



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alachua Conservation Trust

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Community-Supported Conservation Victory Along the Santa Fe River

Gainesville, Florida – Following an influx of regional support, a local land trust has acquired 429 acres of land along the Santa Fe River, increasing protection for North Central Florida’s local springs and surrounding upland and bottomland habitats. Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) purchased the Columbia County property with funding from private donors, the River Branch Foundation, the 1923 Fund, and the Nature Conservancy. Over a hundred individual donors contributed \$82,000 in April 2025 during the Amazing Give towards the acquisition, along with over a hundred other donors who answered ACT through direct mail and online appeals.

The new acquisition directly surrounds ACT's existing 139-acre Sawdust Spring Preserve, which is a third-magnitude spring protected in 2021 and part of the Devil’s Ear Spring Priority Area. This property features river frontage full of karst features, cypress trees, and rain lilies, while safeguarding critical recharge areas for the Floridan Aquifer. Once restored, ACT plans to invite the public to connect to the Santa Fe River through passive recreation as a public preserve. Its protection ensures cleaner water, healthier ecosystems, and open space for future generations in a region facing increasing development pressure.

ACT’s current Santa Fe River Basin acquisition projects are part of a much larger ongoing effort, along with both local and state partners, to protect the entire Santa Fe River Watershed and the larger Lower Suwannee River Basin. The Santa Fe watershed is a vital habitat to many endemic species, as well as other endangered and imperiled species. Some of these federally endangered or threatened species include the Oval Pigtoe and Suwannee Moccasinshell mussels, wood stork, gulf sturgeon, and the West Indian manatee. In addition to these threatened and endangered species, the entire watershed is also home to other iconic North Florida wildlife such as the Florida black bear, river otter, beaver, bobcat, grey fox, and migratory birds.

“This acquisition would not have been possible without the generosity of our partners and donors,” said ACT’s Executive Director, Tom Kay, “The protection of Sawdust Spring and its surrounding lands is part of a long-term goal of ACT to safeguard as much of the Santa Fe River as possible for future generations.”

For additional information about this or related projects, please contact ACT at info@alachuaconservationtrust.org or (352) 373-1078.

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Since 1988, the mission of Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) is to protect the natural, historic, scenic and recreational resources in and around North Central Florida. ACT protects land through purchase, donation, and conservation easements primarily in 22 counties. As Florida's natural leader in conservation, ACT has conserved more than 66,000 acres.