

# Baldwin Bay/St. Marys River

Partnerships & Regional Incentives

Duval, Nassau

<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>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$29,805,640

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Baldwin Bay/St. Marys River project will support an ecological connection between Cary State Forest and Jennings State Forest and provide a corridor from the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project to the St. Marys River. The proposal will connect to the Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail and will increase recreational opportunities for all trail users. The Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail connection occurs in an area where the City of Jacksonville is developing its primary equestrian facility access point. The project will also preserve stands of relatively intact forests and flatwoods of old growth trees.

## General Description

The Baldwin Bay/St. Marys River project is located in Nassau and Duval counties. The multiple owners are offering the project as fee simple. The proposal is characterized by its bottomland forests and wet flatwoods that contain numerous older growth trees. These communities have high species diversity and should provide habitat for numerous rare plant and animal 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>FNAI Elements</b>	<b>Score</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. Marys 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, as proposed, has potential for diverse forms of resource-based recreation. For those areas that would be acquired in fee simple, the project can accommodate such activities as hiking, natural resource appreciation and education, picnicking, camping, bicycling and horseback riding.

### Acquisition Planning

#### **2002**

The Baldwin Bay/St. Marys River project was added to the 2003 Florida Forever project list at the December 5, 2002 ARC meeting. The project had a 2002 estimated tax assessed value of \$3,587,753. The essential parcels are identified as the Baldwin Bay LLC, Brandy Branch LLC, International Paper, and International Paper Realty ownerships. The essential parcels should be mapped and before the other parcels, which are important, but not critical to the project. The parcels are being offered fee simple.

#### **2006**

On December 8, 2006, the ARC approved moving the project from Group B to Group A of the Florida Forever Priority list.

#### **2011**

On December 9, 2011, the ARC placed this project into the Florida Forever category of Partnerships and Regional Incentives projects.

### Coordination

Portions of this project may be acquired in partnership with Duval County. SJRWMD is also interested in acquisition of the project.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary land management goal for FFS 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 FFS's management activities on this project.

### Manager(s)

FFS is the proposed manager for the project with a multiple-use management regime consistent with the state forest system. Management would be designed to accomplish the goals and measures for this project.

### Management Prospectus

#### **Qualifications for state designation**

Based on a review of the Florida Forever Act, this project meets Florida Statute Goals and Measures for significant landscapes, for increasing natural resource-based recreation, and for restoring such natural



functions 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. Marys 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 prep 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 plant and animals were documented on the Baldwin Bay/St. Marys River site, but if measures are taken soon, invasive plants can be controlled with reasonable effort. 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 FFS, public access will be provided for low intensity outdoor recreation activities. FFS proposes to manage the site as a part of Cary State Forest, and the Jacksonville District personnel will carry out management activities and coordinate public access and use.

**Revenue-generating potential**

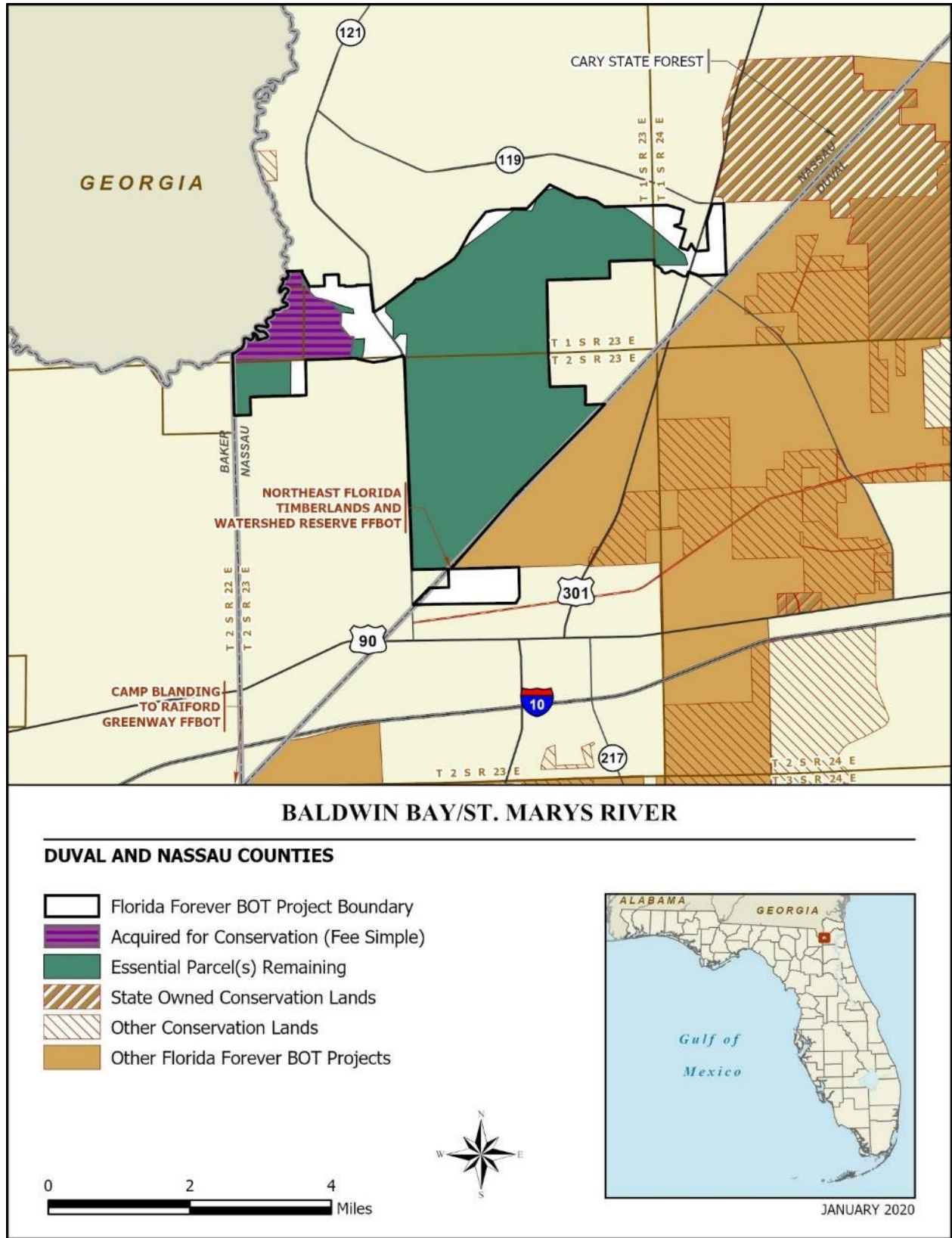
As mentioned above, timber sales will be conducted as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will primarily take place in pine stands and will provide a variable source of revenue dependent upon a variety of factors. Due to the existing condition of the timber resource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

Management Cost Summary

FFS	Startup	Recurring
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





Map 1: FNAI, January 2020