

CONSERVATION TRUST *for* FLORIDA

THE POST

SPRING 2018

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OVERVIEW
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SAMPALA LAKE

Protection underway
for 772-acre Madison
County ranch.

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HOPE FOR SPRINGS

CTF celebrates the
protection of Gilchrist
Blue Springs State Park





From the Executive Director

Serving as the executive director of one of the most innovative and ambitious land conservation groups in Florida for the past seven months has been nothing short of wonderful.

Like many of our members and supporters, conserving Florida is personal for me. As a 6th generation Floridian, I love this state deeply—and protecting our special places, our vast biodiversity, and our breathtaking landscapes boils down to protecting home for me. I want the next six generations to feel the same connection with Florida and appreciate the same natural beauty I grew up exploring.

I know that in my love for natural Florida I am not alone. This is why I have such a passion for conservation. This is why I look forward to CTF's future.

Since its inception in 1999, CTF has played a crucial role in protecting over 23,000 acres of land in Florida — and we are building momentum. Today, we are working on conservation projects totaling over 180,000 acres!

We are stronger than ever, because of you! Our growing group of partners, neighbors, friends, and board members continues to dedicate time, resources, and energy to support our statewide conservation mission.

In March, I had the honor of meeting many of you at our Annual Meeting, and it left me inspired, energized, and ready to

work side-by-side with you to protect the natural Florida that we all cherish.

Together, I look forward to helping CTF continue to take bold steps forward. We plan to continue to play a key role in protecting Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes and lead the way in creating and connecting these lands via conservation corridors to create a statewide network. We will continue to strive to protect lands that support healthy populations of native plants and wildlife, protect freshwater resources, provide places to recreate and connect with the outdoors, and support working family farms and ranches.

Together, we can save natural Florida, forever. Florida's conservation future is bright. I hope that you continue to join and support us on this adventure in whatever way you can!

Enjoy our Spring newsletter!

For Florida,

Traci Deen, Esq.
Executive Director

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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.

WHERE WE WORK



ON THE COVER

The Santa Fe River, including Blue Springs Run, historically has been home to one of the largest concentrations of freshwater turtles in the western hemisphere.

Photo by JOHN MORAN

Sampala Lake Ranch

Old bones, old roads, old homes, old souls

Story by Lisa Gearen

Photos by Randy Batista

In March, photographer Randy Batista, CTF consultant Keith Fountain, and I were invited by R.N. (“Koby”) and Charlene Koblegard to visit their Sampala Lake Ranch for the day. Acting on their remarkable love for the land that they have stewarded for over a decade, they worked with CTF to place a conservation easement that will protect it from development. High, dry and beautiful, with a clearwater lake, ample groundwater resources, rolling topography, and located about 40 minutes’ drive from Tallahassee, their property offers the kind of landscape that would make it ripe for future suburban development. The Koblegars, having witnessed the intent of Bud Adams in protecting his south Florida ranches with conservation easements, have chosen to take the same measures to ensure that it will remain as it is, forever. Bud Adams was a lifelong friend to Florida, her creatures and her people. He died in September of 2017.

I’m walking the grounds of Sampala Lake Ranch on the day before Easter. The wind gusts, calms, and shifts direction. The day started gray and damp, but by noon the sky is Florida-blue and the air is crisp. It has become the perfect day to follow the sunken road that is the Old Spanish Trail, as it borders the ranch property and winds through ancient live oak groves and piney woods. In a few miles, it delivers us to a high bluff that overlooks a clearwater lake. This lake has supported life in this part of the world for tens of thousands of years.

Historians and archaeologists have identified the lake shore as the likely site of a colonial Spanish mission, built and fortified during the 17th Century. It is believed to have been called San Pedro y San Pablo de Potohiriba, a name that has evolved to “Sampala” over the centuries. The mission, part of an ambitious Spanish plan to secure a route for ground travel from Saint Augustine to present-day Pensacola, was probably built on or near an earlier Native American village. The route, called Camino

Real - or King’s Road - played a crucial role in the expansion of Spanish colonization in the New World. Numerous missions, some of them quite sophisticated, served the dual roles of providing way stations for travelers and spreading Christianity to native populations. Sampala, with its spring-fed freshwater lake, was a reliable place to find water, food and shelter. Located about one third of the way between Saint Augustine and Pensacola, I can easily imagine a steady flow of pedestrians, riders, and cart drivers. In good weather, it must have been a very busy place, and in bad weather, it must have provided lifesaving refuge, perhaps for days at a time. The Spanish and Native Americans co-existed, sometimes peacefully, sometimes not, in the area for decades. British attacks and slave raids in the early 1700s eventually caused the Native Americans and Spanish to abandon the site and move to the protection of St. Augustine.

Leaving the lake, I walk along a path of desire that has been carved by the hooves of nearly 200 Koblegard cows. These cows



An old bench on the Koblegard property offers a quiet spot to observe wildlife.



Charlene and Kobe Koblebard stand overlooking their Sampala Lake Ranch.

share their genes with the Braford herd that was established at the Adams Ranch in Fort Pierce, and the family resemblance is plain to see. The cattle, following their instincts and communicating across generations, move through the pastures and woods, roaming in search of the best grass and the shadiest resting spots. Here and there, I find fossilized bones of their predecessors, the remains of animal inhabitants that have lived on this land throughout historic and prehistoric times. Fox squirrels escort me as I move through the piney highlands that border this pasture. Standing at attention and apparently without fear, they gaze for long minutes until resuming their private games of hide-and-seek. Overhead, bald eagles, swallow-tailed kites, hawks and numerous song birds fly through pristine air. They have everything they need here to live their lives and bring up their young.

Later in the day, we meet up with the Koblebards while they clean out bluebird boxes in a central pasture area. Nearby is a carefully positioned bench where the two have spent many hours watching the light change with sunsets, observed communities of wild turkeys, and enjoyed the antics of calves. With obvious affection, Kobe relates to us the story of his lifelong friendship with Bud Adams and stories of how the Koblebard and Adams families have been woven together through friendship and a shared love of Florida. As he talks about Bud, Kobe's profound

respect is apparent. Looking toward the late day sun, he tells us his story of Sampala. In 2004, Koby and Bud purchased the original ranch, and divided the property to allow for separate cattle operations. They had looked at several properties in the area, but as Koby says, "when I saw this, I tried to hide my excitement from the realtor." While intended as a cattle ranch, the place also became a family retreat for the Koblebards. Early on, they built a cottage and put in flower and vegetable gardens. As the family grew, the cottage was enlarged and has been the site of numerous Labor Day and Thanksgiving celebrations, as well as other family events. Grown children and many grandchildren have known the place and loved it for more than 13 years.

As time passed, the friendship and neighboring experience deepened. Bud's commitment to land conservation eventually influenced the Koblebards' decision to protect their property through a conservation easement. Guided through the process by CTF, they made application through the State of Florida's Rural and Family Lands Program. The Florida Cabinet voted to purchase the easement in early March of this year. And as I write this, Bud Adams' heirs are preparing to pursue a conservation easement on the adjacent Adams' parcel, ensuring perpetual protection of 2,400 contiguous acres, including the entire 100-acre lake and its watershed.

SAMPALA UPDATE AND ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

Progress is being made toward the successful protection of the 772-acre Sampala Lake Ranch in Madison County.

Once completed, a conservation easement will allow the Sampala Lake Ranch to stay in private ownership while permanently protecting its natural conservation and cultural values. The easement will be purchased by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) via its Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP).

This will be the 41st easement that DACS has acquired since 2010, which will bring the total acres protected by the Program to approximately 42,276, according to John Browne, land programs administrator with the RFLPP.

The property has been used for agriculture, ranching, and forestry for over 80 years. It is now a cattle/calf operation with high-quality wetlands and habitat for wildlife.

It is also the historical site of San Pedro y San Pablo de Protohiriba— one of the five missions established in the area by the Spanish between 1609 and 1655.

Sampala Lake is a spring-fed lake used by Florida black bear, white-tailed deer, coyotes, turkeys, fox squirrels, wood ducks, and various waterfowl species. It is part of the headwaters of the Econfina River, and it is important for flood control and sediment reduction.

CTF worked with the Koblebard family throughout the RFLPP process and advocated for funding for the project. It is currently negotiating a second phase of the project that will save an additional 1,200 acres of land adjacent to the Sampala Lake Ranch. The project should close this year pending completion of due diligence underway by the DACS.

As Kobe and Charlene head back to the house and their supper, Kobe directs us to the location of an original early 20th-century ranch homestead, hidden behind an old gate. We find it without difficulty and come upon a classic Florida farmhouse that was almost certainly a showplace in its day. With the floor missing and fewer than half the original windows still in place, the bones of its fundamental elegance endure, despite the ruin. I imagine the builders of that home, designing the floor plan, choosing the wood finishes, the detail of the crown molding. I imagine a young, ambitious farmer/rancher and his bride, moving south out of town, as the new US Highway 90 opened the way west for the drivers and passengers of the new, mass produced "automobile." They situated their home to take advantage of the prevailing breezes, with an eternal pasture vista and oriented the front porch toward the rising sun and the back porch toward the dusk. As it should be.

It's late afternoon, almost evening, when we circle back on the ranch to allow Randy to photograph the pastures in the best light of the day. He wanders off to find the vistas that will tell his story, and we wait for the full moon to rise in the east. Bats appear, then a few stars. A small herd of cows, vocalizing to each other, move in our direction, intending to bed down under the grandmother live oak that spreads her limbs across the hill

where we wait. The cows eventually encircle us, quieting as the dark advances. The place is so quiet, we can hear their breath as dark descends.

With no light to work with, it's time for us to pack it in. We load the car and drive back across the pasture, skirt the bluffs, and find the gate. Before turning toward home, I aim the car in the wrong direction, back toward the stretch of camino that still embraces travelers with its 12-foot-high walls, a grotto created over centuries by countless incising feet, hooves, and wheels. Ferns and fossils appear in relief as my headlights illuminate the vertical surfaces. I feel a chill and think: If you can't feel history here, you can't feel it anywhere. Finally, with low beams on, I turn the car around and follow the sunken, dusty single-lane path, whose earthen depression bears witness to the history that engineered this route, over hundreds, maybe thousands, of years. In a mile or two, the banks dissolve and the pavement lifts our vehicle. Old friend moon makes its appearance, and we are on our way.

Thanks to my time-traveler partners, Randy Batista and Keith Fountain. And special thanks to Dr. Gifford Waters, PhD, who provided background for this story.



The Land Protection-Spring Protection Connection

Protecting Florida's springs is of the highest importance to the Conservation Trust for Florida and many other national and state-level conservation organizations.

Facts and Figures

Scientists have been monitoring some of our largest springs closely for several years, and we now know that protecting land in its natural state within both the discharge and recharge areas of a spring is one of the best ways to keep it pure and free from harmful pollutants.

Florida has over 1,000 springs (one of the largest concentrations of freshwater springs on the planet)! Our state's springs are a huge draw for outdoor enthusiasts including international tourists; and, according to a 2012/13 study by UF IFAS, springs-based recreation activities contribute nearly \$85 million to our state's

In order to protect the water, you must protect the land.

— JIM STEVENSON

economy each year. They also provide us with a way to "see" the health of the Floridan aquifer, which is the source of over 90% of Florida's drinking water. Current threats to our springs include groundwater pollution from runoff and excessive water

withdrawal. Withdrawing groundwater faster than it can be replenished can cause springs to run dry. The springs that have the poorest water quality and declining volumes of daily water discharge are those that are not surrounded by a buffer of protected lands. Helping to protect natural areas like the Silver Springs Forest Conservation Area, the Silver Springs Sandhill property, and Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park are all examples of CTF's commitment to protecting Florida's springs for generations to come.



Left: Officials (including Paula Russo, Traci Deen, Kim Davis, Noah Valenstein, Eric Draper, Kevin Brown, Cliff Maxwell, Gabby Paxton, and Jason Vickery) gathered on Feb. 9 to mark the grand opening of Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park. Photo by DEP

Opposite: Visitors jump into Gilchrist Blue, which is a second-magnitude spring that discharges north into the Santa Fe River. Photo by JOHN MORAN

Celebrating Florida's 175th State Park: Gilchrist Blue Springs

Community Conservation in Action

CTF's executive director Traci Deen was invited to speak at the Department of Environmental Protection's Florida Park Service ribbon-cutting ceremony in February at Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park. It was a special opportunity to talk about the connection between conservation and the health of our springs.

Prior to its purchase and protection, this privately-owned property was for sale and was at risk of being closed to the public. Thanks to Florida Forever funding, it is now a new gem in our incredible

We commend the state's efforts to preserve this iconic property and facet of the local community for the benefit of people and wildlife.

— Traci Deen

state park system.

The 407-acre park contains six natural springs and includes approximately one mile of frontage along the Santa Fe River. As a state park, Gilchrist Blue Springs will continue to offer swimming, paddling, hiking and other recreation opportunities for our state's residents and visitors.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony,

DEP Secretary Noah Valenstein highlighted the enormous value of partnerships with members of local, regional, and state communities. As part of CTF's vision, we strive to serve as a trusted community partner to support statewide land conservation and we actively seek projects that help to replenish and safeguard Florida's freshwater supply.



2017: Year in Review Protection Successes

Through the three 2017 land conservation projects featured below, CTF facilitated the protection of 5,120 total acres with a total purchase cost of \$13,150,00 and an appraised total market value of \$16,213,000.

PARTNERSHIPS

We worked closely with landowners and partners including the Adams and Palaez families, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Forest Service, and Marion County Parks and Recreation.

BENEFITS TO THE PUBLIC

Collectively, these protection successes move us closer to achieving our vision by connecting these newly-purchased lands to other existing protected lands. These connected networks of lands support healthy populations of native plants and wildlife, provide places to recreate and connect with nature, contribute to a strong economy, support the success of working family farms and ranches, and replenish and safeguard Florida's freshwater supply.

Adams Ranch Conservation Easement	Palaez & Sons Ranch Conservation Easement	Silver Springs Sandhill Land Acquisition
Acres: 3245	Acres: 1410	Acres: 465
Fair Market Value: \$6,165,000	Fair Market Value: \$4,230,000	Fair Market Value: \$5,818,000
Purchase Price: \$5,400,000	Purchase Price: \$3,250,000	Purchase Price: \$4,500,000

ADVOCACY

In addition to providing expertise to facilitate land protection projects, CTF also engages in education and advocacy efforts in order to achieve its mission and vision.

From January to March, our executive director met with several of Florida's political leaders during the legislative session to advocate for meaningful conservation funding in the 2018 state budget.

With the legislative session now over, we are excited to report that the 2018-2019 state budget appropriated \$100.8 million for land conservation programs, including Florida Forever, Rural and Family Lands, and the Florida Communities Trust. This is a step in the right direction and provides continued hope for a brighter conservation future for Florida.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

When compared with the total expenses CTF incurred to provide expertise and services to facilitate these projects, our ROI ratio was 67:1. In other words, for every \$100 donated to CTF in 2017, we leveraged \$6737 worth of conservation value in the land we helped to protect, and every \$100 donated resulted in the protection of just over 2 acres!

Your donations to CTF translated into tangible, positive action. They resulted in significant and measurable progress toward achieving our organization's mission and vision. And they directly promoted long-term land protection and conservation for future generations.

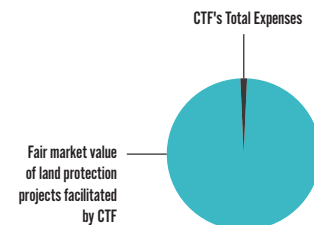
Cost Breakdown

\$241 K

CTF's Total Expenses

\$16 M

Fair market value of land protection projects facilitated by CTF



Your generosity in 2017 turned an investment of **\$240,654** into a conservation impact of over **\$16 million dollars!**

WHAT IS COMMUNITY CONSERVATION?

By Butch Parks, Director of Conservation

The Conservation Trust for Florida is committed to serving as a trusted community partner to support statewide land conservation. We are always seeking community conservation projects that fit our mission, but what exactly does that mean?

Community conservation projects are as diverse as the communities themselves. The process of facilitating community conservation projects begins by first taking the time to meet with and listen to the many different concerned voices in the community. The process continues as involved community partners use the strengths and expertise of a land trust like CTF to help them address their needs and concerns. It's an approach to land conservation that focuses on providing opportunities for more people in a community to directly connect with the natural and agricultural land around them. Although most community conservation projects are smaller in scale, their benefits can be significant. Common examples of community conservation projects include protecting, restoring, and/or creating:

- subdivision lots for green space, community gardens, and playgrounds.
- wetlands for a nature park with recreation and education opportunities.
- urban farms that allow local farmers to market their products directly to the community.
- natural areas for wildlife viewing, photography, art, fishing, and hiking.
- cultural areas for the communities that hold them sacred.
- urban greenways for recreation and education.
- rails-to-trails networks for biking and hiking.
- properties for community recreation that provide natural buffers from fire and flood damage.

Community conservation projects usually:

- directly address local community needs/concerns.
- connect people with place, with each other, and with nature.
- provide places for outdoor recreation and education activities.
- energize, unite, and actively engage the community to achieve a shared goal.
- provide some form of public access to the land conserved.

Partner Spotlight: Florida Trail Association

The Conservation Trust for Florida is excited to spotlight one of our conservation partners, the Florida Trail Association (FTA). Like CTF, FTA is a non-profit organization working statewide to protect natural resources for public benefit. Their mission is to develop, maintain, protect, and promote a network of hiking trails

throughout the state, including the unique 1300-mile Florida National Scenic Trail (the Florida Trail). Together with their partners and volunteers, FTA provides opportunities for the public to hike, engage in outdoor recreation, participate in environmental education, and contribute to meaningful volunteer work.

Did you know? FTA has 18 volunteer chapters around the state working to keep the miles and miles of trails open and in excellent condition.

Find out more about their work at www.floridatrail.org



FTA's February 2018 trip to Big Cypress National Preserve

Donor Spotlight: Sarah and Neil Asma

Sarah and Neil are native Floridians who grew up playing outside on rural properties. Though they now live in downtown Orlando, their connection to and fondness for nature has remained a central part of their lives. They met in the summer of 2012 when they were both starting jobs after finishing school. Neil is the Vice President of Toole's Ace Hardware, a Central Florida company of ten Ace Hardware stores located throughout Orange and Seminole Counties. Sarah is an attorney with the Public Defender's Office in Orlando. They married in June of 2016 and decided to settle near their families. "We love to spend time with them and our two dogs Copper and Charley," said Sarah. They support conservation and CTF's work because they have concerns

about the influx of people into the state. They welcome the economic boost, but they also see the negative impact that growth has had on the natural environment. "We want to be sure that our kids and theirs will get the same chance to learn to love Florida like we do," said Neil. Though born in Florida, Sarah acknowledges that "you don't have to be from here to recognize the beauty of our environment and how unique it is to any other place in the world." The couple believes that Floridians appreciate our special natural places and want to protect them, but not everyone knows how to go about doing that. They give to CTF as a means of incorporating philanthropy into their lives while helping to protect the places they love. "Philanthropy is how I was raised. My grandfather believed very strongly in social responsibility," Sarah reflected. She said he "grew up very poor and went to college on the GI Bill. After that he never forgot that he was educated because of help from someone else" and, as a result, he lived a life dedicated to public service. He instilled those values in his family as



well. Sarah said her grandfather believed that "If you can give back, not only should you, but you must." When considering a substantial gift to CTF, Neil said they felt that they were at a place in their lives where they were ready to start giving back. He said, "We are so fortunate and just want to use that good will to create more in the world." At the end of 2017, their first full calendar year of marriage, they decided to make a plan for how they would incorporate philanthropy into their lives. Sarah said starting their giving

off with CTF felt like the right thing to do. "We talked about organizations and causes we were interested in and picked three we wanted to start developing a relationship with. CTF was one of those three." The couple enjoys spending time outside and having adventures in many of the beautiful natural areas Florida has to offer. Sarah recommends the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Area as a favorite spot. "Anyone who loves Florida would love this area and should definitely see it!"



Remembering Tom Staley

It has been nearly a year since Tom's passing. He was a very generous man, widely known as a superb old-time fiddle player. Just last April, he played for guests of CTF on a beautiful day at Terry Zinn's wildflower

farm. The occasion was a celebration of our work, and the music Tom and his musician friends played was a joyful gift to all of us.

Tom believed that natural Florida is sacred. He worked to restore his Micanopy property to its natural state, laboring by hand to restore the original longleaf pine and wiregrass habitat. He was also instrumental in organizing essential local community support around the 5700-acre Barr

Hammock Preserve project, completed by CTF and its partners in 2010.

Tom's wife, Fay Baird, is a valued member of our advisory board; and as we move forward, we take this moment to express our deep gratitude for their work on behalf of conservation in Florida and acknowledge that we count them both as members of the CTF family.

Board Member Spotlight: New Members

In January, 2018, CTF's board of directors welcomed new board members Jon Graham and John Regenfuss. Jon is a senior health care executive with extensive experience building

organizations and improving operations. His experience includes hospital leadership, expertise in oncology and physician practice leadership, and academic medicine. He is also a coach and mentor who strives to develop new leadership and a collegial organizational culture. Jon earned a master's degree in healthcare administration at the University of Iowa and a doctorate in health services policy

and administration from Walden University. He is a pilot and budding photographer focusing on Florida landscapes and wildlife. John is the director of healthcare administration for the University of Florida Department of Neurosurgery, where he has guided the department through unprecedented growth. He holds a BA degree in Philosophy from St. Francis Seminary and an MBA

with emphasis in Human Resources and Finance from Keller Graduate School of Management. He also holds a Yellow belt from Six Sigma. John has a long history of serving his community. In addition to being a Lions Club member since 1988, he has served on the boards of many organizations. His hobbies are running, bicycling, camping, fishing, kayaking, gardening and tinkering.



Gifts in memory and in honor of others

All of our donors and volunteers play an important role in our work, and we can't thank you enough. Our entire team wishes to convey our deepest gratitude for those who have made contributions. Here, we share messages of love, grief, and joy for those who share in our mission to protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.

In memory of:

Alex McKeeman

Catherine Williams

We wish we could have met again. We had fun with you at Dave & Alyssa's wedding. Hopefully this donation will go towards protecting the water you loved so much.

Howard and Ann Nichols

Jennie and Bob Elliott

You will be missed, but your memory and love for the water will be with us every time we look at our dock or go out on the boat.

James Gilliland

Happy knowing Alex cared about Florida's environment

Ohana Group

Alex's love of nature was evident to anyone who knew him. Promoting conservation is a lasting tribute to his memory.

Susan Marshall

To keep the beauty and adventure of Florida alive, as we give thanks for Alex. Love, Susan Marshall

Utility Associates, Inc.

Glenn A. Lingle

Pip and Phyllis Randall

Jane Leslie Gale Hiers

Richard Hiers

Tom Staley

Gary and Nancy Meffe

John White

With our deepest condolences, in honor of our friend, Hurley, Rogner, Miller, Cox & Waranch PA

"Chuck" Wilson

Andrea Wise

In honor of:

Andrew and Becky Dubill

Patricia and David Tipson

Keith Fountain

In recognition of his commitment to protecting Florida's working lands, wildlife and wild places, Cluny McCaffrey

David Whitis

Happy Birthday to a Lover of the Land!, Kimberly Thomas

David Govan

Hope this helps to conserve the land and waterways where you go fishing so often!, Adrienne Barber

Thomas Ellis

All I want for Christmas is for our land & creatures to be protected. Love you Tom, Kimberley Ellis

Linda and Charles Hodoval

Kelly Hodoval



► Spider lily at Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park

Photo by JOHN MORAN

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CONSERVEFLORIDA.ORG

The Conservation Trust for Florida, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit land trust. The mission of the Conservation Trust for Florida is to protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.

Saving Florida. For Nature. For People. Forever.

Mission

We protect Florida's natural and agricultural landscapes for future generations.

Our vision is a Florida where protected lands:

- Form a statewide conservation corridor
- Support healthy populations of native plants and wildlife
- Provide places to recreate and connect with nature
- Contribute to a strong economy
- Support the success of working family farms and ranches
- Replenish and safeguard Florida's freshwater supply

We achieve this vision by:

- Providing expertise to guide landowners through the land protection process
- Serving as a trusted community partner to support statewide land conservation
- Promoting land conservation through effective education and advocacy