

Mays Island Conservation Corridor

Less-Than-Fee

Jefferson and Madison Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2025
<i>Project Acres</i>	3,826
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	3,826
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$7,086,024

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Mays Island Conservation Corridor project would conserve a large, intact landscape that contributes to the protection of groundwater recharge areas and functional wetlands associated with Gum Creek, a tributary of the Aucilla River. The project would protect foraging areas and potential nesting sites for rare plant and animal species such as the Florida spiny-pod (*Matalea floridana*), Bachman's sparrow (*Peucaea aestivalis*) wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*) and white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*).

General Description

The Mays Island Conservation Corridor project is located approximately 15 miles northwest of Monticello along the Florida-Georgia border. While the majority is in northwestern Madison County, a portion of the property (±256 acres) is in northeastern Jefferson County. This region of the state is underrepresented in conservation lands, with only a few isolated conservation easements in the vicinity. The entirety of the project lies within the Aucilla River watershed, the Wacissa Springs Priority Focus Area and the Wacissa Basin Management Action Plan.

The property is currently used for timber, wildlife management and row crops (corn and peanuts). Approximately 300 acres are in agriculture in two disjunct areas of the property; a portion of this acreage in the northern section is leased to a local peanut farmer, while the southern end was planted in corn at the time of the site visit. The property was also historically used for a cow/calf operation. Improvements include those associated with agricultural operations, including irrigation infrastructure (center pivot) and approximately 3,233 linear feet of high fencing once used for a captive breeding program for white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) that is no longer in operation. Several houses are also on site including a 3,509





square-foot main house, 1,296 square-foot guest cabin, 1,124 square-foot manager home and 2,272 square-foot mobile home.

About 27 percent of the property (most of the uplands) is occupied by pine plantation. These include plantations of slash and loblolly pine in a variety of stages. A large proportion of the project (about 12 percent) is considered successional hardwood forest and occurs mainly in areas at the transition between pine plantations and the bottomlands and swamps at lower elevations. Intensity of past logging varies greatly, and it should be noted that not all forested wetlands that have been logged in recent decades are included in this designation. Areas of basin swamps that were partially logged but have recovered their closed canopy are still generally classified as basin swamp.

Three main areas of basin swamp, in addition to a few smaller patches, make this the largest natural community type (32 percent) within the project. Much of this community is associated with the Gum Creek drainage. Formerly logged areas of basin swamp are now largely devoid of cypress and dominated by shrubs, small trees and vines. These areas are considered successional hydric shrubland/forest. Although most of the uplands have been converted to other uses, one area near the center of the project contains under-represented upland hardwood forest dominated by mature pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*) and Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*). Dome swamps with large cypress were observed on-site and provide habitat for a variety of wading birds such as the federally threatened wood stork. An area of abandoned field, once presumably a former area of upland pine, was notable in that it exhibited diverse pine-associated groundcover species and a patch of particularly healthy state-endangered Florida spiny-pod. During the site assessment, a deep, steep-sided 0.5-acre sinkhole was discovered in a forested area near the main house.

The Mays Island Conservation Corridor project almost entirely (94 percent) lies within Priority 5 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. Several rare and imperiled species have been documented on-site, including mud sunfish (*Acantharchus pomotis*) and Eastern mudminnow (*Umbra pygmaea*). During the site assessment, a Bachman's sparrow was heard vocalizing in a recently harvested (but grass-dominated) pine stand.





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Wood stork	G4/S2
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
White ibis	G5/S4
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3
Mud sunfish	G4G5/S3
Eastern mudminnow	G5/S3

Public Use

The Mays Island Conservation Corridor project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition with no public access.

Acquisition Planning

2025

On October 10, 2025, the Acquisition and Restoration Council voted to add the Mays Island Conservation Corridor project to the 2026 Florida Forever Priority List.

Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the Mays Island Conservation Corridor project would be managed for conservation purposes by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.

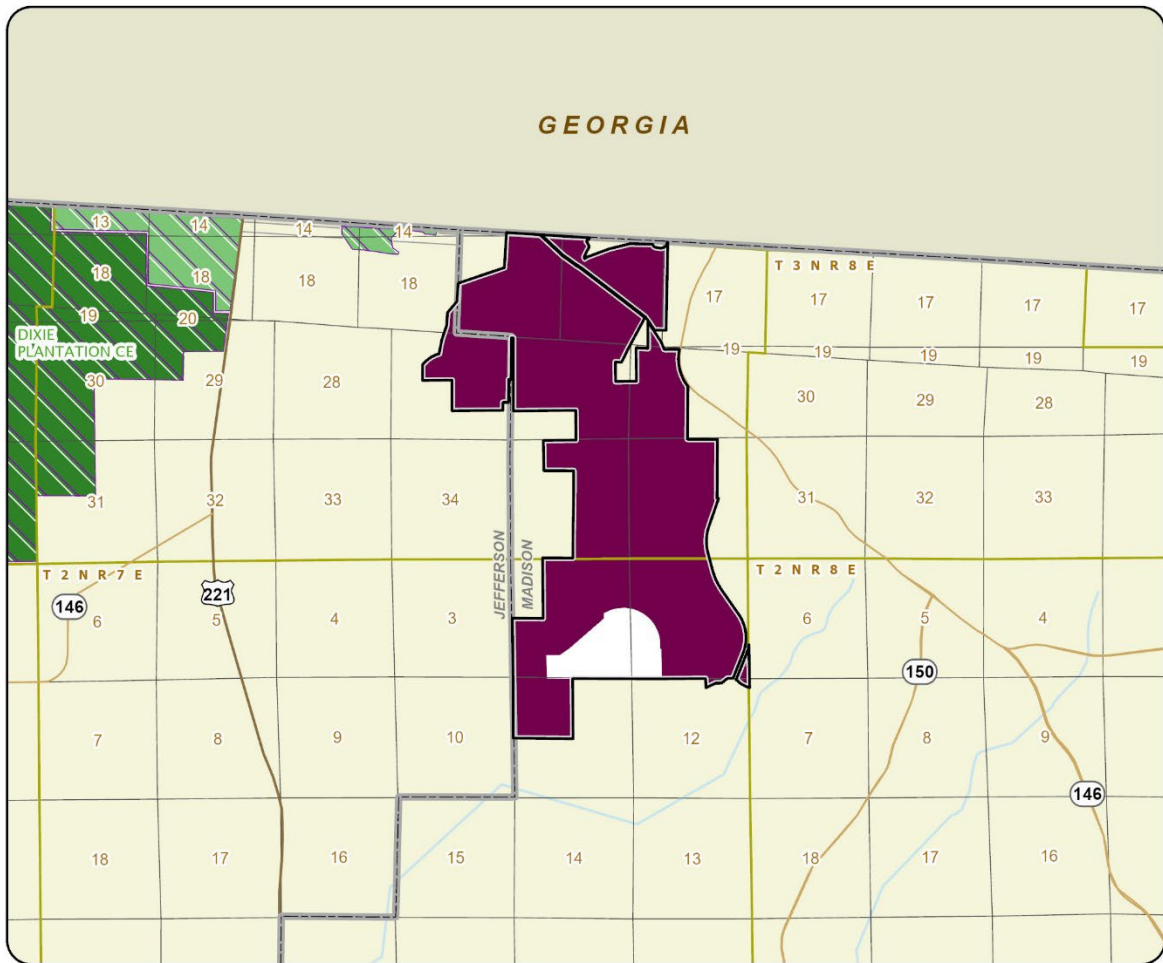
Manager

If acquired as less-than-fee, management of the Mays Island Conservation Corridor project would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site’s management to confirm compliance with the conditions of the conservation easement would be coordinated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Division of State Lands.

Management Prospectus

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of the Mays Island Conservation Corridor would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring to confirm continued conservation easement compliance would be coordinated by DEP’s Division of State Lands.





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JEFFERSON AND MADISON COUNTIES

