CONSERVATION EASEMENTS in FLORIDA: A LANDOWNERS PERSPECTIVE

Florida Conservation Group

Our Work

- We are a landowner-led conservation organization focusing on science-based land protection and conservation incentives;
- We advocate for land conservation funding on state and federal level;
- Formed as a reflection of need for landowners to have a cohesive voice on state and federal level;
- Focus is statewide;
- Landowners sign on to our effort, lend their voices;
- We now have landowners representing over 3 million acres that have lent their voices to our efforts;
- (State Level) RFLPP, Florida Forever; (Federal Level) LWCF, NRCS;
- We offer program and scientific expertise;
- Tallahassee legislative visits
- District visits; ranch trips, for state and federal legislators;
- Press: op-eds and profiles

Conservation Easements

BENEFITS

- Ranchlands protect Florida's water and natural resources;
- Conservation Easements provide viable OPTION to conserve lands;
- Ranchlands protect drinking water supply and water quality to our urban areas
- These programs are the most cost-effective way to preserve our water resources;
- We can invest a little now or a LOT later to restore our watersheds;
- Protection of water resources for fraction of cost of outright purchase;
- Management costs responsibility of landowner;
- Programs are critical natural and water resources AND our food security and agricultural economy.
Focal Conservation Easement Programs

- Florida Forever: Fee simple and easements. High Resource Value
- Rural and Family Land Protection Program: Agricultural Easements (agricultural focus/flexible);
- NRCS: WRE Program: restorable wetlands
- FWS: Land and Water Conservation Fund: Fee simple and easements (for National Wildlife Refuges);
- REPI-easements (Partner Program with State/Local)
- NRCS ALE: Partner program: agricultural easements with State/Local

Others:
- Water Management Districts
- County Programs
- Forest Legacy
Conservation Easements

- Personal and Business Decision;
- Is an Easement Right for you? It may not be!
- How do I get started? Reach out to the programs, a program expert; learn about the different programs;
- Program criteria: Land uses, resource values. Match the property to the program and your personal needs!
Conservation Easements
- Process: Applications, site visits, presentations, project advocacy; crafting language, appraisals, contract, cabinet approval (for state) etc;
- Process can take a long time (length varies on program);
- Appraisals: property valued at highest and best use, NOT for its conservation value!
- Needed: Land representative, attorney, CPA

THE GREAT UNKNOWN: Managing for uncertainty
- Dollars received need to maintain property forever;
- FAMILY and future ownership:
- Future Management: Exotics in a changing landscape, hydrology, burning, etc.;
- Future Development in region (and managing with surrounding development);
- Future Cow Prices

Politics and Funding
Our current situation with Florida Programs
- Acres in Rural and Family Lands Protection Program Top Tier: 237,758 (all tiers: 373,311)
  - Current funding: 5.8 Million (last year was 10 Million)
  - Current acres on Less-Than-Fee Florida Forever Project List: 696,959 (over 2 million acres total-including additional less-than-fee projects)
  - Current Funding: 77 million (last year was zero)
- Both RFLPP and Florida Forever conservation easements are NEEDED;
- RFLPP protects our food security and agricultural economy; Florida Forever protects our critical natural and water resources;
- Investment in Florida’s Future and our quality of life.
THANK YOU
For more information please contact:
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