

LEGACY LANDS

HOW FLORIDA'S WORKING LANDS HOLD THE KEY TO CONSERVATION

»»» FLORIDA'S HUMAN POPULATION IS BOOMING

As our communities swell, demand for land escalates, placing enormous pressure on our foresters and ranchers to yield to the compelling offers of developers. But timberlands and ranches are the living, breathing heart of Florida and a critical part of conserving Florida's wildlife and wild places. These lands power our rural economies and offer indispensable natural services, from hosting wildlife to purifying freshwater reserves and storing vast carbon stocks. These lands represent some of our state's last wild expanses, and without them, our wildlife corridors would be irretrievably lost.

40% OF THE FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR IS WORKING LANDS:

3.1 million acres of ranchland and
3.8 million acres of timberland.

Among Corridor lands that still need to
be conserved ("Opportunity Areas"),
working lands comprise 76%.

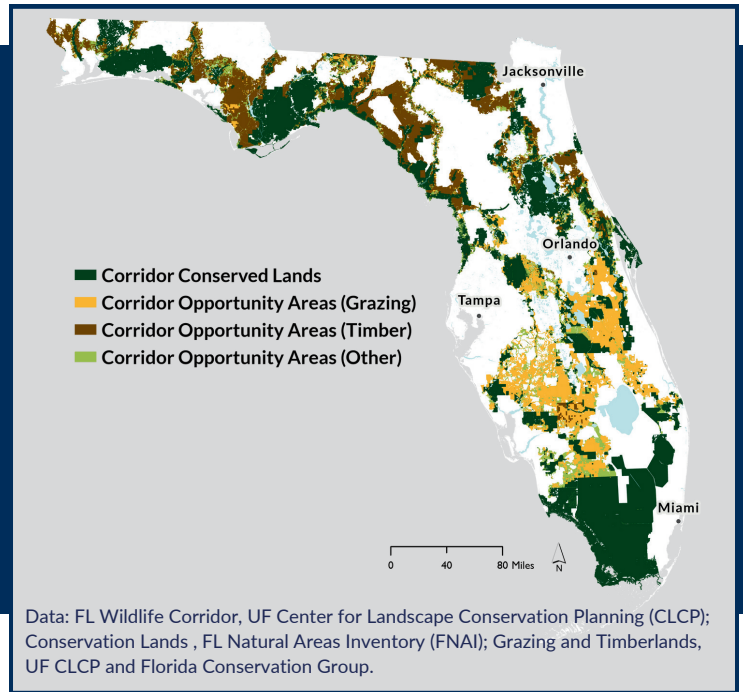


Photo by Carlton Ward, Jr.



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Photo by Haoyu Li

»»» FINDING BALANCE

Florida is the third most populous state, with a population growing by 1130 people each day – equivalent to adding a new Miami's worth of people each year. With rapid growth comes development of rural and natural lands, along with greater demand for water. Working lands can help protect natural resources and wildlands in the face of development.

»»» WHAT ARE WORKING LANDS?

- Working lands are agricultural areas, like timberlands and ranchlands, and are usually privately owned. They contribute billions of dollars annually to the state economy.
- Timberlands cover more than one-third of the state (~15 million acres), and ranchlands cover about one-eighth (5.4 million acres).

➤➤➤ WHY ARE WORKING LANDS CRITICAL TO CONSERVATION IN FLORIDA?

Timberland and ranches are low-intensity agricultural operations and provide excellent wildlife habitat and ecosystem services (e.g., water quality, food production, flood protection). After natural lands, low-intensity agriculture is the best land type for conservation in Florida, because pasture and timber forests are ecologically similar to native grasslands and woodlands.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Historically, much of southern Florida was grassland, wetland, or pine flatwoods. Now, ranchlands mimic those habitats, protecting species adapted to those landscapes, like the federally threatened Crested Caracara, Snail Kite, and Florida Panther. Similarly, timberlands harbor species adapted to pine flatwoods, like the threatened Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Eastern Indigo Snake.

CONNECTIVITY

Development blocks wildlife movement but the open landscapes of ranches and timberlands connect natural areas, especially important for species like the Florida Panther, Florida Black Bear, and Eastern Indigo Snake.

WATER

Ranches protect thousands of acres of intact wetlands and floodplains. Working lands help protect Florida's fresh water, filtering surface water, promoting groundwater recharge, reducing erosion, and mitigating flood risk.

CLIMATE

Working lands store vast amounts of carbon in their extensive grasslands and woodlands.

The alternative to timber and ranching in Florida is development, which depletes ecosystem services, damages water resources, and displaces wildlife. Development is consuming Florida's natural lands, pastures, and timber plantations at a rate of almost 27,000 acres per year.

➤➤➤ HOW DO WE PROTECT OUR WORKING LANDS FROM DEVELOPMENT?

Conservation easements are a good way to conserve our working lands. Easements can protect ecosystem services and provide a substantial economic return, as well as tax incentives, for landowners.

**WORKING LANDS ARE CRITICAL TO THE FUTURE OF
FLORIDA'S WILDLIFE AND WILD SPACES.**

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
HOW WE CAN PROTECT THEM.**

