

Sand Mountain

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Bay and Washington Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1994
<i>Project Acres</i>	33,615
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	18,613
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	15,002
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$48,780,453

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Sand Mountain project will conserve and restore one of the largest remaining tracts of longleaf pine sandhill in the Florida panhandle. The project will protect the watersheds of the lakes and of Econfina Creek (the source of Panama City's water) and will maintain habitat critical to the survival of several rare species that live only around these lakes such as Gholson's blazing star (*Liatris gholsonii*) and Panhandle meadowbeauty (*Rhexia salicifolia*). The project will provide a large scenic area where the public can enjoy recreation activities including hiking and hunting.

General Description

This project protects the largest remaining tract of high quality, natural xeric uplands of Florida's New Hope Ridge and Fountain Slope physiographic regions. The high rolling pinelands drop down to classic examples of steephead ravines, unique sandhill upland lakes and a portion of a nearly pristine stream. Much of the sandhill is of excellent quality, having a nearly intact ground cover of wiregrass and dropseed, but those owned by the Rosewood Timber Company have been cleared and planted with sand pine. At least 18 species of rare or endangered plants inhabit the project. The slope forests in the steepheads shelter several species, while around the sandhill upland lakes there are four globally imperiled plant species found nowhere else in the world. The project also contains a large part of the watershed of Econfina Creek. Three archaeological sites are known from the project with the potential for more to be discovered. Development threatens the entire northern portion of the project, as well as the lakes in the southern portion.





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>Crystal Lake nailwort*</i>	G1/S1
<i>Gholson's blazing star*</i>	G1/S1
Shaggy ghostsnail	G1/S1
Oval pigtoe	G2/S1
Gurney's spurthroat grasshopper	G1G2/S1S2
Apalachicolan cave isopod	G1G3/S1S2
<i>Karst pond xyris*</i>	G2/S2
<i>Quillwort yellow-eyed grass*</i>	G2/S2
<i>Smoothbark St. John's wort*</i>	G2/S2
Dougherty Plain cave crayfish	G2G3/S2
<i>*Plant species are in italics</i>	

Public Use

This project would be designated as a state forest with such uses as hiking, hunting, fishing, swimming, camping and environmental education. The project may also help complete the Florida National Scenic Trail, a statewide non-motorized trail that crosses several Florida Forever project sites.

Acquisition Planning

1995

The larger longleaf pine sandhill tracts, Deltona, St. Joe and John Hancock Mutual Life Ins. Co., should be acquired first. The Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD) has acquired the Rosewood ownership in Phase II and a portion of the Deltona ownership.

1999

On December 9, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council removed 2,104 acres owned by the St. Joe Paper Company and placed them into the St. Joe Timberland Conservation and Recreational Lands project.

2003

On September 11, 2003, the U.S. Forest Service acquired the Dees Tract (40.55 acres).

On October 3, 2003, NFWFMD established the Urquhart/Perry conservation easement (1,173.05 acres).





2011

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

2024

In June 2024, ARC approved the addition of eight parcels totaling approximately 572.01 acres in Washington County. ARC also approved the addition of three parcels totaling approximately 348.45 acres in Washington County.

2025

In February 2025, ARC removed approximately 2,068 acres from the project boundary that were deemed unsuitable for state acquisition.

In August 2025, ARC approved the addition of 681 acres as a part of the St. Joe Timberland reorganization effort.

Coordination

NFWFMD is an acquisition partner.

Management Policy Statement

The management goals of the project are to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered species; conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or imperiled species; conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems to enhance or protect significant natural resources; and provide outdoor recreational areas.

Manager(s)

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) is the recommended manager.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

The project's large areas of natural longleaf pine sandhills and restorable pine plantations make it desirable for management as a state forest.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

The pine plantations on-site will require restoration. There are no other known disturbances that will require extraordinary attention, so management intensity is expected to be typical for a state forest.





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

Once the core area is acquired, FFS will provide public access for low-intensity, non-facilities-related outdoor recreation. Initial activities will include securing the site, providing public and fire management access, inventorying resources and removing trash. FFS will provide access to the public while protecting sensitive resources. The project’s natural resources and imperiled species will be inventoried to provide the basis for a management plan.

Long-range plans for this project will generally be directed toward restoring disturbed areas to or close to their original conditions, as well as protecting threatened and endangered species. Much of the pinelands have been cleared and planted in sand pine and require restoration. An all-season burning program will use existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks to contain fires whenever possible. Timber management will mostly involve improvement thinning and regeneration harvests. Plantations will be thinned and reforested with native species as appropriate. 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. FFS will promote environmental education.

Revenue-generating Potential

FFS will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will provide variable amounts of revenue, but the revenue-generating potential for this project is expected to be low.

Cooperators in Management Activities

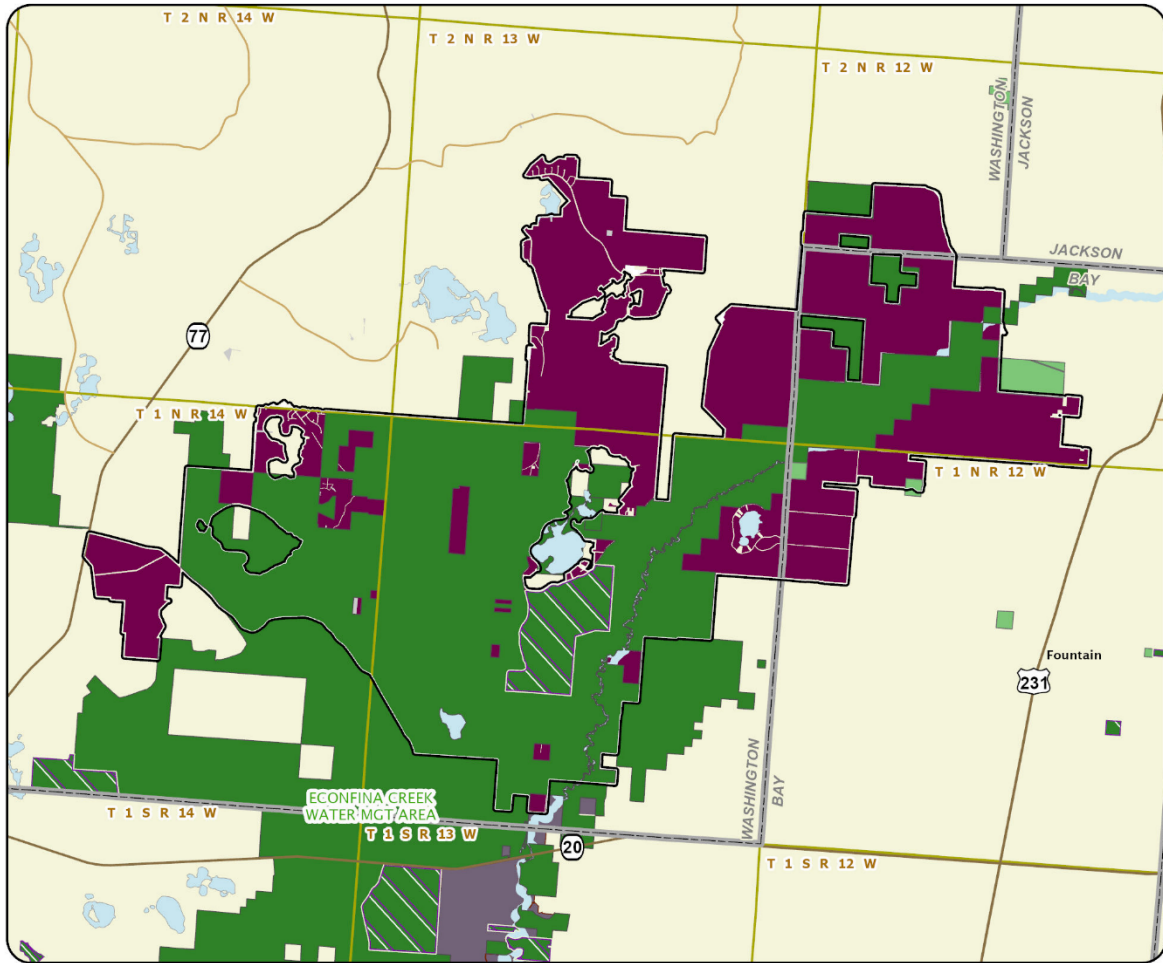
NFWFMD has purchased land along Econfina Creek within the project boundary. NFWFMD will cooperate with FFS in the management of this corridor. FFS will also cooperate with and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government entities and other interested parties as appropriate.

Management Cost Summary

FFS		Startup	Recurring
Source of Funds	Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL) Program		CARL
Salary		\$148,370	\$148,370
OPS		\$0	\$0
Expense		\$70,000	\$50,000
OCO		\$234,900	\$15,000
TOTAL		\$453,270	\$213,370

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





SAND MOUNTAIN

BAY AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

- Florida Forever Project Boundary*
 - Essential Parcels Remaining
 - Other Florida Forever Projects
 - State Conservation Lands
 - Other Conservation Lands
 - Other Public Lands
 - Less-Than-Fee Acquisition
- *Project boundary has been generalized for map clarity.*

