



FLORIDA NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL. PHOTO BY ROBERT COVENEY.

# The Florida Trail and Wildlife Corridor

**The Florida Trail Association, Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, US Forest Service, and Trust for Public Land are joining forces to unlock the full potential of Florida's outdoors. We are filling in the missing pieces needed to create a seamless mosaic of conserved lands along the Florida National Scenic Trail to ensure that all Floridians can enjoy the state's rich natural treasures.**

## **A Trail Worth Protecting**

In our fast-paced and ever-changing world, access to nature is essential. Florida's natural spaces nurture our well-being and refresh our spirits. They foster cohesive and resilient communities and thriving outdoor industries. Our unique wildlife species depend on them to survive and thrive.

Today, rapid population growth and increasing demand for development impact our coastlines, wetlands, and upland ecosystems, and outdoor recreation economy. Safeguarding these natural spaces has never been more important.

That is why we are working together to expand and improve two of Florida's most vital outdoor assets, the Florida National Scenic Trail (Florida Trail) and the Florida Wildlife Corridor (Corridor). Together, they hold the promise of connecting residents to the vast tapestry of Florida's natural wonders.

## A Two-Pronged Strategy

Spanning 18 million acres, the Florida Wildlife Corridor is vast network of forests, lakes, rivers, prairies, and working lands that stretch from the Everglades to the Georgia and Alabama borders. These connected lands and waters help sustain habitat connectivity and biodiversity, water quantity and quality, recreation, and the economy.

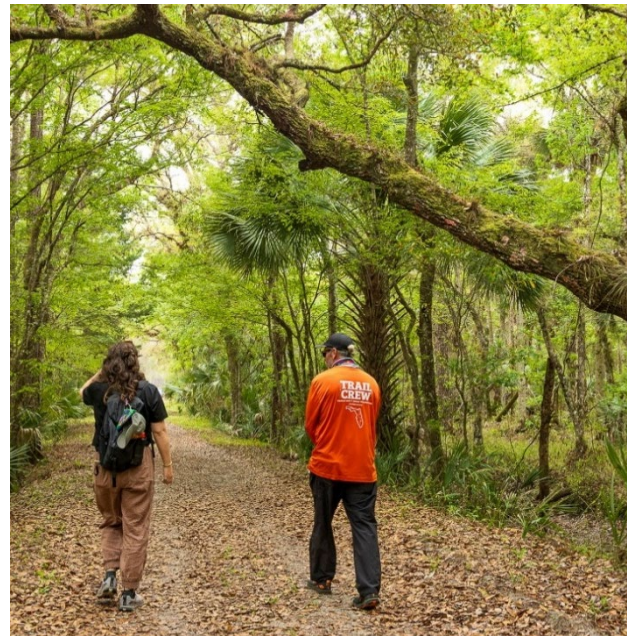
Nestled within and meandering through the Corridor is the Florida National Scenic Trail, also known as the Florida Trail. Extending 1,500 miles from the Everglades to the Panhandle, the Florida Trail provides opportunities for hiking, biking, swimming, and exploring some of the most stunning places in the Corridor. It is the longest trail in the state and one of only 11 federal national scenic trails in the country.

The Florida Trail and Corridor share a stunning landscape but there are gaps in need of permanent protection to secure public access and safe passage for wildlife. One quarter of the Florida Trail includes roadways that detract from the outdoor experience and safety of hikers. The Corridor has over 8 million acres lacking permanent conservation protection. Closing these gaps in the Trail and Corridor will safeguard the ecological and recreational values of these national treasures, and benefit future generations of Floridians.

## A Bounty of Benefits

With support from Disney Conservation Fund, the Florida Trail Association, Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, US Forest Service, and Trust for Public Land have united to close these gaps and build a better Florida Trail. Our goals are:

- **Recreational Benefits:** Expand and improve recreation by relocating road walks to natural areas, unlocking access with trailheads and links to local networks, and creating access to vistas and campsites.
- **Corridor Connectivity:** Sustain ecological health and biodiversity across the state by protecting the Wildlife Corridor opportunity areas where native habitats, rare species, drinking water, and working lands thrive.

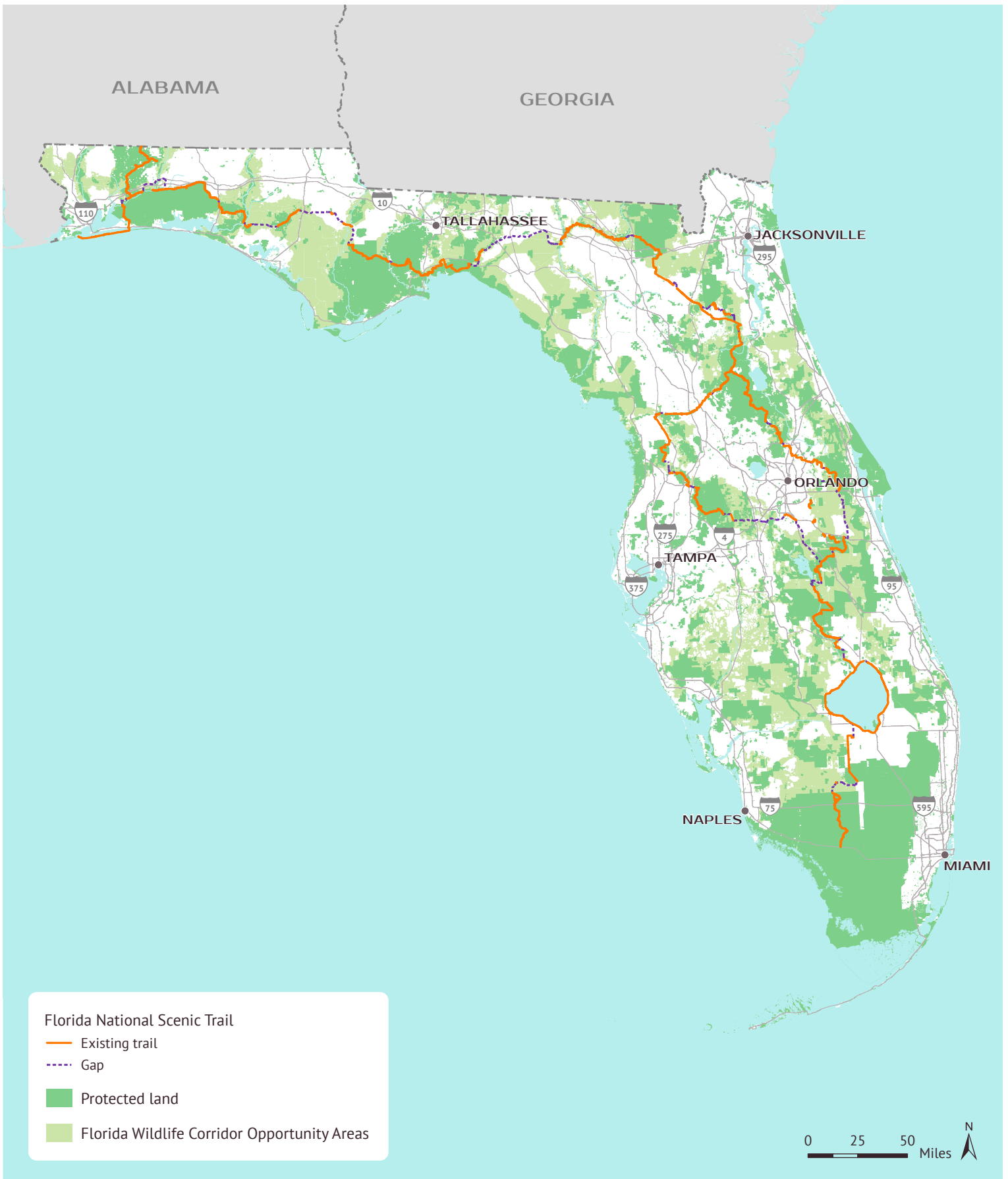


TOSOHATCHEE TRAILHEAD, FLORIDA. PHOTO BY ETHAN COYLE.

- **Ecosystem Resilience:** Protect natural elements that support ecosystem resilience, such as wetlands that mitigate flooding impacts and tree canopies that reduce heat and air pollution.
- **Sustainable Economies:** Sustain and uplift local and regional economies by supporting trail towns, outdoor industries, farming and ranching, and tourism-based businesses along the Florida Trail and in the Corridor.

## Program Activities

- **Strategic Planning:** The Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation is leading the collaboration toward using data-driven insights; coordinating mapping and stakeholder input to prioritize opportunity areas and funding strategies; and leading diverse stakeholders in building support for achieving local and regional goals for the Florida Trail and Corridor.
- **Land Protection:** With our partners' regional relationships, Trust for Public Land is leading and serving as the trusted acquisition partner to protect land benefiting the Florida Trail and Corridor. This includes working directly with landowners, conducting due diligence, fundraising, and conveying properties to long-term stewards for management.



# The Florida Wildlife Corridor

## CLOSING GAPS AND EXPANDING ACCESS ALONG THE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

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- **Building and Maintaining Trails:** Leveraging professional staff and a strong network of volunteers, Florida Trail Association is leading construction of trailheads, linkages, and access areas, while maintaining trails by repairing structures, repainting trail markers, and clearing growth to ensure the Trail is safe and accessible.
- **Community Programming:** Florida Trail Association is leading and all partners are supporting recreational and educational activities, such as hiking, cycling, and nature walks, as well as volunteer cleanups.
- **Conservation Financing:** Trust for Public Land is advising local governments on the passage of ballot measures that generate public funding for conservation that can benefit the Florida Trail and Corridor.

## Program Partners

Each of the program partners brings unique expertise and resources to this effort.

- **Trust for Public Land:** Since 1972, TPL has protected over 4 million acres nationwide, including 185,187 acres in Florida and sections of the Florida Gulf Coast Trail, Florida Legacy Trail, and Appalachian National Scenic Trail. TPL has a strong record of securing bipartisan voter approval for ballot measures to fund conservation and trails, resulting in a total of \$110 billion nationwide. In Florida, voters have approved 30 such measures benefiting 35 cities and counties. For this effort, TPL will contribute to mapping, land protection, trail planning, and conservation finance.
- **Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation:** Champions a collaborative campaign to permanently connect, protect, and restore the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The organization aligns efforts for conservation of the Corridor's



FLORIDA TRAIL. PHOTO BY ROBERT COVENEY.

highest priorities, accelerates connectivity by convening partners, providing tools and resources, and celebrates collective successes through storytelling and art while elevating partners' work. For this effort, the Foundation will primarily prioritize land along the trail with high ecological and connectivity value.

- **Florida Trail Association:** Develops, maintains, protects, and promotes a network of hiking trails throughout the state, including the Florida Trail. For this effort, the Association is contributing to planning, construction, and maintenance, as well as hosting volunteer, recreational, and educational activities.

## How You Can Help

We depend on the generosity of donors to achieve our missions. By closing gaps in the Florida Trail and Corridor, we can achieve the following goals:

- Expand safe public access to natural, historic, and cultural sites
- Safeguard critical habits and movement corridors for wildlife
- Boost local economies through outdoor industries and tourism
- Strengthen communities across Florida

Join us in protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor and connecting the Florida National Scenic Trail.

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