



*Alachua  
Conservation  
Trust*

# Alachua Conservation Trust

*is committed to protecting the natural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources in and around Alachua County, Florida. ACT protects land through purchase, donation, and conservation easements.*

Alachua Conservation Trust is a regional land trust that works with landowners to protect our special places. Since 1988, ACT has directly acquired more than eleven thousand acres in north-central Florida for public parks and nature preserves, and has helped private landowners achieve their conservation goals on thousands of additional acres.



Howard Jelks

When three miles of land bordering the Gainesville-Hawthorne Rail Trail was auctioned off to out-of-state developers, 300 supporters raised nearly \$3 million in loans and gifts in ninety days to save **Phifer Flatwoods**. A year later, ACT sold the 644 acres, including this pitcher plant marsh, to *Alachua County Forever* with a matching grant from *Florida Communities Trust*, and the funds were re-cycled to purchase even more land along the Rail Trail.

ACT's charitable mission is established by an all-volunteer Board of Directors and carried out by professional staff who rely on an extensive network of advisors, volunteers, and creative partnerships.



John Moran

The **Haile Plantation, House** built in 1854, was restored by Alachua Conservation Trust in the 1990s. Today, it is a house museum operated by *Historic Haile Homestead, Inc.* which is raising funds for a visitor's center.



Marsh Drew

**Withlacoochee Marine Preserve** is 413 acres of coastal hammock and tidal marsh that was protected in 1991 from likely development with a conservation easement by ACT – it is now a Yankeetown nature park. ACT has past or pending projects in every county touching Alachua County.

When Alachua Conservation Trust began more than twenty years ago, the nation had fewer than 400 local land trusts – today there are nearly 1700. ACT is one of the South's leading local conservation organizations when measured by the amount and value of land protected. Alachua Conservation Trust has also set the curve in diversity of projects – from conservation easements and outright acquisitions, to historical preservation and environmental education.

This report summarizes a few of ACT's projects that reflect the range of our activities, and looks toward future projects that we can accomplish together – with your support.

# A Conservation Toolkit

**Land purchase or donation.** Alachua Conservation Trust purchases land and either holds it in perpetuity or conveys it to a public land conservation agency. ACT purchases land only from willing sellers, and we generally follow a process of first reaching an agreement with the seller on the land's value, which we then confirm with one or more independent appraisals. We then get a survey, environmental audit, and title insurance before closing. ACT manages land to restore it to a condition that maximizes the biological diversity of native plants and animals while allowing for resource-based recreation.

ACT accepts donations of conservation land, and because we are a non-profit organization, donors may receive substantial tax benefits, such as income tax deductions and avoidance of capital gains taxes on appreciated property. ACT generally enters into a gift agreement with donors, which outlines the timing and terms of the donation, how it may be used or restricted, and how the donor wishes to be recognized (or not).

**Conservation easement.** A conservation easement is an agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits the uses of the land to protect its conservation values. It allows the landowner to own and use their land for conservation-compatible purposes, but limits development. Landowners are still free to engage in agriculture or forestry, to sell the property, or to pass it on to heirs. Donating an easement can result in substantial income, estate, and property tax benefits, which have recently changed at the local, state, and federal levels. All of ACT's conservation easements include a perpetual monitoring and enforcement endowment.

**Partnerships.** There are a bewildering array of local, regional, state, and federal agencies engaged in land conservation. ACT has worked with more than a dozen such agencies, each with differing criteria for projects they will fund, and a specific process for gaining approval. ACT spends considerable effort staying current with the programs and maintaining relationships with the principals involved. In the past five years, ACT projects have received an average of \$5 million per year in acquisition grants from local, state, and federal agencies.

**Mitigation.** Developers sometimes gain regulatory permission to degrade a resource in one area if they agree to save a similar resource elsewhere. This mitigation might be for impacts on wetlands or destruction of habitat of threatened species (such as gopher tortoises). ACT has no regulatory authority, and we take no position in advocating for or against mitigation policies or practices. However, when government agencies make mitigation funds available to protect natural resources, ACT may participate by working with landowners, developers, and agencies to find suitable mitigation property and owning and managing it in accordance with the mitigation requirements.

**Transfer of Development Rights.** Alachua and Marion Counties have programs that provide market incentives for clustering development into areas that are most suitable. One tool is to permit development density to be transferred from one area to another. ACT is not involved in the regulatory decisions, but we are available to receive the resulting conservation areas that are created when most or all future development rights have been removed.

Funding availability, regulations, and the priorities of programs frequently change. The staff of ACT is always willing to see if there is a combination of purchase and sale, donation, and other tools that can conserve a cherished landscape.



Huch

A major portion of **Gum Slough** wilderness including seven springs, in Marion and Sumter Counties, is protected with conservation easements donated by the Wilson and MacGregor Smith families.

**Alachua Conservation Trust**, with the help of many partners, has produced this snapshot of where we have succeeded, and where we have not, in protecting and connecting our natural areas. ACT has been instrumental in the protection of over fifteen thousand acres in Alachua and surrounding counties, about eleven thousand of which were transferred to state and local land conservation agencies. Currently ACT owns and manages close to three thousand acres.

**ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST ACRES**

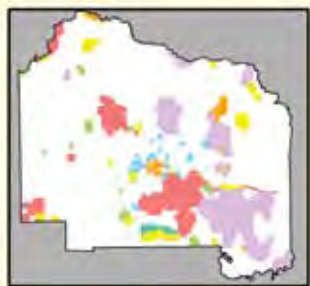
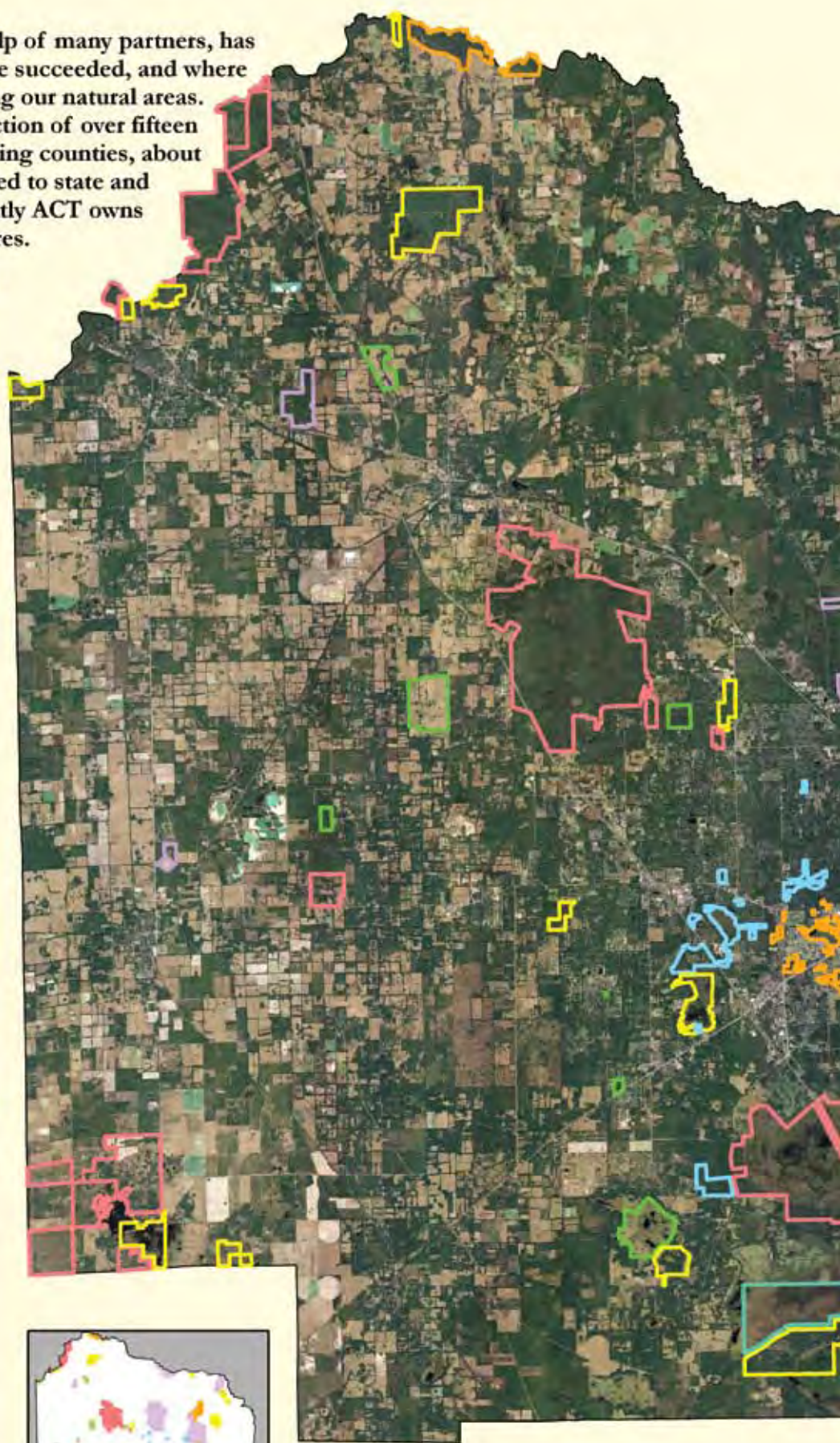
BLUES CREEK RAVINE <sup>af</sup>	162
HARTZOG CAVE	2
HISTORIC HAILE HOMESTEAD	39
HOGTOWN CREEK BASIN INHOLDING	6
KANAPAHA PRAIRIE CONSERVATION EASEMENT <sup>af</sup>	683
LAKE TUSCAWILLA CONSERVATION AREA <sup>f</sup>	544
LEE CONSERVATION EASEMENT	12
MILLHOPPER FARM CONSERVATION EASEMENT	656
PRAIRIE CREEK PRESERVE <sup>f</sup>	365
RETIREMENT HOME FOR HORSES CONSERVATION EASEMENT	260
SAARINEN PRESERVE	81
WITHLACOCHEE MARINE CONSERVATION EASEMENT (Levy County) <sup>f</sup>	413
GUM SLOUGH CONSERVATION EASEMENT (Marion/Sumter County)	423

**CITY OF GAINESVILLE**

ALFRED A. RING PARK	19
BIVENS ARM NATURE PARK	81
BOULWARE SPRINGS PARK & HISTORIC WATERWORKS	108
BROKEN ARROW BLUFF	9
CLEAR LAKE NATURE PARK	12
COFRIN NATURE PARK <sup>af</sup>	30
COLCLOUGH POND NATURE PARK	5
DOWNTOWN GAINESVILLE RAIL TRAIL	12
FLATWOODS CONSERVATION AREA	70
FOREST PARK	26
GAINESVILLE-HAWTHORNE TRAIL	7
GREEN ACRES PARK	37
GUM ROOT PARK	369
HOGTOWN CREEK HEADWATERS NATURE PARK <sup>f</sup>	70
JOHN MAHON NATURE PARK	10
LOBLOLLY WOODS NATURE PARK	164
MORNINGSIDE NATURE CENTER	278
PALM POINT NATURE PARK	16
SPLIT ROCK CONSERVATION AREA <sup>f</sup>	241
SPRINGTREE PARK	12
SUGARFOOT PRAIRIE CONSERVATION AREA	199
TERWILLIGER POND CONSERVATION AREA	25
TWENTY-NINTH ROAD NATURE PARK	5
WACAHOOA WOODS	200

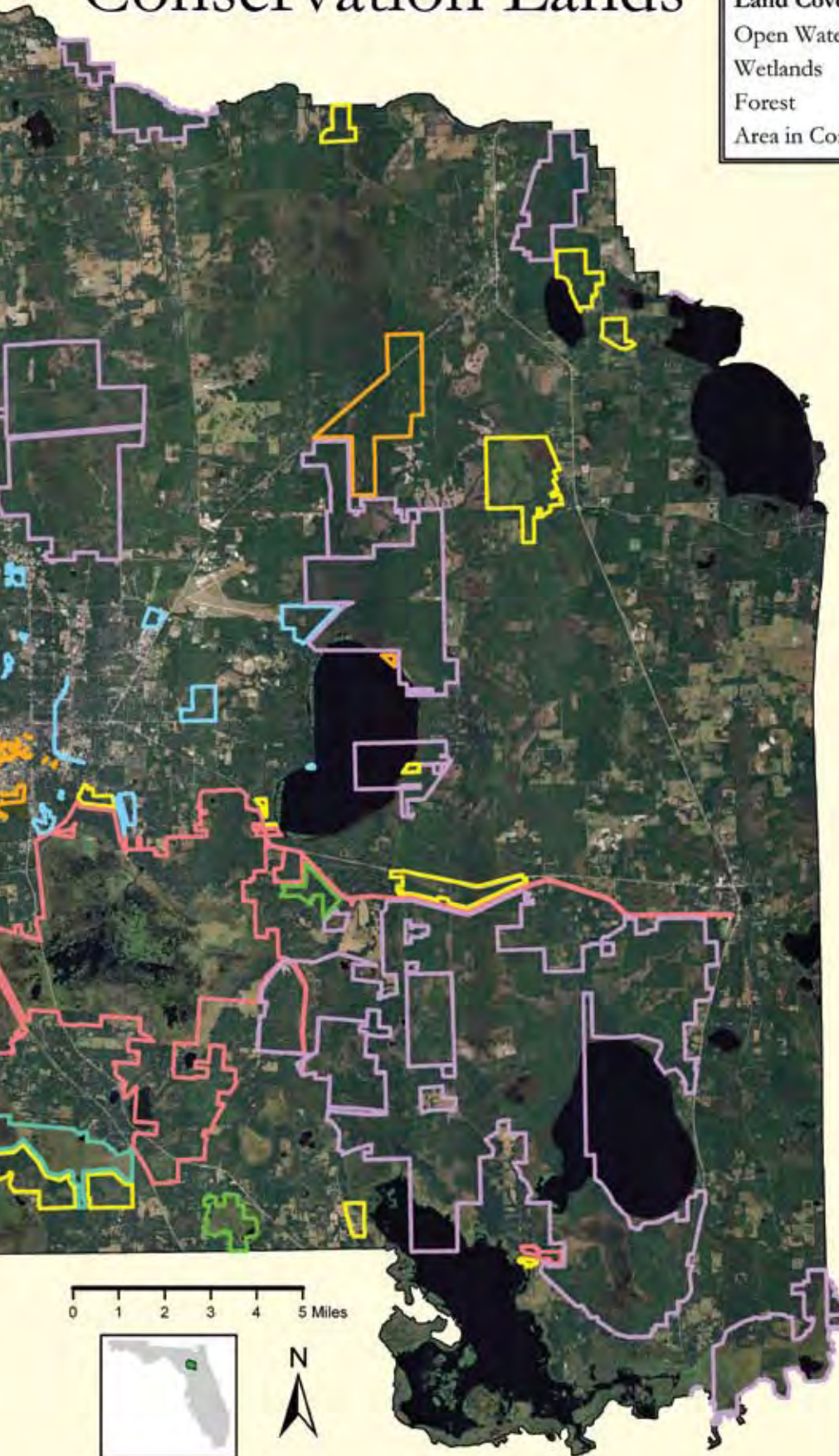
**ALACHUA COUNTY**

RAYONIER AUSTIN CARY ADDITION <sup>f</sup>	1,845
BALU FOREST	1,609
BARR HAMMOCK PRESERVE <sup>af</sup>	2,302
CAMP KULAQUA CONSERVATION EASEMENT <sup>af</sup>	198
EARL P. POWERS PARK	9
KANAPAHA BOTANICAL GARDENS	38
KANAPAHA PRAIRIE CONSERVATION EASEMENT <sup>af</sup>	283
LAKE ALTO PRESERVE NORTH <sup>af</sup>	486
LAKE ALTO PRESERVE SOUTH <sup>af</sup>	187
LAKE FOREST CREEK PITHLACHOCCO CANOE TRACT <sup>f</sup>	25
LAKE KANAPAHA CONSERVATION AREA	448
M. K. RAWLINGS PARK	24
MCCALL PARK	76
MILL CREEK NATURE PRESERVE <sup>af</sup>	1,194
OWENS-ILLINOIS PARK	23
PHIFER FLATWOODS FLATWOODS <sup>af</sup>	644
POE SPRINGS PARK	197
ROBERTSON CONSERVATION EASEMENT <sup>af</sup>	100
SAN FELASCO PARK	186
SANTA FE RIVER - AP&E <sup>af</sup>	234
SANTA FE RIVER - ODUM CONSERVATION EASEMENT <sup>af</sup>	41
SWEETWATER PRESERVE <sup>af</sup>	121
WATERMELON POND - FERRAN <sup>af</sup>	36
WATERMELON POND - GLADMAN <sup>af</sup>	440
WATERMELON POND - KING <sup>af</sup>	40
WATERMELON POND PARK	12
WOOD CONSERVATION EASEMENT <sup>af</sup>	162



<sup>af</sup>Acquired with Alachua County Forever funds.  
<sup>f</sup>Owned by The Conservation Fund.  
<sup>af</sup>Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida.  
<sup>f</sup>U.S. Census Bureau.  
<sup>af</sup>Calculated from St. Johns River and Suwannee River Water Management District data.  
<sup>f</sup>Acquired with Florida Communities Trust funds.  
<sup>af</sup>Conservation Easement with NRCS funding.  
<sup>f</sup>Joint ownership between Alachua County and St. Johns River Water Management District.  
 Map created by Elizabeth Binford, November 2006.

# Alachua County Conservation Lands



Alachua County		
Population <sup>c</sup>	247,561	
Total Area <sup>d</sup>	969.12 mi <sup>2</sup>	(620,236 acres)
People per Square Mile	283.25	
Land Cover <sup>e</sup>	Area (acres)	% of County
Open Water	36,962	6.0%
Wetlands	78,760	12.7%
Forest	272,327	43.9%
Area in Conservation	107,097	17.3%

STATE OF FLORIDA	ACRES
DEVIL'S MILLHOPPER GEOLOGICAL STATE PARK	67
DUDLEY FARM HISTORIC STATE PARK	333
GOETHE STATE FOREST	1,540
MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS HISTORIC STATE PARK	100
O'LENO STATE PARK	401
PAYNES PRAIRIE PRESERVE STATE PARK	20,857
RIVER RISE PRESERVE STATE PARK	1,962
SAN FELASCO HAMMOCK PRESERVE STATE PARK	6,987
WATERMELON POND MITIGATION AREA	1,306
ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	
CRONES CRADLE CONSERVATION EASEMENT	128
LOCHLOOSA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AREA	27,046
LOCHLOOSA CONNECTOR - RIVER STYX <sup>g</sup>	2,815
NEWNANS LAKE CONSERVATION AREA <sup>h</sup>	7,464
ORANGE CREEK RESTORATION AREA	2,528
TTC WELLFIELD CONSERVATION EASEMENT	3,984
SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	
CITY OF NEWBERRY CONSERVATION EASEMENT	40
GRAHAM CONSERVATION AREA	335
LONGLEAF FLATWOODS RESERVE	2,788
MONTEOCHA CONSERVATION AREA	60
MONTEOCHA CREEK CONSERVATION EASEMENT	969
SANTA FE SPRINGS CONSERVATION AREA	378
SANTA FE SWAMP CONSERVATION AREA	1,560
TTC WELLFIELD CONSERVATION EASEMENT	3,086
UPPER WACCASASSA CONSERVATION AREA	61
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA	
AUSTIN CARY MEMORIAL FOREST	2,000
BARTRAM-CARR WOODS	9
BAT HOUSE WOODS	5
BIVENS RIM FOREST	114
BLUE WAVE WETLAND	2
DASH COURSE WOODS	3
DIGITAL DESIGN WETLAND/SWEET SINK	8
FRATERNITY WETLAND	5
GRAHAM WOODS	8
GREEN POND AND NEWINS-ZIEGLER SINK	2
HARMONIC WOODS	10
HOGTOWN CREEK WOODS	22
LAKE ALICE	130
LAKE ALICE SOUTH WETLAND	11
MCCARTY WOODS	3
NATURAL AREA TEACHING LABORATORY	60
PRESIDENT'S PARK	4
REITZ RAVINE WOODS	3
SANTA FE RIVER RANCH	738
SOLAR PARK POND	11
SWINE UNIT WOODS	8
TRILLIUM SLOPE	5
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA CREEKS AND PONDS	9
UNIVERSITY PARK ARBORETUM	2
FEDERAL	
WHITEHURST CONSERVATION EASEMENT	3,278



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# Land Conservation in Alachua County: A Very Short History

Forty years ago in Alachua County, the only land that had been set aside as a public park or preserve larger than 25 acres was the Austin Cary Memorial Forest, the teaching forest of the University of Florida. In 1970, local activists convinced the State to purchase Paynes Prairie as Florida's first state preserve. Four years later, San Felasco Hammock State Preserve, the last substantial remnant of a once mighty forest, was acquired – but not before significant portions were carved away for development. Then for the next fifteen years, there were no large-scale land conservation projects in Alachua County.



Lauren Day

Since 2005, Alachua Conservation Trust has acquired most of **Tuscowilla Preserve**, a wet prairie south of Micanopy that is important for migratory birds. The Preserve has been patiently pieced together with donated land, conservation easements, and property purchased using millions of dollars in state and federal funds. Public access to the Prairie is now available for the first time along the north rim.

ACT proposed and/or negotiated the purchase of Paynes Prairie Additions, San Felasco Hammock Additions, Lochloosa Wildlife Management Area, Newnans Lake Conservation Area, Watermelon Pond (part of Goethe State Forest), Gumroot Conservation Area, the Hogtown Creek Greenway, and others.

The next two significant land conservation events in Alachua County also related to funding: the passage of *Alachua County Forever* at the local level, and *Florida Forever* at the state level, both in 2000. The local program, created with ACT's guidance and financial support, was a citizen-initiated referendum to float a \$29 million bond issue. The map on pages 4-5 shows how this program has successfully protected 13,700 acres of land valued at more than \$65 million. For every dollar spent to purchase land, Alachua County Forever has received two dollars of matching funds from partners.

The two water management districts in Alachua County have acquired important wetlands, lakes, and riverfront properties. The St. Johns River Water Management District purchased one of the state's first and largest conservation easements which surrounds Lochloosa Lake, and also purchased significant lands on the north and east shores of Newnans Lake. The Suwannee River Water Management District acquired conservation easements over important drinking water sources and riverfront lands. Both water management districts provide land for outdoor recreation, and are strong partners in local land conservation.

In 1986, President Reagan commissioned a task force to study the desirability of greenbelts. The President's task force recommended that the land use plan of cities should include a greenbelt. In 1988, the Alachua County Conservation and Recreational Areas Task Force reached a similar conclusion, and mapped the areas they thought should be saved. This local group also suggested the formation of a charitable land trust, resulting in the birth of Alachua Conservation Trust. Part of ACT's mission has been the creation of a greenbelt to protect lands around Gainesville.

Conservation activities got a significant boost in 1990 with the passage of *Preservation 2000*, a major funding source for the state's Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) acquisition program. The first several years of ACT's existence were focused on nominating dramatic CARL projects, and negotiating for their acquisition.



Hutch

ACT's **Prairie Creek Preserve** has a half-mile of frontage along this wild creek, and more than a mile along the Gainesville-Hawthorne Rail Trail. The diverse landscape contains cypress domes, open marshes, pine flatwoods, hardwood hammocks, and sandhills – on just under 400 acres with four miles of trails for walking, biking, and horseback riding. The purchase of this spectacular property was made possible with funding from private sources, from Florida Communities Trust, and from a wetlands mitigation project.

Since the 1990s, national non-profit conservation organizations, such as the Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, and The Conservation Fund have all done important work in Alachua County. Besides ACT, local land trusts also operating in the area include the Conservation Trust for Florida, the Nature Coast Conservancy, and the Putnam Land Conservancy.

With ACT's leadership, *Wild Spaces and Public Places*, a two year, one-half penny sales tax was approved by Alachua County voters in November, 2008. By once again demonstrating their commitment to land conservation, our community will protect perhaps another ten thousand acres in the first decade in this millennium. Alachua Conservation Trust will strive to conserve an equal amount during the next few years.

So, from just 2,000 acres forty years ago, the amount of land protected by public agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners in Alachua County has grown to over 107,000 acres. But the true measure of land conservation success is not raw acreage – it is the quality of the habitat protected, the environmental services provided by the land, and the unique opportunities for our community to secure the gift of natural beauty to our successors – the ultimate legacy.

## Future Projects of ACT

**Land Conservation.** Alachua Conservation Trust and its partners have a wide range of land conservation purchases planned, including property along the Santa Fe River and on every major water body. Cities will be acquiring “nearby nature” amenities as refuges from urban life, and rural landowners will continue to seek ways to preserve the character of their landscape.

All the conservation organizations, public and private, are working together on initiatives of regional scale to join our wild spaces with landscape linkages. The north-south Ocala Forest - to - Osceola Forest connector is one; another is the mosaic of wetlands and sandhills being linked in eastern and southern Alachua County and beyond.

**Historic Preservation.** ACT will preserve historic structures and cultural sites, in continuation of our efforts that began with the protection and restoration of the Historic Haile Homestead. Buildings from the 1800s in Rochelle, Micanopy, Windsor, and other areas will be stabilized and restored whenever adequate resources and cooperative partners are available.

**Greenways and Trails.** The network of trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and paddling will continue to grow in Alachua County. ACT and its many partners will continue to link existing trails and greenways into a comprehensive network for commuting, recreation, and wildlife.

**Education and Public Participation.** ACT is committed to providing high quality environmental education on our preserves. We are especially interested in providing better opportunities for children to have unstructured outdoor experiences in nature. ACT also understands that land conservation is attainable through smart public policy. We will remain a connected and committed member of the community by collaborating with a full range of partners to achieve our goal. Besides other conservation agencies and organizations, ACT works with our schools and colleges, the criminal justice system, and many civic, business, social, and faith-based organizations to achieve the mutual goals of a more sustainable community.

The future for ACT will not differ from the past – there will be too much to do, not enough money or time to do it, and the heartbreaking triage of selecting where conservation efforts might succeed. Alachua Conservation Trust has become a community institution entrusted with the extraordinary responsibility to protect the land and heritage we love, and to pass on the best of this cherished place's natural resources to future generations.



Sally Adkins

Suburban parks, such as ACT's **Blues Creek Ravine**, are essential for providing "nearby nature" to our youth, the vast majority of whom are in danger of becoming the first generation of Americans to be estranged from any meaningful contact with the natural world.

# Your Conservation Legacy

There are many opportunities to help Alachua Conservation Trust in our mission to protect natural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources, and to provide environmental education.

**Volunteer.** ACT relies on volunteers to do much of the land management on our properties. This involves building amenities such as boardwalks and kiosks, laying out and maintaining miles of trails, and landscape restoration including prescribed fire and exotic plant control. ACT can always use professional expertise, such as legal, engineering, surveying, and accounting skills. We are usually in need of help during our fundraisers, and at festivals and special events.

**Research and Education.** ACT projects are not just idly dreamed up – they result from someone identifying an opportunity, and being willing to research the options. If you have an idea of what should be saved or how it could be done, please bring it to our attention. ACT is also committed to environmental education, and we work with a variety of organizations, such as the Audubon Society, Scouts, the Florida Parks Service, Santa Fe College, the University of Florida, and local agencies to provide environmental education programs. ACT provides internships to help students experience an alternative career path in the

non-profit conservation sector.

**Donate or bequeath.** Alachua Conservation Trust has received donations of special family lands and conservation easements that we will protect into perpetuity. Some donors have a life estate agreement, retaining the use of their property during their lives. Planned bequests, not only of conservation land, but of other assets, are a way to assist our mission. ACT can receive the donation of appreciated assets, such as stock, art, or other investments for which the donor may reduce or avoid capital gains or estate taxes. ACT can convert some assets into an annuity payment for the donor during their lifetime, with the principal going to ACT at the end of the donor's life to create a lasting legacy.

ACT is a participating agency with the University of Florida's Community Campaign, and invests funds with the Gainesville Community Foundation. Alachua Conservation Trust seeks to broaden our base of support, and solicits your contribution, in whatever amount is comfortable for your charitable budget. For every \$3 that ACT spends in our operations, we conserve \$100 worth



Alison Blakeslee

With a timely bequest of funding, ACT was able to purchase the last remaining rookery on Lake Santa Fe so these egrets, and scores of other birds, would continue to have nesting sites. The land that was slated for development is now **The Hanson Sanctuary** – a quarter mile of lakefront preserved forever.



Hutch

Arthur and Phyllis Saarinen donated 81 acres of their family land to Alachua Conservation Trust to create a perpetual preserve in the western portion of Alachua County which has few remaining natural areas.

of land – forever.

Alachua Conservation Trust has adopted the *Standards and Practices* of the Land Trust Alliance, available at: [www.LTA.org](http://www.LTA.org). ACT's annual reports to the IRS on Form 990 are available for at least the past five years from: [www.Guidestar.com](http://www.Guidestar.com). Alachua Conservation Trust does not provide tax advice, and recommends that all donors and sellers seek competent legal and financial advice. ACT does not discriminate against any protected class in employment or activities.

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) 435-7532 WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.



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