

St. Johns River Blueway

Climate Change Lands

St. Johns County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2002
<i>Project Acres</i>	26,481
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	10,911
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	15,570
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$1,887,457,347

Purpose for State Acquisition

The St. Johns River Blueway project will preserve the last remaining undeveloped shoreline of the St. Johns River and several of its tributaries. The project will also expand access to natural resource-based recreation opportunities including boating, canoeing, hiking, camping and bicycling for northeast Florida visitors. The project contains multiple recorded archaeological and historical resources.

General Description

The St. Johns River Blueway project runs along the eastern shore of the St. Johns River between Green Cove Springs and Palatka and bounds the Watson Island State Forest on the west bank of the St. Johns River. It includes considerable forested wetlands by the river and around six tributary creeks, mesic flatwoods, freshwater marsh and a portion of disturbed uplands.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>pineland scurfpea</i>	G1/S1
<i>Canby's wild indigo</i>	G3T1/S1
<i>Curtiss' loosestrife</i>	G2/S2
<i>variable-leaf crownbeard</i>	G2/S2
Creek siltsnail	G2/S2
<i>Thorne's beaksedge</i>	G3/S1S2
<i>Bartram's ixia</i>	G2G3/S2S3
<i>Piedmont roseling</i>	G5/S1S2
<i>Florida mountain-mint</i>	G3/S3
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3



Public Use

Both fee and less-than-fee acquisition approaches are recommended in the proposal. The resource-based recreation potential for the project is considered low to moderate, depending on what title rights and uplands can be obtained.

The project area is predominantly wetland or floodplain adjacent to the St. Johns River and its tributary creeks. These public waterways have boating and canoeing opportunities. Upland sites along the waterways could provide public access for boating, opportunities for environmental education, wildlife viewing, hiking, bicycling, camping and picnicking.

Acquisition Planning

1989

In 1989, Michael Adams acquired the Saturiwa Swamp Conservation Area (94.4 acres), all of which would be in the project boundary when the project was created.

1990,

On December 1, 1990, St. Johns County acquired the Watson Island parcel (62.36 acres).

2002

On December 5, 2002, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added the St. Johns River Blueway project to Group A of the 2003 Florida Forever Priority List. This fee-simple and less-than-fee acquisition, sponsored by St. Johns County, consisted of approximately 27,997 acres and 290 landowners. Six entities own more than 15,000 of the acres in the project: Rayonier, Meldrim, SJ Land Associates LLC, Klaerich, Ringhaver and Plum Creek Timberlands LP.

2005

On June 16, 2005, the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (BOT) approved buying 231.8 acres (Warner). BOT also acquired 736 acres (Lambert) in August 2005.

2010

On June 11, 2010, ARC placed this project in the Climate Change Lands category.

2011

On December 9, 2011, ARC recommended a 1,656-acre reduction to the project, removing residential development, commercial buildings and infrastructure from the boundary.

2014

On December 2, 2014, St. Johns County granted the Deep Creek conservation easement (316 acres) to the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), of which 112 acres are within the project boundary.





2016

On August 16, 2016, the 5,237-acre Meldrim ownership was acquired as a perpetual conservation easement for \$5,991,803.

On November 29, 2016, the North Florida Land Trust acquired Sixmile Creek Preserve (284 acres), of which 275 acres are within the project boundary.

2018

On July 26, 2018, SJRWMD and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) established a conservation easement on the St. Johns Mitigation Bank (3,580 acres), of which 637 acres are within the project boundary.

On September 25, 2018, St. Johns County acquired McCullough Creek Conservation Area (1,391 acres) from Jacksonville Port Authority, of which 1,376 acres are within the project boundary.

On November 8, 2018, the St. Johns Mitigation Bank was approved.

2020

On December 11, 2020, ARC approved an addition of 112 acres in Clay County to the project boundary.

Coordination

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

Management Policy Statement

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) proposes managing the project under multiple use management for the state forest system. Management would be designed to accomplish the goals and measures for this project. These goals and measures are referenced later in this prospectus. The primary land management goal for FFS is to restore, maintain and protect in perpetuity all native ecosystems; to integrate compatible human use; and to ensure long-term viability of populations and species considered rare. This ecosystem approach will guide FFS management activities on this project.

Manager(s)

FFS has proposed managing part of the site as an addition to Watson Island State Forest and the remainder of the site as a new state forest. FFS Bunnell District personnel will manage the site and coordinate public access and use.





Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

The project's location, size and diversity make it desirable for use and management as a state forest. State forest designation requires that certain criteria be met, such as public access and acreage available for many types of recreational activities. Designation as a state forest is contingent upon acquiring property rights that are consistent with these criteria.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

Much of the project's upland areas have been disturbed and will require various levels of restoration. Natural communities that have been converted to pine plantation will require removal of off-site species and reforestation with native species. Protecting and restoring wetland communities will be a priority for FFS. Restoration efforts will concentrate on removing and filling ditches and corrections of other hydrological alterations. Public use will be limited to activities that are compatible with any sensitive resources.

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. Initial and intermediate management efforts will concentrate on resource inventory, restoring and reforesting areas where harvesting has occurred, hydrologic restoration, site security, and public and fire management access. Inventories of the site's natural resources and threatened and endangered flora and fauna will be conducted to provide a basis for the formulation of a management plan.

Revenue-generating Potential

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, the revenue-generating potential of this project is expected to be low to medium. It is anticipated that management funding will come from the Conservation and Recreational Lands Trust Fund.

Cooperators in Management Activities

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



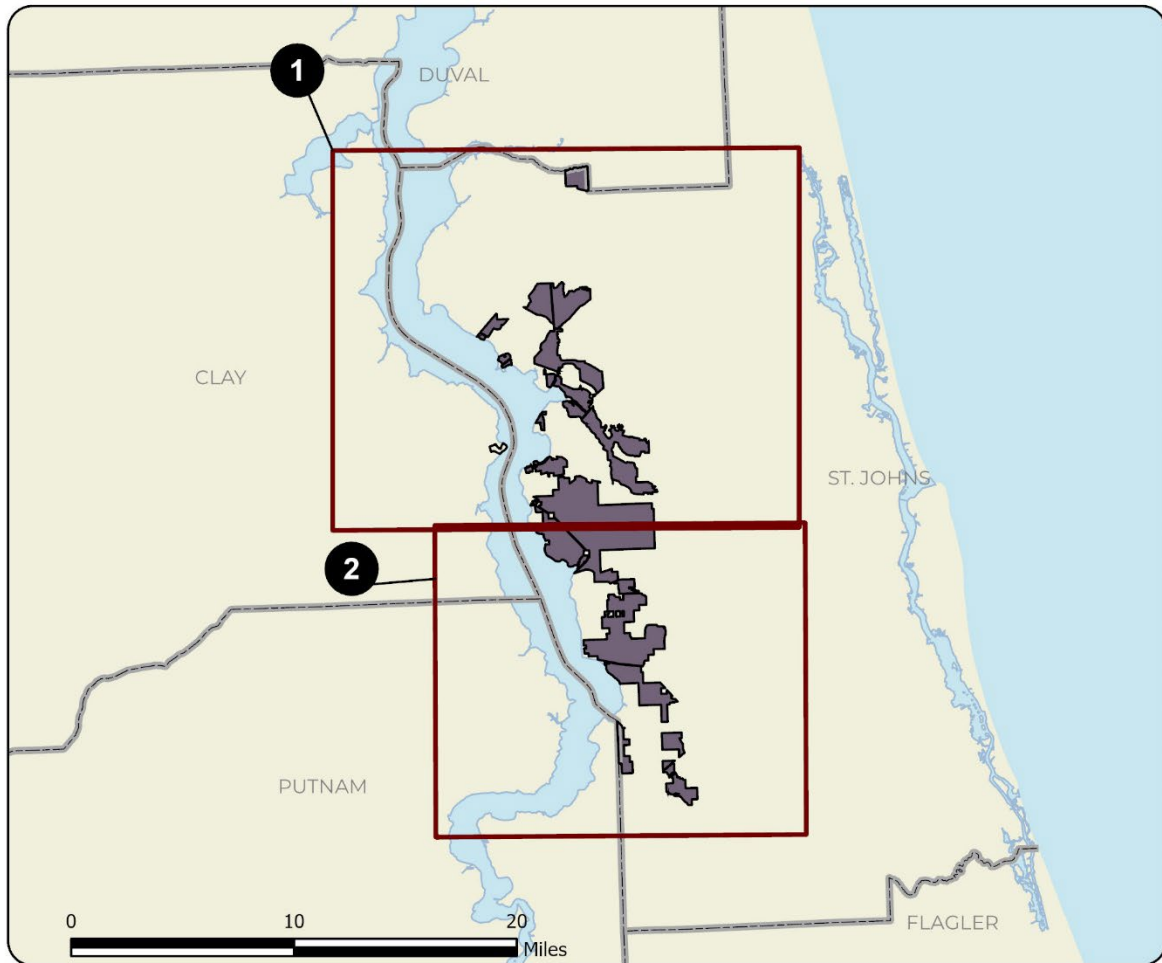


Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	LATF	not provided
Salary	\$173,346	not provided
OPS	\$0	not provided
Expense	\$125,000	not provided
OCO	\$361,000	not provided
FCO	\$0	not provided
TOTAL	\$659,346	not provided

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted

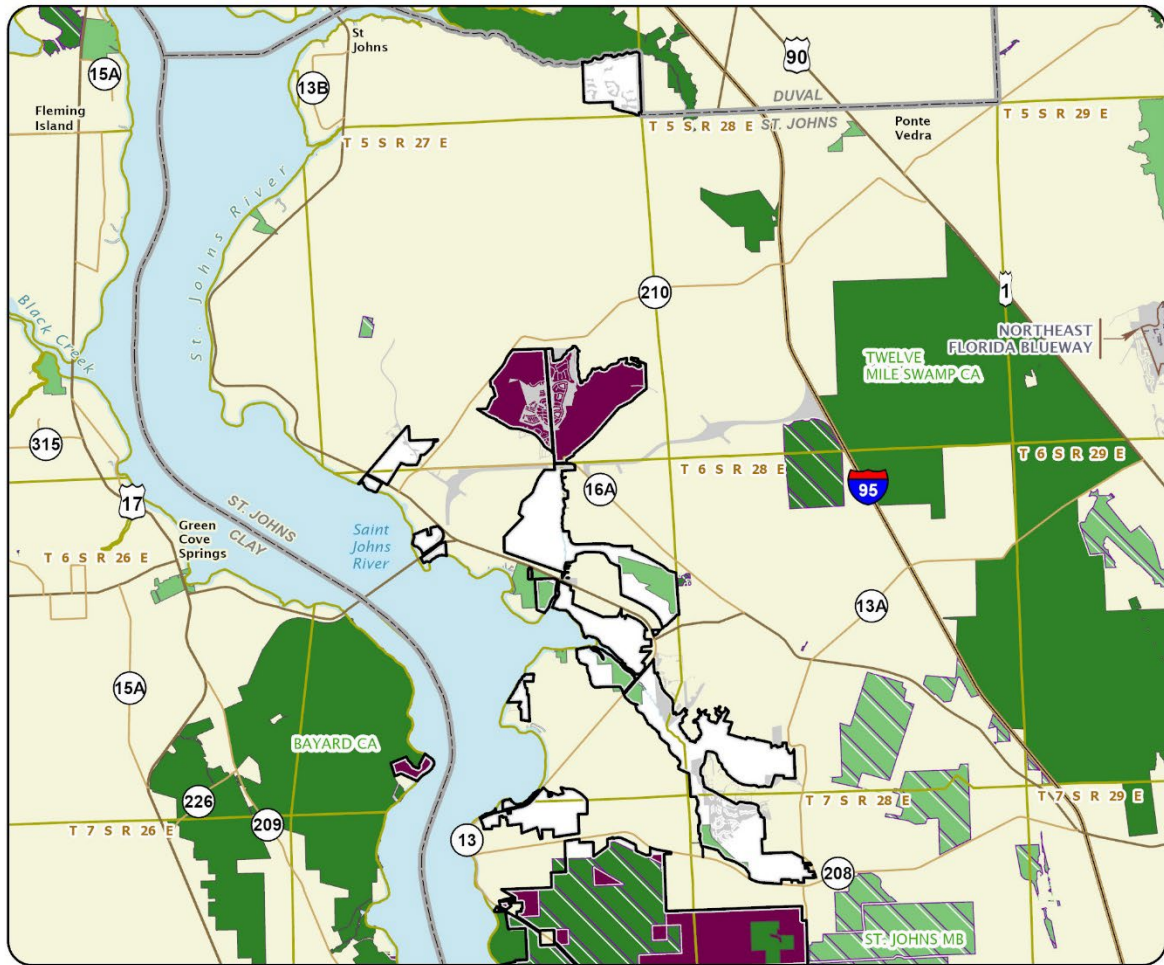




ST. JOHNS RIVER BLUEWAY: OVERVIEW

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

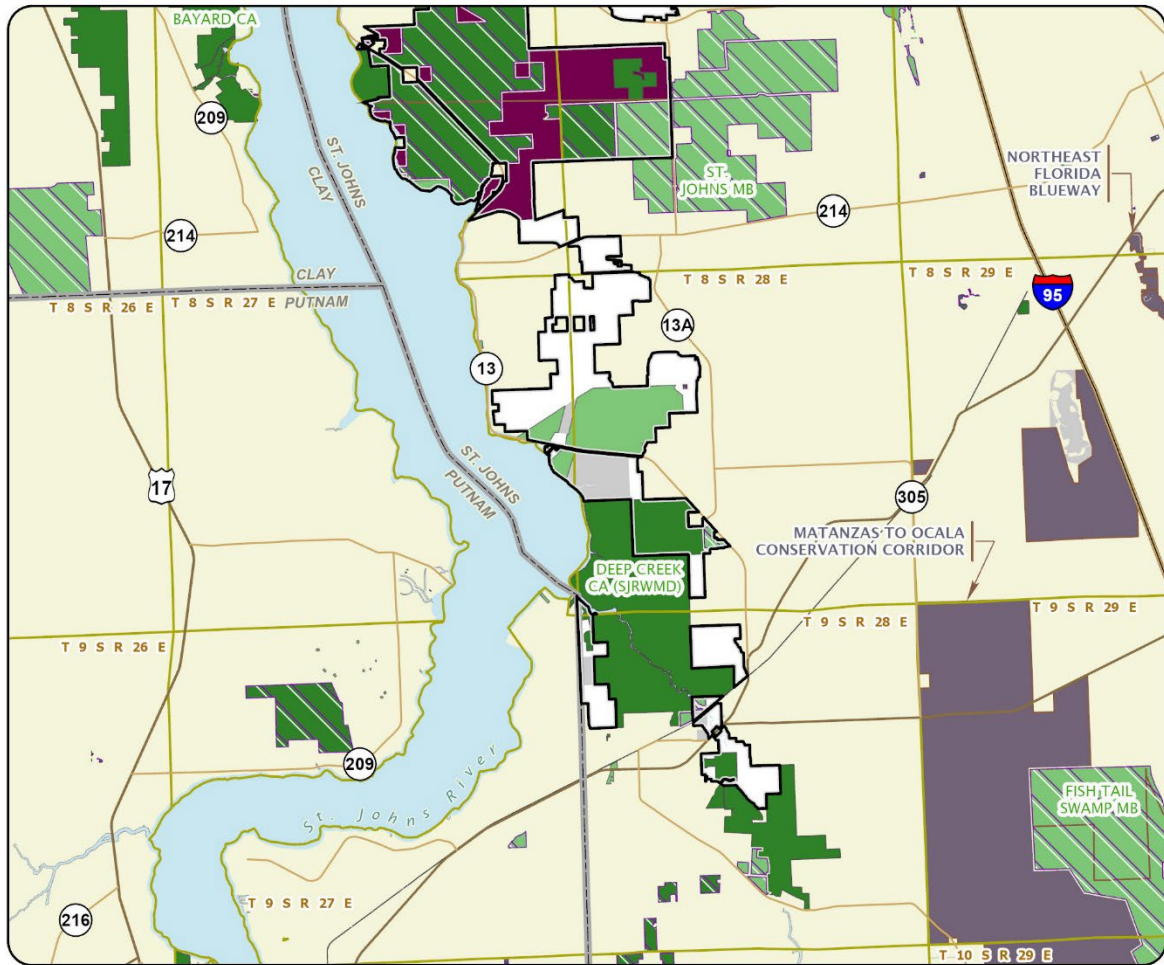




ST. JOHNS RIVER BLUEWAY: MAP 1

ST. JOHNS COUNTY





ST. JOHNS RIVER BLUEWAY: MAP 2

ST. JOHNS 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

