

# Volusia Conservation Corridor

Partnerships & Regional Incentives

Flagler, Volusia

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <i>Year Added to Priority List</i>            | 2001         |
| <i>Project Acres</i>                          | 79,074       |
| <i>Acquired Acres</i>                         | 61,255       |
| <i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>                 | \$76,566,247 |
| <i>Remaining Project Acres</i>                | 17,819       |
| <i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i> | \$56,334,971 |

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Volusia Conservation Corridor will provide a continuous corridor of environmentally significant land from the 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 sufficient quantities of water are available to meet current and future needs of natural systems and the citizens of the state. Some areas contain moderate to good recharge to the Florida aquifer, which mainly occurs through rainfall.

## General Description

The property is in central Volusia County, stretching from north of SR44, fourteen miles south to the St. Johns River. It is generally low and wet, consisting of alternating flatwoods and swamp, which occupy the northwest/southeast-trending ridge and swale topography on the eastern edge of the DeLand Ridge. It includes the parallel, southward-flowing drainages of Deep Creek and Lake Ashby canal, which empty into the St. Johns River. Natural communities include: Basin Swamp, Hydric Hammock, Mesic Flatwoods, Scrub, and Dome Swamp.

### FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

| FNAI Elements                  | Score     |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Gopher tortoise                | G3/S3     |
| Florida black bear             | G5T4/S4   |
| <i>Rugel's pawpaw</i>          | G1/S1     |
| <i>lake-side sunflower</i>     | G1G2/S1S2 |
| Florida sandhill crane         | G5T2/S2   |
| <i>large-flowered rosemary</i> | G3/S3     |
| Bachman's sparrow              | G3/S3     |
| Bald eagle                     | G5/S3     |

#### 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

##### **2001**

On January 25, 2001, the ARC added the Volusia Conservation Corridor project to Group B of the Florida Forever 2001 Priority list. This fee- simple and less-than-fee acquisition, sponsored by SJRWMD, consisted of approximately 33,503 acres and multiple owners. The 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, the ARC moved the project to Group A of the Florida Forever 2002 Priority list.

On August 15, 2002, the ARC approved a less-than-fee 11,723-acre and fee-simple 7,654-acre addition to the project boundary. The 19,369-acre addition, sponsored by the SJRWMD, consisted of two owners, Plum Creek and Rayonier.

##### **2003**

On June 6, 2003, the ARC approved a less-than-fee addition, in Flagler and Volusia counties, to the project boundary. The 26,740-acre addition, sponsored by the SJRWMD, consisted of one owner, Plum Creek Timberlands LP.

##### **2004**

In December 2004, Volusia County, with help from SJRWMD and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), acquired a 1,711-acre conservation easement over the Le Fils Corporation property.



**2007**

In April 2007, the 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 December 15, 2010, Volusia County closed on the 4,806-acre Leffler Ranch. The County will manage this property.

**2011**

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, comprised of a donation of value (\$478,174.38) from the Seller, \$956,348.75 from a USDA/NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program grant, and \$478,174.38 from SJRWMD.

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

**Coordination**

SJRWMD, FFS, 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 the next twenty years.

**Management Policy Statement**

The primary goals of management of the Volusia Conservation Corridor project are to conserve and protect significant water resources in a priority water resource caution area; and to conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, to enhance or protect significant timber, recreation, fish or wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect.

**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, make 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 outdoor recreation. Initial activities will include securing the site, providing public and fire management accesses, inventorying resources, and removing trash. The District 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 generally be directed toward restoring disturbed areas to their original conditions, as far as possible, 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, whenever possible, 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 species found in natural ecosystems. Stands will not have a targeted rotation age. Infrastructures will primarily be located in disturbed areas and will be the minimum required for management and public access.

**Revenue-generating potential**

The District 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**

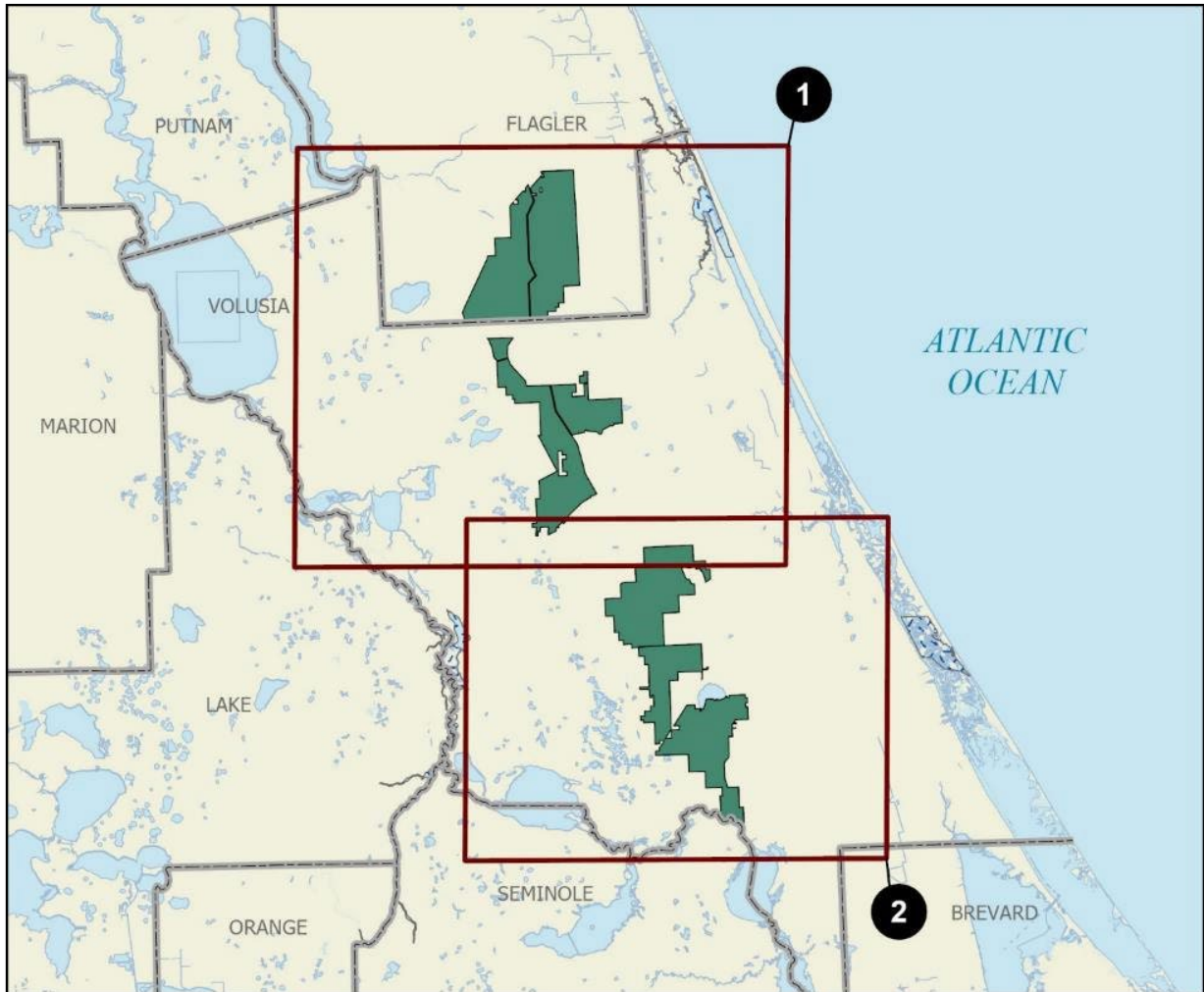
The District will cooperate with Volusia County and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government entities and interested parties as appropriate.

Management Cost Summary

| <u>SJRWMD</u>   | <u>Startup</u> | <u>Recurring</u> |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Source of Funds | 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           | \$345,000      | \$185,000        |

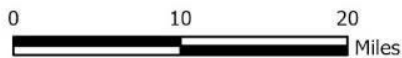
*Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted*





### VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: OVERVIEW

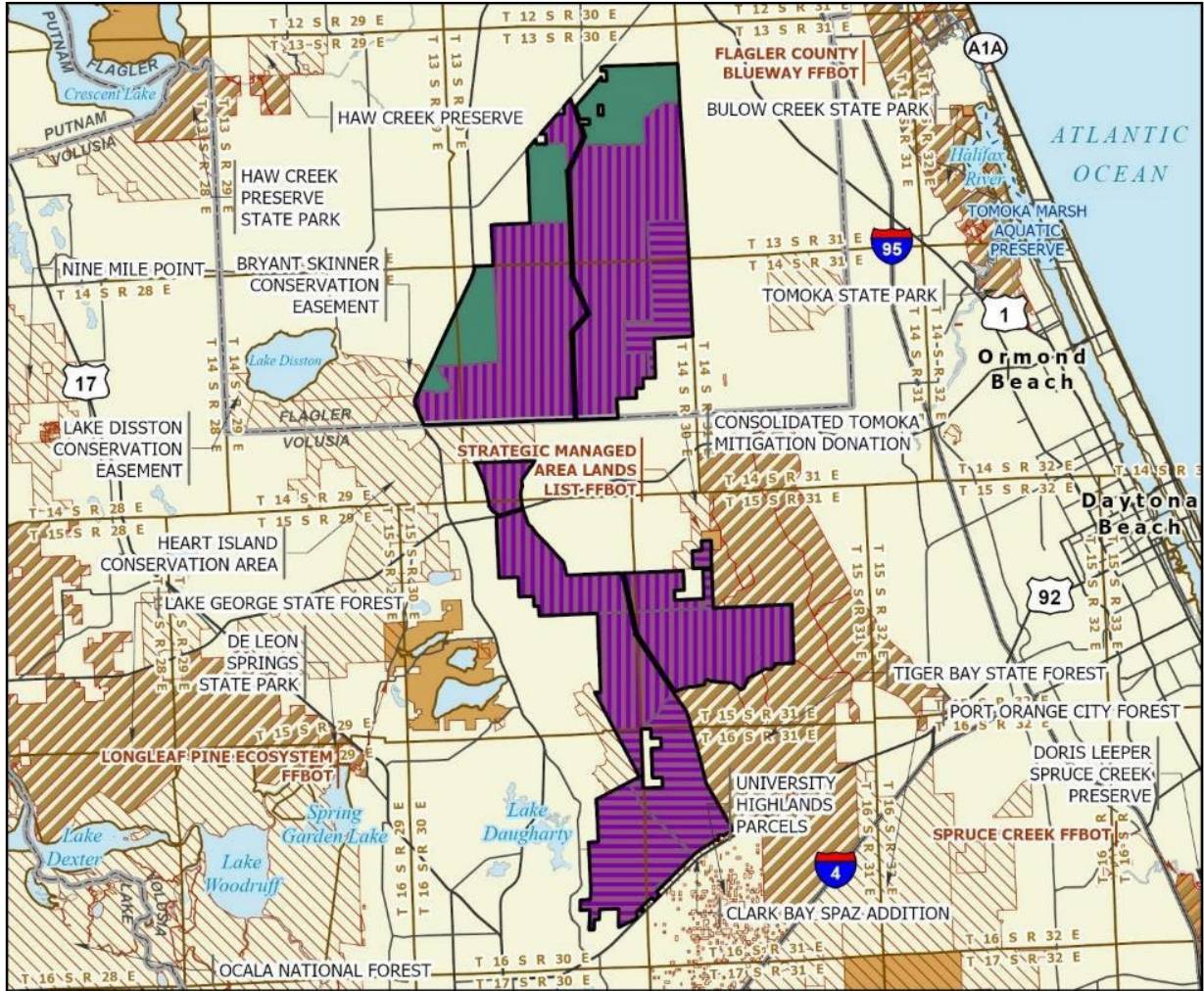
#### FLAGLER AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES



JANUARY 2020

Map 1: FNAI, January 2020

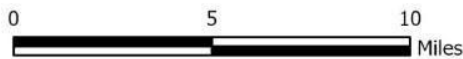




**VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: MAP 1**

**FLAGLER AND VOLUSIA COUNTIES**

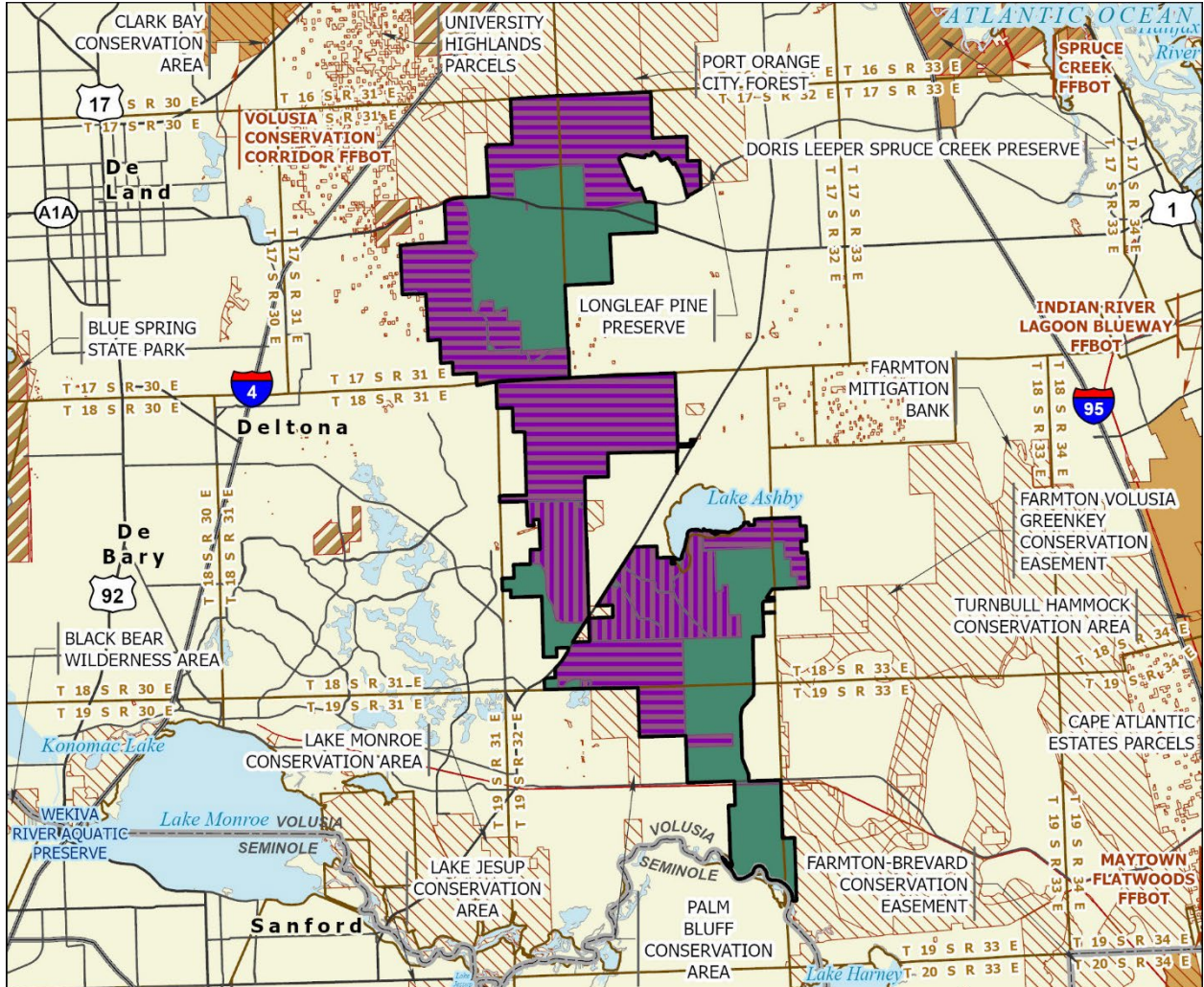
-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Acquired for Conservation (Less-Than-Fee)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  State Aquatic Preserve



JANUARY 2020

Map 2: FNAI, January 2020





**VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR: MAP 2**

**VOLUSIA COUNTY**

-  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 3: FNAI, February 2022

