

## **The Florida Wildlife Corridor**

### **Legislation**

Governor Ron DeSantis and the Florida Legislature created the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act in 2021. This law directs the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to encourage and promote investments in areas that protect and enhance the Florida Wildlife Corridor. It specifies that the Florida Wildlife Corridor is an existing physical, geographically defined area comprised of over 18 million acres, of which 10 million acres are protected conservation lands.

### **The Science Behind the Wildlife Corridor**

The ability to migrate plays an important role in supporting biodiversity by enabling animals to safely travel to find mates, food and shelter. Animal migration results in increased genetic diversity within a population and ensures a species' resistance to issues such as disease, genetic mutations from inbreeding, and potential extinction.

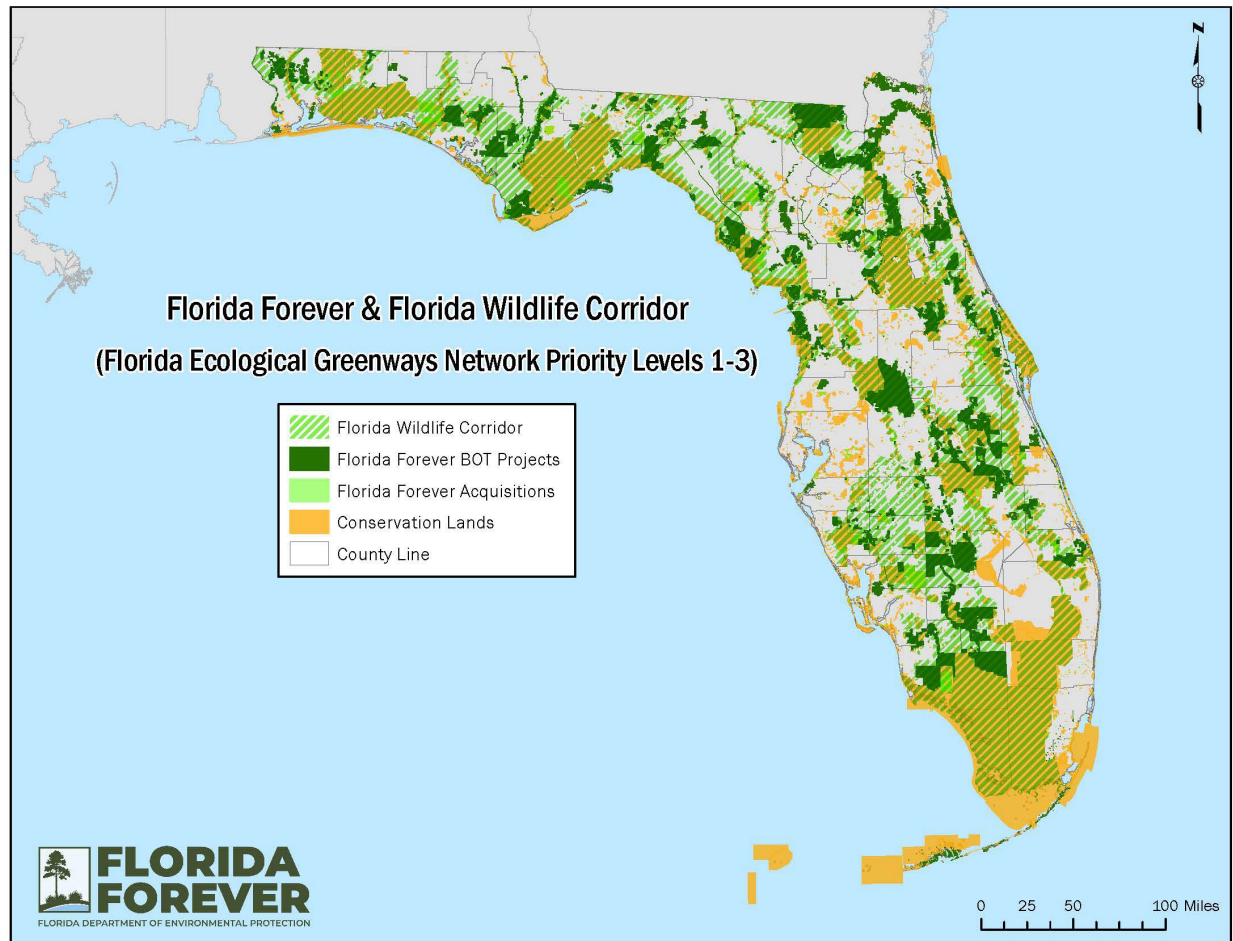
Many wildlife habitats have become fragmented and isolated by human development such as residential areas, commercial centers, industrial activity and transportation infrastructure. Wildlife corridors are sections of land that can connect two or more areas of wildlife habitat and allow animals to migrate and avoid roads and other development.

The Florida Wildlife Corridor refers to the conserved lands and opportunity areas defined as Priority 1, 2 and 3 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN). The FEGN is a statewide database that identifies and prioritizes a functionally connected statewide ecological network of public and private conservation lands. The FEGN is used to inform Florida Forever and other state, federal, and regional land acquisition programs regarding the most important ecological corridors and intact landscapes across the state for protection of Florida's native wildlife, ecosystem services, and ecological resiliency. It identifies "opportunity areas," which are lands and waters within the wildlife corridor that are not conserved lands, and green spaces within the corridor which lack conservation status and/or are contiguous or between conserved lands.

### **Vision for the Florida Wildlife Corridor**

The Florida Wildlife Corridor seeks to build a network of public and private lands for safe passage and dispersal routes to maintain healthy populations of plants and animals. Utilizing the most current scientific analysis of Florida's natural resources, DEP's Division of State Lands triages properties based on their contribution to [specific goals and measures](#). Priority is given to lands that preserve, protect or enhance natural ecosystems and connect to existing private and public conservation lands.

There are 612,979 acres within the Florida Wildlife Corridor opportunity areas that are a high priority for conservation through the state's Florida Forever program ([Florida Ecological Greenways Network Florida Forever Projects](#)).



### **Florida Wildlife Corridor Acquisition Successes as of June 11, 2026**

*Raiford to Osceola Greenway* – This 61,525-acre conservation easement located in Baker and Union Counties is the largest in Florida Forever’s history. The property serves as a vital link in the Ocala-to-Osceola Wildlife Corridor and connects the Camp Blanding Military Reservation, the Raiford Wildlife Management Area, and the Osceola National Forest. This conservation easement also helps to protect Lake Palestine, considered the headwaters of the St. Marys River, and Swift Creek Lake. Conservation of this property in perpetuity will also protect habitat for the Florida black bear, red-cockaded woodpecker, eastern indigo snake, and gopher tortoise, among others.

*Waccasassa Watershed* – Located in Levy County, this 21,600-acre purchase consists of two tracts adjacent to the Devil’s Hammock Wildlife Management Area, Upper Waccasassa Conservation Area, and Goethe State Forest. Both tracts contain two tributaries of the Waccasassa River: Magee Branch and Otter Creek. An unrecorded historical site was found on the property featuring a significant concentration of rare, rectangular turpentine pot fragments – remnants of Florida’s once thriving industry. This property will be an addition to Goethe State Forest and help to protect the water quality and quantity of the Waccasassa River and the downstream estuaries of the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve.

*Camp Blanding to Raiford Greenway* – Located in Baker and Bradford Counties, this 14,648-acre conservation easement will help to buffer the Raiford Wildlife Management Area and provide a

critical landscape linkage to the Camp Blanding Military Reservation. The headwaters of the New River, a tributary of the Santa Fe River, originate in the northwestern portion of the property. As such, this property will help in flood attenuation and aquifer recharge.

*Ranch Reserve* – Located in Osceola County, this 7,514-acre conservation easement is currently a working cattle ranch with approximately 1,600 head of cattle. The property borders the St. Johns River Water Management District's Wolf Creek Ranch and Escape Ranch conservation easements. Protection of this property will provide habitat for rare and imperiled species such as the arogos skipper, Florida burrowing owl, southern fox squirrel, and whooping crane.

*Little Orange Creek Corridor* – Located in Putnam County, this 2,973-acre conservation easement serves as a key connection in the Ocala-to-Osceola Wildlife Corridor, linking the Little Orange Creek Nature Park, Putnam Lakes Preserve, and the BJ Bar Ranch conservation easement. Protection of the wetlands on the property and Little Orange Creek will help to preserve the water quality of Orange Creek and its key tributary. The landowner is actively restoring formerly successional hardwood forest and hardwood-encroached sandhill, providing high quality habitat for a variety of species such as the narrowleaf naiad, swallow-tailed kite, gopher tortoise, and sandhill crane.

*Etoniah/ Cross Florida Greenway* – Located in Putnam County, this 1,535-acre acquisition will be an addition to the Etoniah Creek State Forest. The property creates a connection between the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area and the O'Connor Tract conservation easement. Burntbridge Brook and an unnamed waterway flow through the property to the Ocklawaha River, and the southern portions feature frontage along the Rodman Reservoir. Acquisition serves to protect the water quality and quantity of the Ocklawaha River, a major tributary of the St. Johns River, and increase lands for public outdoor recreation.

*Bar-B Ranch* – Located in Martin County, Bar-B Ranch is a 1,668-acre property lying in the hydrologic connection between the St. Johns River and Everglades watershed. The property is a critical restoration area designated for shallow water storage to support the improvement of downstream water quality in the St. Lucie River Estuary and the Indian River Lagoon. This conservation easement has also been identified for acquisition as a part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project. This acquisition will complete the Bar-B Ranch Florida Forever project.

*Big Bend Swamp/ Holopaw Ranch* – Located in Osceola County, this 1,403 -acre conservation easement is adjacent to the Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area and helps to close a gap in a nearly continuous corridor within a large complex of conservation easements. The property is bifurcated by the Florida Turnpike, featuring about 2 miles of frontage. Drainage on site flows into Scrub Slough, ultimately discharging into the Kissimmee River to form the headwaters of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades system. Conservation of this property contributes to the protection of water quality and quantity in this important watershed, and helps to provide habitat for imperiled species such as the crested caracara, Florida long-tailed weasel, eastern indigo snake, and wood stork.