

Not So Lazy Days of Summer

A SEASON OF VOLUNTEERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



Out with the old, in with the new: Volunteers from the Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo program watch a Gopher Tortoise, a new resident in timber-thinned areas at Prairie Creek Preserve. These areas are on their way to becoming great flatwoods habitat made possible by pine thinning and lots of native ground-cover planting.

During the summer of 2009, it seemed as if volunteers grew on trees. ACT had more than a dozen groups, from kindergartners to septuagenarians, working on our preserves. Over 1500 hours of hard work have been logged by ACT volunteers in 2009 to date. They have planted 6000 wiregrass plugs, thousands of longleaf pine trees, and cleared or maintained miles of hiking and paddling trails.

Kindergartners through high schoolers from **Girl's Place** helped with trail maintenance and planting at Prairie Creek and Blues Creek Ravine Reserves, and with the Historic Rochelle Church. The groups also took time to learn about Florida ecology at Paynes Prairie Preserve, Morningside Nature Park, and ACT's own preserves. The Girl's Place (formerly the Girl's Club), is a local non-profit that provides after-school programs, athletics, and summer day camp for girls ages five through eighteen.

Five high school students from the **Young Entrepreneurs for Leadership and Change** were among 28 from all over the state who spent six weeks at the University of Florida taking classes, living in the dorms, and doing service projects every afternoon. They worked through the heat, rain, and insects on trail work, removal of invasive exotic plants, and planting trees and grass. At the program's conclusion, they wrote to Ivor Kincaide, ACT's Land Manager:

"We learned so much about Florida ecology, and it was fun and interesting to see so many parts of Gainesville within the larger context of forest restoration. Thank you for creating such a great mix of work and play, and for helping us discover our inner biologists. Our service this summer was a memorable experience."

A group of students from the **Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo** volunteered at Prairie Creek Preserve by helping with flatwoods habitat restoration including native shrub and grass planting, and

first-year **UF Law School** students became bricklayers for a day in Rochelle. ACT continues to work with the UF Conservation Clinic at the Law School and has recently begun a relationship with **FloridaWorks**, a local program providing workforce training and resources in Alachua and Bradford Counties.

Alachua Conservation Trust co-sponsored an extensive visit by Richard Louv to Gainesville a few years ago just after his book **"Last Child in the Woods"** was published. The book lamented a sharply diminished connection between our youth and the natural world, citing a multitude of reasons. The movement sparked by Louv motivated ACT to re-engage young people with their Florida – as this self-knowledge and appreciation of our natural home is essential if we are to conserve a "sense of place." Without a land ethic moving forward into the next generation, all the creativity, generosity, sacrifice, and hard work to save our natural features will be for naught. The Children in the Woods of the summer of 2009 restored our faith.



*Here with ACT's land manager, Ivor Kincaide, high school students pulled exotic coral ardisia and planted native grasses at Prairie Creek Preserve during their summer with the **Young Entrepreneurs for Leadership and Change** program.*

Alachua Conservation Trust thanks our many supporters whose contributions this year continue to make possible the protection of north Florida's special places.

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Alachua Conservation Trust Environmental Education Classes

Sept 26	9:00a	Making the Cut: Everything You Need to Know About Tree Pruning (at Prairie Creek) <i>taught by Ben Thompson</i>
Oct 3	10:00a	Getting to Know the Spiders of North Florida (at Prairie Creek) <i>taught by Jon Reiskind</i>
Oct 10	9:00a	Getting Your Feet Wet: An Introduction to Wetlands (at Prairie Creek) <i>Instructor TBA</i>
Nov 14	8:00a	Alachua Audubon Society Field Trip* (at Tusawilla Preserve) <i>taught by Ivor Kincaide</i>

Check www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org for other upcoming classes!

Prairie Creek Preserve classes meet at Witness Tree Junction at the intersection of CR 234 and CR 2082 in Rochelle.

*The AAS class will meet at 8:00a at Sweetbay, 2002 SW 34th St in Gainesville, to carpool to Tusawilla Preserve.

Please RSVP: (352) 373-1078 or Info@AlachuaConservationTrust.org

UF's Community Campaign: A Great Opportunity to Support ACT

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA FACULTY AND STAFF CAN NOW SUPPORT ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST THROUGH CHARITABLE PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS.



The UF Community Campaign is kicking off in mid-September. Since 1993, the UFCC has contributed to scores of charities in the community, and in the last three years, the campaign has distributed more than \$1 million annually to a wide spectrum of organizations. This year's goal, according to Robert Jerry, the Campaign Chair, is \$1,111,111.11.

The UF Community Campaign carefully measures the benefits to our local community of a charity's activities. ACT is proud of the preserves we've acquired and opened in the past few years and of the many environmental education and recreational opportunities we provide to people of all ages.

ACT continues to employ students whenever we can – this summer, we had three high school interns, and this year, we will have several UF law students working with us. During the summer, ACT hosted a UF Forestry School class who used our property as a laboratory for two weeks. UF Planning students wrote a grant proposal for ACT that resulted in a \$4 million grant for land acquisition two years ago.

We encourage UF faculty and staff to give generously to local charities, and to specify **Alachua Conservation Trust** if you want to show your support for saving our special places.

Protecting Wetlands Drop by Drop



ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST RECEIVED A \$1 MILLION DOLLAR GRANT TO PROTECT LAND IN THE PAYNES PRAIRIE BASIN AS PART OF THE FOURTH INSTALLMENT OF OUR NORTH FLORIDA WETLANDS CONSERVATION PROJECT.

The funding source is the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), a program of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Its purpose is to protect critical habitat for migrating birds, especially waterfowl. The program stresses partnerships, and our plan (originally crafted by ACT's former director Lauren Day) includes participation by Alachua County Forever, Florida Communities Trust, the Conservation Trust for Florida, and several generous private donors.

Past phases of this project (totaling \$3 million) have awarded these federal funds to protect portions of Lake Tusawilla, Kanapaha Prairie, and Barr Hammock/Ledwith Lake.

In a recent site visit to Alachua County, a Massachusetts state official who scores these NAWCA proposals from all over the country was very impressed with the quality of our projects, and even more impressed with our strong partnerships and community support.

As we like to remind our supporters, for every \$3 that ACT raises in local funds, we protect \$100 worth of land. Re-capturing some of our federal tax dollars, in a very competitive merit-driven process, is one way that we do it.



A great egret and her chicks along the Potano Paddling Trail earlier this summer.

Save
the date!

Tusawilla Preserve in Micanopy

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

5pm - Friday, October 30th

*Join us for a sunset overlooking
Tusawilla's prairie basin*

For more information or to sponsor this event,
contact us at:

(352) 373-1078 or Info@AlachuaConservationTrust.org

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Prairie Creek: Our Backyard Wilderness

IT TOOK TEN SEPARATE TRANSACTIONS AND OVER TWO DECADES TO PROTECT THE 3.5 MILES OF PRAIRIE CREEK BETWEEN HAWTHORNE ROAD AND PAYNES PRAIRIE. TODAY, THIS IS ONE OF THE WILDEST AREAS IN FLORIDA NEAR A MAJOR CITY.



A large bald cypress at Prairie Creek Ranch is either being measured or hugged by Liz Binford, ACT's Project Manager.

ACT's most recent acquisition, closed in late March, is **Prairie Creek Ranch** (also known as Crevassic Park). This 750-acre wilderness spans the creek and shares nearly three miles of border with Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. The land is a mosaic of wet prairie, cypress swamps, flatwoods, sandhills, and hardwood hammock. Used historically for cattle grazing and as an exotic game preserve, today it has nesting sandhill cranes and ospreys, deer and turkey in abundance, and a Florida black bear who may have glimpsed his first exotic Asian antelope this Spring.

ACT borrowed the funds from private lenders to purchase the property, which had also been highly sought after by developers. Our plan to re-pay the \$4 million bridge loan includes seeking federal, state, and local land acquisition grants. We have secured \$1.5 million in federal funds so far, and are in negotiations with other agencies.

Prairie Creek Ranch includes a dramatic lodge, stables, and barns. ACT is currently soliciting proposals for how these existing improvements should be used in the future: we are stressing entrepreneurial and sustainable solutions that protect the wilderness values.

If you know somebody who would be interested in a unique partnership with ACT, please get a copy of our **Request for Proposals** by contacting Hutch or Lesa at ACT.



As a community service project, forty incoming UF law students became bricklayers for a day. They laid 120-year old bricks around new foundation piers supporting the historic Rochelle Church.



Thanks for a hard day's work:

John Montague, Joe Joyce, Saberin Jamshed, Christopher Burton, Mohammad Mubarek, Jennifer Allen, Stephen Bagge, Justin Chang, Labeed Choudhry, Hilary Flint, Joshua Fong, Courtney Gaughan, Corbin Hanson, Martin Holland, Michael Hrdlicka, Karissa Ickes, David Jacobson, John Janousek, Levy Johnson, Eric Jolk, Jason Juall, Daniel Lazaro, Rachel Lowes, Joseph Malca, Jonathon Mann, Bruce Marin, Thomas McCourt, Lina Melendez, Gregory Mitchell, Geoff Moore, Lindsay Morauer, Joshua Nemser, Paul Pakidis, Victor Piemonte, Daniel Policastro, Jordan Pratt, Gregory Rechtman, Ronell Robinzine, Joshua Root, Adam Rosen, Christina Russo, Amanda Samerson, and Kara Tucker



Sally Dickinson, Gladys Lane, and ACT's Director Robert Hutchinson stay hydrated during a Volunteer Day in June when a thousand wiregrass plugs were planted at Prairie Creek. Our Gator 6-wheel-drive work vehicle was generously donated by the Crevasse family.



FloridaWorks intern Sad'Hamel Gregoire worked with ACT on boardwalk construction, mowing, and painting. Our wonderful Kawasaki Mule was donated by Streits MotorSports.

Thank You, Volunteers!

ACT has become completely reliant on volunteers for land management, building restoration, public outreach, and many office functions. This fall, we will be convening a group of people to advise us on how to do a better job in recruiting, task-matching, training, motivating, and rewarding our volunteers. From this effort, we expect to find one or more volunteer coordinators, and to adopt best practices for volunteerism. If you have particular interest or expertise in this area, please consider helping ACT become the best place to volunteer in Alachua County.



Girl's Place campers clean and stack bricks at the Historic Rochelle Church stabilization project.



Girl's Place campers explore the trails in ACT's Blues Creek Ravine Preserve.



ACT Board members Bill Bryson and John Winn, and volunteers Christine Housel and Creed Greer plant native wiregrass at Prairie Creek Preserve. Wiregrass provides the fuel for returning low-intensity fires to the understory.

- Michael Gannon & Genevieve Haugen
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- Floyd W. Wood
- Marc & Barbara Woodmansee

We strive for accuracy -- please point out anything that should be corrected.

Wild Spaces Public Places . . . in the City of Gainesville

THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE HAS CONTRACTED WITH ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST TO ACQUIRE LANDS USING WILD SPACES – PUBLIC PLACES FUNDS.

This fall, ACT will begin negotiating with willing land-owners to protect land the City has ranked highly for its conservation values.

This is not the first time ACT has been the City's land acquisition partner. In the early 1990s, ACT worked purchasing lands along the Hogtown Creek Greenway, including Split Rock Nature Preserve and some of the floodplain along NW 8th Avenue. ACT also acquired the Gumroot Conservation Area north of Pithlachocco (aka Newnans Lake). In more recent years, ACT negotiated the acquisition of Hogtown Headwaters currently under development as the City's newest nature park.

Gainesville has done a good job acquiring urban greenspace in the form of neighborhood parks, nature preserves, greenways, and the urban-defining greenbelt (or "emerald necklace".) But undeveloped greenspace is becoming harder to find within the city limits, so this is an important chance to save the last few gems.

Wild Spaces-Public Places is the sales tax initiative passed by Alachua County voters in November of 2008.

It provides a half-penny of sales tax, collected for two years, for recreation improvements and natural lands acquisition.

As with all Wild Spaces-Public Places expenditures, they must be approved by the County Commission or the various city commissions in Alachua County and will be reviewed by an independent citizens' committee. Most of Gainesville's split of the funds has been designated for recreation improvements, but about 15% is being used for park acquisitions. For Alachua County, these priorities are reversed, with most of the funding being for wild spaces and a smaller proportion for recreation improvements. The cost of developing a Senior Recreation Center is being shared between the City and County.

Wild Spaces-Public Places funding ends when the current sales tax expires in December, 2010, so this may be our best and perhaps last chance to permanently protect some of our remaining urban greenspace.



Alachua County Forever has made two purchases so far with **Wild Spaces-Public Places** funding. A 280-acre parcel was recently added to Paynes Prairie Preserve, and a 36-acre parcel that was a "hole-in-the-donut" of the Newnans Lake Conservation Area was purchased. A summary of Alachua County Forever's successes are:

- Total acreage protected: 17,122
- Acreage open to the public, or will be in the future: 90%
- Acreage under contract: 341
- Value of land protected: \$77 million
 - County share: \$25 million
 - Partner share: \$52 million
- Acreage managed by Alachua County: 8,706
- Acreage managed by Partners: 8,862



*Alachua Conservation Trust thanks
our 2009 Corporate Sponsors
for their generosity*

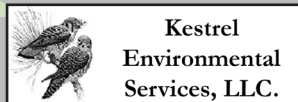
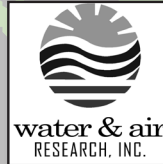
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*In memory of friends and
supporters of Alachua
Conservation Trust who
are no longer with us:*

Helen Hood
Jack R. Smith
David Cofrin
Ruth Cantwell
Sam Gowan

Correction:

In our May 2009 newsletter, we printed that a donation had been made in memory of Flo Mickelberry. It should have read "Flora Ward." Thank you!

Alachua Conservation Trust's extended family is the foundation of our success:

Thank you to: **Ken Langland** from IFAS for advice about Camp's Canal, and to the **Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission** for exotics control on the Potano Paddling Trail. Many thanks to **John Green** at **GreenSouth** for generosity in helping us acquire a serious mower, and to the **Reddick Brothers** for keeping dozens of our small motors running. We appreciate the art and photos that many let us use – **John Moran's** images are all over our website, and **Larry Korhnaak's** pictures were used in our last newsletter. Many thanks for **Jim & Jerry Painter** for providing masonry supplies and advice for our Historic Rochelle Church stabilization project – we'll be back for that crane to lift the belfry soon.

Thanks to all the legal advice we get – from **David Menet**, **Larry Turner**, **John McPherson**, **Richard White** and others. We appreciate the work of **Al Haaker**, our surveyor who always shows up even when the swamp is deep. Thanks to **Dustin Bonds** and **Austin Crevasse**, our on-site caretakers at Tusawilla and Prairie Creek Preserves, and to **Ben Thompson** who is just now figuring out what he's gotten himself into. **JulieAnne Tabone**, **Darrell Hartman**, **Doug Hornbeck**, **Elizabeth Drawdy**, and **Erik Kivimaki** continue to be steady volunteers par excellence, and **Vicky Baldwin** is our eyes and ears at Saarinen Preserve. **Paul & Joni Florence**, as always, are generously supporting our property clean-up efforts. **Tom Ankersen** of the UF Conservation Clinic continues to direct his law students in their work on our toughest projects.

We appreciate **Ramesh Buch**, **Brian Block**, and **Sandra Vardaman** for continuing to propel Alachua County Forever forward, and **George & Lee Edwards**, (President and his better half) of Friends of Paynes Prairie for their years of cooperation with ACT on a number of projects and fundraisers. **Freddie Johnson**, **Susan Marynowski**, and the entire board of **Conservation Burial, Inc.** continue their efforts to create happy hunting grounds for all of us; and thank you very much to **GeoHazards** for donating their soil and sinkhole assessment services. We appreciate **John King** of **Water & Air Research** and the quick, precise work of **Simon Cordery** in providing environmental assessments. Without **Lauren Day** and **Matt Sexton** of The Conservation Fund, conservation would not be so fun (or funded). All the folks associated with NAWCA are a pleasure to work with: **Rob Deblinger**, **Craig Watson**, **Callee Davenport**, and **Christina Ryder**.

Thank you **Mark Carpenter** for striving for a conservation outcome for threatened lands next to Watermelon Pond, and to **Ian Kress** for being the watchdog from afar for the Serenola Forest. We appreciate the planning assistance of **Ken McMurray**. Congratulations to **Kathy Cantwell** and the entire **Putnam Land Conservancy** on their successful multi-million dollar grant award from Florida Communities Trust to protect land in far eastern Alachua County.

And thank you for caring about Alachua County's natural, historical, and cultural treasures.



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ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST: The Natural Leader

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Since 1988, the mission of Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) has been to protect the natural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources in and around Alachua County, Florida. ACT protects land through purchase, donation, and conservation easement.

ACT is a 501(c)3 non-profit charity and receives no government grants for general operating support; we rely on contributions from private individuals, corporations, and foundations. Donations may be tax deductible, however ACT does not provide tax advice.

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