



Alachua Conservation Trust Gazetteer

HOW MUCH GREENSPACE IS ENOUGH?

The glib response is, “How much development is enough?” These questions are two sides of the same coin – there is a give and take between conservation and development that is determined by the public’s needs and wants.

When asking how much land needs to be conserved, there are answers based on science and others found in regulations. But the ultimate decision about how much land to protect is a collective, incremental, ethical, and aesthetic choice based on what kind of environment our community wants to shape.

As an organization that relies completely on public support, ACT’s mission is to protect as much of Alachua County as the community wants to see protected. We cannot protect more than that. We protect land through real estate transactions that respect property rights in order to permanently conserve land rather than by advocating for or engaging in regulatory activities such as zoning or comprehensive planning. By purchasing real estate, ACT guarantees the conservation of acquired areas beyond the tenure of the current governing body.

Using charitable contributions and public referenda, Alachua Conservation Trust will continue to play as large a role in land protection as the public will support – that’s how we know the amount of greenspace is enough. The rest is up to you.

Newnans Lake photo by Alison Blakeslee.



ACT COMPLETES THE LONG TRAIL TO ACCREDITATION

Fewer than 100 of the more than 1700 land trusts in the nation have been accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. This March, Alachua Conservation Trust joins Tall Timbers Land Conservancy as the only accredited land trusts in Florida.

Accreditation measures a land trust’s performance against the *Standards and Practices* developed by the Land Trust Alliance, an organization devoted to strengthening the national land conservation community. Creation of the accreditation process was motivated by the need to strengthen how conservation easements are handled throughout the U.S.

For ACT, the process of accreditation has taken over three years. ACT’s goal was to maintain our flexibility, entrepreneurial spirit, and ethical compass while creating financial reserves, greater accountability, and more solid land protection transactions. Our first application package weighed in at 40 pounds, we submitted 700 pages of follow-up material, and estimate that the exercise took 1000 hours of staff time and cost \$20,000. ACT has emerged from this process stronger and more efficient, and we can confidently assure landowners, supporters, and public agencies that we are a worthy partner.

Many thanks John Winn, Lauren Day, JulieAnne Tabone, Chuck Roe, ACT staff, and everyone who helped with the accreditation process. For more information, go to www.LandTrustAccreditation.org





WET PRAIRIE TOUR TAKES A LOOK AT ALACHUA COUNTY'S UNIQUE WETLANDS

In December, a busload of wet prairie owners, managers, and researchers toured six wet prairies in Alachua County to discuss management techniques and issues. The tour included Hogtown Prairie, Paynes Prairie, Tuscawilla Preserve, Ledwith Prairie, Levy Lake, and Kanapaha Prairie. These wet prairies were historically fire-dependent ecosystems and are now often managed with mowing or grazing to prevent encroachment of hardwood trees like laurel oaks.

Alachua County is full of wet prairies. These wetlands are characterized by grassy plains with few trees that depend on flooding and fire. Water flowing into wet prairies comes from creeks or runoff and often drains into sinkholes.

Wet prairies are important conservation areas, because while they may not be suited for residential development, they are often damaged by muck farming, sod harvesting, peat mining, or aquaculture. Sometimes they are overgrazed or owners try to modify the hydrology to suit their needs. The biggest example of this is Paynes Prairie, through which dikes and canals were built to drain the prairie for grazing in the early 20th century.

In north Florida, where the landscape is dominated by closed canopy hardwood and pine forests, wet prairies provide an important habitat for many birds, amphibians, and reptiles. Today, we can still feel the awe expressed by William Bartram as he described his first encounter with the largest of our wet prairies:

"... when at once opens to view, the most sudden transition from darkness to light, that can possibly be exhibited in a natural landscape. The extensive Alachua savanna is a level, green plain, above fifteen miles over, fifty miles in circumference, and scarcely a tree or bush of any kind to be seen on it. It is encircled with high, sloping hills, covered with waving forests and fragrant Orange groves, rising from an exuberantly fertile soil. The towering Magnolia grandiflora and transcendent Palm, stand conspicuous amongst them. At the same time are seen innumerable droves of cattle; the lordly bull, lowing cow and sleek capricious heifer. The hills and groves re-echo their cheerful, social voices. Herds of sprightly deer, squadrons of the beautiful, fleet Seminole horse, flocks of turkeys, civilized communities of the sonorous, watchful crane, mix together, appearing happy and contented in the enjoyment of peace..."

UPCOMING EVENTS SPRING 2010

Conservation Stewards Awards

*at Historic Haile Homestead,
March 26, 5:30 to 9:00 pm*

The Homestead will be open and there will be a silent auction, BBQ dinner, and historic drama. Tickets required - please join us!

Trees, Flowers, Ferns, &

Pollinators *at Blues Creek Ravine,
March 27 -- 10 am*

Taught by Meg Neiderhofer,
Gainesville City Arborist

Edible and Medicinal Plants

of Florida *at Prairie Creek
Preserve, April 3 -- 10 am*

Taught by Rick Stepp, Professor
of Anthropology at the University
of Florida

Ecosystems of Florida *at Prairie
Creek Preserve, May 15 -- 10 am*

Taught by Linda Tyson, Professor
of Biology at Santa Fe College

More exciting environmental
education classes will be scheduled
for the summer and fall.

For directions to ACT's preserves,
please visit our website:

www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org



Josh Dickinson describes the natural history of Hogtown Prairie. The Wet Prairie Tour group poses in front of Ledwith Prairie (above left). Photos by Brandi Jo Petrino

TUSCAWILLA TRIUMPH: AN ADDITIONAL 75 ACRES ADDED TO THE PRESERVE

Alachua Conservation Trust has now permanently preserved 596 acres of Tuscawilla Prairie and its surrounding uplands in transactions with five landowners; the most recent was a month ago, adding 75 acres. Funding for the last two transactions, totalling 139 acres, came from federal migratory bird funds, called the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act*. The first three purchases used funds from *Florida Communities Trust* and private supporters.

Tuscawilla Prairie, the green expanse just south of Micanopy, has been used for agriculture and grazing, and it has also been a favorite fishing and birding spot for generations. The dynamic nature of the place, with water levels that fluctuate as often as ideas for what the land should be used for, makes the basin exciting to watch and even more important to protect.

Many environmental education classes are taught each year at Tuscawilla, in cooperation with the Town of Micanopy's adjacent Native American Heritage Preserve. Many of these classes are birding or wildflower viewing trips with local experts, and others interpret the cultural history or provide instruction in landscape painting. A list of upcoming classes is available at ACT's website: www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org

Future site plans for the Preserve include a boardwalk and the reintroduction of prescribed fire, in part to reduce the risk of a wildfire. The most recent purchase of 2000 feet of frontage along scenic US 441 will provide the Old Florida Heritage Highway with one of its most magnificent vistas.

PLANT PROFILE

Latin Name: *Pontederia cordata*

Common Name: Pickerelweed



Pickerelweed is native to Florida and is commonly found growing in streams, marshes, ditches, ponds, and lake margins. It is a perennial plant that typically grows two to three feet tall and blooms from spring to summer. Leaves are large and are usually lance-shaped. Pickerelweed flowers are tubular in shape, violet-blue, and each flower only lasts one day. This stunning flower will soon be blooming at both Prairie Creek Preserve and Tuscawilla Preserve.

LANDMARK TRANSACTION ADDS 500 ACRES TO PAYNES PRAIRIE PRESERVE

On March 9th, Florida's Governor and Cabinet agreed to purchase over 500 acres from ACT to add to Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. The property will permanently protect the most beautiful stretch of Prairie Creek, and will enhance the State's ability to consistently manage the area with a mix of fire, flood, grazing, and exotic controls.

The land being sold by Alachua Conservation Trust will abut our existing 380-acre Prairie Creek Preserve. ACT and the Florida Park Service are considering a trail plan to link the properties, and to enhance the Potano Paddling Trail, which includes this stretch of the Creek.

Prairie Creek can best be appreciated by paddling from Newnans Lake. The county's Powers Park Boat Ramp makes a good starting place. The creek meanders through giant cypress with miniature cathedrals of knees, and sweeps along wet prairie basins and through towering hardwood and palm hammocks. This spring, there will be blue flag iris and pickerelweed blooming under the red maple and lacy green cypress foliage. There have already been sightings of baby alligators, otters, and even a bear along the creek. The soundtrack is a mix of warblers, owls, cranes, and frogs.

Prairie Creek is one of the wildest places you can experience in Florida so close to an urban area. After more than two decades of persistence, ACT and our partners (Paynes Prairie Preserve, the St. Johns River Water Management District, Florida Communities Trust, and Alachua County Forever) are happy to declare that the first part of our mission - to protect the land along the creek - is largely accomplished. Now the real work begins: to restore and maintain the basin by balancing the natural forces with ongoing human impacts.





12 West University Avenue, Suite 201
Gainesville, Florida 32601

ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST: The Natural Leader

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Howard Jelks, *President of ACT*, Fish Biologist - U.S. Geological Survey
Janet Wootten, *Vice President of ACT*, Research Editor - retired
Alison Blakeslee, *Secretary of ACT*, Private Investigator - Fisher & Blakeslee
Eric Flagg, *Treasurer of ACT*, Enviro. Scientist/Documentary Film Producer
Anne Barkdoll, Ph.D., Biologist - Florida Div. of Recreation & Parks
Bill Bryson, Publisher/Business Owner
Fred Cantrell, Associate Vice President for Business Affairs - UF - retired
Mike Castine, AICP, Senior Planner - Alachua County Growth Management
Trey Greer, Associate Director, University Writing Program - UF
Richard Hamann, J.D., Associate in Law, Ctr. for Gov't Responsibility - UF
Pegeen Hanrahan, P.E., Mayor - City of Gainesville
Laurel Nesbit, Project Manager - Alta Systems
Peter NeSmith, Botanist - Water & Air Research, Inc.
Justin Saarinen, Geographer & GIS Consultant

STAFF

Robert Hutchinson, Executive Director
Ivor Kincaide, Land Manager
David Trenor, Land Management Intern
Cat Gowan, Environmental Policy Intern
Ben Thompson, Assistant Land Manager
Parker Titus, Resident Caretaker

Lesa Holder, Office Manager
Liz Binford, Project Manager
WD Watkins, Office Assistant
Mike Willson, Legal Intern
Dustin Bonds, Resident Caretaker
Drew Davis, Resident Caretaker

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.

ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST'S CHARITABLE SOLICITATION NUMBER IS **CH12693**. A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800) 435-7352. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

