

Forest Legacy Program 2003 Project

Perdido River-Longleaf Hills Preserve: Phase I, Baldwin Counties, Alabama



Total funding required..... \$2,649,334
Federal contribution \$1,987,000
Non-Federal match..... \$662,334

The Perdido Longleaf Hills (PLH) project, located within Baldwin County, contributes to the conservation of forest habitats within Alabama's largest and most ecologically significant blackwater river watershed. Recent state efforts have secured 2,000 acres of forested and marsh wetland habitat in the lower portion of the system's watershed, in an area known as Lillian Swamp. This effort has also identified a significant block of threatened tracts, totaling more than 50,000 acres, which may be available for protection through the Forest Legacy Program. These tracts are readily manageable, strategically located and extremely important to the continued progress made through recent federal and state conservation efforts in Baldwin County. The highest priority tracts presently available would be secured through fee-simple title acquisition by the Forever Wild Land Trust, and managed by the State Lands Division, within the AL Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR). The state's match would be at the required 75/25 ratio.

Key issues for protection

- The tract identified for acquisition in Baldwin County offers a unique opportunity to transition the State's recent conservation emphasis in a manner that could now include threatened riparian and upland habitats along the Perdido River. Progression of this concept could allow for an eventual linkage corridor between conservation areas spanning the Florida panhandle and the vast Mobile-Tensaw Delta (MTD).
- This project initiates a comprehensive interstate approach to the conservation and management of a unique coastal ecosystem. Specifically, this project would compliment the pending acquisition of a 7,400 acre conservation easement on the Florida side of the river, by the Florida Forever acquisition program, as well as 2,386 acres recently purchased by the Florida Chapter of the Nature Conservancy.
- This new focus area in Baldwin County is thought to be an important travel corridor for Alabama's largest remaining black bear population, linking the MTD tracts to other year-long habitats in Florida. These circumstances demonstrate the unique attributes of these tracts and how they relate to MTD and Perdido systems.
- This ecologically unique tract enhances federal interests within Baldwin County, as well as forwarding the potential linkage to the MTD's lands, and subsequent connection of USACE and ADCNR lands, with the Perdido Longleaf Hills waterways. Further, this provides connection to three federally and State owned Conservation Areas totaling more than 104,000 acres, which provide significant new upland access for coastal Alabama's citizens.
- Since 1999, the State Lands Division (SLD) has secured four \$1 Million wetland acquisition grants through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). These funds have contributed to the purchase of approximately 8,600 new acres of marsh and bottomland hardwood habitats. During June, 2003, a National Coastal Wetlands grant proposal was submitted to the USFWS by the SLD for acquisition of approximately 960 acres of pine savannah wetland habitat within the lower Perdido

For more information on the Forest Legacy Program, contact:

Elizabeth Crane, Forest Legacy Program Manager
USDA Forest Service
1720 Peachtree Road, NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-347-5214
ecrane@fs.fed.us

Dan Dumont, Forest Legacy Coordinator
Alabama Forest Resources Center
169 Dauphin Street, Suite 302
Mobile, Al. 36602
251-433-2372



January 2002

Forest Legacy Program 2003 Project

Perdido River-Longleaf Hills Preserve: Phase I, Baldwin Counties, Alabama



watershed (Lillian Swamp). These projects demonstrate a very active, and strong state/federal relationship within Baldwin County, directed at the conservation of unique habitats.

- The 2,500 acre target tract (which is a portion of a 3,800 acre tract presently available; see map) includes numerous miles of waterfront, representing upland longleaf pine habitats and riparian forested communities that are extremely threatened by development, listed as a Strategic Focus Area within the Lower Southwest FLA, and offer habitat to over 63 listed and rare species identified by ADCNR, including the gopher tortoise, black bear, white-topped pitcher plants and bald eagles.
- Securing any of the potential tracts supports regional conservation efforts to protect the biodiversity, longleaf pine uplands, atlantic white cedar riparian forests, maritime forest and live-oak hammock habitats crucial to neo-tropical migrant songbirds, the historical/cultural resources of Coastal Lowlands, as well as preventing additional fragmentation of Baldwin County's riparian and peripheral upland forest corridors.

Examples of Immediate and potential threats to the land

- Existing longleaf habitats have largely been converted to loblolly and slash pine plantations, which supports a reduced level of species richness compared to fire-managed longleaf stands.
- The seller has been divesting themselves of Baldwin County land holdings to development interests, resulting in the conversion of working forests to non-forest land uses
- The tract is located in a Priority I county in the Lower Southwest FLA, which is incurring tremendous population growth in some portions (e.g., 42.9% 1990-2000; Baldwin Co.), as well as rampant habitat conversion.
- Upland habitats peripheral to the Perdido River are under tremendous pressure from residential developments, and have been in-eligible for acquisition through recent wetland grants.

Other parties supporting the protection of unique habitats in Baldwin County

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's MTD wetland mitigation lands for the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.
- The EPA supported Mobile Bay NEP and Baldwin County Advanced Wetland Identification project, as well as the NOAA supported Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and Alabama Coastal Area Management Plan.
- NAWCC Gulf Coast Joint Venture's Mobile Bay Initiative, developed under the N.A. Waterfowl Management Plan.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through recent funding of four Baldwin County projects from the National Coastal Wetlands program.
- Alabama NGO's: Alabama Forest Resources Center, The Alabama Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy of Alabama, the Alabama Black Bear Alliance, and The Coastal Land Trust.
- Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider an employer

For more information on the Forest Legacy Program, contact:

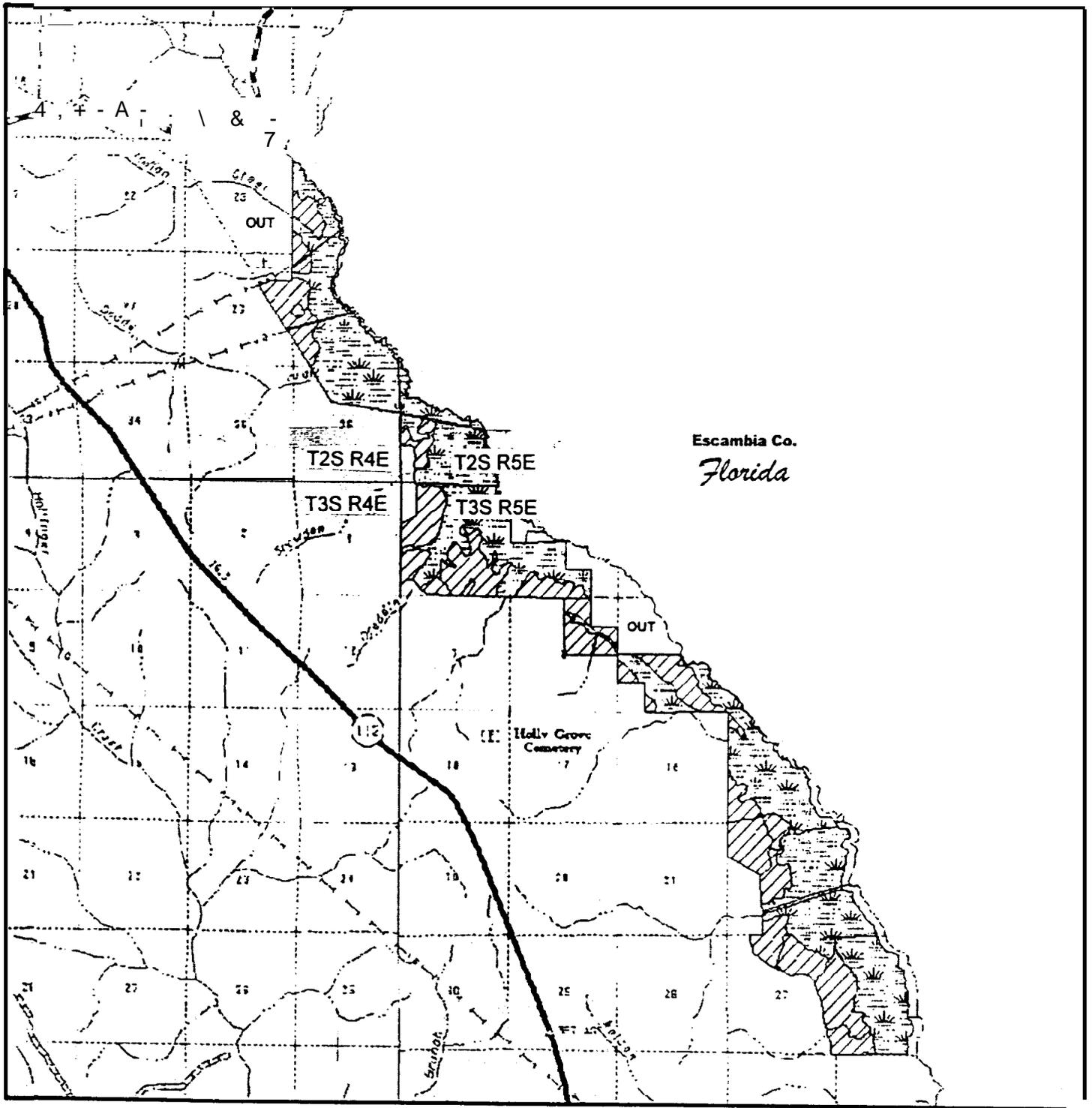
Elizabeth Crane, Forest Legacy Program Manager
USDA Forest Service
1720 Peachtree Road, NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-347-5214
ecrane@fs.fed.us

Dan Dumont, Forest Legacy Coordinator
Alabama Forest Resources Center
169 Dauphin Street, Suite 302
Mobile, Al. 36602
251-433-2372

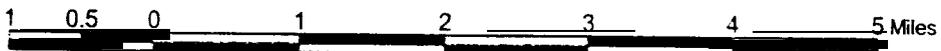


January 2002

Perdido River Parcel



Escambia Co.
Florida



Sustainable Forests L.L.C.
Baldwin Co., AL
Steelwood Unit
3812 Acres

Legend	
	Stream Bottom 2413 ac.
	Planted Pine 1399 ac.
	IP Ownership

