

# Volusia Conservation Corridor

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Flagler and Volusia Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>2001</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>85,834</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>64,682</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>21,152</i>
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$90,364,686</i>

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Volusia Conservation Corridor project will provide a continuous corridor of environmentally significant land from Tiger Bay State Forest, through the central wetlands and flatwoods of Volusia County, to the marshes of the St. Johns River. This project will also increase natural resource-based public recreation and education opportunities. This 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, 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 the 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.





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
<i>Rugel's pawpaw*</i>	G1/S1
<i>Lake-side sunflower*</i>	G1G2/S1S2
St. Johns elephantear	G1G2/S1S2
Florida sandhill crane	G5T2/S2
<i>Florida beargrass</i>	G3/S3
<i>Large-flowered rosemary*</i>	G3/S3
Wood stork	G4/S2
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3
<i>Narrowleaf hornpod*</i>	G4G5/S2
Bald eagle	G5/S3

*\*Plant species are in italics*

**Public Use**

Fee acquisition areas have the potential of providing a variety of resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities such as, 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 (SJRWMD) 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 (ARC) added the Volusia Conservation Corridor project to Group B of the 2001 Florida Forever Priority List. This fee simple and less-than-fee acquisition, sponsored by SJRWMD, 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, ARC moved the project to Group A of the 2002 Florida Forever Priority list.





On June 14, 2002, SJRWMD and Volusia County split the acquisition of the Menard parcels (1,347.03 acres) in the Wiregrass Prairie Preserve.

On July 30, 2002, SJRWMD established the Plum Creek Rayonier/Hutton (4,780.44 acres) and Plum Creek Volusia/Pineland (6,947.09 acres) conservation easements.

On August 15, 2002, ARC approved a less-than-fee 11,723-acre and fee simple 7,654-acre addition to the project boundary. The 19,377-acre addition, sponsored by SJRWMD, consisted of two owners, Plum Creek and Rayonier.

### **2003**

On February 28, 2003, SJRWMD 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 latter two conservation easements were secured with Florida Forever funding.

On March 12, 2003, Volusia County joined SJRWMD as a co-owner of the Plum Creek Rayonier/Hutton and Plum Creek Volusia/Pineland conservation easements.

On June 6, 2003, ARC approved a less-than-fee addition to the project boundary in Flagler and Volusia counties. The 26,740-acre addition, sponsored by SJRWMD, 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 (1,722.8 acres) conservation easements were established by SJRWMD and Volusia County, of which 1,645.09 acres are within the project boundary. SJRWMD used Florida Forever funds for their part of the acquisition.

In December 2004, Volusia County, with assistance from SJRWMD and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), acquired a 1,711-acre conservation easement over the Le Files Corporation property.

### **2005**

On September 27, 2005, ARC approved the removal of 686 acres from the project 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, SJRWMD 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, SJRWMD purchased 324.35 acres fee simple, leaving 25 acres in the W. T. Ranch conservation easement. SJRWMD 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, SJRWMD established another Le Files conservation easement (9.73 acres).

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

## 2011

On May 27, 2011, SJRWMD acquired the Kemcho Tract (3,200 acres) of Deep Creek Preserve with Florida Forever funding.

On October 18, 2011, SJRWMD established another Le Files conservation easement (2.28 acres).

On November 22, 2011, SJRWMD 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; this acquisition was comprised of a donation valued at \$478,174.37 from the seller, \$956,348.75 from a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program grant, and \$478,174.38 from SJRWMD.





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

## **2012**

In April 2012, Volusia County and SJRWMD signed a management agreement for Volusia County to manage the Kemcho Tract of Deep Creek Preserve.

## **2022**

On July 12, 2022, Volusia County and SJRWMD purchased 857 acres in the Palm Bluff Conservation Area with Volusia Forever funds.

In 2022, Volusia County and SJRWMD established a 425-acre conservation easement in the Palm Bluff Conservation Area with Volusia Forever funds.

## **2023**

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

## **2024**

On April 12, 2024, ARC approved the addition of the Lake Harney project proposal (5,424 acres) in Volusia County to the project boundary.

## **2025**

In February 2025, ARC removed approximately 396 acres from the project boundary that were deemed unsuitable for state acquisition.

On March 18, 2025, DEP acquired, in fee, 1,339.66 acres in Volusia County from M L Carter Services, Inc.

In December 2025, ARC approved the addition of two parcels totaling approximately 292.84 acres in Volusia County to the project boundary.

## **Coordination**

SJRWMD, Florida Forest Service, Volusia County and USDA 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)

SJRWMD 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 SJRWMD.

### **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, SJRWMD 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. SJRWMD 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 this 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

SJRWMD 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 this project is expected to be low.

### Cooperators in Management Activities

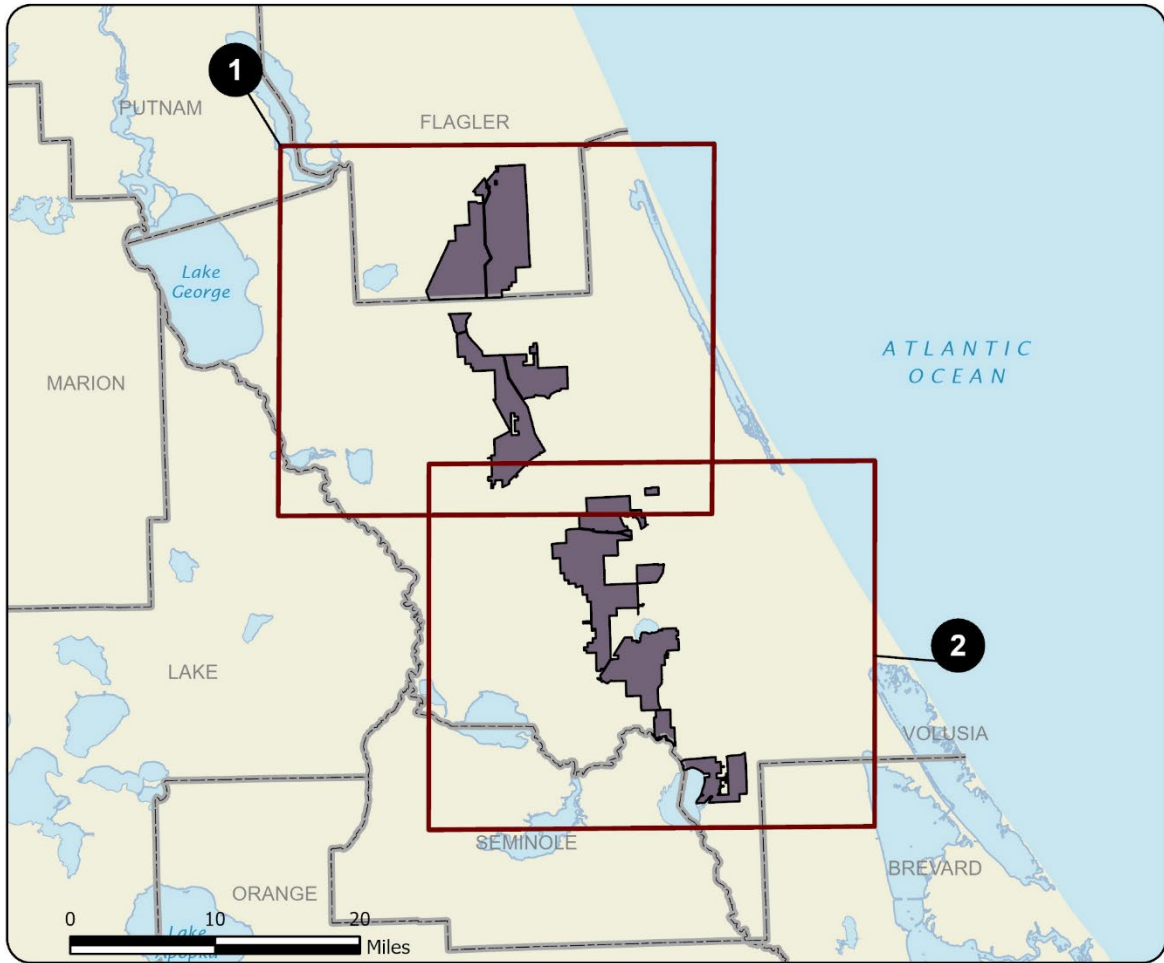
SJRWMD will cooperate with Volusia County and seek assistance from other state agencies, local government entities and interested parties as appropriate.

#### Management Cost Summary

<u>SJRWMD</u>		<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	Water Management Lands Trust Fund (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*

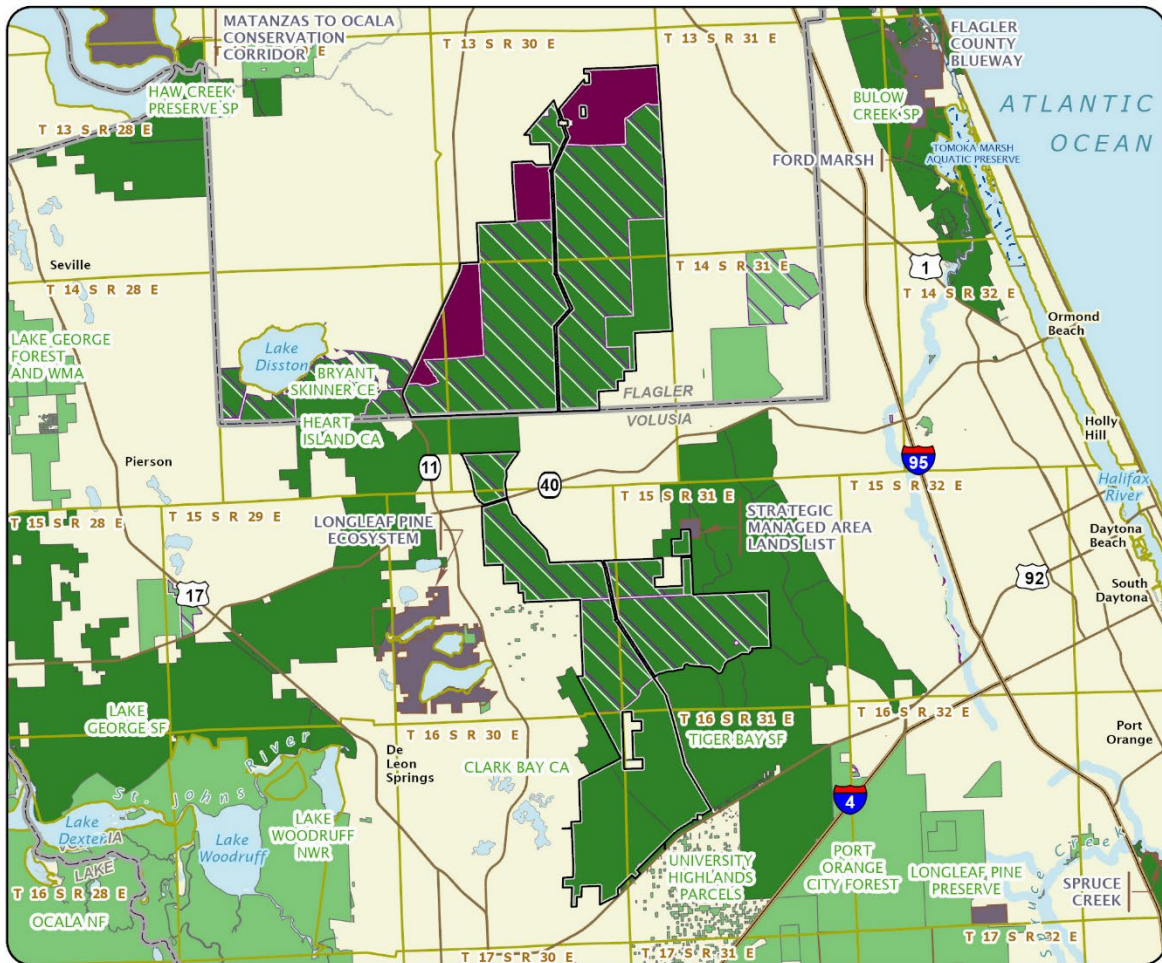




### VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: OVERVIEW

#### FLAGLER AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES

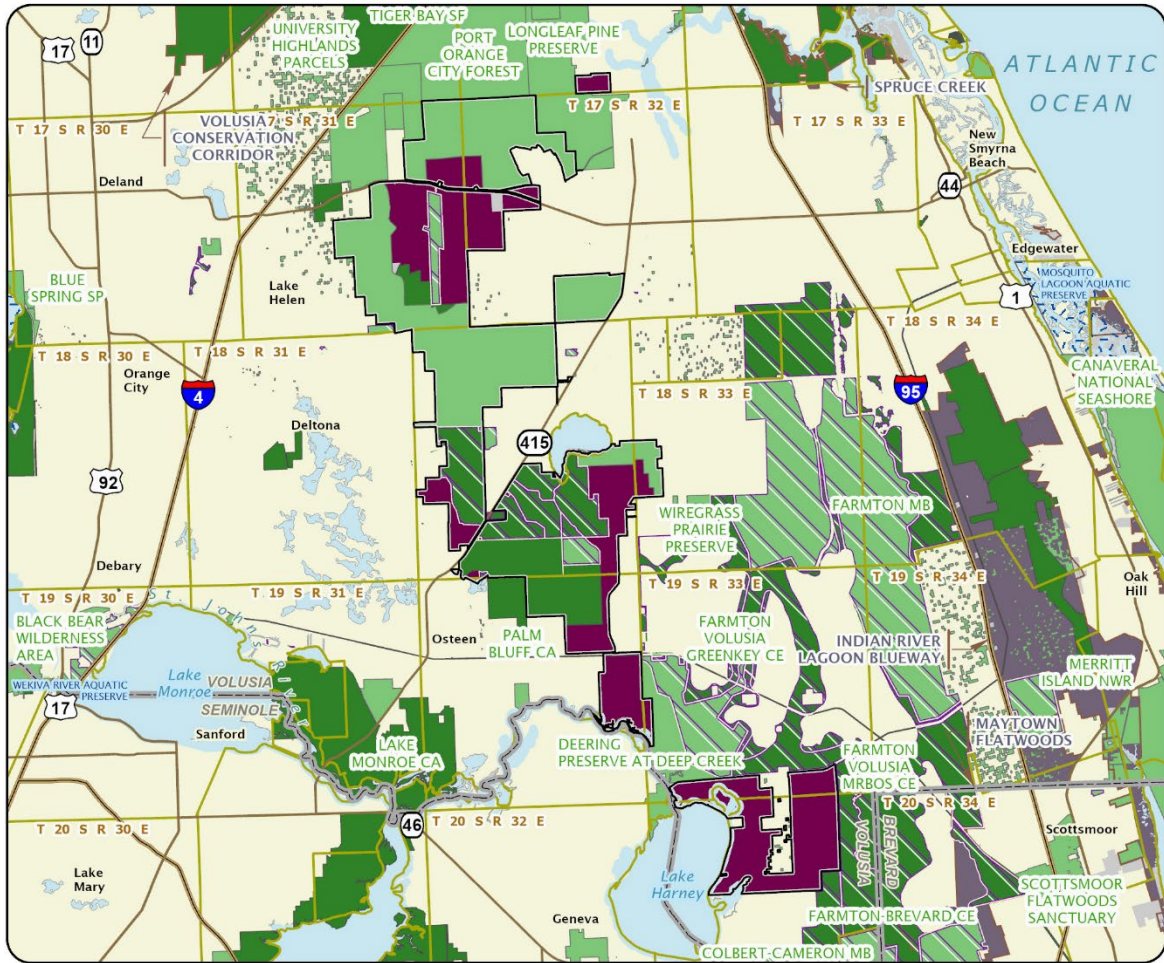




**VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: MAP 1**

**FLAGLER AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES**





**VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: MAP 2**

**VOLUSIA COUNTY**

- Florida Forever Project Boundary
- Essential Parcels Remaining
- Other Florida Forever Projects
- State Conservation Lands
- Other Conservation Lands
- Other Public Lands
- Less-Than-Fee Acquisition
- State Aquatic Preserve

