

# Sand Mountain

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Bay and Washington Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>1994</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>34,361</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>19,828</i>
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	<i>\$26,637,412</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>14,533</i>
<i>2021 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$30,922,361</i>

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Sand Mountain project will conserve and restore one of the largest remaining tracts of longleaf pine sandhill in the Florida panhandle. The project will protect the watersheds of the lakes and of Econfina Creek (the source of Panama City's water) and will maintain habitat critical to the survival of several rare species that live only around these lakes such as Gholson's blazing star and Panhandle meadowbeauty. The project will provide a large scenic area where the public can enjoy recreation activities including hiking and hunting.

## General Description

This project protects the largest remaining tract of high quality, natural xeric uplands of Florida's New Hope Ridge and Fountain Slope physiographic regions. The high rolling pinelands drop down to classic examples of steephead ravines, unique Sandhill Upland Lakes and a portion of a nearly pristine stream. Much of the sandhills are of excellent quality, having a nearly intact ground cover of wiregrass and dropseed, but those owned by the Rosewood Timber Company have been cleared and planted with sand pine. At least 18 species of rare or endangered plants inhabit the project. The Slope Forests in the steepheads shelter several species, while around the Sandhill Upland Lakes are four globally imperiled plant species found nowhere else in the world. The project also contains a large part of the watershed of Econfina Creek. Three archaeological sites are known from the project with the potential for more to be discovered. Development threatens the entire northern portion of the project, as well as the lakes in the southern portion.



FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>Gholson's blazing star</i>	G1/S1
<i>Crystal Lake nailwort</i>	G3T1/S1
Shaggy ghostsnail	G1/S1
Oval pigtoe	G2/S1S2
Apalachicola cave isopod	G1G3/S1S2
<i>quillwort yellow-eyed grass</i>	G2/S2
<i>smoothbark St. John's wort</i>	G2/S2
<i>karst pond xyris</i>	G2G3/S2
<i>thread-leaf sundew</i>	G4/S1
Dougherty plain cave crayfish	G2G3/S2

**Public Use**

This project would be designated as a state forest with such uses as hiking, hunting, fishing, swimming, camping and environmental education. The project may also help complete the Florida National Scenic Trail, a statewide non-motorized trail that crosses several Florida Forever project sites.

**Acquisition Planning**

**1995**

The larger longleaf pine sandhill tracts, Deltona, St. Joe and John Hancock Mutual Life Ins. Co., should be acquired first. The Northwest Florida Water Management District has acquired the Rosewood ownership in Phase II and a portion of the Deltona ownership.

**1999**

On December 9, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council removed 2,104 acres owned by the St. Joe Paper Company and placed them into the St. Joe Timberland Conservation and Recreational Lands project.

**2003**

On September 11, 2003, the U.S. Forest Service acquired the Dees Tract (40.55 acres).

On October 3, 2003, the Northwest Florida Water Management District established the Urquhart/Perry conservation easement (1,173.05 acres).

**2011**

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council placed this project in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

**Coordination**

The Northwest Florida Water Management District is an acquisition partner.





## **Management Policy Statement**

The management goals of the project are to: conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered species; conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or imperiled species; conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems to enhance or protect significant natural resources; and provide outdoor recreational areas.

## **Manager(s)**

The Florida Forest Service is the recommended manager.

## **Management Prospectus**

### **Qualifications for State Designation**

The project's large areas of natural longleaf pine sandhills and restorable pine plantations make it desirable for management as a state forest.

### **Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

The pine plantations on-site will require restoration. There are no other known disturbances that will require extraordinary attention, so management intensity is expected to be typical for a state forest.

### **Management Implementation, Public Access, Site Security and Protection of Infrastructure**

Once the core area is acquired, the Florida Forest Service will provide public access for low-intensity, non-facilities-related outdoor recreation. Initial activities will include securing the site, providing public and fire management access, inventorying resources and removing trash. The Florida Forest Service will provide access to the public while protecting sensitive resources. The project's natural resources and imperiled species 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 or close to their original conditions, as well as protecting threatened and endangered species. Much of the pinelands have been cleared and planted in sand pine and require restoration. An all-season burning program will use existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks to contain fires whenever possible. Timber management will mostly involve improvement thinning and regeneration harvests. Plantations will be thinned and reforested with native species as appropriate. Stands will not have a targeted rotation age. Infrastructure will primarily be in disturbed areas and will be the minimum required for management and public access. The Florida Forest Service will promote environmental education.

### **Revenue-generating Potential**

The Florida Forest Service will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will provide variable amounts of revenue, but the revenue-generating potential for this project is expected to be low.

### **Cooperators in Management Activities**

The Northwest Florida Water Management District has purchased land along Econfina Creek within the project boundary. The Northwest Florida Water Management District will cooperate with the Florida





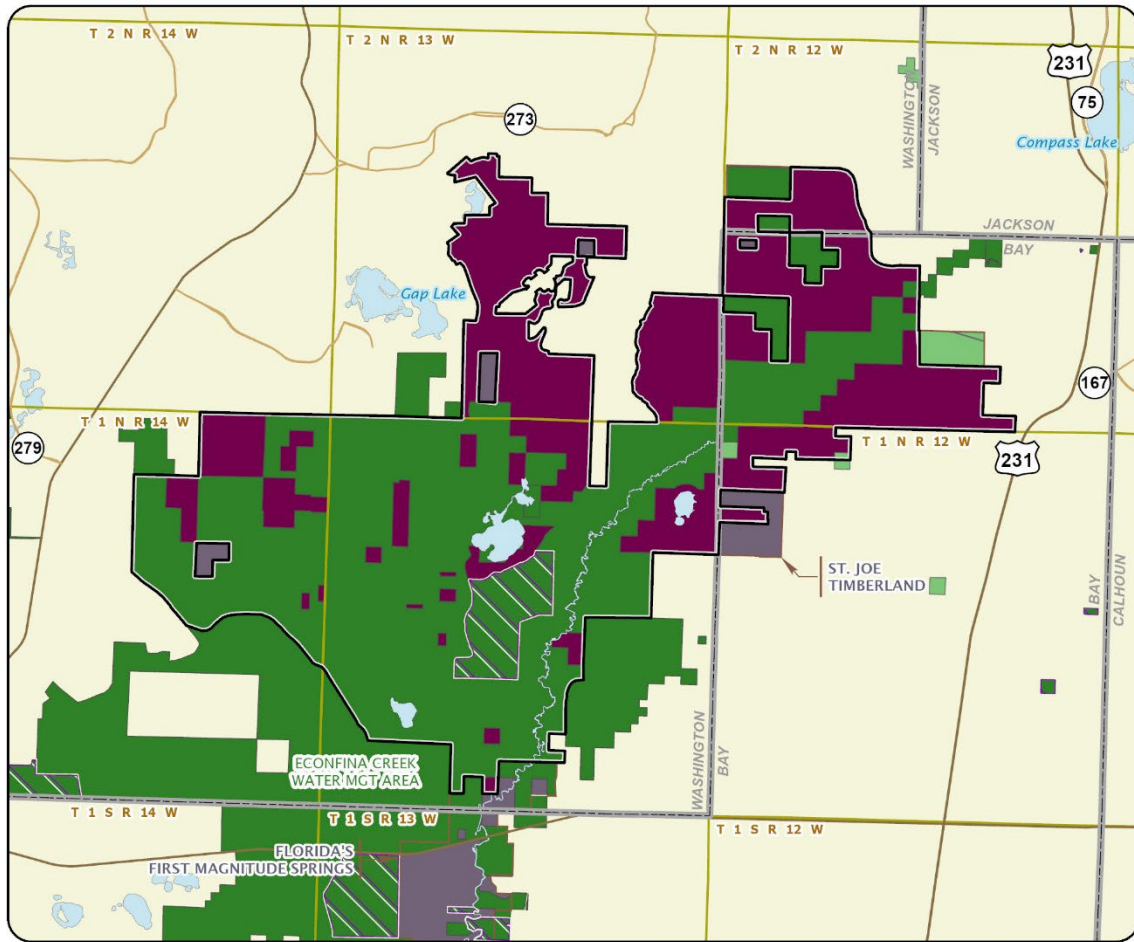
Forest Service in the management of this corridor. The Florida Forest Service will also cooperate with and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government entities and other interested parties as appropriate.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$148,370	\$148,370
OPS	\$0	\$0
Expense	\$70,000	\$50,000
OCO	\$234,900	\$15,000
FCO	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$453,270	\$213,370

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





### SAND MOUNTAIN

#### BAY AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

-  Florida Forever Project Boundary
-  Essential Parcels Remaining
-  Other Florida Forever Projects
-  State Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Less-Than-Fee Acquisition

