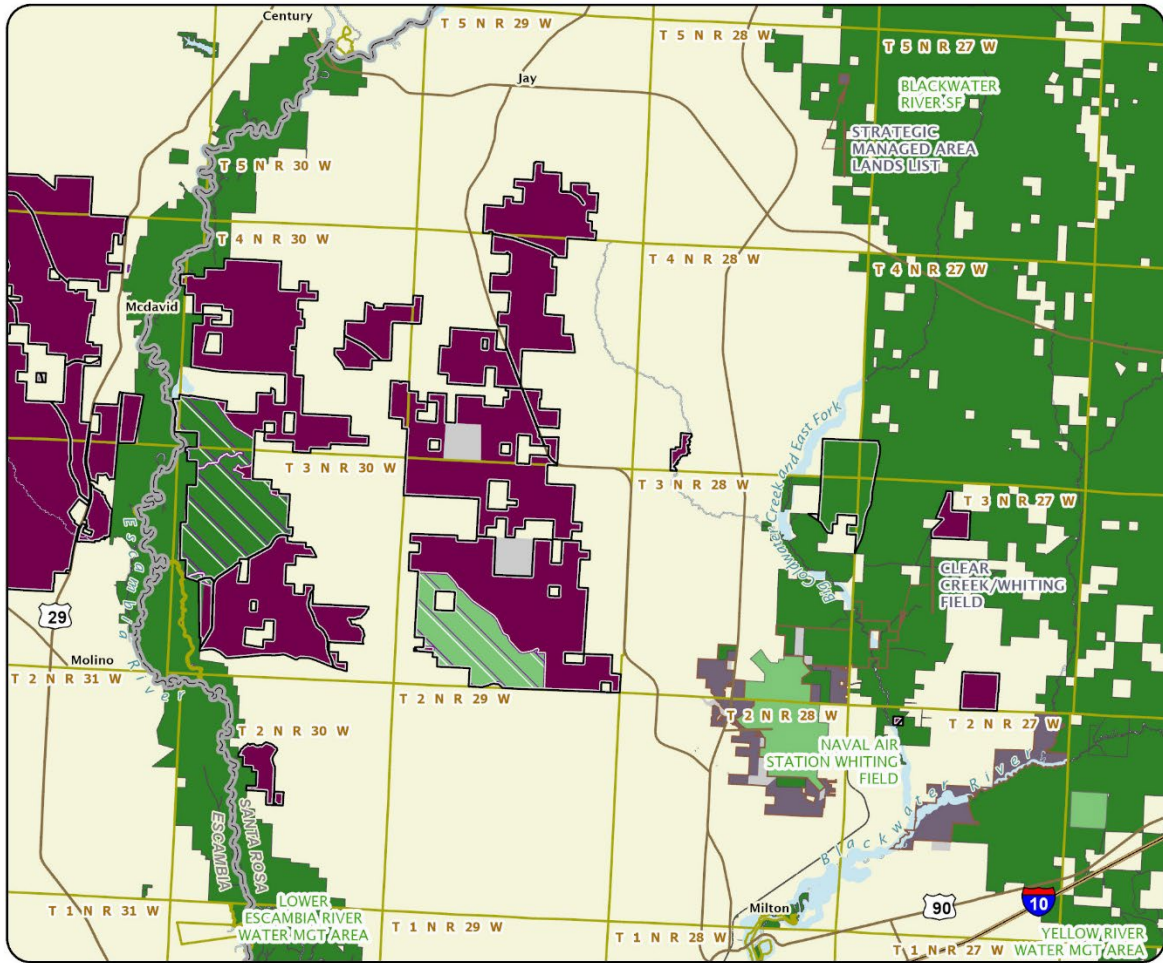




COASTAL HEADWATERS LONGLEAF FOREST: MAP 1

ESCAMBIA AND SANTA ROSA COUNTIES





### COASTAL HEADWATERS LONGLEAF FOREST: MAP 2

#### ESCAMBIA AND SANTA ROSA COUNTIES

