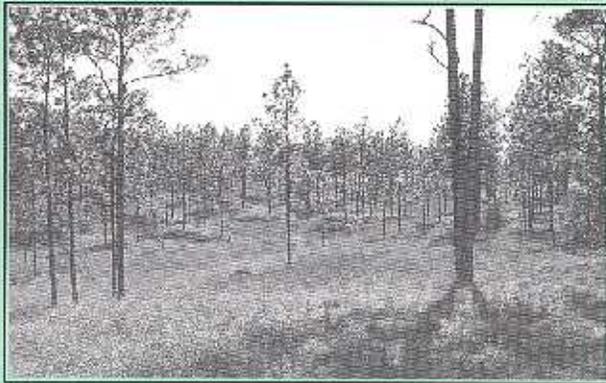
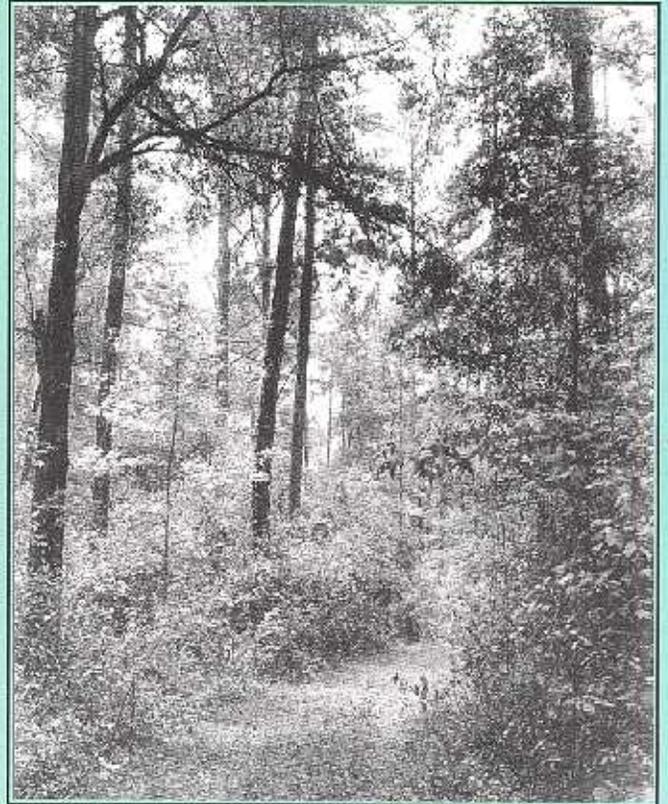




Have You Considered

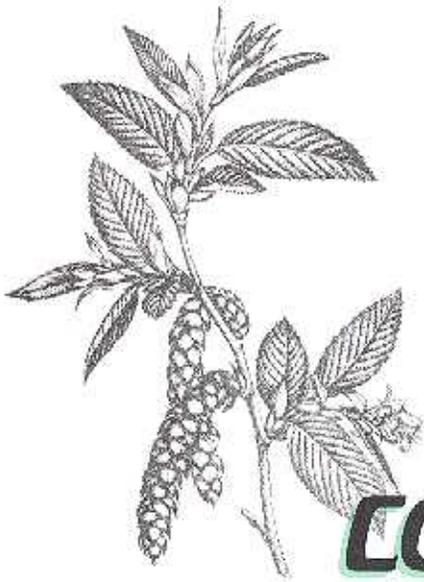


Northwest Florida Water
Management District
81 Water Management Dr.
Havana, FL 32333
(850) 539-5999

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A Conservation Easement?



CONSERVATION *easements*

*When it comes to owning land, there is a way to
“have your cake and eat it too.”*

Conservation easements have been used by landowners all over Florida and the United States to preserve and protect millions of acres of land. **With a conservation easement, you can receive a sizable payment for selected interests in your land while you continue to own it and live on it.** You can also continue to make a living from it, lease it, sell it or pass it on to heirs.

The Northwest Florida Water Management District is very interested in paying landowners to place conservation easements on their lands. The District's land acquisition program attempts to acquire only enough interests in some lands to protect water resources and supplies and to preserve the natural habitats that exist on the property. **The best part is that the original landowner continues to own and use and enjoy the land very much as he or she did before the conservation easement was sold.**

There are also considerable tax advantages possible via conservation easements. Federal income taxes or future estate inheritance taxes can be significantly reduced if some or all of the conservation easement is a charitable contribution.

How A Conservation Easement Works

A conservation easement is an agreement between a landowner and the Water Management District that helps make it financially possible for a landowner to continue to own and permanently protect his or her land.

Every piece of land has a large number of uses or rights associated with it. **As part of a conservation easement, you would sell a selected number of those uses or rights and retain the rest.** For example, you might keep the rights to grow crops, trees or live-stock but limit the right to build additional residences or to use the land more intensively than at present. **The District will pay you for each right you give up.**

The conservation easement that you help to craft can be tailored to meet your financial and personal needs. **Conservation easements commonly allow the owner to continue doing on the land exactly what he or she was doing before selling the easement.** The owner continues to decide, within the framework of the easement, how the land will be used and who will be allowed on it.

In short, a conservation easement must ultimately protect the land's conservation values but, beyond that, it can be designed by the landowner to satisfy a very broad range of personal goals.



How to Sell a Conservation Easement

The process is relatively simple. You should first contact the Water Management District at (850) 539-5999 and let us know where your land is and the general nature of the rights you would like to keep as well as what you want to sell.

The second step for you is to work with us to fashion a conservation easement acceptable to you and us. This easement will be provided to the professional appraisers hired by the District to provide values for the land as a whole and for the property rights you want to sell.

The landowner and the District then negotiate the financial terms to each party's satisfaction. If a deal is struck, we will create with you a "snapshot" of the property at the time of the purchase that can be used to verify that the easement is being followed.

Closing is similar to that for any piece of property being bought by the District. From start to finish, the whole process can take from three to eight months.



Areas Where the District is Seeking Conservation Easements

Since 1984, the Water Management District has been attempting to place as much as possible of the floodplains and neighboring lands along our major rivers, large lakes, aquifer recharge areas and coastal wetlands under some level of public protection or ownership. The following basin areas, presented generally in geographical order from west to east, are priority acquisition areas in which the District is seeking to buy or receive conservation easements or, if the owner prefers, to purchase land outright:

- Perdido River
- Escambia River
- Garcon Point
- Blackwater River (including Juniper, Big and Little Coldwater Creeks)
- Yellow – Shoal River
- Choctawhatchee River and Bay
- Holmes Creek
- St. Andrew Bay
- Chipola River
- Apalachicola River
- Ochlockonee River (including Telogia Creek and the New, Crooked and Sopchoppy Rivers)
- Lakes Talquin and Jackson
- Wakulla – St. Marks Rivers

If you have a wetland or waterfront property in or near any of these basins and are interested in discussing either a conservation easement or a land sale, we would like to talk with you.



Conservation Easements and Charitable Contributions

Depending on your income tax or inheritance situation, you might find it highly beneficial to grant a conservation easement as a charitable contribution. Gifts of perpetual easements are tax deductible and can be spread over several years. The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1998 also provides significant incentives for considering conservation easements, such as reducing inheritance estate taxes by up to 40 percent and giving heirs up to nine months after an owner's death to arrange an easement. This is intended to give the heirs an opportunity to avoid having to sell the land to pay inheritance taxes. Please consult with a tax attorney if you are interested in exploring the benefits of these options.