

NORTHWEST FLORIDA SENTINEL LANDSCAPE



May 28, 2025

Hank Vinson
Division of State Lands
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Blvd., MS 100
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Via: hank.vinson@floridadep.gov

Re: NWFSL Letter of Support for Evaluation of the New Creeks to Choctawhatchee River Florida
Forever Proposal

Dear Hank,

On behalf of the partners of the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape (NWFSL), we are pleased to support the evaluation of the New Creeks to Choctawhatchee River Florida Forever proposal. Please share this letter with the members and staff of the Acquisition and Restoration Council and make it part of the public record for its upcoming meeting on June 13th.

The proposed fee simple acquisition in Walton County, Florida would protect approximately 2,222 acres of timberland and forest that are within the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape and the Florida Wildlife Corridor. By conserving several tributaries to the Choctawhatchee River, acquisition of these tracts would help safeguard the water quality of the Choctawhatchee River which is an Outstanding Florida Water. As these tracts are beneath a military training route, their acquisition would maintain compatible forestry land uses benefiting Eglin Air Force Base's mission readiness.

The Florida Forest Service has agreed to manage the property which will create opportunities for sustainable timber management, potential restoration of long leaf pine forests and provide public outdoor recreation opportunities. The project has 23 parcels listed for sale which presents a unique opportunity to protect an intact landscape and create an anchor for protected lands in this portion of the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The project supports a variety of species like the gopher tortoise, the Florida black bear, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and many other species.

Approval and acquisition of this project addition demonstrates the State of Florida's continuing commitment to successfully achieving two goals of the Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape Partnership:

1. Increase the resiliency and sustainability of natural systems by conserving and restoring habitat and water resources with an emphasis on listed species recovery, prescribed fire, water quality, and water quantity to better adapt to our changing climate.
2. Identify, implement, and accelerate projects that mitigate coastal risks and increase the climate resiliency of military installations and the landscapes that overlap mission footprints to protect military missions, community infrastructure and habitats.

Thank you for the opportunity to support approval of the evaluation of the New Creeks to Choctawhatchee River Florida Forever proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kent L. Wimmer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'W'.

Kent L. Wimmer, AICP
Coordinator, Northwest Florida Sentinel Landscape and
Senior Northwest Florida Representative, Defenders of Wildlife
1294 Avondale Way, Tallahassee, FL 32317
kwimmer@defenders.org