

Comments – America’s Great Outdoors Listening Session – June 21, 2011

Dixie County/Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed Conservation Easement

Project Summary

The 46,500-acre *Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed Conservation Easement* project is a rare opportunity to protect an expansive tract of land in a critical location. Building on the success of the adjacent 31,962-acre California Lake easement, completed in 2001, this project is directly adjacent to both the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge and the Big Bend Wildlife Management Area, and will vastly expand the protected area along Florida’s “Nature Coast.”

Natural Resources

The project contains habitat for an abundance of wildlife, including Wood Stork, Gopher Tortoise, Florida Black Bear, and others. It is designed to protect the quality of water flowing into the adjacent conservation lands along the Suwannee River and the Gulf of Mexico, which together comprise one of the largest undeveloped river delta systems in the nation. Like the California Lake easement, the Lower Suwannee easement will acquire timber harvesting rights within forested hardwood and cypress wetlands. This will permanently protect more than 34 square miles (approximately 22,000 acres) of forested wetlands and wildlife corridors, thereby ensuring these areas continue to succeed into mature cypress, hardwood, and mixed pine communities, similar to those found on adjacent public lands. The majority of the project falls within the “Critical Linkage” category of the Florida Ecological Greenway Network, which delineates priority areas for protection to maintain connectivity between natural areas.

Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed Conservation Easement - Regional Conservation Significance

