



Bay County Conservancy, Inc.

The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida

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Summer 2025 Newsletter
www.baycountyconservancy.org

Creating a Walk on the Wild Side

Ok, we admit it - going for a stroll alongside an inner-city ditch might not be on everyone's bucket list. But for nature lovers, birders, dog-walkers, apartment dwellers and anyone else who wants to try a little Walk on the Wild Side – BCC's King Family Preserve may soon offer a reprieve from the surrounding concrete and traffic.

The King Preserve is a 26-acre wetland property situated just south of 19th Street, stretching between Balboa Avenue on the west over to Wood Avenue and then continuing on almost to Florida Avenue. Most of the property is too wet for walking, and while this may not be ideal for human visitors, it's a great thing for our local wildlife.



A City-maintained ditch forms the northern border of the property. Earlier this year, while walking along the berm next to this ditch, we saw two otters scampering from one side to the other. A great egret stood silently by the water's edge, and we saw wood ducks off among the trees in the swampy outskirts. We have observed red-winged blackbirds, ruby-crowned kinglets, red-bellied woodpeckers, hawks, great-crested flycatchers, and many different species of butterflies and other insects.



The conditions at this berm/trail/pathway are a little bit wild and are destined to be ever-changing. The City has to maintain our ditches – and they mow the berm a couple of times a year. BCC appreciates the effort they've put in, bringing in extra fill dirt to make marshy sections more walker-friendly.

We think it will be worth a visit—and we thank the unique and noteworthy crew at **Wild Green Future** who have provided us with funding to help make this happen. Volunteers, stay tuned—we may have Work-day opportunities here soon. We *know* you love to put those boots on!
- Teresa Nooney

Grow Native!

On April 12th, BCC Board member **Jackie Kolk** joined up with representatives from other local environmental groups at the 2nd Annual Sandhills Celebration at **Sandhills Native Nursery** in Fountain.

Sam Mello and her team at the nursery grow, propagate and sell local native plants—trees, shrubs, flowers, ferns, vines and groundcovers.

They also offer consultations and residential and commercial design services.

Visit our friends at: sandhillsnativenursery.com



Tyndall AFB NCO Academy Lends a Helping Hand

On May 23rd, a dozen Tyndall Air Force Base NCO Academy volunteers showed up in force to help us out at the **Mary Ola Reynolds Miller Palm Preserve**. Together, they picked up, delivered, and unloaded 55 bags of river rocks—over a ton of rocks! The rocks were spread and raked into place alongside Jane Perry's beautiful mural on the side wall of the Gallery of Art that borders the preserve. Thank you to all and best of luck in the future!



Welcome to New BCC Board Member, Chris Moser

Long time Panama City resident **Chris Moser** has been involved in local environmental efforts for many years and is excited to be a new BCC Board Member. She managed the Panama City and St. Andrews Marinas for many years and loves to spend time on the water with her husband Paul, and son, Zachary, a 1st Lt in the Marine Corps. The entire family enjoys boating, fishing, and all types of outdoor activities, and Chris looks forward to assisting BCC with the preservation and management of their wetland properties and natural habitats.

BCC also would like to thank outgoing Board member **Lisa Tubridy** for her enthusiastic support and friendship.

Lisa, we wish you good luck and happy times in your new mountain home!

A Sign for Bayhead Preserve

Thank you to **John Parker** and **Jake Harbison** for putting up the new sign at the **Bayhead Preserve**—even with some malfunctioning tool issues.



Bayhead Preserve is a 7-acre parcel of land located between Bayhead Road and Holly Avenue near Deerpoint Lake.

Expanding Nature Preserve Renamed

Since 2005, BCC has owned 10 acres of conservation land on Jenks Avenue just south of W. 26th Street. This property has long been managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as protected habitat for the Federally-designated Threatened Panama City Crayfish. The property has been without a sign, however, since Hurricane Michael tore through our area.

Bay County recently turned over an adjoining 20-acre parcel of land to BCC, and the Conservancy is renaming this combined 30-acre property as the **Ed and Lisa Keppner Preserve for Panama City Crayfish and Other Living Things**. The Keppners' research and advocacy efforts significantly contributed to the conservation of the Panama City crayfish. In addition, the Keppners have added immeasurably to the biological inventory of Bay County and surrounding area. Both Lisa and Ed are skilled field biologists who have delighted in finding and cataloging nematodes, birds, dragonflies, plants, and "Other Living Things" that populate the Panhandle.

Lisa and Ed are former members of the Board of Directors of Bay County Conservancy and have been active in other environmental organizations. Their advice on management of land has helped preserve the native habitats that BCC is dedicated to saving for future generations.

- **Candis Harbison**

Out & About: BCC Attends Corridor Connect Summit

The Corridor Connect Summit was held in June in Orlando with 700 people in attendance. The Summit was arranged by the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, with help from other groups and about 100 speakers. Founded in 2004 by Carlton Ward, Jr. (with help from others), the Foundation's goal is "to champion a collaborative campaign to permanently connect, protect and restore the Florida Wildlife Corridor."

The Florida Wildlife Corridor Act (Fla. Stat. 259.1055) was passed by the legislature in 2021, to save lands and try to connect people to places and to restore and connect lands and waters. The goal of the Summit is to raise awareness of the corridor.

The Summit featured a day of field trips, followed by 2 days of presentations from an incredible number of conservation groups, universities across the Southeast, government officials including the Secretary of Florida's Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation, private investment groups, military representatives and many more. The third day emphasized collaboration and how even storytelling and songwriting can be used to promote the corridor and respect for green space and wildlife.

A majority of the 700 attending seemed to be young and employed in environmental jobs. Few representatives from 501 (c)(3) land trusts seemed to be there and few people from northwest Florida. The available corridor map does not seem to include land trust preserves. Bay County Conservancy's preserves are not noted. We certainly need to have more lands in northwest Florida designated as desirable acquisitions for the corridor.

Many new and innovative ideas were discussed. Meeting people who are also interested in conservation is a benefit of the seminar. New funding sources including voter approved local acquisition programs, private funding, real estate planning, and military grants were interesting topics at the Summit and we should definitely investigate some of them. No brochures or lists of these sources seemed to be available and would have been helpful.

Do you see other topics the Bay County Conservancy should look into?

- Jackie Kolk
BCC Land Acquisition Chair

What is the Florida Wildlife Corridor?

18 Million Acres

A patchwork of connected public and private lands that spans from the tip of the Everglades across the panhandle.

Conserved Areas

54% of the Corridor is already conserved including the lands and waters within the 75 state parks, 34 state forests, and 7 national parks that fall within the Corridor.

Opportunity Areas

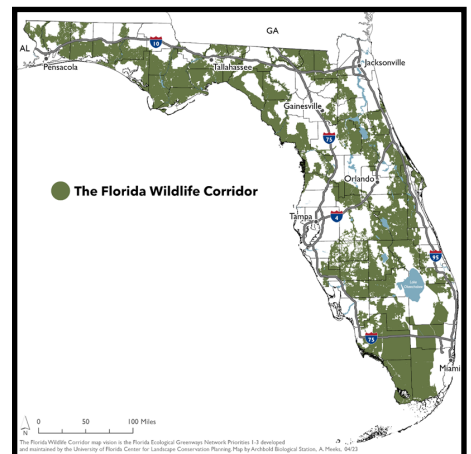
46% of the Corridor is not yet protected.

Of this,

33% = ranchland

and

43% = timberland.



The Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation has online links to various maps and information about Corridor Geography. Find out more: <https://floridawildlifecorridor.org/maps/>

Mission Statement

Bay County Conservancy is a land trust dedicated to the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in Northwest Florida.

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Help Wanted

Insurance Advisor

Volunteer needed to supervise BCC's liability and workers' compensation policies. It only takes a few hours per year, but it would be a big help to have someone familiar with insurance to review and advise us regarding these policies. Contact Candis at 850-381-7500.

Ambassadors

Representing Bay County Conservancy at festivals and other outreach activities is an important way to make people aware of BCC and to educate them about the importance of preserving native habitat for animals and people. Would you volunteer to spend a couple of hours having fun with other BCC members and curious spectators? Send your name and email address to Teresa at nooneyt1963@gmail.com to get on the list. There will be an opportunity on August 23 at the Walton County Fairgrounds at the new "Landowner Days", a networking event that will involve folks from around the Panhandle who manage private lands.

Bay County Conservancy -

The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida—

is a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation.

Your donations and membership contributions help

local people save local lands.

**Join BCC or make a tax deductible contribution online. Visit:
www.baycountyconservancy.org and click on**

You Can Help.

Or— if donating by check, fill out and mail the form below to:

Bay County Conservancy

P.O. Box 1122

Panama City, FL 32402



Yes! I want to invest in my future and Northwest Florida's quality of life by helping Bay County Conservancy save open space and wildlife habitat.

Name: _____

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