

# SOUTHERN FORESTS PROJECT

FLORIDA

The Nature Conservancy and International Paper have undertaken a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect ecologically important forests, rivers and streams in 10 southern states. The Nature Conservancy will acquire more than 218,000 acres in the largest private land conservation project in the history of the southern U.S. Partners include state governments, federal agencies, and timber investment entities.



**total area** 22,841 acres  
**yellow river ravines** 11,313 acres  
**gulf coast plain ecosystem  
partnership** 11,528 acres

**river and stream miles protected**  
approximately 30 miles of stream & creek

#### **representative species**

florida black bear  
red-cockaded woodpecker  
tiger salamander  
eastern indigo snake  
panhandle lily  
yellow fringeless orchid  
florida pine snake

#### **project partners**

The Nature Conservancy  
Department of Agriculture and  
Consumer Services' Division of  
Forestry (DOF)  
Florida Dept. of Environmental  
Protection  
Board of Trustees of the Internal  
Improvement Trust Fund of the  
State of Florida (state)  
Timber investment entity

## THE PROJECT

The Nature Conservancy has been working for many years to secure permanent protection of these areas which represent remnants of the historic 60 million-acre longleaf pine ecosystem and vibrant areas of diversity in Florida.

## YELLOW RIVER RAVINES

11,313 Acres

*The Yellow River Ravines project is the connector between two of Florida's outstanding natural areas, Eglin Air Force Base and Blackwater River State Forest. The project will form a protected landscape of more than 800,000 acres, from the Gulf of Mexico through Eglin Air Force Base and Blackwater River State Forest into Conecuh National Forest in Alabama.*

Yellow River Ravines is an "A" ranked Florida Forever Program project, located in Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties. There are three steephead ravine systems within the project that flow into the Yellow River that ultimately feeds into Blackwater Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. The project will provide important habitat for Florida black bear, red-cockaded woodpeckers and rare species found in the ravines. The project will be managed by DOF as an addition to Blackwater River State Forest and will provide an opportunity for long-term restoration to the original longleaf pine community type, of which only two percent remains in the world.

In addition, Yellow River Ravines is adjacent to two military installations, Eglin Air Force Base and Navy Outlying Landing Field — Harold. Acquisition will assist in buffering the bases from incompatible uses and help to allow the missions of both the base and the field to continue.

## GCPEP (GULF COAST PLAIN ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP)

11,528 Acres

This project connects Blackwater River State Forest and Whiting Field Naval Air Station in Santa Rosa County. It includes a section of Coldwater Creek, a sand-bottomed, clearwater creek with a relatively unaltered floodplain and fed by numerous small seepage streams. Coldwater Creek is a tributary of the Blackwater River, which ultimately flows into Blackwater Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. The project will protect six miles of outstanding state-designated canoe trail, often cited as the best in the state.

A large portion of the project will likely be an addition to Blackwater River State Forest, probably the premier state forest in Florida. The site includes 1,160 acres of a Florida Forever "A" ranked project. As a connector between Blackwater River State Forest and Whiting Field Naval Air Station, the project area will provide additional habitat for wide-ranging species such as the Florida black bear and various waterfowl and bird species.

All Navy helicopter pilots train at Whiting Field, which is also a major training facility for fixed-wing pilots. Acquisition will assist in buffering the base from incompatible uses and protect from encroachment.

A timber investment entity will continue to manage a portion of the project as a working forest until such time as it can be purchased by the state or by The Nature Conservancy.

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