

ITEM 17:

Vote on whether to amend the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project boundary to add five parcels totaling ±805.87 acres in Clay County with a tax assessed value of \$4,125,651.54.

LOCATION:

Clay County

DIVISION OF STATE LANDS STAFF REMARKS:

The Lovett Property amendment, proposed by The North Florida Land Trust, adds five parcels in Clay County totaling ±805.87 acres to the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project. The property consists of five parcels: four owned by Creek Farms Corp, and one owned by Thunder Lodge LLC. The landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers. The parcels have a combined tax assessed value of \$4,125,651.54. The four parcels owned by Creek Farms Corp are proposed for fee-simple acquisition and the parcel owned by Thunder Lodge LLC is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition. If acquired, the property would be managed by the Clay County Board of County Commissioners.

The proposed addition is adjacent to the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project and lies between the cities of Starke and Green Cove Springs. There are several conservation lands within 5 miles of the property, including the Longbranch Crossing Conservation Easement, Tarflower Preserve, Belmore State Forest, and Camp Blanding Military Reservation. The proposal boundary includes a St. Johns River Water Management District regulatory easement totaling 85 acres.

The site contains forested floodplain, mesic/wet flatwoods and sandhill. Mesic/wet flatwoods and sandhill are underrepresented natural communities. South Fork Black Creek, a tributary of the St. Johns River, runs along the western boundary of the property. The site lies within a region in which the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission classifies the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) as frequent. There are records of the Black Creek crayfish (*Procambarus pictus*) onsite. In the past, multiple rare plants have been documented within 1 mile of the property. According to the application, gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) occur onsite. Improvements on the property include three single family residences, a pole barn and at least four impoundments or borrow pits. If acquired, the property could protect under-represented natural communities and would contribute to the surface water protection of South Fork Black Creek, and ultimately the St. Johns River.

The proposal meets the criteria to be submitted as a boundary amendment. The property has a tax assessed value of less than \$5 million. The proposal area should be designated as essential.

Project History:

The Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project in Clay, Duval and Nassau counties was added to the priority list in 2002. The project will increase the protection of Florida's biodiversity by protecting habitat for rare and imperiled species including the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*). The project will conserve spaces suitable for greenways or outdoor recreation that are compatible with conservation purposes such as

camping, picnicking, nature appreciation, hiking, and horseback riding. The project also has the potential to restore the quality and natural functions of land, water, and wetland systems due to most of the land being disturbed, with restoration as a primary objective.

The Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever project includes 138,243 acres with 58,947 acres remaining and is ranked number four in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category on the 2026 Florida Forever Priority List. The tax assessed value for the remaining acres to be acquired in this project per property appraiser information (2025) is \$973,371,263.

Florida Natural Areas Inventory Review:

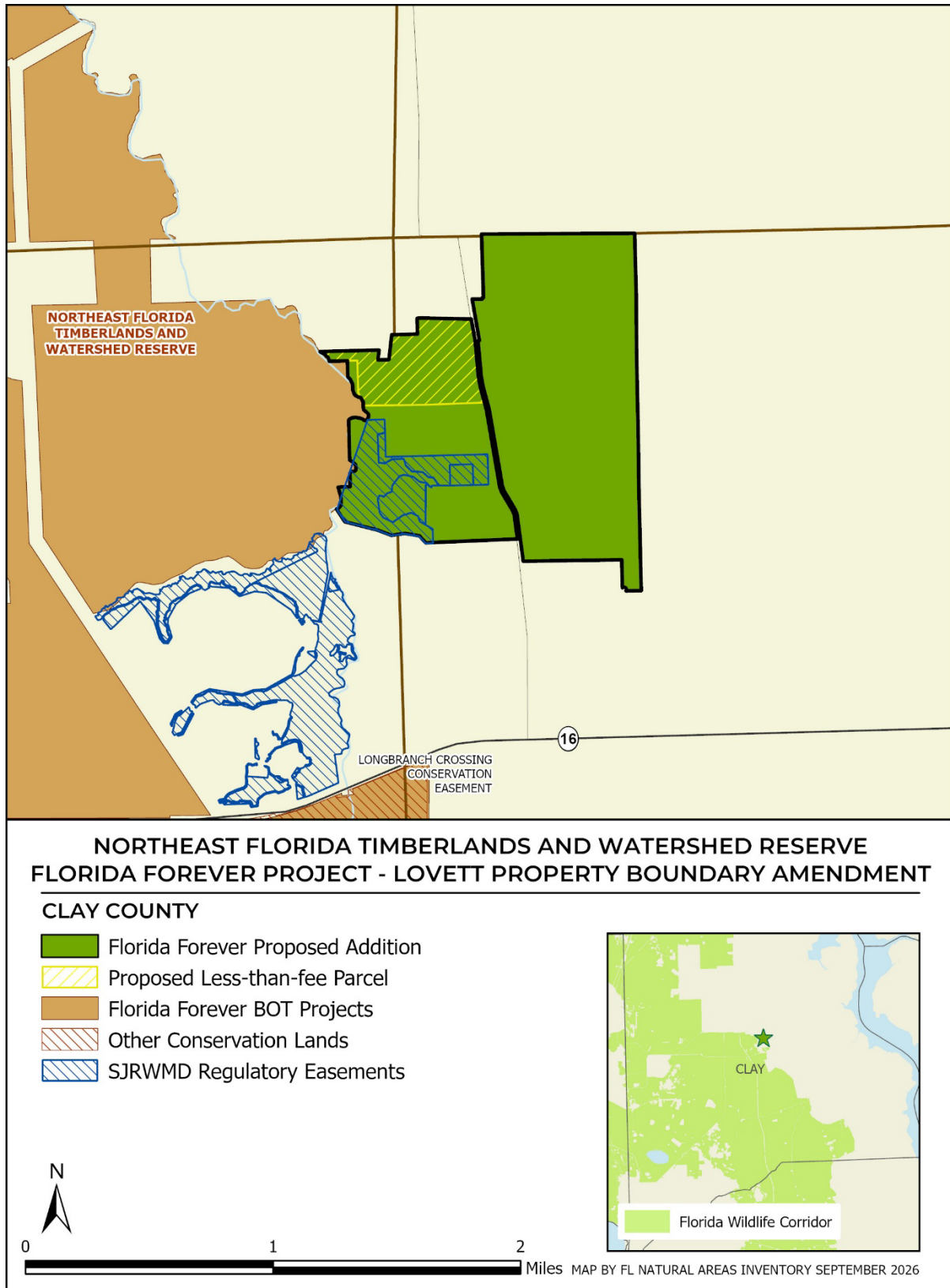
According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 100% of the site contributes to Surface Water Protection (mostly Priority 5) and Aquifer Recharge (mostly Priority 5). Additionally, 93% contributes to Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (mostly Priority 5) and 98% contributes to Ecological Greenways (mostly Priority 5). Thirty-five percent of the property (± 286 acres) contains under-represented sandhill and 15% (± 122 acres) contains under-represented mesic/wet flatwoods.

DIVISION OF STATE LANDS STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

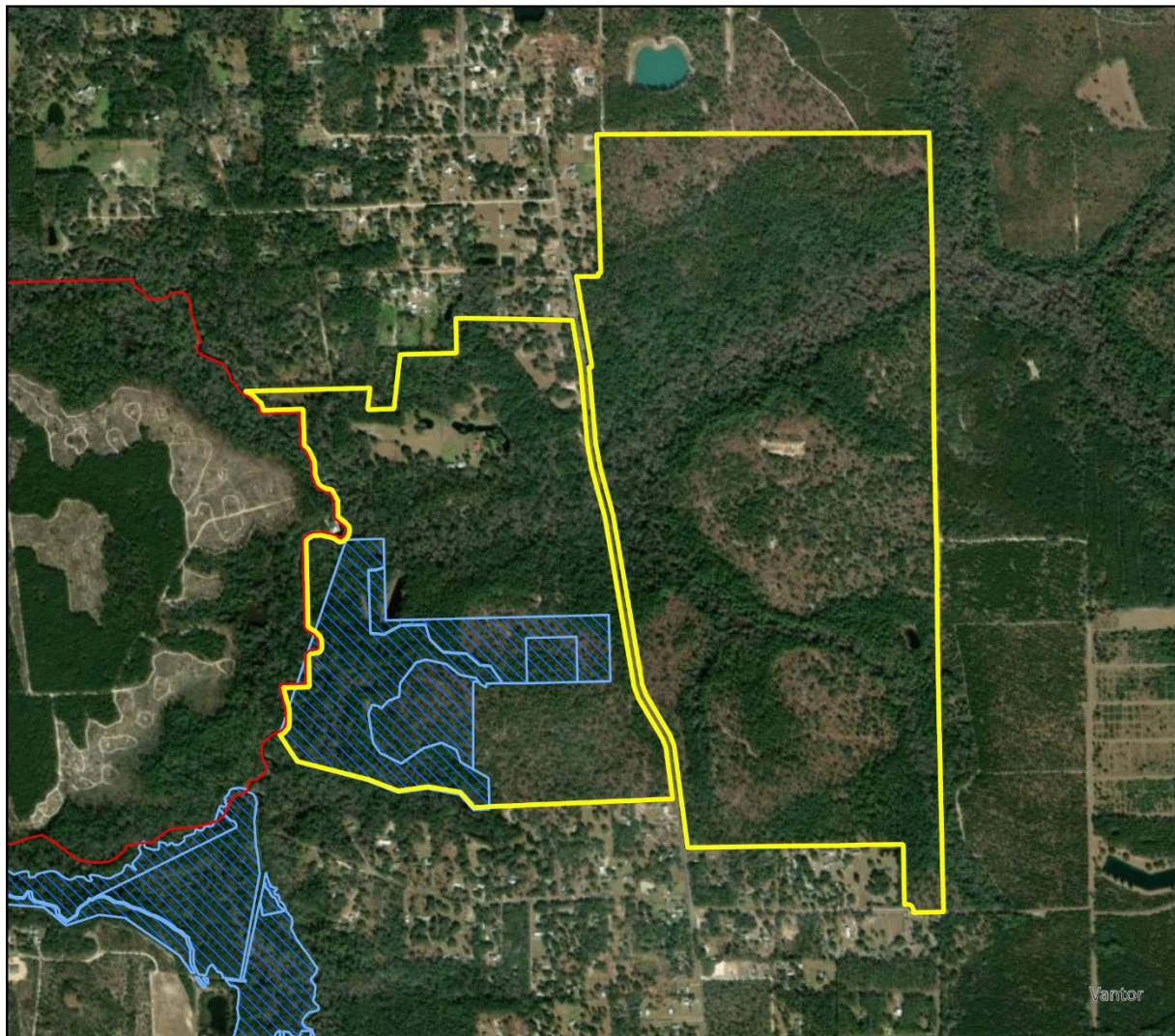
ACQUISITION AND RESTORATION COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:

	Watts	DHR	FFS	Griner	DEP	FWC	Palmer	Peppers	Gamblin	Select
Project										
Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve: Lovett Property										



**NORTHEAST FLORIDA TIMBERLANDS AND WATERSHED RESERVE
FLORIDA FOREVER PROJECT - LOVETT PROPERTY BOUNDARY AMENDMENT**

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED ADDITION AS OF AUGUST 2026



Map Produced by: FL Natural Areas Inventory, N. Pasco, August 2026

Background: ESRI World Imagery



-  Florida Forever Proposed Addition
-  Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  SJRWMD Regulatory Easements



0 0.25 0.5 1
Miles

NE FL Timberlands and Watershed Reserve (Lovett Property): Florida Forever Measures Evaluation 20260626

GIS ACRES = 806

MEASURES	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	26	3%
Priority 3	253	31%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	470	58%
Total Acres	750	93%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	496	62%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	21	3%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	517	64%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	126	16%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	662	82%
Total Acres	787	98%
B4: Under-represented Natural Communities		
Upland Glade (G1)	0	0%
Pine Rockland (G1)	0	0%
Scrub and Scrubby Flatwoods (G2)	0	0%
Rockland Hammock (G2)	0	0%
Dry Prairie (G2)	0	0%
Seepage Slope (G2)	0	0%
Sandhill (G3)	286	35%
Sandhill Upland Lake (G3)	0	0%
Upland Pine (G3)	0	0%
Mesic/Wet Flatwoods (G4)	122	15%
Upland Hardwood Forest (G5)	0	0%
Total Acres	407	51%
B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species		
G1	0	
G2	1	
G3	0	
G4	1	
G5	0	
Total	2	
C4: Natural Floodplain Function		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	196	24%
Priority 3	64	8%
Priority 4	8	< 1%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	267	33%

MEASURES (continued)	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
C5: Surface Water Protection		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	64	8%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	121	15%
Priority 5	498	62%
Priority 6	121	15%
Priority 7	0	0%
Total Acres	804	100%
C7: Fragile Coastal Resources		
Fragile Coastal Uplands	0	0%
Imperiled Coastal Lakes	0	0%
Coastal Wetlands	0	0%
Total Acres	0	0%
C8: Functional Wetlands		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	256	32%
Priority 3	61	8%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	317	39%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	20	2%
Priority 4	240	30%
Priority 5	293	36%
Priority 6	251	31%
Total Acres	805	100%
E2: Recreational Trails (miles)		
(prioritized trail opportunities from Office of Greenways and Trails & Univ. Florida)		
Land Trail Priorities	0.0	
Land Trail Opportunities	0.0	
Total Miles	0.0	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number)		
	0 sites	
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	149	18%
Priority 4	296	37%
Priority 5	12	2%
Total Acres	456	57%
G3: Forestland for Recharge		
	0	0%

^aAcres of each resource in the project and percentage of project represented by each resource are listed except where noted. This analysis converts site boundary into pixels, which causes slight differences from GIS acres; this effect is most noticeable on small sites.



To: Diana Pepe, DEP/OES
 From: Dale R. Jackson, FNAI
 Date: July 15, 2026
 Subject: Proposed Boundary Modification to Florida Forever BOT Project: Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve – Lovett Property (Clay County)

The major goals of the Northeast Florida Timberlands and Watershed Reserve Florida Forever BOT Project (NFTWR) are to increase protection of rare and imperiled species including the Florida black bear; conserve spaces suitable for greenways and conservation-compatible outdoor recreation; and restore disturbed land, water, and wetland systems. The ca. 787.9-acre Lovett property is proposed as an addition to the project. The property is proposed for both fee simple (four parcels) and less-than-fee simple (one parcel: Thunder Lodge) acquisition.

The Lovett Property lies in central Clay County about 0.7 mile north of SR-16, 8 miles west of Green Cove Springs, and 3 miles east of Camp Blanding Military Reservation. The nearest conservation lands are Longbranch Crossing Conservation Easement, Greens Creek Mitigation Bank, Arahatchee Conservation Easement, Halloran Conservation Area, and Tarflower Preserve; as a group, these adjoin Camp Blanding. NFRWR is contiguous with the western boundary of the proposed site, and except for a powerline easement, is adjacent to the aforementioned conservation lands as well. Approximately 85 acres of the site are encumbered by a water management district regulatory easement.

The proposal lies within the drainage of South Fork Black Creek, which runs along the site's western boundary. Branches of an unnamed tributary of that creek flow westward through the property. These branches are generally bordered by a forested floodplain, grading upslope to wet/mesic flatwoods. Higher elevations above this support sandhill that has been conspicuously disturbed and now supports a cover of both live and dead trees as viewed on an aerial photograph. At least four impoundments or borrow pits are within the site. A paved, public road divides the overall proposal into eastern and western tracts. Within the northern section of the western tract is development that, per the applicant, includes three houses and a pole barn bordered by cleared lawn/pasture containing two of the ponds. Adjacent lands east and west of the site are undeveloped. However, immediately to the south of the proposed site, the land is fully developed as rural residential as far as SR-16. Similar development occupies some of the landscape immediately north of the proposal.

The entire site is within a region in which the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission considers the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*; G5T4/S4, N, N) to be frequent. The only other rare species occurrence recorded onsite by FNAI is that of the Black Creek crayfish (*Procambarus pictus*; G1/S1, PE, ST); the species is now threatened by a second, invasive species of crayfish. Multiple rare plants, as well as gopher tortoise, have been recorded in the past from within a mile of the site; per the application, gopher tortoise has been seen onsite.

Florida Natural Areas Inventory – 1018 Thomasville Road Suite 200-C – Tallahassee, FL 32303 – 850-224-8207 – www.fnai.org

Florida Resources and Environmental Analysis Center – Institute of Science and Public Affairs

The Florida State University



The Florida Forever Measures Evaluation (FFME) below is based on the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment developed by FNAI. The data used in that analysis represent a standardized, statewide perspective of natural resources. All or most (> 90%) of the proposal contributes to Aquifer Recharge (mostly priorities 4-6), Surface Water Protection (priorities 2, 4, 5, and 6), Ecological Greenways (priorities 1 and 5), and Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (mostly priorities 3 and 5). Significant contributions are also made to FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities (64%; mostly priority 3), Sustainable Forestry (57%; mostly priorities 3 and 4), Under-Represented Natural Communities (51%; sandhill and mesic/wet flatwoods), Functional Wetlands (39%; priorities 2 and 3), and Natural Floodplain Function (33%; priorities 2 and 3).