

CONSERVATION TRUST *for* FLORIDA

# THE POST

FALL 2017

02

## CONNECTING LANDS FOR WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE

New park adds 465  
acres to Central Florida's  
conservation hub.

05

## CONSERVING RURAL AND FAMILY LANDS

Visionary rancher Bud Adams  
will be missed.  
Pelaez & Sons Ranch offers  
refuge for wildlife.

# Connecting What Matters

*Landscape-scale connectivity is the future of conservation.*





## From the President

**As I write this**, CTF has welcomed to its team our new executive director, Traci Deen, and our new director of conservation, Butch Parks, both of whom joined us - or tried to - the week that Irma approached Florida. It was interesting and heartwarming to work with them as we adapted our plans and tested our organizational resilience. An unexpected gift was that they, and Cyndi Fernandez (our newly-promoted assistant director), got to learn a lot about each other in a very short and challenging period of time. They then made their first outing together to the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation's 8th annual conference in Pensacola, FL. All three appreciated the opportunity to connect and brainstorm with other conservation groups at that meeting.

In the year since I last wrote a message for our newsletter, the world and CTF have experienced tremendous change. In working with our professional staff over the last couple of weeks, we have started to weave the constructs of appreciation, adaptation, and resilience into our thinking and into our new culture.

There are many positive signs on our horizon. As we have successfully been re-accredited this year, we are also receiving valuable support from the Land Trust Alliance in the form of enhanced coaching and support for communication materials. Our Land Protection Committee recently approved an impressive portfolio of projects, with more proposals to come before year's

end. These projects, located all over the state, will protect thousands of acres of Florida's wild and working landscapes when they are completed, adding to the 5,085 acres we successfully protected in 2017.

Appreciation, adaptation and resilience: words to live by as we look ahead. I hope we have the chance to tell you more at our 2018 Annual Meeting, which will take place in the spring. Until then, as always, we are grateful to serve you through our work of saving Florida's wild and working lands forever.

**Thank you for your continued support,**

Please feel free to reach me at **LMOLITORGE@aol.com**.

We have a very bright future, and we'd like you to be an active part of it.

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**An accredited land trust.**

The mission of the Conservation Trust for Florida is to work with landowners to save Florida's wild and working landscapes for future generations.



# Springtime in the Forest

By Cyndi Fernandez

There's nothing like a hike in the woods with friends to ease some of the stress and worry of our hectic lives. I had the good fortune to spend some time with a few of your fellow CTF supporters earlier this year at the Silver Springs Forest Conservation Area, and I remember it like it was yesterday.

We couldn't have wished for a more picture-perfect spring day. Gathered at the parking area off SR 326, an enthusiastic group of nine huddled over JB Miller's LIDAR map. After much scientific chatter about the hydrogeologic characteristics of the property, Guy Marwick, an ardent environmentalist, brought us back to the reason we were all there – "Let's walk," he said.

With that, we hit the trail. As we ambled down a shady dirt road built

atop an old railroad grade, the native plant experts among us called out the names of nearby trees. "That's sweet gum," chimed CTF intern Emily Hesterman, "... the one with star shaped leaves." The facts fluttered like a passing swallowtail butterfly. It's kind of a "weedy tree." Its amber resin is medicinal. That's swamp chestnut oak. "It's a gorgeous tree with big acorns that are tasty to wildlife."

We all stopped to inspect a high-tech well on the side of the trail. A solar-powered gizmo on top of the well transmits data to scientists at the St. Johns River Water Management District (District). It is one of many such wells used to monitor the level of water in the Floridan Aquifer.

JB, a land resource specialist with

the District, led the group. He pointed out the box culverts (aka water cannons) jetting out of deep trenches on either side of the road. Water can gush through them after a rain event at high rates. Flow rates of up to 90+ cubic feet per second have been recorded at the State Road 40 bridge in the last couple of years. He said that's "about like a first-magnitude spring."

Naturalists Marcie Clutter and Jim Buckner kept the native plant name game going. The diverse hammock contained a dizzying array of plants with fantastical names – ironwood, dragonwood, crookedwood, devilwood, innocence, resurrection fern, sparkleberry, deer tongue.

When Jim spotted a passerine nest that he determined had been modified by an arboreal golden mouse, I was sure these were either the most observant naturalists I'd ever met, or they were totally messing with me. Either way, it was easy to daydream about a time when such an intimate knowledge of nature was integral to our survival.

We paused to admire a lovely oak branch that crossed the path. We marveled at the brilliant green of the spring leaves shimmering overhead. We walked along the dry creek bed, and Emily told us everything we ever wanted to know about frogs.

We made one final stop to see a huge cypress tree before parting ways. It was a wonderful morning. The group's knowledge, good humor, and passion for protecting our natural world gives me hope for the future. I hope you'll join us in the future when we venture out onto other lands that CTF has helped protect. 🐸

► A group explores the Silver Springs Forest Conservation Area near Ocala, Florida.



Photo by CTF STAFF



02

# Connecting **What Matters**

*Landscape-scale connectivity is the future of conservation.*

## CONNECTING LANDS FOR WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE

### **Imagine Florida 10, 20, or even 50 years from now. What do you see?**

Florida is changing fast. Right before our eyes, farmlands are being converted to housing developments. Forests are being razed, and wetlands are being dredged and paved. Growth and change are inevitable, but we can and must make smart decisions about what lands we choose to protect.

The Conservation Trust for Florida is looking ahead, and there is a lot to look forward to. We know that there is still time to play a meaningful role in shaping Florida's conservation future. The wild and rural Florida you love is still out there, and we are working to keep it that way.

The key is to continue working at a landscape scale.

## WHAT IS LANDSCAPE-SCALE CONSERVATION?

There are many definitions of this complex conservation trend, but, at its heart, landscape-scale conservation is the practice of thinking big. Projects span entire regions -- connecting large conservation properties together like a vast jigsaw puzzle. The interconnected properties are owned and managed by various people and agencies that collaborate to achieve specific objectives for that region. We've started calling these protected areas "conservation hubs."

- ▶ **Our work focuses on creating, expanding, and linking conservation hubs throughout the state. This is our best chance to save Florida's iconic species, protect our drinking water, provide wild spaces to enjoy nature, and keep working family lands, like ranches and farms, in production for generations to come.**





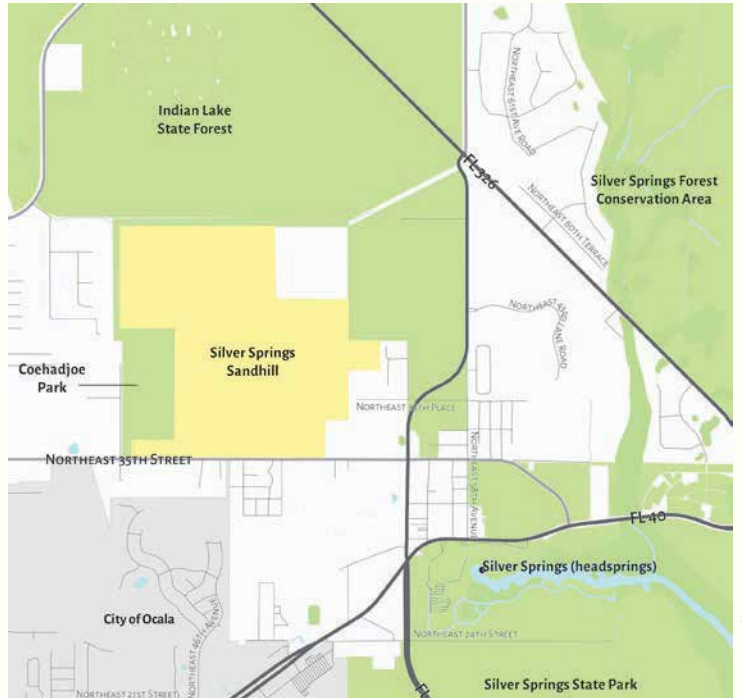
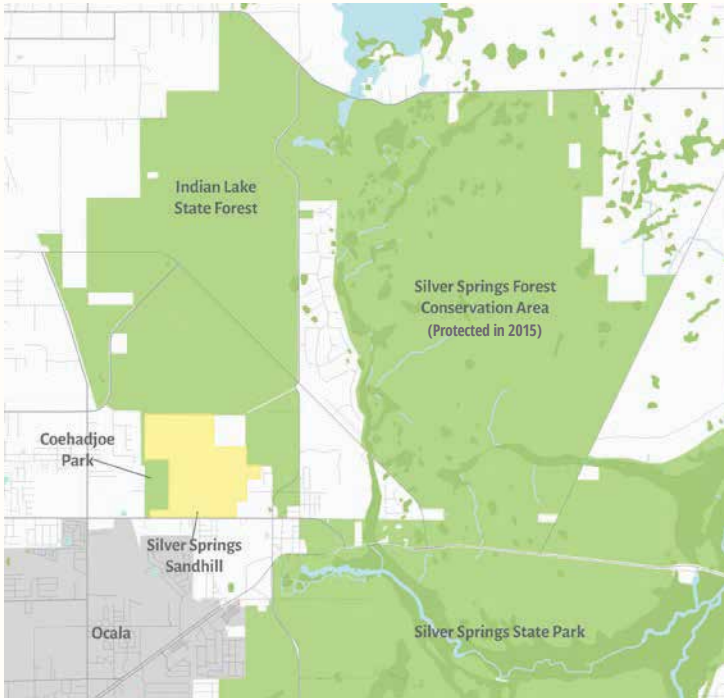
Photo by CARLTON WARD, JR.

▶ A view from the Silver Springs Forest Conservation Area. CTF helped protect this 4,900-acre property in 2015. It is now owned and managed by the St. Johns River Water Management District.



## SILVER SPRINGS SANDHILL ADDS 465 ACRES TO CENTRAL FLORIDA'S CONSERVATION HUB

This year, we were thrilled to announce the protection of the 465-acre Silver Springs Sandhill property. In January, the Conservation Trust for Florida finalized negotiations and signed a purchase option with the property's multiple owners. In September, the purchase was finalized with funding from Florida Forever, the state's primary conservation land acquisition program. **John Rudnianyn, one of the sellers, said, "This was the last large undeveloped property located in Silver Springs and was entitled for over 1,800 homes."** Instead of developing the property, which would have negatively impacted Silver Springs and the Silver River, the land is now in the hands of Marion County Parks and Recreation and will be opened to the public. As you can see in the map below, the property connects to Indian Lake State Forest and Marion County's Coehadjoe Park. 🐦



Map Design by ANDERSON GEOSPATIAL

▲ The Silver Springs Sandhill project's benefits include: connections to existing conservation lands, sandy soils that purify drinking water, protection of remnant sandhill habitat, and opportunities for the public to enjoy the property.





Photo by RANDY BATISTA

## Bud Adams 1926 – 2017: A pragmatic visionary

Most of us can only imagine “Old Florida” but Bud Adams wrote the book on it. In his book “The Old Florida,” he recounts the details of his life and shares his wisdom. He was a Florida Cattleman through and through.

He was also a conservationist. He saw it as his duty to care for his land along with the plants, animals, and people that depended on it. He took special care of employees, treating them like family, “only better.” He bred cattle that thrived in the harsh Florida environment rather than destroying the land to support the herd. He also led the way in protecting thousands of acres of the Adams Ranch before his passing.

When it came to conservation, he thought not in terms of years but in terms of generations. “In 50 or 100 years, we are going to need green space, a clean watershed, clean air, and a food supply. We must act now.”

Lisa Gearen remembers a visit she had with Bud in 2015: “A highlight was a ride we took out on the Fort Pierce property, which is also the site of the family homestead. Bud drove us in his pickup truck over land that he knew so intimately, talking passionately about its history and his stewardship.”

We will always be grateful to Bud Adams for his lifelong love of his “Old Florida,” his generous support of CTE, and for working with us to help his family place agricultural easements on portions of the Adams Ranch. We mourn his passing. 🐾

“

The future of all of us lives in the conservation of our lands, water, and air.

”



# Pelaez & Sons Ranch offers refuge for wildlife.

The Conservation Trust for Florida worked with the Pelaez family to place a conservation easement on their 1,375-acre cattle ranch. The easement allows the family keep their land in agricultural production and protects important habitat near the Everglades Headwaters. This project was funded by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and supported by the Florida Forest Service.

Located east of the Kissimmee River and eight miles north of Lake Okeechobee, the property is in a key location for watershed protection. It is adjacent to a federal wetlands reserve program easement and is near South Florida Water Management District conservation lands.

The property contains suitable habitat for many species such as the Eastern indigo snake, crested caracara, sandhill crane, gopher tortoise, Sherman's fox squirrel, bald eagle, Southeastern American kestrel, burrowing owl, wood stork, and Florida grasshopper sparrow.

**The Pelaez & Sons project exemplifies the relationship between sustainable agriculture and conservation.** Funding from Florida's Rural and Family Lands Protection Program has allowed this family to continue ranching while protecting important water resources and wildlife habitat. 🐾



▶ Ralph Pelaez with his grandson McKinley on their 1,375-acre ranch in Okeechobee County



“

My family has always been committed to ranching and the conservation of this land. I am very grateful to the Conservation Trust for Florida and the Rural and Family Lands Program for helping me establish this legacy for my children and grandchildren.

”



Photo by RANDY BATISTA



**The Conservation Trust for Florida would like to acknowledge and thank the following 2016 donors for their contributions.**

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**100+**

- Andy and Molly Barnes
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**PARTNER SPOTLIGHT**

**Wekiva to Ocala Greenway Partnership**

The Friends of the Wekiva River and CTF are official partners in protecting the Wekiva River basin. The Wekiva River is designated a Florida Outstanding Water, a Florida Canoe Trail, an Aquatic Preserve, and a National Wild and Scenic River with over 70,000 acres of state-protected lands in the basin. We will focus on protecting lands that link the Ocala National Forest and the extensive state holdings along the Wekiva River.



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## WAYS TO GIVE

**Interested in joining CTF to save Florida's wild and working landscapes?**

Whether you'd like to fund a special project, protect an acre, or make a general donation, we appreciate your generosity! Your donations are crucial to our success in protecting the rural lands and wildlife habitat of Florida.

### WAYS TO GIVE

DONATE ONLINE

DONATE ON FACEBOOK

WORKPLACE MATCHING

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50155

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**DONOR SPOTLIGHT**  
**The art of Gary Sliffe (1953-2017)**



Gary Sliffe was a military veteran and life-long resident of Hudson, Florida on the Gulf Coast. Living on a property with water on 3 sides that had been in his family since the 1940s, Gary spent a lifetime fishing, raising his food, and taking care of neighbors. He began building fish sculptures in his wood shop based on individual animals that he caught and spent more than a decade refining his techniques, creating a wonderful collection of 20 pieces before his untimely death in 2017. He cared deeply about the natural world of the Gulf Coast, avidly watching birds and participating in manatee protection.

► **The estate of Gary Sliffe has generously donated his entire collection to the Conservation Trust for Florida to be sold in support of our mission to protect Florida’s treasured lands.**

**In Honor Of**

Lisa Gearen’s birthday by Ande and Richard Lister  
 Kathy Cantwell by Julie Thaler  
 Ben Friday, putting \$\$ where our mouth (heart) is, by Sonya Guidry  
 Jane West Law by Matthew Shaffer  
 Mr. and Mrs. Andy Knieriem’s wedding anniversary by Jason and Jessica Schindler

Freda “Freddie” Green by Deborah Green, Don and Jan Smally Fund, and Frances Fowler  
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**In Memory Of**

Walter and Kitty Funderburk by Paul and Mary Ellen Funderburk  
 Mike Hagey by Kathleen Williams and Andy Day



# RESILIENCE

**From the Keys to the Panhandle,** Hurricane Irma was a powerful display of the force of nature. Her impact was felt by every Floridian. We weathered this destructive storm together in a show of unity and compassion.

Irma has reminded us of the critical line of defense that nature provides—barrier islands, coral reef systems, coastal wetlands and prairies—and how essential it is to protect, restore, and prioritize conservation of these areas.

We at CTF pledge to lead meaningful conservation efforts that will benefit future generations of Floridians. Conservation lands can become a first line of defense.

Join us as we work together to conserve land that is imperative to protecting Florida against future storms of this magnitude.

**STAFF SPOTLIGHT**

**New Leadership Will Steer Statewide Conservation Efforts**

Please help us welcome our new executive director, Traci Deen, Esq. and our new director of conservation, Butch Parks. We are also pleased to announce the promotion of Cyndi Fernandez to assistant director.



“ I am honored to lead the Conservation Trust for Florida team during this exciting and challenging time for conservation. Protecting Florida’s wild and working lands has never been more important.

”  
- TRACI DEEN



“ I look forward to helping CTF conserve the wonders of Florida, and to working with conservation partners throughout the state.

”  
- BUTCH PARKS

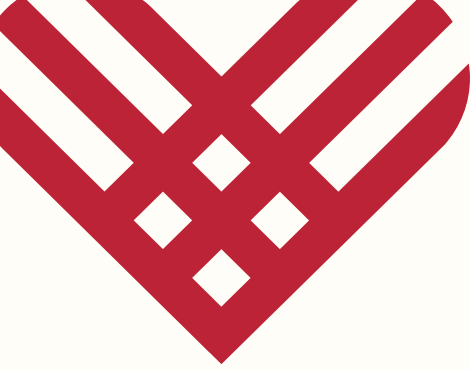


“ I have always believed in the merits of CTF’s mission. I am fortunate to be part of it.

”  
- CYNDI FERNANDEZ

A friend and neighbor, who wishes to remain anonymous, provided funding to help offset the cost of growing our professional staff. This angel invested in CTF because our mission and vision are key to Florida’s conservation future.

To find out more about CTF staff, please visit [www.conserveflorida.org/aboutus](http://www.conserveflorida.org/aboutus) or call **352-376-4770**.



#GIVINGTUESDAY

11/28/17

# One day to give back

**#GivingTuesday** is the start of the giving season. Your gift to CTF on this day is an act of generosity that means even more when combined with the giving power of others.

Support CTF on #GivingTuesday at [conserveflorida.org/givingtuesday](http://conserveflorida.org/givingtuesday)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Reaccreditation

*National accreditation helps us help landowners.*

We are proud to announce that the Conservation Trust for Florida has successfully renewed its land trust accreditation – proving once again that we are committed to professional excellence and to maintaining your trust in our conservation work.

To achieve this national distinction, we underwent a comprehensive review of our policies and procedures. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded the renewed accreditation, signifying its confidence in the Conservation Trust for Florida’s long-term stability.

To learn more about the accreditation process, visit [landtrustaccreditation.org](http://landtrustaccreditation.org)



### Planning for the Future

*LTA speed coaching award benefits CTF operations.*

The Conservation Trust for Florida is committed to continued organizational development. The Land Trust Alliance recognizes our potential and provided CTF with expert guidance to help us achieve our goals. This year, we participated in a customized coaching program that strengthened our operations. Only two land trusts in the southeast U.S. were selected to benefit from this program. We are honored and grateful for this incredible opportunity. Thank you, LTA!



CONSERVATION TRUST *for* FLORIDA  
PROTECTING OUR WILD AND WORKING LANDS



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Photo by **RANDY BATISTA**



▲ The Conservation Trust for Florida worked with the Adams Ranch to protect over 5,000 acres of their ranchlands via the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. This includes protecting 3,245 acres in 2017 via a conservation easement held by the State on their Lake Marian Ranch.

**THIS IS OUR LAND**  
**AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE FOR IT.**



- Alto "Bud" Adams Jr.