



Creating a Cooperative Conservation Blueprint for Florida

Two years of progress and a framework for next steps



Prepared for the
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
March 2010

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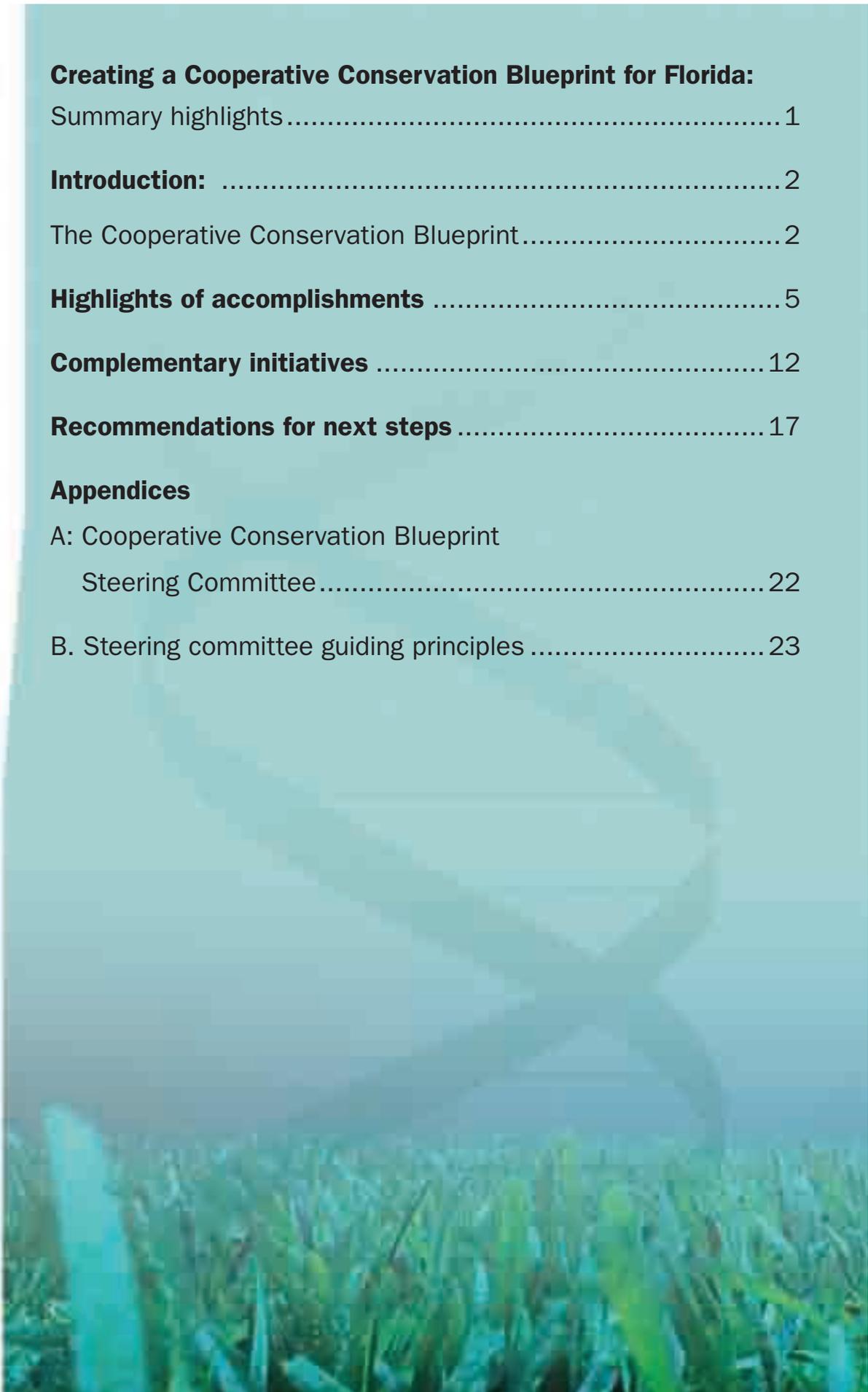
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Creating a Cooperative Conservation Blueprint for Florida

Summary Highlights

The Cooperative Conservation Blueprint (Blueprint) is a major multi-partner strategic planning process initiated in 2007 by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) as part of implementing its State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The process is bringing together landowners, businesses and governmental and conservation organizations to collectively:

- Create a compelling natural systems vision of what Florida could look like if steps are taken to conserve the critical environmental resources and working agricultural lands that the state's wildlife depend upon and that provide ecosystem services and quality of life for the benefit of all Floridians.
- Build agreement among government and private interests to use that vision as the basis for unified statewide land-use and investment decisions to conserve those critical environmental and agricultural resources for future generations. That would result in maintaining a sustainable economy and a wide range of agriculture and nature-based opportunities.

The goal is a Florida where, because of the bold steps taken today:

- Floridians work together to maintain the abundance, range and variety of the state's native wildlife and their habitat and enjoy access to ample quantities of fresh drinking water, clean air, recreational areas, and agricultural products.
- Environmental resources exist in harmony with social and economic priorities.
- Owners of priority conservation areas view them as an asset because they are linked to meaningful conservation incentives.

This report provides an introduction to the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint, highlights of its 2008-2009 start-up accomplishments, a description of complementary initiatives, and recommended next steps. Those next steps build on the shared recognition that if Florida is to sustain its critical natural systems and working agricultural lands, now is the time for an incentive-based conservation blueprint that will lead to the long-term conservation of the diverse and sensitive land and water natural features that form the Florida landscape.

(To learn more about the Blueprint, go to MyFWC.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS/Legacy_CCB.htm)



The Cooperative Conservation Blueprint will depict those areas that are invaluable to sustaining the fish and wildlife and quality of life so valued by Florida's residents, visitors, and businesses.

Introduction: The Cooperative Conservation Blueprint

Why a conservation blueprint now?

Florida's natural capital – its signature natural land and water resources that bring in billions of dollars annually and are at the core of the state's economic prosperity – is at risk if we continue to develop as we have in the past. The impacts are vividly depicted in 1000 Friends of Florida's report, *Florida in 2060: Not a Very Pretty Picture?* (www.1000fof.org).

If development occurs as it has in the past, the report notes, a doubling of the state's population would convert some 7 million acres (approximately the size of the state of Vermont) of rural land into roads, shopping malls and subdivisions. As illustrated in the images to the right, if that were to occur, much of what is currently natural in Florida will vanish. That outcome would have severe consequences for the state's fish and wildlife and those who enjoy and benefit economically from them. It would also negatively impact the many essential ecosystem services, such as access to reliable sources of water, clean air, recreational areas, diverse wildlife, and agricultural products that are critical to the state's quality of life and economic prosperity.

To avoid the kind of future predicted in the 2060 report, in 2007 the FWC undertook the development of an alternative vision (termed the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint) as a core element of implementing its 2005 Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative. At the same time, the FWC was moving forward with developing the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint, the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida that initiated the development of the Critical Land and Waters Identification Project (CLIP) (described below). The parallel initiation of those two projects underscores the importance of a systematic statewide focus on conserving Florida's natural features.

An alternative vision: the Florida cooperative conservation blueprint

The Blueprint process provides a way to achieve a future that is the flip side of the trends depicted in *Florida 2060: Not a Very Pretty Picture?* The process involves

- Developing a statewide vision that depicts the important natural resources and working agricultural areas critical to the state's environmental, wildlife, water and energy security.
- Building the partnerships, knowledge and tools that will result in public and private investments and policy decisions to support the Blueprint vision today and over time.

The process to develop the Blueprint:



“Soon, the ultimate footprint of development in Florida will be set in asphalt and concrete. The choice is ours: Do we want to see a continuous expanse of subdivisions spread from coast to coast, or vibrant communities linked by a green infrastructure that protects open space, farmland, and wildlife?”

– *“Florida 2060: What’s at stake for Florida?”, prepared by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 2008.*

- Builds on and refines CLIP, a fully unified set of Geographic Information System (GIS) data layers of priority statewide conservation areas, working landscapes, and development areas. CLIP, which is available on the web, uses science and the best statewide spatial data to identify Florida's critical environmental resources in a database that can be used as a decision-support tool for collaborative statewide and regional conservation and land use planning. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) and the University of Florida GeoPlan Center and Center for Landscape and Conservation Planning worked with the FWC and the Century Commission to develop CLIP.
- Couples the mapping of critical environmental resources with a focus on social and economic priorities and the development of a package of ideas for incentives that will result in decisions by private landowners to conserve priority resources. The focus on incentives is fundamental to the FWC's incentive-based, non-regulatory approach to working with landowners to achieve important conservation goals while maintaining land in private ownership.



The Cooperative Conservation Blueprint provides the antidote to Florida's future described in 1000 Friends of Florida's report, "Florida in 2060: Not a Very Pretty Picture?" (as depicted above). In that future the natural resources that residents value so highly give way to sprawling, disconnected development.

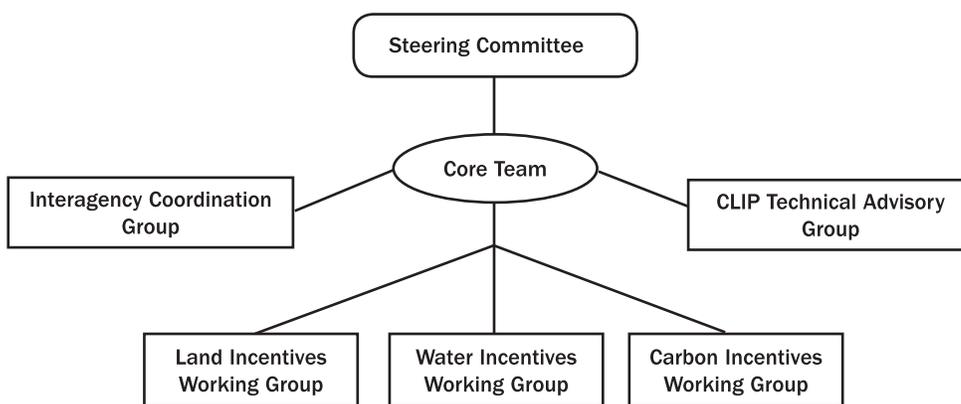
The blueprint structure

As the cooperative part of its name implies, the Blueprint process is designed to be highly participatory and involve varying perspectives and interests. It is also intended to be both vision-driven and science-based. That requires a leadership committed to keeping the Blueprint on course and technical groups well-versed in the science. It also means broad-based working and interagency groups that can facilitate the exchange of information and ideas. To date, the resulting Blueprint structure includes:

Three Convening Partners that provide the overall leadership for the Blueprint and include the FWC, the Century Commission and Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders).

A Blueprint Steering Committee that offers oversight and direction

Cooperative Conservation Blueprint organizational structure



The Blueprint structure (depicted above) is designed to be transparent and inclusive and to maximize input from those with diverse views.

Distinguishing Features of the Blueprint Process

Unifying Approach – The Blueprint incorporates social and economic priorities with science-based conservation priorities.

A Common Vision – The Blueprint synthesizes 30 years of science, conservation planning, and working with landowners into a vision where natural resources are conserved to benefit the state's human, wildlife and economic health.

Economic Benefits – Because of the Blueprint, Florida's unique natural resources continue to attract residents, tourists and businesses and provide the environmental services, such as clean water, that are vital to maintaining healthy communities and a healthy economy.

and makes decisions according to a set of guiding principles (outlined in Appendix B). Members come from the public and private sectors and represent a diverse range of views and areas of expertise and interest.

A Core Team that manages and guides the process and provides support for the Steering Committee. Members include representatives of the three convening partners, chairs of the three Creative Working Groups on Incentives (described below), representatives of the FNAI and the University of Florida's GeoPlan Center and Center for Landscape and Conservation Planning that are developing CLIP, and Blueprint support staff.

An Interagency Coordination Group that brings the perspectives of state agencies to the Blueprint process and provides opportunities for coordination and agency engagement in Blueprint activities. Members include representatives from the Florida Department of Community Affairs, the Florida Department of Transportation, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Department of Health, and Florida's regional planning councils and water management districts.

A CLIP Technical Advisory Group (TAG) that assists in identifying relevant data and prioritization methods to develop the CLIP database. The TAG, which was created at the beginning of the CLIP project, includes state and regional agency personnel, university faculty, and science and conservation planning experts from various private organizations. Its members are required to have relevant background in ecological or natural resource science or extensive experience in regional GIS analysis.

Three Creative Working Groups on Incentives that focus on carrying out their charge to explore and identify innovative ideas for potential new private landowner conservation incentives related to land use, water, and energy. The goal is a suite of incentives that will result in landowners' decisions to conserve large portions of their land that are identified by the CLIP data as having statewide importance. Members of the working groups come from different parts of the state, have different areas of expertise, and represent a wide variety of views.

The FWC provides Blueprint staff support. Additional assistance is provided by volunteers and technical experts who help with the CLIP analysis, facilitate meetings, and oversee daily activities. The Blueprint website (<MyFWC.com/WILDLIFEHABITATS/Legacy_CCB.htm>) facilitates communication between groups working on the Blueprint and provides a way for the public to learn about the Blueprint initiative and provide feedback. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has provided additional support through its extensive funding for the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment that was used to create the CLIP database. The DEP also has funded the development of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN) through its Office of Greenways and Trails. Envisioned as a system of interconnected lands protected for their ecological value, the FEGN is a critical component of CLIP and developing a cohesive conservation vision for Florida.

When asked to name the major Blueprint accomplishments of the past two years, Core Team members identified the five primary areas of success:

- action awareness
- productive partnerships
- a strong underpinning of shared information
- extensive outreach
- an emphasis on an incentive-based (focusing on private landowner conservation incentives), rather than a regulatory-based approach to conserving priority Blueprint land

Accomplishments in those areas have created a strong foundation for the next phase of Blueprint planning and the ultimate goal of a bold plan for sustaining Florida's priority natural lands for future generations.

Highlights of accomplishments

Action awareness

Florida is at the unique point where people with different views and from different areas are saying the same thing: the state's important natural resources and rural lands are at risk from current development patterns. A blueprint plan that identifies the priority areas that should be conserved and the meaningful private landowner conservation incentives to achieve that plan are needed now while significant natural areas are still intact and large parcels remain in single ownerships. Approximately 3 million acres of Priority 1 and 2 CLIP lands are owned by an estimated 30 landowners. That pattern of land ownership and the current reduced development pressures provide a timely opportunity for the strategic use of incentives to protect large areas of land for future generations.

"The fact that approximately 3 million acres of Priority 1 and 2 CLIP lands are owned by an estimated 30 landowners presents a unique opportunity for the strategic use of incentives to protect large areas of land for future generations."

– A Blueprint Core Team Member

Productive partnerships

The Blueprint's emphasis on working through partnerships is viewed by participants as an important accomplishment to build on in order to further broaden the variety of interests and perspectives represented. As noted in Florida's Wildlife Action Plan, "Partnerships are critical because this effort is much larger than any one agency or organization can accomplish alone."

The importance of partnerships was underscored by the FWC, Century Commission, and Defenders coming together to co-convene the Blueprint initiative. Other examples include the diverse perspectives and organizations that comprise the Blueprint Steering Committee and the multiple agencies involved in the Blueprint Interagency Task Force. Another example, as described later in this report, is the practice of incorporating Blueprint outreach presentations into the meetings of other organizations. Also critical was the work of the creative working groups to involve the landowners, conservation organizations, and business interests in the process of developing and vetting for new conservation incentives.

“CLIP is an important state accomplishment that should continue to influence Florida conservation and development policy at the state, regional and local levels for years to come.”

– A Blueprint Core Team Member

Strong underpinning of shared information

Successful planning and visioning processes build on a shared understanding of the facts. Without agreement on the facts, achieving consensus about goals and actions can be difficult. For the Blueprint, the important facts focus on the science-based data (CLIP) that identify the lands and waters with natural resource attributions of state and regional significance and, therefore, are vital to the state’s future economic and environmental health.

The FWC’s funding for CLIP is viewed as instrumental in the successes to date:

- CLIP Version 1.0 was completed and made available online (bsm02.freac.fsu.edu/imf2/FREAC/FWC2.jsp?) in an easy-to-use, searchable format. The nine core data layers are grouped in three broad resource categories: Biodiversity, Landscapes and Surface Water.
- The CLIP data layers for marine and groundwater resources are in process and will be incorporated in future versions of the CLIP database.
- Additional funding was obtained to maintain CLIP and begin developing CLIP 2.0.

The planning initiatives that are already using CLIP data underscore its value and timeliness. Examples of federal, state, regional and county-level use of CLIP data are highlighted below.

- At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service is using CLIP in criteria to rank projects for funding under its Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, a voluntary program for landowners who want to maintain, restore and improve wildlife habitat on their land.
- At the state level, the Florida Department of Transportation is using elements of CLIP in its Efficient Transportation Decision Making System Environmental Screening Tool.
- At the regional and local levels, agencies and initiatives using CLIP data include several water management districts, the Heartland 2060 visioning project to develop a regional model of conservation priorities, Highlands County to identify priority habitats and wildlife corridors, and the Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council’s regional visioning process.
- Serving as a model for other regional planning councils (RPC), the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC) modified the CLIP maps into a region-specific model (called Natural Resources of Regional Significance or NRORS for short) that can be used to meet the state statute requirement that RPCs identify and protect “a natural resource or system of interrelated natural resources, that due to its function, size, rarity or endangerment retains or provides benefit of regional significance to the natural or human environment, regardless of ownership.”

Important to using the CLIP data is understanding the data limits. The CLIP data are of sufficient resolution for statewide- and regional-scale conservation planning. However, they are neither intended nor sufficient to be used as the basis of local government comprehensive

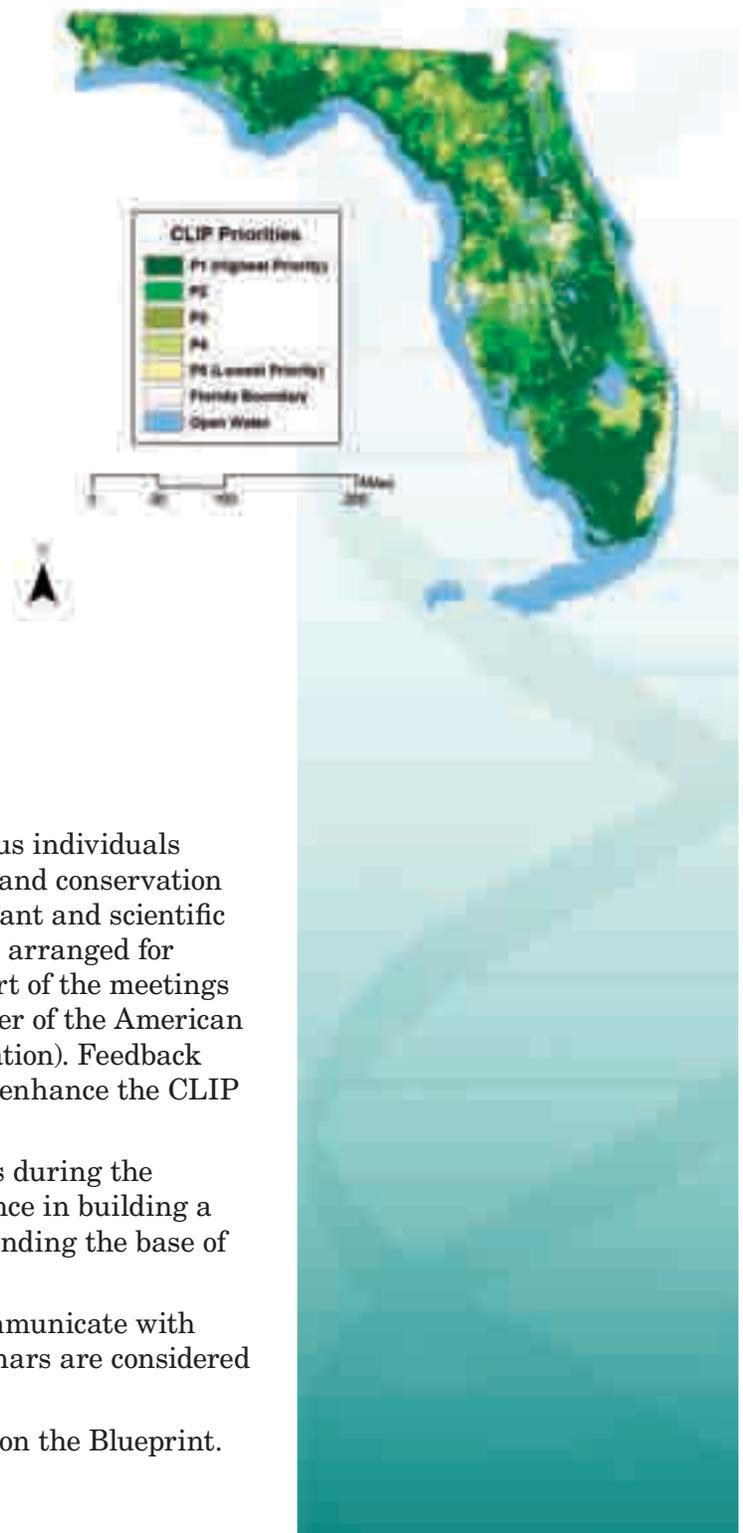
plans, agency permitting decisions, and high accuracy mapping applications such as parcel boundaries, delineation of wetlands, and other uses requiring more **specific, ground survey quality data**. As the **CLIP data are regularly updated, users should obtain the most recent version**.

Extensive outreach

Reaching out to a wide variety of stakeholders and a broad spectrum of interests is an essential component of the Blueprint process. The outreach was carried out in a variety of ways and built on FWC partnerships with Defenders, the Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida, and the Florida Earth Foundation. In addition, the three creative working groups on incentives connected with landowners and stakeholder organizations to generate and test ideas for new private landowner conservation incentives.

Defenders of Wildlife: During the two-year start-up of the Blueprint, Defenders, in partnership with the FWC, conducted a number of outreach activities, which

- Prepared the essential components of an effective outreach program, including compelling presentations and informational materials, targeted message points, and an engagement plan designed to connect with media and each of the nine Blueprint stakeholder groups listed in the box to the right.
- Coordinated Blueprint briefing and discussion sessions with 60+ organizations and numerous individuals that included statewide and local environmental and conservation groups, landowners, business people, and consultant and scientific organizations. To maximize resources, Defenders arranged for Blueprint briefing and dialogue sessions to be part of the meetings of other organizations (such as the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association and the Everglades Foundation). Feedback from the presentations is used to help refine and enhance the CLIP data and the work on conservation incentives.
- Obtained letters of support from 30 organizations during the first phase of outreach, underscoring its importance in building a broader understanding of the Blueprint and expanding the base of advocates.
- Began using webinars as an essential way to communicate with a travel-limited, internet-focused audience. Webinars are considered a very useful tool for future outreach activities.
- Briefed state legislative members and their staff on the Blueprint.



“Conservation will ultimately boil down to rewarding the private landowner who conserves the public interest.”

– Aldo Leopold,
“A Sand County Almanac”

“Research has revealed that across each of the states reviewed, the process of preservation and conservation involves more than just a specific program for development or farm or natural area preservation on specific parcels. Rather, the process involves a comprehensive approach to land use, planning and preservation at a large scale.”

“In examining incentive programs from other states, a record of public support, often built on collective visioning and planning, seems to accompany successful programs...Therefore, involvement, buy-in and participation by landowners and other stakeholders at both the state and local levels appear to be key indicators of successful conservation.”

– Defenders of Wildlife, “State Conservation Initiatives and Incentive Report: A Selection of Programs at Work in States and Localities”, 2009

Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida: The Century Commission reviewed the CLIP data and the Blueprint with its Rural and Agricultural Lands Technical Advisory Committee, highlighted the importance of CLIP and the Blueprint in its annual report, and frequently discussed CLIP and the Blueprint at its public meetings. The Commission’s Executive Director often updated stakeholder groups about the CLIP/Blueprint synergy. In addition, Commission staff joined with the FWC in CLIP/Blueprint development discussions with state agencies and the CLIP Technical Advisory Group and fostered the three working groups on incentives.

Florida Earth Foundation: In 2008 and 2009, the Florida Earth Foundation and the FWC convened six roundtable discussions with owners of large parcels of agricultural land and agricultural associations. The aim was to help identify and test incentives that would be of interest to private landowners. Roundtables were held with representatives of industrial owners of large landholdings and members of the Florida Cattlemen’s Association, citrus land owners, the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, and the Florida Forestry Association Environmental Committee. A workshop was also incorporated into a conference on ecosystem services sponsored by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Incentive-based conservation

The Blueprint’s emphasis on incentive-based conservation focuses on two parallel tracts: research on existing conservation incentive programs that are used in or could potentially be adapted to Florida and identification of potential new incentives that will encourage private landowner conservation of priority natural systems and working landscapes.

Review of Research on Existing Conservation Incentive Programs: As part of its Blueprint work, Defenders led an initiative to identify and evaluate existing conservation incentives. The results are contained in the two reports described below.

The Conservation Incentives Toolkit: Current Incentive Mechanisms for Biodiversity Conservation, Federal and State of Florida is a compendium of Florida and federal government-sponsored land conservation incentive programs that, in addition to conserving natural resources, would bring higher value to working lands, such as ranches and forests, and help retain a healthy agricultural industry. The report describes existing federal and Florida conservation incentives and spending levels and includes an extensive glossary of terms, links to program information and administrators, and a reference chart to programs and uses. Defenders solicited feedback from a broad group of stakeholders, including landowners, the conservation community, and members of the three Blueprint creative working groups. As one reviewer put it, “The toolkit is the best collection of available tools I have seen to date.” A future step is to transform the toolkit to a print and on-line guide that can easily be accessed by landowners and their expert advisors to match specific land areas to potential programs.

The draft *State Conservation Initiatives and Incentive Report: A Selection of Programs at Work in States and Localities* reviews land conservation incentive programs in 27 states. The incentives, selected

for their appropriateness to Florida, fall into the categories of financial assistance, technical assistance, tax relief, marketing, recognition, and conservation banking. They illustrate the variety of programs at work in other states and emphasize that preservation and conservation require a comprehensive approach to land use and planning at a landscape scale. That approach typically includes a codified state-level commitment to the preservation of water and natural land resources, including rural working lands, and often incorporates county-wide open space plans and the creation of regional approaches. In early 2010, Defenders is reviewing the report with key stakeholders to determine if further state research would add value, to assure that program content is presented in the most useful format, and most important, to determine which programs hold promise for adaptation to Florida.

Identification of New Conservation Incentives: As described earlier, because of the emphasis on voluntary, incentive-based conservation, a core component of the Blueprint process is the work of three working groups. The groups' charge was to develop ideas for incentives that would reward private landowners for conserving the priority conservation land that benefits all Floridians and, in doing so, make owning those lands an economic asset.

The groups, which focused on potential incentive areas related to carbon markets, land use and development, divided their initial work into two parts. In 2008, they gained an understanding of the issues related to preserving important privately-owned conservation lands and developed preliminary incentive ideas. In 2009, the groups convened to reassess and refine their 2008 incentive ideas in light of current conditions and to add new ideas.

The incentive ideas prioritized by each group are highlighted below. The ideas are intended to be more fully assessed and developed as part of the Blueprint process. That assessment will include close coordination with state, regional, and local agencies with an interest in the incentive ideas. The goal is to create a win-win for landowners, the public and the environment.

Carbon Markets Incentives Working Group: If Florida landowners are to benefit from emerging carbon markets, the working group concluded that

- The state needs to be a leader in determining a cap-and-trade process that benefits landowners, wildlife and ecosystems.
- Any standard and scientific methodologies used in Florida and any potential state carbon credit registry should be tailored to fit the unique characteristics of the state's soils, vegetation, climate and geographic size.

To ensure the development of sound incentive ideas that will capitalize on Florida's natural advantage in carbon markets, the group included representatives of state agencies and non-governmental organizations with expertise in carbon markets and related opportunities in Florida. The group's two incentive ideas (outlined below) would create a triple win: reducing greenhouse gas emissions and global warming impacts, restoring and retaining natural areas, and providing new sources of income for participating landowners. An additional benefit would be the retention of agricultural land. The two carbon market ideas are to:

"The ideas developed by the working groups on private landowner conservation incentives underscore the importance of acting today to take an incentive approach to conservation and provide value for the many ecosystem services that private landowners contribute to the benefit of the public."

– Blueprint Core Team Members

Preliminary Ideas for Potential New Private Landowner Incentives for CLIP/Blueprint priority resources

Carbon

1. Unlimited carbon offset program
2. High, tailored standards and third party verification

Land

1. A Safe Haven Master "Blueprint" for large landholdings
2. Conservation Design Development for smaller landholdings
3. A Pay as You Go approach to acquiring conservation easements
4. Ecosystem services markets

Water

1. Hydrologic restoration of natural systems
2. Self Supply Water Security & Resource Restoration Partnerships

“Florida has the opportunity to help structure emerging carbon markets because it is uniquely endowed to participate through forestry and agriculture. The opportunities for forest management, afforestation, biofuels production, and soil carbon sequestration are greater in Florida than in most other regions of the U.S., giving Florida an advantage in carbon markets.”

– “Opportunities for Greenhouse Gas Reduction through Forestry and Agriculture in Florida”, April 2008

1. Establish unlimited carbon offsets as a central element of a future federal or state cap-and-trade system. In this idea, emitters of carbon dioxide would be able to offset their excess emissions through off-site sequestration of carbon sinks. Florida participants could include owners of agricultural lands (pasture and crop), wetlands, commercial woodlands, and other existing natural carbon sinks. Additional carbon credits would be given to carbon sequestration that has co-conservation benefits. Properly managed and restored, the Everglades, including the privately-owned Everglades Agricultural Area, could offer significant carbon storage capacity.
2. Institute an accounting of carbon credits that includes high, carefully tailored standards and third-party verification. The integrity of carbon accounting is critical to gaining the confidence of carbon buyers and sellers and other participants in a carbon market. To achieve that integrity, all long-term carbon credits must be fully verified by third parties in order to guarantee that standards are adhered to and landowners benefit financially. In addition, the valuing and trading of credits and the creation of baselines and inventories should be accurate, transparent, long-term, predictable, and fully documented and should acknowledge complementary environmental co-benefits. To incentivize owners of large land areas to participate, low density storage over a larger land area should be allowed.

Land Incentives Working Group: In 2008, the working group developed two incentive ideas. In 2009, the group refined and expanded those two ideas (Ideas 1 and 2 below) and added two new ones (Ideas 3 and 4 below) that merited further exploration. Group members included private landowners, environmental interests, experts in land use planning, and representative of state and regional agencies with responsibilities for land-use policies. The group’s incentives ideas are to:

1. Establish a Safe Haven Master “Blueprint” process. Through the master blueprint process, a landowner or group of landowners who wish to conserve large landscape scale connected systems of priority CLIP land could voluntarily participate in a safe evaluation and planning process. “Safe” would mean no mid-process rule changes for the landowner or the public. The Blueprint would establish a 40-to-50-year vision of what the land should look like, including areas to remain in agriculture or preserved natural resource uses and how they will be managed, and the areas where development would be allowed. In that approach, a landowner would receive economic value for conserved priority CLIP land, and the public would gain the protection of strategic conservation land without public acquisition. Both would receive more predictable outcomes along with continued private land ownership and management and agricultural production.
2. Provide owners of rural lands a Conservation Development Strategy (CDS) alternative to trend development. Under local land use plans, many rural area landowners in Florida have the right to subdivide their land into large lot ranchettes (typically five and ten acres) or larger conventional subdivisions. The CDS approach would enable a landowner or several landowners who come together

to transfer those development rights in order to cluster development on smaller lots in areas with lower natural resource values. In exchange, the landowner(s) must agree to permanently set aside 50 percent or more of a site with high natural resource values as undivided, permanently protected open space managed for either agriculture or natural resources. The preserved lands would be contiguous in order to minimize fragmenting natural systems. The goal is to make conserving and restoring natural land and water systems more practical and conservation development, with its reduced environmental impacts, more predictable and easy to carry out.

3. Enable a Pay as You Go approach to conservation easements. Applying to priority CLIP lands and areas that connect those lands, that approach would provide an alternative to the current practice of paying cash up front to close a real estate transaction and enables a state agency to acquire conservation easements when bonding capacity is down or legislative appropriations for acquisitions are limited. In this approach, an agency would enter into long-term contracts to purchase conservation easements over a period of time. An easement is recorded when the final payment is made. The approach would provide a landowner with a reliable income stream in exchange for permanently conserving priority CLIP land and allow strategic conservation land to be protected at times when less state revenue is available for large one-time acquisitions.
4. Establish an ecosystem services markets incentive that monetizes the value of the environmental services provided by rural lands. In this idea, public and private utilities or agencies requiring an environmental service (for example, storing and purifying water to prevent flooding and meet water quality standards) would first look to agricultural landowners to provide those services through conservation management practices and restoration activities. The entities benefiting from the service would use some type of payment, financing mechanism, or other incentive to compensate the landowners who provide the desired environmental service. The provision of those services would become part of farmers' or ranchers' business and management plans. The result would be a new source of income for landowners, the protection of strategic conservation land, continued private land ownership, sound land management practices, and the provision of sustainable and cost-effective essential services without the large, up-front costs of public acquisition and construction of new facilities.

Water Incentives Working Group: This group's incentives ideas are intended to be framed within the context of watershed and aquifer management and designed to relate back to the current CLIP data and maps. To ensure sound ideas, members included water management district land managers and environmental interests, hydrologists, hydro-geologists, and water-use attorneys.

1. In consideration of the public interest met by property owners' commitments to protect CLIP lands, their existing permitted water use allocation would be secured. In this approach, landowners who have water use permits for self supply and agree to protect

Incentive Working Group Themes

Several common incentive themes emerged from the three working groups. The private landowner conservation incentives must be:

- transformational
- predictable
- voluntary
- innovative
- non-regulatory
- market- or public-private partnership-based (i.e., not require new state funding)
- capable of being layered together and tailored to fit individual landowner needs
- easy to understand, use and implement

The incentives must also:

- maintain and enhance the economic value of conserved land,
- reflect that different types of land ownership, agricultural uses, and geographic area will require different solutions, and
- complement and be able to be used in combination with local, state and federal incentives and acquisition programs on at least a regional and preferably a statewide basis.

“If Florida’s environmental history teaches us anything, it is that handing over the state’s most precious resources, for free, to anyone with a business plan, does not work. Appropriate pricing, markets for buying and selling water, and other economic incentives for its wise use all ‘have a central role to play in the transition to an era of scarcity,’ says Sandra Postel of the Worldwatch Institute, the global sustainability think tank.”

– “Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.”, 2007, as cited in “Summary Report for Water Incentive Idea #1”, 2009 Discovery

priority CLIP areas would receive a long-term water use permit for their existing quantities. The permit would be negotiated and run for the duration of the agreement to protect the CLIP resources. Participating landowners would also be eligible to share water created by water conservation and efficiency investments. The program could be incorporated into and regulated by the water management district’s current water use allocation permitting process. The multiple benefits for the landowner include greater water security and an incentive to conserve water; for the public, they provide protection of priority CLIP lands, greater water conservation and efficiency, the potential for water resource recovery, and a cost-effective alternative to or deferment of the need to develop new water resources.

2. Incentivize private investment in the restoration of potential hydrologic restoration target areas.

To incentivize private restoration of potential hydrologic restoration target areas (PHRTA), provide density bonuses when and if the private sector invests in community infrastructure associated with land development. The first step is to identify and map PHRTA as a CLIP priority. Benefits would include restoration of natural system hydro-periods, water quality impairment, enhanced floodplain storage and protection, potential alternative water supply development, and enhanced regional stormwater and floodplain management.

Because pursuing Incentive Idea 2 required CLIP identification of candidate sites for potential hydrological restoration (a process now under consideration), 2009 activities focused on testing Incentive Idea 1. That consisted of a series of discovery meetings with landowners in different geographic areas of the state and the respective water management districts for those landowners. The results are summarized in *Summary Report for Water Incentive Idea #1: 2009 Discovery*, prepared by Progressive Water Resources, LLC, for the FWC. The report also highlights the Florida Water Law context for the incentives and provides wording for sample legislation that would explicitly enable the implementation of Incentive Idea 1 within Florida’s regulatory water framework.

Potential Blueprint Partnering Opportunities

- Florida’s regional planning councils’ Strategic Regional Policy Plans
- 1000 Friends of Florida’s Alternative 2060 project
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s Landscape Conservation Cooperative Initiative
- The Nature Conservancy’s Northern Everglades Initiative
- The nine regional visioning projects around the state

Complementary initiatives

A number of initiatives in Florida create ideal Blueprint partnering opportunities. One approach (described earlier under CLIP accomplishments) would be to integrate CLIP data and the Blueprint into the regional planning councils’ Strategic Regional Policy Plans. That and other potential opportunities are listed to the right.

The synergy created by complementary organizations working together and sharing ideas will advance each organization’s ability to achieve a shared goal of planning for a more sustainable Florida. Partnering also will stretch valuable resources and energy and create an ever expanding base of support and knowledge.

1000 Friends of Florida's Alternative 2060

(For more information on 1000 Friends of Florida and the Alternative 2060 plan, go to www.1000fof.org.)

Florida Alternative 2060 builds on 1000 Friends of Florida's report, *Florida 2060: A Population Distribution Scenario for the State of Florida*. As noted in the introduction to this report, Florida 2060 contains a series of compelling GIS-based images that depict what the state's land use might look like in 2020, 2040 and 2060, assuming current development patterns continue. If they do, the report concludes, by 2060 approximately 7 million acres of additional land will be converted from rural to urban uses, including 2.7 million acres of existing agricultural lands and 2.7 million acres of native habitat.

To develop a new plan for a new future, 1000 Friends partnered with the:

- University of Central Florida's Metropolitan Center for Regional Studies (through the University of Pennsylvania) to create an Alternative Future that identifies what Florida will look like in 2060 if the projected growth and development patterns follow the principles of smart growth.
- Georgia Institute of Technology's Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development to develop a set of recommendations designed to achieve that smart growth future while still accommodating new growth.

Recommendations that would benefit priority CLIP and Blueprint lands are outlined below.

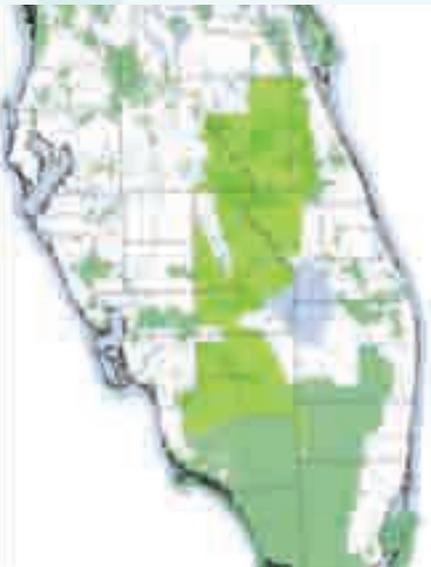
- Accelerate and expand Florida Forever to permanently protect natural lands, wildlife habitat and corridors, water resources, open and recreation space, and agricultural and forestry lands.
- Adopt new policies mandating that the conversion of rural land to urban density only be allowed in fair trade for significant public benefit, especially the preservation of natural and agricultural lands and open space.
- Create a 100 Year Legacy Plan that identifies lands for permanent protection from development and areas that are appropriate for development and redevelopment. All state funding should be consistent with the Legacy Plan.
- Identify a broad cross-section of leaders and champions who will advocate for the Legacy Plan.



1000 Friends of Florida's Alternative 2060 plan provides a way to achieve a Florida where the state's highly valued natural systems and working agricultural lands have been conserved for future generations.



The proposed Peninsular Florida LCC provides an opportunity to achieve the landscape scale anticipated in the FWC's Cooperative Conservation Blueprint initiative.



Florida's still largely undeveloped Northern Everglades presents an opportunity to protect and connect rare habitat, restore natural wetland hydrology, and sustain working cattle ranches.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's (FWS) Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) Initiative

(For more information on LCCs, go to www.fws.gov/science/shc and www.fws.gov/southeast/LCC/PeninsularFlorida.)

In January 2010, the FWS and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) entered into an agreement that committed them to an adaptive management framework for conservation at the landscape scale through the creation of LCCs that address climate change and other stressors within and across landscapes. The FWS and USGS are using an initial federal investment of \$25 million to begin forming eight LCCs across the country. Four other LCCs will move forward as partner interest and funding permits. One of those four is the Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative (PFLCC) that extends from the St. John's River watershed to the Florida Keys.

Consistent with the LCC applied partnership approach, the PFLCC will support conservation at the landscape scale. It will:

- Enhance and expand existing partnerships among state, federal, and local agencies, the Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes of Florida, nongovernmental organizations, universities, private landowners, and other stakeholders.
- Complement Florida's Wildlife Action Plan and other landscape level conservation strategies to restore, manage, and conserve the biodiversity of the region. That includes focusing on the priority statewide conservation areas and working landscapes identified by the Blueprint. The most critical challenge to be addressed by the PFLCC is the vulnerability of Florida's biodiversity to the impacts of sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, and aquifer depletion. Other core challenges include intense development pressures from human population growth, habitat destruction and conversion, the spread of invasive species, and management of fire and natural hydrological processes.

The Nature Conservancy's Northern Everglades Initiative

(For more information on the Nature Conservancy's work in Florida, go to www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/florida.)

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) work in Florida includes a focus on the still largely undeveloped northern Everglades that contains large areas of privately owned ranch and farm land extending some 170 miles from the outskirts of the Orlando metropolitan area, south through the Kissimmee River valley to Lake Okeechobee, and southwest to the Big Cypress Preserve.

TNC's Northern Everglades action plan is based on three goals, each of which complements the goals of the Blueprint and its working groups on private landowner conservation incentives:

- Protecting and connecting high quality habitats on private lands through fee acquisition of key parcels and conservation easements on ranches that will sustain the biological diversity of the landscape.

- Restoring natural wetland hydrology on selected ranches that provide the greatest contribution to the restoration of the Everglades ecosystem.
- Sustaining the northern Everglades working cattle ranches using conservation easements, payments for ecosystem services, and other financial incentives.

To achieve those goals, TNC is building on a series of northern Everglades conservation opportunities that include:

- Focusing Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm Bill programs on the places that provide the greatest contribution to the restoration of the Everglades ecosystem. Since 2001, TNC has worked closely with landowners and the NRCS to match conservation needs with Farm Bill programs. To date, TNC reports, at least 25 ranches containing more than 140,000 acres have already been submitted for the Wetland Reserve Program and many more ranchers are waiting for funding of the Reserved Rights Pilot Program.
- Designating the Greater Everglades system, including the northern Everglades, as a National Treasured Landscape.
- Encouraging the FWS to create a new Northern Everglades National Wildlife Refuge.
- Focusing Department of Defense funds on preserving habitat and limiting development by acquiring conservation easements on ranchlands located in and around the 106,000-acre Avon Park Air Force Range situated in the heart of the northern Everglades.
- Encouraging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District to re-establish a minimum target of 90,000 acres of wetland restoration for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan's Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project.

Florida Regional Visioning Projects

As shown in the image below, much of Florida (48 counties) is the focus of regional visioning initiatives.

Committee for a Sustainable Emerald Coast (CSEC) – Initiated in 2006 by Executive Order, the CSEC was charged with making recommendations related to long-range planning to assure sustainable growth and development in the Emerald Coast, defined as Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton counties (consensus.fsu.edu/emeraldcoast/index.html).

Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast (CSTC) – Created in 2004 by Executive Order, the CSTC was charged with making recommendations related to long-range planning to assure sustainable growth and development along the Treasure Coast, defined as Indian River, Martin and St. Lucie counties (www.sustainabletc.org).

Heartland 2060 – Initiated in 2006 as a regional visioning process designed to establish short- and long-term priorities and a consensus



Illustrated in the graphic above prepared by the Florida Department of Transportation, Florida is the subject of nine regional visioning projects that focus on long-term planning issues.

list of projects and ideas for an area including DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee, and Polk counties (www.cfrpc.org/Heartland2060.com).

How Shall We Grow? – Initiated by myregion.org in 2005 to engage residents of Central Florida in answering the question, “How Shall We Grow?” The result is a 2050 Regional Growth Vision for the future of central Florida, defined as Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia counties (www.myregion.org).

Our Region Tomorrow – A public-private initiative kicked off in 2009 to develop a collective vision for the future of the eight-county, North Florida region consisting of Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla counties, and the two-county south Georgia region made up of Grady and Thomas counties (www.ourregiontomorrow.org).

Northeast Florida Regional Vision – Initiated in 2009 under the leadership of the Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council and the Urban Land Institute North Florida District Council to engage public and private leaders in a visioning exercise designed to discuss, analyze, and develop alternative growth scenarios for the First Coast region of Florida, defined as Baker, Duval, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties (www.firstcoastvision.com and www.realitycheckfirstcoast.com).

One Bay – Initiated in 2007 by the Urban Land Institute Tampa Bay District Council and the Tampa Bay Partnership to engage public and private leaders from the seven-county region in order to increase awareness about the interrelationships among regional land use, transportation systems, and natural resources. Participating counties include Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Polk, Manatee, and Sarasota (www.realitychecktampabay.com and www.myonebay.com).

Southeast Florida 2060 – An emerging collaborative initiative involving the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils, the Urban Land Institute Southeast Florida-Caribbean District Council, the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions at Florida Atlantic University, and the Collins Center for Public Policy. Counties include Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River (www.sfrpc.com/2060.htm).

People, Prosperity, Protection – Initiated in late 2009 by the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council as a collaborative effort involving residents and private sector and civic leaders to develop a smart growth vision focusing on quality of life, strategic economic development, and the protection of the region’s natural environment. Participating counties are Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, and Sarasota (swflregionalvision.com/regionalvision.html and www.geoplan.ufl.edu/lucis/lucis.html).

Recommendations for next steps

To create a comprehensive view, each Blueprint Core Team member was asked to identify important next steps. They are outlined in the box to the right and described in more detail below.

Refine, add to, and expand on CLIP

Next CLIP steps focus on two primary areas: refining and expanding the use of the existing CLIP data and adding new CLIP data layers.

Refining and expanding the use of the existing clip data: The next iteration of CLIP can be carried out with the current State Wildlife Grant support for the University of Florida and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory. It would include updating existing CLIP core data and aggregated priorities and adding new data such as marine and groundwater resources. Two ways to increase the use of CLIP include maintaining the CLIP website and developing a related tutorial guide. Another goal is to create an Interagency Policy Advisory Committee (IPAC); as an interim step, that role could be played by the Blueprint Interagency Coordinating Committee. The IPAC could help coordinate interagency use of CLIP data and facilitate timely data updates.

Adding new CLIP data layers: As outlined below, the potential new CLIP data layers – water resource restoration areas, climate change impacts, landscape scale context, and an ecosystem services analysis – would provide multiple co-benefits:

- The water resource restoration layer is a requisite for the Water Incentives Working Group's Incentive Idea 2 (Hydrologic Restoration of Natural Systems). It could be used to examine the possibility of a water restoration pilot project in the greater Everglades watershed and to identify areas for restoring natural water storage in critical watersheds such as the Kissimmee River. Over the longer term, a methodology is needed to obtain consistent statewide data. However, an interim step could be to develop regionally consistent data for a pilot project area; that, in turn, could serve as a model for developing the required statewide information.
- The climate change impact data and the identification of areas adjacent to or near existing conservation lands and high CLIP priority areas will bring essential information to planners, decision makers, and the public and will be useful in the Peninsula Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative initiative. Among the issues to be considered are whether current CLIP priorities should be changed to address climate change impacts, land management and restoration strategies can be developed to avoid or mitigate the impacts of intensive land uses on CLIP priority areas, and there are specific strategies available to minimize, mitigate, or facilitate adaptation to climate changes.
- The focus on ecosystem services through a payment for ecosystem services (PES) program would help advance private landowner conservation incentives tied to the provision of those services. The Florida Ranchlands Environmental Services Project (FRESP) collaboration is an example of that approach. It envisions state agencies making payments to landowners in the Okeechobee

Possible Next Steps in a Nutshell

- Refine, expand the use of, and expand on the CLIP data
- Fully develop and vet the Working Groups' private landowner conservation incentives
- Test the Blueprint through pilot projects and a Blueprint Summit
- Further define the Blueprint
- Piggyback on other organizations' complementary events and projects
- Expand the Blueprint leadership and capacity base

The Blueprint-Essential Ecosystem** Services Markets Connection

The increasing attention to ecosystem services markets provides a timely opportunity to:

- Highlight the environmental, quality of life, and economic benefits of creating and achieving a conservation blueprint for Florida.
- Help communities and public agencies meet policy and regulatory requirements, such as those for water quality and storage, carbon emissions, and habitat replacement, through generally lower-cost, more expedient ecosystem services solutions.
- Provide (through payments for ecosystem services) a new source of revenue that will encourage landowners to retain and enhance land in agricultural and conservation uses.

For example, New York City was able to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency water quality requirements for 80 percent less than originally estimated by turning to farmers to implement practices that protected water quality. In Oregon, the city of Damascus is incorporating an ecosystem services approach in the public facilities element of its comprehensive plan in order to avoid high infrastructure costs in meeting regulatory requirements.

watershed who document that they can and have provided water retention and nutrient reduction services. Landowners enter into fixed term contracts (as opposed to having permanent conservation easements placed on the land) with state agencies to provide water-related environmental services and habitat above and beyond regulatory requirements, thereby creating a new profit center for ranching enterprises.

Fully develop and vet the private landowner conservation incentives

Next steps focus on identifying existing conservation incentives and developing ideas for new ones. For the work on existing incentives, a next step identified by Defenders is to update its federal and Florida toolkit and make it interactive. The research and report on state programs around the United States should be reviewed for promising models that could be adapted for Florida. The next step for the three working groups (carbon, land, and water) is to more fully develop, vet (with other practitioners), and test (through pilot projects) their incentive ideas. To do that, each group's membership might need to be broadened to ensure that all views are represented.

The next step ideas for specific working groups are outlined below. A common theme among the group's is that to tilt the decision in favor of conservation, landowners should be allowed to layer revenue streams together (for example, from carbon sequestration, water farming, growing crops for alternative fuels, etc.). How those income streams could be layered together and add value for a landowner could be a focus of a pilot test project or projects (described in the next part of this report).

Carbon Markets Incentives Working Group: Group members ended 2009 by agreeing that the group should stay involved to help ensure that Florida landowners will be competitive in the emerging field of carbon markets, particularly when federal cap-and-trade for carbon emissions legislation is enacted. That should include inserting Florida's interest in any offset system that is established and contacting the Chair of the Florida Energy and Climate Commission to see how the Commission would like to interact with the Carbon Markets Working Group and discuss its findings.

Other ideas are to:

- Invite a technical group of carbon market experts (similar to a peer review) to review the working group's findings and provide suggestions that would facilitate Florida's participation in emerging carbon markets.
- Explore the idea of developing surrogate carbon emission and sequestration baseline studies for some typical geographic areas and types of agricultural operations. That could include the use of FNAI data. Another approach could be a "table top" analysis that pulls together the inventories completed to date in order to see what data already exist and decide what data need to be developed. The resulting data should be assessed to see how they could relate to priority CLIP lands and how carbon banking might work.

- Determine if a Florida-specific standard will be needed or if the group (and others) should comment on the federal standards when they come out.
- Encourage further work to understand certain management practices that could result in more offsets, a step that should include research on the impacts of alternative fertilization practices on carbon emissions. The first step could be to see if state or federal funds are available for such an assessment.

Land Incentives Working Group: The working group members were clear that each of its incentive ideas require additional vetting and more detailed development by an expanded group. That is particularly true of the pay as you go and ecosystem services markets ideas that were identified in the later part of 2009. Development of ecosystem services markets in Florida, the group agreed, would help achieve the dual goals of conserving priority Blueprint land while enhancing the economic value of that land. To create such a market, the concept of ecosystem services solutions to public service and facilities needs will need to be grounded in local comprehensive plans' policy statements, regulatory rule making, and statutory policy statements. That grounding will require a lot of upfront education.

Water Incentives Working Group: The report summarizing the findings from the 2009 discovery meetings to test Incentive Idea 1 (water supply security) contains recommendations for next steps. Outlined below, the recommendations fall in two primary areas: the working group's Idea 1 and Idea s2 (restore potential hydrologic restoration target areas) and the CLIP process and maps.

- The next steps for Idea 1 are to convene the Water Incentives Working Group to further discuss the findings of the discovery research and hold a forum with landowners to present the discovery findings and gauge support for enabling legislation. If strong support is present, additional forums should be held with environmental and water management stakeholders. The CLIP mapping of the potential hydrologic restoration target areas is the next step for advancing Idea 2.
- The CLIP maps and priority criteria should be thoroughly vetted with the private professional sector that landowners look to when engaged in water planning. That vetting could occur through a statewide technical summit to present the CLIP data and maps and solicit feedback from relevant public agencies, academics, and private sector environmental scientists, biologists, hydrologists, and geologists. An additional step is to conduct a statewide public opinion survey to measure the public's willingness to support leveraging public assets beyond those of a monetary nature (e.g., entitlements and state permits) in order to protect high priority ecological lands.

The Blueprint-Essential Ecosystem** Services Markets Connection

(continued from page 18)

In addition, Oregon recently enacted legislation defining and recognizing the importance of ecosystem services markets to help landowners diversify their income. At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is facilitating landowner participation in ecosystem services markets through its newly established Office of Ecosystem Services and Markets.

Test the Blueprint through a Blueprint Summit and pilot test projects

The Blueprint Core Team and the members of the three working groups identified the need to more explicitly define the role and content of the Blueprint and further test and develop the incentive ideas. That could occur through a Blueprint Summit and pilot demonstration projects.

Blueprint Summit. A Blueprint Summit, which would be designed to be similar to the 2008 Water Congress, would focus on completing and more succinctly articulating the Blueprint vision and the ideas for incentives. The summit could be held after the completion of a pilot demonstration project and a series of regional summits aimed at creating awareness and support prior to a statewide gathering. The regional focus will also help build capacity for later implementation.

Demonstration Pilot Projects. Pilot projects should be regionally- or geographically-based, have a good likelihood of success, blend resource protection with continued agriculture, and allow integration with the efforts of other organizations. They should start with identifying the areas that need to be protected and be used to test how private landowner conservation incentives can be blended together to encourage landowners to protect natural resources important to ecosystem and human health.

The focus on incentives should include examining how to integrate an ecosystem services markets approach into state, regional and local plans. It should also look at the feasibility of establishing a regional-scale transfer of development rights program to protect large rural landscape areas and directing development to suitable areas, including existing urban areas.

A first step in pursuing the idea of pilot projects will be to develop a clear, consensus-based scope that includes identifying the partners, defining the desired outcomes, and securing the necessary financial and technical resources. The pilot projects should result in more clearly defined Blueprint goals, greater Blueprint identity, a level of protection that is over and above what is currently possible, and a defined set of partners, thereby making the Blueprint process more manageable and concrete. The focus on pilot projects should be balanced by a continued spotlight on the statewide goals of the Blueprint. Participating in the Peninsula Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative is one way of doing that.

Further Define the Blueprint

The feedback from the pilot demonstration projects should be used to further define and refine the Blueprint and determine how it can be used as a framework for decisions that over time will sustain the natural resources and working agricultural landscapes it highlights. The CLIP layers and the Blueprint, Blueprint Core Team members agreed, should serve as primary information sources for designing conservation incentives (potential hydrological water restoration areas, for example) and related conservation planning efforts. Any future Blueprint map should not be highly detailed and should identify general conservation priority areas across the state and to which everyone can agree. The map, a Core

Team member suggested, could acknowledge that there are other, smaller conservation priority areas in Florida that are very important but beyond the resolution of the Blueprint map.

Piggyback on Other Organizations' Complementary Events and Projects

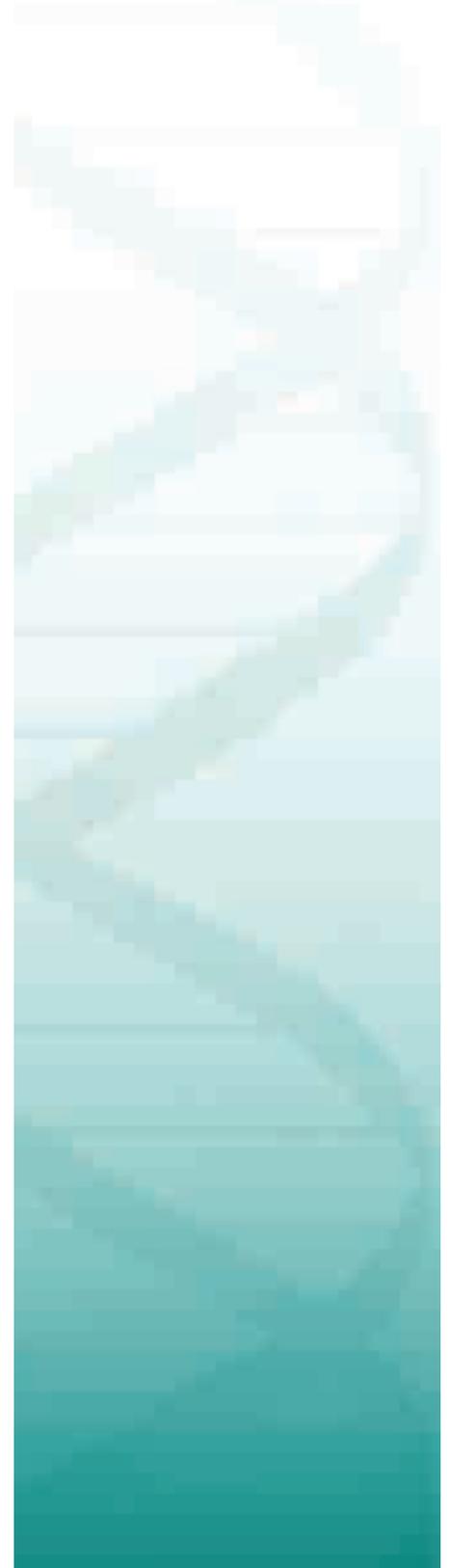
To stretch Blueprint resources and energy, maintain a statewide focus and exposure, and help build the momentum for a future Blueprint Summit, initiating a pilot project could be coupled with embedding the Blueprint and CLIP into the projects of other organizations that include conservation. Examples include the regional planning councils' Strategic Regional Policy Plans, the numerous regional visioning projects underway around the state, the water management districts' Watershed Management Plans and five-year acquisition plans, and state, regional, and local climate change and greenhouse gas reduction plans.

Expand the Blueprint Leadership and Capacity Base

The FWC has been a strong champion and shepherd of the Blueprint, but it now needs company. The very nature of a Cooperative Conservation Blueprint and the State Wildlife Action Plan calls for strong support from all FWC divisions and the active leadership and involvement of other state agencies and non-profit organizations. To gain and maintain that broad support and bring forth new leaders, those agencies and organizations will need to be well informed about the Blueprint and become actively involved in the Blueprint process if they are not already. Ways to bring that about include:

- Identifying opportunities for partnerships that create additional synergy, pinpoint new Blueprint co-leaders, and develop additional resources. As noted earlier, one such partnership is to integrate the Blueprint into the Peninsula Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative initiative to generate new resources and funding.
- Pursuing a memorandum of understanding with stakeholders and agencies.
- Using regular, carefully targeted communication methods to keep current and potential stakeholders and supporters informed about Blueprint successes and opportunities for involvement.
- Creating the position of a Blueprint Ombudsman to spread the word about the Blueprint, engage partner agencies, and help make landowners aware of and help them access the incentives that are ready for implementation.

In a nutshell, the first two years of Blueprint work provide the solid foundation needed to move forward with embedding the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint in public and private planning and investment decisions. That foundation includes a base of sound information that identifies Florida's must-save places and creative ideas for incentives that will encourage private landowners to share in protecting those places. Also important is the growing recognition that creating and achieving a Cooperative Conservation Blueprint for Florida is essential to the state's long-term environmental and economic health.



Appendix A: Cooperative Conservation Blueprint Steering Committee

Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation – Tony Carvajal

WilsonMiller – Georgianne Ratliff

Family Lands Remembered – Ernie Cox

Evan's Properties – Ron Edwards

University of Florida – Tom Hocter

Florida Natural Areas Inventory – Gary Knight

Defenders of Wildlife – Laurie Macdonald

Collins Center for Public Policy – Steve Seibert

Century Commission for Sustainability – Tim Center

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission – Thomas Eason

The Nature Conservancy – Andy McLeod

The Trust for Public Lands – Will Abberger

Florida Division of Forestry – Steve Bohl

Department of Community Affairs- Tom Pelham

Florida Farm Bureau- Staci Braswell

Appendix B: Steering Committee Guiding Principles

1. Maintaining and preserving healthy ecosystems is important to maintaining and strengthening healthy communities and people.
2. Without a comprehensive strategy, disjointed and incremental land use policy decisions result in the conversion of significant amounts of Florida's agricultural and natural lands at an unprecedented rate of consumption. This pattern provides an unacceptable and unsustainable picture of how we should accommodate Florida's expected population and economic growth.
3. We must establish a sustainable course in terms of the future of Florida's rural, natural and agricultural lands while acknowledging the interconnected needs of protecting and enhancing private property values and rights and creating new markets and economies.
4. A sustainable future for Florida requires a vision that protects the state's ecosystems, promotes efficient land use, ensures opportunities for a viable agricultural economy and working lands, healthy ecosystems and promotes vital, livable urban, suburban and rural communities.
5. As landscapes change and data improves, continually updated, accurate data – science-based, empirical and tested – should provide the basis for conservation-minded policy making in order to design and invest in a sustainable future. Data must be accurate to the scale necessary to support policy making – statewide, regional, local and individual project.
6. Florida must adopt more innovative ways to leverage and better use the economic engines that create value by linking conservation, community development and agriculture.
7. Using clear, understandable and accessible science and data, the public must be involved, informed and support efforts to establish a sustainable future.
8. A sustainable future includes a conservation plan that is accepted and used by conservation planning and advocacy groups, private landowners and state, regional and local government agencies.
9. An online GIS-based application built from empirical, accurate, verifiable and scalable data accessible to policy makers, planners, land owners, environmental stakeholders and the public is necessary, needed, will be valued and will represent an important tool for creating a sustainable future.
10. The development of a Cooperative Conservation Blueprint will require a coordinated and cooperative effort. Continued effort to strengthen existing data sets should be complimented by additional steps that advance the funding, legislative support and local government and stakeholder training necessary to actualize the adoption of such an effort.

By adopting these principles and creating the Blueprint, the vision is that consensus and data will encourage and enable policymakers to set priorities to achieve a sustainable future for Florida.





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