

Northeast Florida Blueway

Climate Change Lands

Duval, Flagler, St. Johns

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2001
<i>Project Acres</i>	32,591
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	21,619
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$32,438,430
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	10,971
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$553,353,032

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Northeast Florida Blueway project will protect and maintain shoreline plant communities on the Tolomato and Matanzas rivers, benefiting the manatees that spend the warm season in these waters. The project will support connectivity in the Statewide Greenways and Trails network and in other areas that will contribute to ongoing efforts to protect and restore the region's land and water. The project offers many resource-based recreation opportunities such as fishing, canoeing, bicycling, and camping.

General Description

This project is composed of uplands and wetlands along both sides of the Intracoastal Waterway, the Tolomato and Matanzas rivers and selected tributaries, from the Duval County line south to the Flagler County line. Marshlands, open water, and small islands of shrub and hammock vegetation are 92 percent of the existing public lands. The project will connect existing natural areas and greenspace to form a conservation lands corridor along the north-south waterway. It is adjacent to the following managed areas: Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Faver-Dykes State Park, Guana River State Park, Deep Creek State Forest, and Ft. Matanzas National Monument.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Florida manatee	G2G3T2/S2S3
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>coastal vervain</i>	G3/S3
Wood stork	G4/S2
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3
<i>yellow hibiscus</i>	G4G5/S2
American oystercatcher	G5/S2
Roseate spoonbill	G5/S2
Least tern	G4/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Osprey	G5/S3S4

Public Use

This project would support primitive camping opportunities with canoeing and kayaking taking place within the waterway and associated creeks. Some of the larger parcels may have potential for archaeological interpretation and nature study. The DRP proposes to manage the St. Johns County portion north of Faver-Dykes State Park and south of a haul road between US Highway 1 and a spoil site on the Matanzas River. This section of the project contains about 5,000 acres and would expand the quality and quantity of recreational activity at Faver Dykes State Park, including bicycling, hiking, horseback riding, camping (RV and primitive camping), environmental education, and picnicking.

The FFS proposes to manage the remainder of the project under a multiple-use management regime consistent with the State Forest system. A portion of the project will become part of the Deep Creek State Forest, managed for multiple uses including, but not limited to, timber management and restoration, low impact recreational opportunities, and protecting archeological and historic sites.

Acquisition Planning

2001

On January 25, 2001, the ARC added the Northeast Florida Blueway – Phase I project to Group A of the Florida Forever 2001 Priority list. This fee simple proposal, located in Duval County and known as Pablo Creek, was sponsored by the City of Jacksonville (Preservation Project Jacksonville). It consisted of approximately 6,943 acres, multiple owners (private and public), and had a taxable value of \$15,700,000 on the 4,867 acres in private ownerships. The entire project was designated as essential.

On December 6, 2001, the ARC approved Phase II, also known as Tolomato and Matanzas Rivers, to the project boundary. The fee-simple addition in St. Johns County consisted of approximately 27,929 acres, multiple owners (private and public), and a 2001 taxable value of



\$18,610,780 on the 17,834 acres in private ownerships. St. Johns County sponsored this addition. The essential parcels were designated as Rayonier Timberlands, Ponce de Leon Resort, Flagler Development, Roberts, Rayland, Wadsworth, and Swan Development.

2003

On August 15, 2003, the ARC approved two additions to the project boundary. The Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (now ORCP) sponsored a 20.26-acre addition with a single owner, Jacoby Development Inc., two parcels, and a 2002 taxable value of \$2,955,714. This fee-simple addition, located in St. Johns County, was added to Phase II. St. Johns County sponsored a 70-acre addition with a single owner, Marine Park Properties, LLC, multiple parcels, and a 2002 tax assessed value of \$8,400,000. This fee-simple addition is in Flagler County.

2006

On October 13, 2006, the ARC approved a redesign of the project boundary. A total of 2,000 acres no longer suitable for conservation were removed from the project, 180 in Duval County and 1,820 in St. Johns County, reducing the total project size to 32,564 acres. The updated total includes lands in public ownership and acres acquired. Previous project area estimates did not include lands in public ownership.

2011

On December 9, 2011, the ARC placed this project in the Climate Change Lands category of projects.

Coordination

The City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, St. Johns County, Florida Communities Trust and the SJRWMD may be partners on portions of the project. The Trust for Public Land will be the intermediary for negotiations.

Management Policy Statement

This project would be managed to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of the state or a larger geographic area, to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species, to conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources, and to preserve significant archaeological or historical sites.

Manager(s)

The City of Jacksonville will manage the portion of the project within Duval County. The DRP proposes to manage that portion of the Northeast Florida Blueway – Phase II project, approximately 5,000 acres, lying north of Faver-Dykes State Park, south of a haul road from US 1 to a spoil site on the Matanzas River, east of US 1 and west of the Matanzas River. The Florida Forest Service (FFS) proposes to manage the Rayonier parcel north of the spoil haul road (approximately 4,000 acres) plus two additional parcels,



one adjoining Deep Creek State Forest and an adjoining Florida Natural Areas Inventory Addition (approximately 2,500 acres).

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation

The lands approved in Phase I of this project are rapidly disappearing as Duval County grows. The Preservation Project, the city's land acquisition program, seeks to protect and preserve the existing habitat and waterway as it exists today. It is the goal of the City of Jacksonville to manage this project to conserve, protect or restore important ecosystems while providing opportunities for natural-resource-based recreation. The City of Jacksonville proposes to manage the lands in accordance with the standards of ARC.

Phase II of the project is of a size and diversity that makes it desirable for use and management as a state forest. Management by the FFS as a state forest is contingent upon acquiring fee simple title to the parcels of interest to FFS. The portion of the project of interest for management by the DRP is largely disturbed land that has been managed for silviculture. While much restoration work will be required over time, the quality of the property when restored will make it suitable for state park purposes.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

Initial management efforts of Phase I by the City of Jacksonville will concentrate on site security, resource inventory, removing trash, and having limited public access to the property. Steps will be taken to ensure that the public is provided appropriate access while simultaneously protecting sensitive resources. Intensive restoration will be needed on the portion of Phase II managed by DRP to restore natural communities disturbed by timber operations. Intensity of restoration will be dictated by study of the site. Any immediate action, such as prescribed burning, would increase the early intensity of management. The lands bordering the river are in relatively good shape and will not require intensive management.

The portions of Phase II managed by FFS can be restored with the help of carefully prescribed fires and hydrologic restoration. The use of fire must be carefully applied because of the fuel load and type of fuel in this forest system. An inventory of the forest roads in this area would determine which stay open for public use, which would be used for management, and which would be closed.

Management implementation, Public access, Site security and Protection of infrastructure

Jacksonville's land acquisition program, Preservation Project Jacksonville, will be responsible for developing and implementing the management plans for Phase I. The Preservation Project set aside \$950,000 to hire a program manager to develop and implement management plans.

As properties are acquired, the City will first inventory natural resources and develop a plan to protect and restore resources, including removing invasive and exotic species, before developing access plans. The DRP plans for its portion of Phase II that, upon fee title acquisition, public access will be provided



for passive outdoor recreation. First year management will concentrate on site security, natural and cultural resource protection, and developing a plan for long-term public use and resource management.

The FFS timetable for management of the remainder of Phase II also provides initial public access for diverse, low-intensity outdoor recreation. Management would be carried out by the FFS Bunnell District until additional personnel were available for resource management and restoration activity. Initial and intermediate management will concentrate on site security, public and resource management access, prescribed fire, reforestation, and removing trash.

Revenue-generating potential

Phase II, the portion to be added to Faver-Dykes State Park, will not initially generate any significant revenue for DRP. After acquiring and adding the land to Faver-Dykes State Park, it will probably be several years before significant public use facilities are developed. The amount of revenue generated will depend on the nature and extent of public use and facilities developed. FFS plans to conduct timber sales as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystems. These sales will primarily be from merchantable pine stands and provide a variable revenue depending on a variety of factors. The condition of the timber stands on the property is such that the revenue generating potential is expected to be moderate.

Cooperators in management activities

Although not required, the City of Jacksonville commits to submitting management plans for city managed properties in the Blueway to the ARC for review and comment, even though properties may have been acquired with other sources. Doing so will ensure that the Preservation Project takes a system-wide approach to managing Blueway properties.

In Phase II, DRP will consult other federal, state, and local government agencies, as appropriate, to further resource management, recreational and educational opportunities and developing the property for state park purposes. FFS plans to cooperate with, and seek the assistance of, local government entities, interested parties and FNAI as appropriate. The FFS also intends to coordinate the recreational use of the Rayonier parcel with DRP because of the potential for a recreation trail on the eastern portion of the property. FFS will work with FWC in game and non-game management and related public use of the property.

Other agencies that own lands within the Blueway include the U.S. Navy, the National Park Service, Florida Inland Navigation District, the cities of Jacksonville Beach and Atlantic Beach, the Jacksonville Electric Authority and the SJWMD. It is hoped that the Blueway boundary will be the catalyst for a voluntary, joint management approach to publicly owned lands within the corridor.



Management Cost Summary

<u>DRP</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$0	\$29,000
OPS	\$25,000	\$8,000
Expense	\$18,000	\$12,000
OCO	\$28,000	\$0
FCO	\$20,000	\$0
TOTAL	\$81,000	\$49,000

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted

Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	not provided
Salary (3 FTEs)	\$79,518	not provided
Expense	\$215,000	not provided
OCO	\$37,800	not provided
TOTAL	\$333,318	not provided

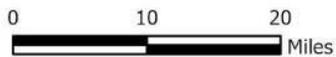
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NORTHEAST FLORIDA BLUEWAY: OVERVIEW

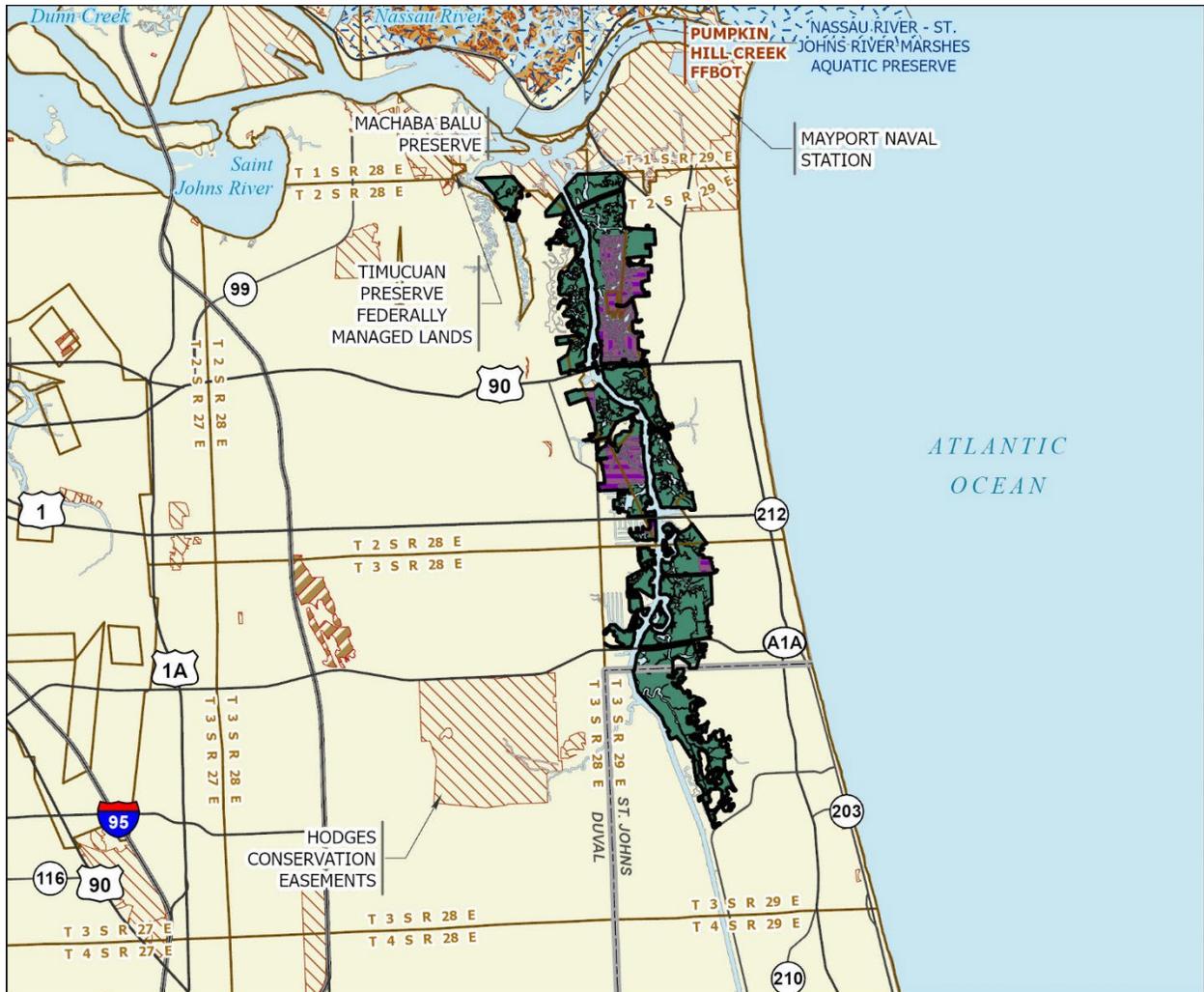
DUVAL AND ST. JOHNS COUNTIES



JANUARY 2020

Map 1 : FNAI, January 2020





NORTHEAST FLORIDA BLUEWAY: MAP 1

DUVAL AND ST. JOHNS COUNTIES

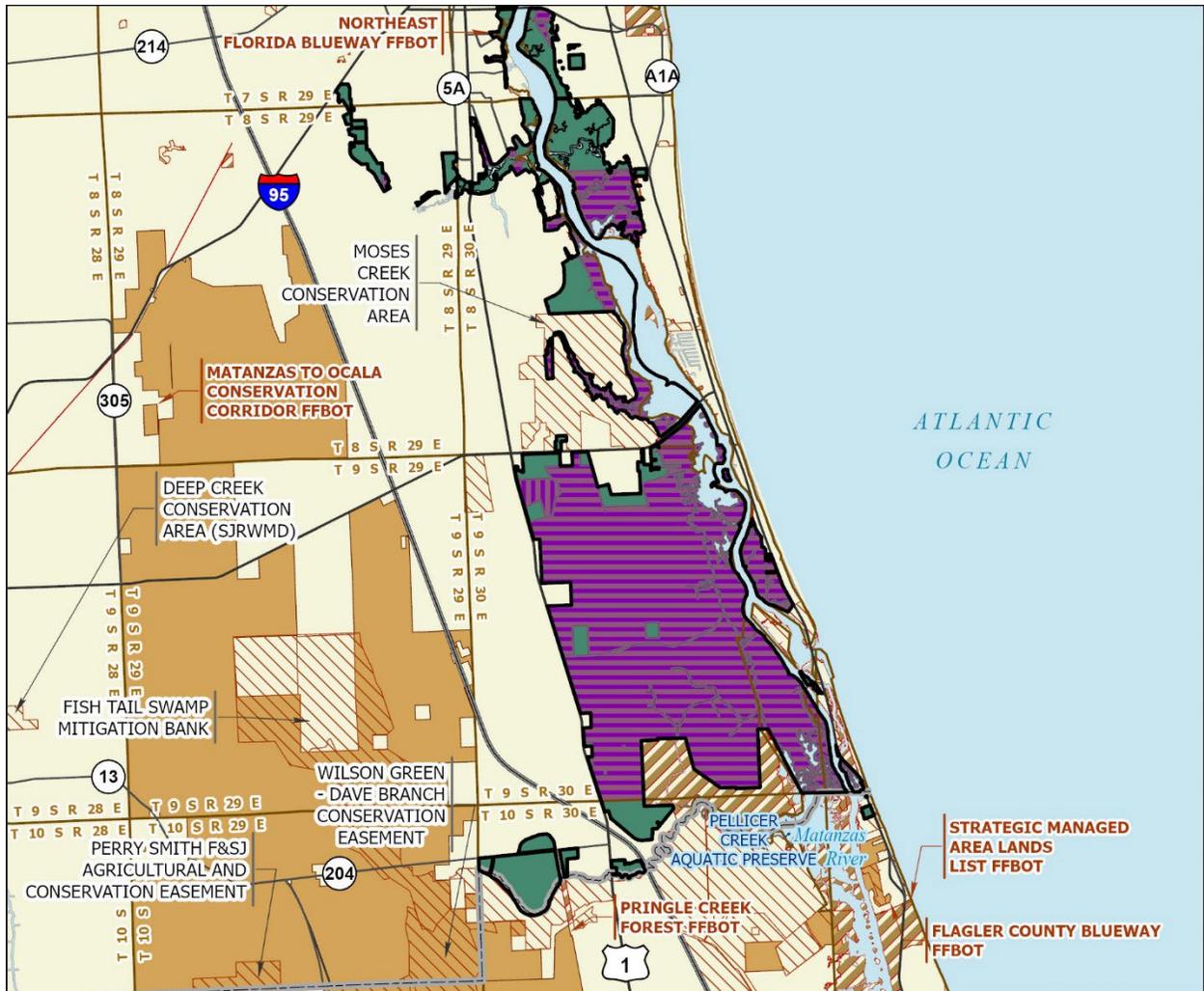
-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Acquired for Conservation (Less-Than-Fee)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  State Aquatic Preserve



FEBRUARY 2022

Map 2 : FNAI, February 2022

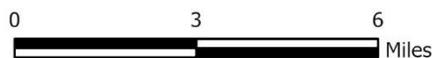




NORTHEAST FLORIDA BLUEWAY: MAP 3

FLAGLER AND ST. JOHNS COUNTIES

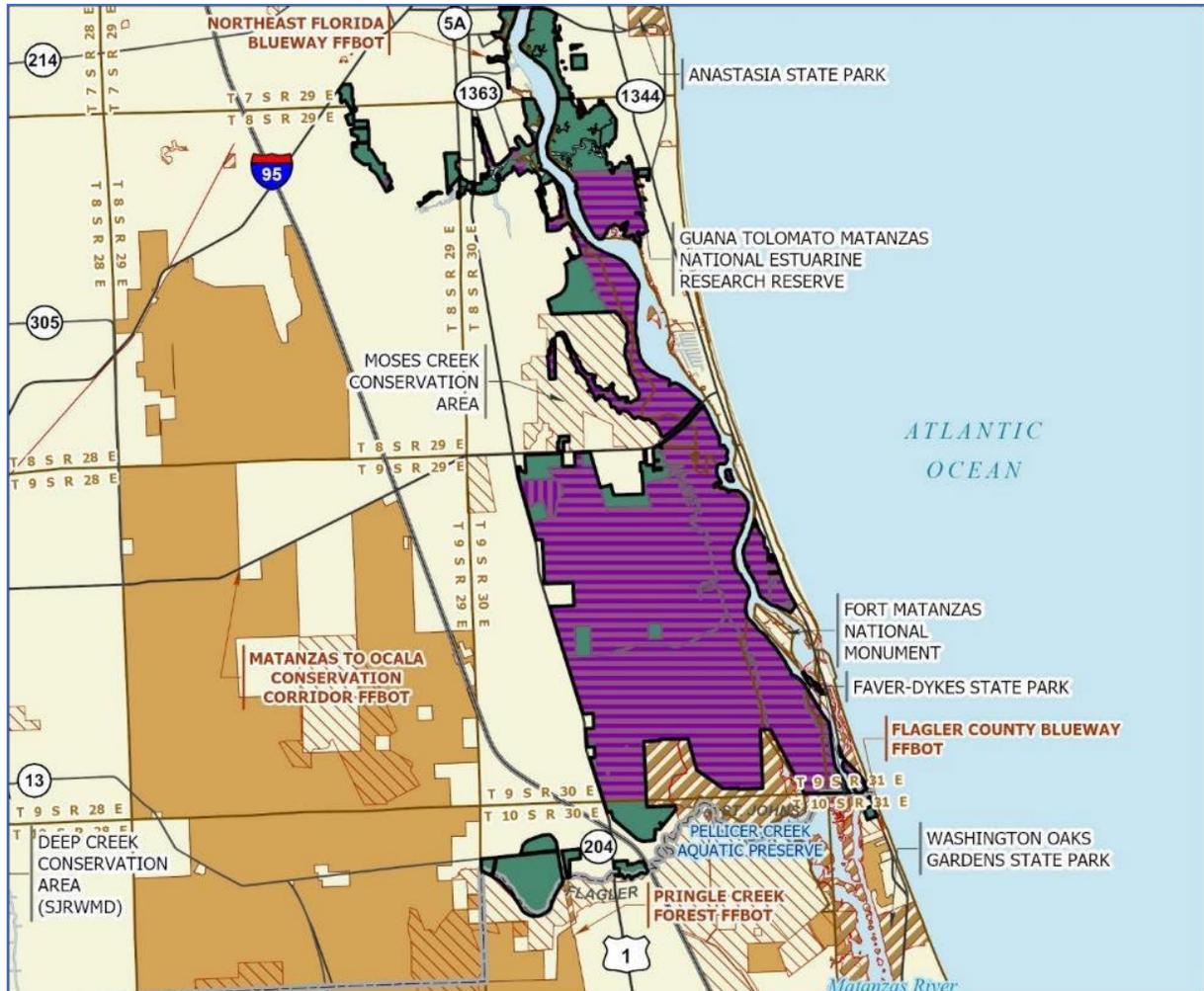
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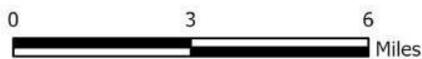




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JANUARY 2020

Map 4 : FNAI, January 2020

