

Matanzas to Ocala Conservation Corridor

Less-Than-Fee

Flagler, Putnam and St. Johns Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2016
<i>Project Acres</i>	95,050
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	6,359
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	88,691
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$158,020,588

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Matanzas to Ocala Conservation Corridor project will enhance connections between multiple conservation lands extending from the Matanzas River to the Ocala National Forest. The project will also protect the hydrological resources of the lake and riverine systems of northeast Florida. As a wildlife corridor among other conservation lands, the Matanzas to Ocala Conservation Corridor would help the long-term survival of wide-ranging wildlife such as the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*).

General Description

The Matanzas to Ocala Conservation Corridor is located in Flagler, Putnam and St. Johns counties in the Eastern Flatwoods physiographic district; this district is described as coastal lowlands with flatwoods and swamps on silty sand soils. There are several public conservation lands adjacent to this project, including Dunns Creek State Park, Pellicer Creek Conservation Area, Lake George Conservation Area and Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve. The Pringle Creek Forest Florida Forever project borders this project on its eastern side.

Historically, the project was a mix of mesic and wet pine flatwoods. Currently, the trees on this land are mainly stands of slash pine up to 40 years old with an understory that ranges from heavily wooded with shrubs to no understory in areas where the pines are bedded. Commercial pine plantations account for about half of the project area. Natural uplands are about five percent of the project, with small patches of wet and mesic flatwoods.

Wetland communities make up most (40 percent) of the natural communities on the property.

Vegetation is generally dominated by bald cypress or swamp tupelo and isolated wetlands are abundant throughout the property. Dome swamps dominated by pond cypress and open depression marshes are common within the pine plantation and flatwoods uplands.

Several natural lakes occur on the property: Speckled Perch Lake, Black Lake and Tank Lake. They are in a higher, more xeric portion of the property. Baygall vegetation dominated by loblolly bay and slash pine surrounding these lakes indicates the increased seepage originating from the xeric uplands.





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>celestial lily</i>	G3/S3
<i>nodding pinweed</i>	G3/S3
<i>Florida mountain-mint</i>	G3/S3
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3

Public Use

The Matanzas to Ocala Conservation Corridor is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. However, some parts of the property could be acquired in fee-simple, opening the opportunity for public uses. Fee simple acquisitions would be managed by the adjacent conservation land manager(s).

Acquisition Planning

2010

On December 1, 2010, Fish Tail Swamp Mitigation Bank (1,061.28 acres) was issued, all of which would be inside the project boundary when the project was started.

2015

This project was sponsored in a proposal by the Conservation Trust of Florida and was presented to the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) at their October 16, 2015, meeting.

2016

On April 29, 2016, the St. Johns River Water Management District established the Wilson Green - Dave Branch conservation easement (5,326.92 acres), of which approximately 3,396.92 acres are in the project boundary.

2018

On April 20, 2018, ARC approved the removal of 7,468 acres from the project boundary at the request of the landowner.

2023

In October 2023, ARC approved the removal of 8,991 acres from the project boundary.

In December 2023, ARC approved to add 34 parcels totaling approximately 422.86 acres in Putnam County.

2024

In September 2024, ARC approved the addition of three parcels totaling approximately 532.19 acres in Putnam County.





Coordination

No partners in the acquisition were identified for this project.

Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the Matanzas to Ocala Conservation Corridor would be managed by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.

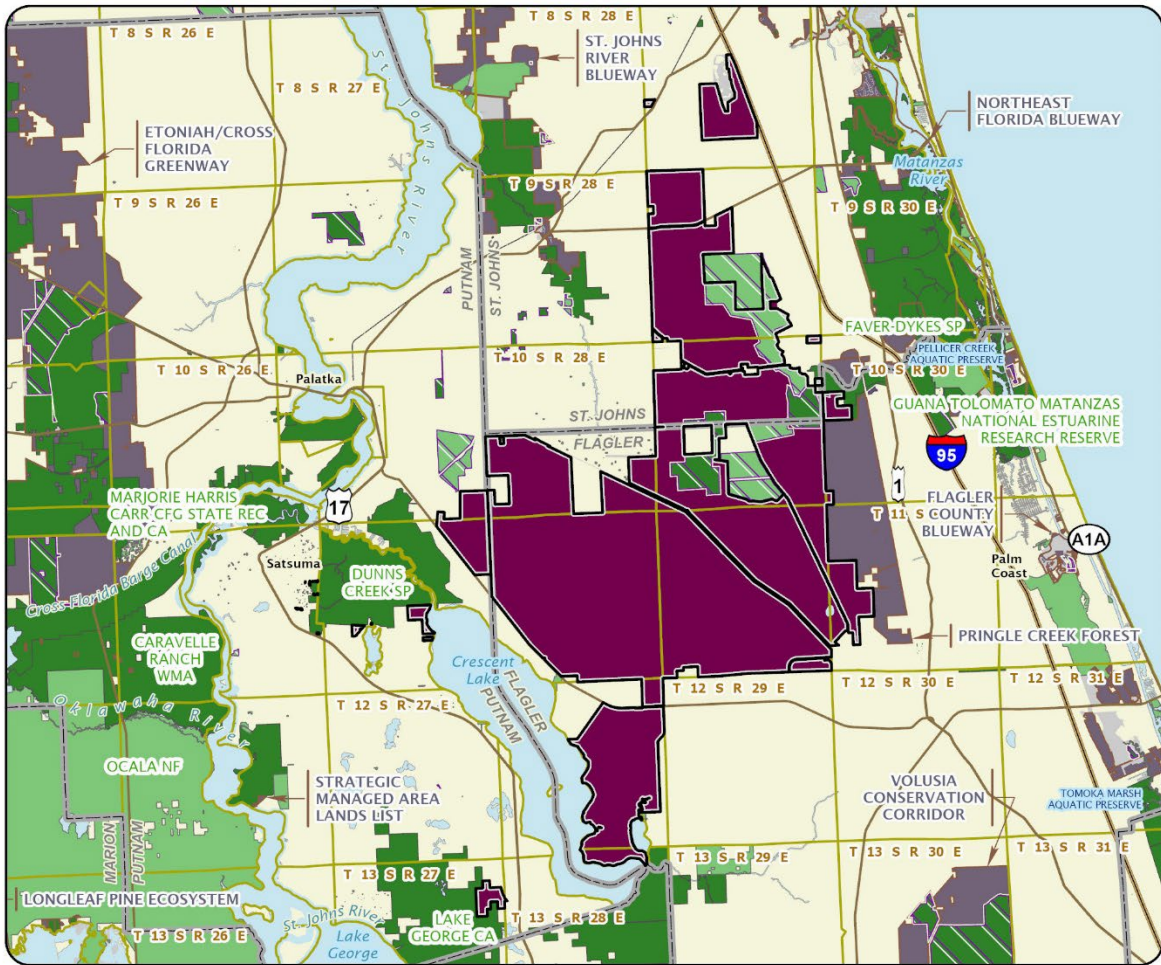
Manager(s)

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of the Matanzas to Ocala Conservation Corridor would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm continued conservation easement compliance would be coordinated by the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of State Lands. There is a possibility that some project parcels could be acquired in fee-simple.

Management Prospectus

DEP's Division of State Lands will periodically monitor the conservation easement, while the management will be conducted by the property owner.





MATANZAS TO OCALA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR

FLAGLER, PUTNAM, AND ST. JOHNS COUNTIES

