

Existing Programs & Resources

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Office of Greenway and Trails in 1998 published a series of Greenway Maps identifying the conceptual location of equestrian trails, hiking trails, off-road bicycling trails, paddling trails, conservation and/or ecological corridors, and multi-use trails throughout the state of Florida. These series of maps have mainly identified trails along the Atlantic Ocean in St. Johns County, including the Florida Circumnavigational Trail, conservation/ecological corridor (running along both sides of the Intracoastal) and a multi-purpose path identified along SR A1A. St. Augustine's unique cultural and historic sites have also been identified on these series of greenway maps. The only other trail the state has identified is SR 207 multi-purpose corridor connecting St. Augustine with Putnam County.

In the Florida Greenway and Trail System – Canoe Trail brochure, published by DEP's Office of Greenways and Trails, Pellicer Creek was identified as one of 38 designated state recreational canoe trails. In 1979, the Florida Legislature, realizing Florida's unique natural beauty and incredible appeal to outdoor enthusiasts, passed the Florida Recreational Act which authorized the establishment of a network of recreational, scenic and historic trails. DEP's Office of Greenway and Trails administers this program to encourage bicycling, canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, skating and jogging. The canoe trails are publicly owned streams, often flowing through private property where the riverbanks are privately owned and are not open to public use.



As discussed in the previous section, there are many existing St. Johns County programs that either compliment or further implement the County's Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan. The programs that exist on the east coast include A1A Scenic and Historic National Coastal Byway, East Coast Greenway Alliance, Southern Passages Heritage Trail, Vilano Greenway/Nature Trail, Northeast Florida Blueway Phase II – Guana Tolomato and Matanzas Rivers Florida Forever project, Pellicer Creek State Canoe Trail, Guana Tolomato and Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTMNERR) and the Northern Coastal Basin Program. Presently, the only adopted development with an established greenway system is the Nocatee DRI. Within the Northwest Planning District and along the St. John River, the existing programs include Northwest Sector Plan policy directives, William Bartram Scenic Highway, St. Johns River Blueway Florida Forever project, the American Heritage River Initiative and the SJRWMD's St. Johns River SWIM program. Within the interior portion of the county, the existing programs include SR. 207 Rails-to-Trails, St. Augustine to Lake City Rail Trail and Nine Mile Road. The existing programs that directly implement the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan are shown on the map. The existing programs that either compliment or directly implement the County's Greenways, Blueways & Trails are described further below.

“Scenic & Historic A1A”, in early January 2002, was designated as a State (FDOT) Scenic Highway. “Scenic & Historic A1A” begins at the Duval / St. Johns County boundary line and ends at the Flagler / St. Johns boundary line, a total of 52 miles. In June 2002, both St. Johns and Flagler County's Scenic Highways became designated as a National Scenic Byway and adopted the official name *A1A Scenic*

and *Historic Coastal Highway*. This federally designated scenic byway boundary begins at the Duval/St. Johns County boundary line and ends at the Flagler/ Volusia boundary line, a total of 72 miles.

The **Florida Scenic Highway Program** as well as the **National Scenic Highway Program** is a grass roots initiative created to heighten the public’s awareness about the region’s history and intrinsic resources (i.e., historical, archaeological, cultural, recreational and natural scenic qualities) valued by Florida residents and millions of tourists who visit Florida each year. The mission of the Florida Scenic Highway Program and the National Scenic Highway Program is to protect, preserve, enhance and maintain the identified intrinsic resources within the corridor while allowing economic development. The scenic highway strives to educate the travelers by “*telling a story*” that represents Florida’s lifestyles, from the past to the present.

As its name implies, “Scenic & Historic A1A” has many natural, historical/archaeological and cultural resources including State Parks (Guana River State Park, Anastasia Island State Park and Frank Butler Beach Park), St. Johns River Water Management District Acquisitions (Stokes Landing and Moses Creek Conservation Area), an Aquatic Preserve (Guana River Marsh), National Monuments (Castillo de



San Marcos and Ft. Matanzas), a Wildlife Management Area (Guana River Wildlife Management Area) and Local Parks/Cultural amenities (Mickler Landing, South Ponte Vedra, North Shores Park, Surf Side Park, Vilano Beach Fishing Pier, Vilano Boat Ramp, Fountain of Youth, St. Johns County Amphitheater, Davenport Park, Lighthouse Park/Museum, St. Johns County Fishing Pier, Crescent Beach Park, Southeast Intracoastal Waterway Park, Matanzas Inlet Fishing Bridge and Rattlesnake Island Park). Although the scenic highway interconnects all the federal, state and local parks/cultural amenities, it is the

desire of the “Scenic & Historic A1A” Corridor Management Council’s (CMC’s) to also interconnect all these resources through parallel open green space and to construct a continuous multi-purpose path from Duval/St. Johns county boundary line to the St. Johns/Flagler County boundary line. It is also the intent of the “Scenic & Historic A1A” – CMC to interconnect all the water access ways through the Intracoastal Waterway, thereby creating a parallel blue open space (blueway) that will support eco-tourism boat tours similar to the Rhine River scenic waterway in Germany.

The East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) ideas began in November 1991 at the East Coast Bicycle Conference. This nationally organized 501(C) 3 non-profit corporation’s *vision* is to connect all the major East Coast Cities (i.e. New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.) and youth hostels along the Atlantic Ocean. Over time, the East Coast Greenway Alliance multi-purpose path idea expanded from connecting nine eastern states into connecting fifteen states in an effort to tie Maine to Key West, Florida. It was envisioned that the multi-purpose path would be a hard surface trail varying in width from 10 ft. to 12 ft. The “Scenic & Historic A1A” - CMC’s proposed Corridor Management Plan (CMP) identified the construction of the multi-purpose path through St. Johns County into Flagler County in the Action Plan, thereby directly implementing the East Coast Greenway Alliance’s initiative. This “Scenic and Historic A1A” multi-purpose path is identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map.

Southern Passages Heritage Trail is a regional corridor that possesses unique natural, cultural and historical resources creating a special “*sense of place*”. The corridor includes historic downtowns, indigenous foods, historic sites, historic event, unique industries, historic businesses, and historic agriculture and industries. Heritage Corridors’ combine resource conservation, interpretation education and economic development (typically in the form of tourism).

This heritage trail runs parallel to SR A1A and US 17, along the east coast of the United States and provides the primary route from Charleston, South Carolina on the Northern end to Volusia County, Florida on the Southern end. Over the entire distance of the heritage trail, the trail crosses coastal marshes, rivers and passes through some of the most fragile environments and scenic areas along the Atlantic coast. Users can find diversity in forestry, natural resources, and plant and animal life that reflect ecological zones that define the natural character of the SR A1A/US 17 corridor. This corridor also passes through some of the most significant historic and architectural sites found in the United States, which is reflected in the variety of architectural styles of residential homes, government buildings, downtowns, and farm structures. Southern Passages Heritage Trail travels through 30 plus cities and towns and 18 counties representing numerous federal, state and regional geo-political, jurisdictions. Although the Southern Passages Heritage Trail has not officially been designated as a Heritage Trail to date, it will be designated as such in the near future. The Southern Passage’s Heritage Trail is not identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Map, but the initiatives compliment the *A1A Scenic and Historic National Coastal Byway*.

Vilano Beach Nature Boardwalk (Greenway) - In 1999, Vilano Beach was designated a Waterfronts Florida Community by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The focal point of this proactive planning effort was to redevelop the Vilano Road Business District into a sustainable Town Center for the surrounding community and visitors alike. The underlying theme of the Town Center design is to make it pedestrian and bicycle friendly while incorporating environmental amenities into a design, thereby creating a "sense of place" for eco-tourism opportunities. In 2000, through a grant from the DCA’s Coastal Management Program, a nature boardwalk was built across a marsh ecosystem in order to connect the southern Town Center under the Usina Bridge with the residential area located to the north. The nature boardwalk is approximately 900 feet long and has several outlooks with benches. There are two pieces of public art (fast becoming landmarks) in the form of mosaic tile (fund-raising events) reflecting the surrounding marsh and marine ecosystem. The nature boardwalk has become a very popular place to walk and bike, and now residents can get to the Town Center without having to drive. It is the only public outlook to the marsh and it is the best place in the area to come watch Vilano's breathtaking sunsets over the Intracoastal Waterway. The final details on the nature boardwalk are in the process of being completed including solar paneled foot-lighting and environmental signage funded by the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND). The environmental signage will provide an educational opportunity for the community to come and learn about the importance and qualities of the surrounding marsh ecosystem. The Vilano Beach Nature



Boardwalk is an existing greenway identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map.

The **Florida Forever Program** is a Florida land acquisition program created to preserve and conserve the state's unique natural resources. In 2000, the Florida Legislature replaced the state's highly successful 10-year Preservation 2000 program, the largest program of its kind in the United States, with the Florida Forever Program. In 1998, the Florida voters amended the state constitution and re-authorized bonds for land acquisition. Under the Florida Forever Program, the state issues bonds for \$3 billion annually and distributes about \$300 million to various agencies -- the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Agriculture, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the state's five water management districts. The funds are used for land acquisition, environmental restoration and water resource development. Under the Florida Forever Program, lands are **only acquired from willing sellers**. Within St. Johns County, there are two Florida Forever approved blueway projects; the Northeast Florida Blueway Phase II and the St. Johns River Blueway. Both of these projects are described further below.

Northeast Florida Blueway Phase II – Guana Tolomato and Matanzas Rivers Florida Forever project. The Northeast Florida Blueway Phase II (“Blue II”) project boundary was designated as a Category A project by Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) in 2001. Projects that are ranked as Category A projects are eligible for 100% state funding. This proposal included undeveloped lands on the east and west sides of the Intracoastal Waterway through St. Johns County. Within the “Blue II” project boundary area there is approximately 18,170 acres (1413 parcels) of private lands and 9985 acres (259 parcels) in public ownership.



Public ownership within the “Blue II” project boundary reflects the natural, ecological integrity and historic value of the region. Specifically the public lands are owned by various federal, state and local agencies including the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), Department of Forestry (DoF), United States Department of Interior National Park Service and St. Johns County. Many of these resources have previously been described in the “Scenic and Historic A1A” section above, except for five other publicly

managed areas located along the Intracoastal Waterway. These protected publicly managed areas include DEP's Favor Dykes State Park and Pellicer Creek Aquatic Preserve (one of the state's 38 designated recreational canoe trails), SJRWMD's Stokes Landing Conservation Area, DoF's Deep Creek State Forest and the state's historic Ft. Mose. In April 2003, the state acquired the largest tract of land within the “Blue II” project boundary area known as the Rayonier Tract. The 8,500-acre tract protects five miles of the Matanzas River shoreline (from SR 206 to Pellicer Creek) and creates 16,000 acres of contiguous conservation land between Favor Dykes State Park, Pellicer Creek Conservation Area and Princess Place.

Rich in eco-system diversity, the approved project boundary was identified for future acquisition and includes 17 types of natural communities, supporting 70 or more Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) listed species. This boundary is recognized by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWCC) Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (SHCA). Through this program the ecological integrity of this area will be protected. In addition, this area is rich in historical and archaeological resources due to the Native Americans and European inhabitants, spanning over a wide period of time as identified by the Division of Historical Resources Master Site Files. The acquisition and protection of the remaining uplands will help ensure this area continues to provide a quality outdoor experience including opportunities for boating, canoeing, kayaking, birding, picnicking, hiking, dirt biking, horseback riding, fishing as well as environmental and historical/archaeological interpretative education (through signage). The Northeast Florida Blueway Phase II – Guana Tolomato and Matanzas Rivers blueway is identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map.

The **Great Florida Birding Trail** – The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) designated the east coast of St. Johns County as the Great Florida Birding Trail. In St. Johns County, this trail is known as the **Painted Bunting Cluster**. The trail is marked with signs and it connects Guana River Wildlife Management Area, Guana River State Park, St. Augustine Alligator Farm, Anastasia State Park, Ft. Matanzas National Monument, Faver-Dykes, Princess Place Preserve and Washington Oaks State Gardens. The Great Florida Birding Trail promotes eco-tourism in the county.

Although the Great Florida Birding Trail is not identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map, this program has an indirect impact on the Intracoastal Blueways.

The **Important Birding Areas Program** - The “Important Birding Areas” (IBA) Program was developed by an International Consortium (Birdlife International) to protect migrating birds around the world. Sites are selected based on factors such as large or unusual bird rookeries; critical migratory spring and fall stop overs, rare bird nesting areas and unusually large numbers of species located in one place. The International Birding Community designated five IBA's in 2000-2002. The areas that have been designated as IBA's in St. Johns County include Guana River Wildlife Management Area, Guana River State Park, Ft. Matanzas National Monument, Faver-Dykes and Moses Creek Conservation Area. Similar to the Great Florida Birding Trail, the IBA's promote eco-tourism in the county.

Although the IBA is not identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map, this program has an indirect impact on the Intracoastal Blueways.

Pellicer Creek State Canoe Trail is an existing four-mile canoe trail that winds through the tidal marshes of southern St. Johns County. The waters of the canoe trail are slow flowing, allowing the traveler to paddle upstream. The trail begins at U.S Highway 1 Bridge (six miles west of Marineland) and ends at Favor Dykes State Park. In 1979, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), as authorized by the Florida Recreational Act, designated Pellicer Creek as one of 38 state canoe trails. The canoe trail is identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map.

Guana Tolomato and Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTMNERR)

In 1999, the GTMNERR (the Reserve) was chosen as the nation's example of temperate Carolinian biogeography province and designated as the United State's 25th NERR. The boundaries lie perpendicular to the Guana River State Park/Wildlife Management Area boundary and traverses east into the Atlantic Ocean and west past the Tolomato River. The southern portion of the NERR boundary

begins just south of Moultrie Creek (less than a mile) and extends south along the Intracoastal Waterway into Flagler County past Washington Oaks Gardens State Park. The Reserve encompasses



approximately 55, 000 acres of salt marsh and mangrove tidal wetlands, oyster bars, estuarine lagoons, upland habitat and offshore sea. This estuarine ecological system produces a rich abundance of marine life including northern Atlantic right whale, manatees, dolphins, wood storks, roseate spoonbills, bald eagle and peregrine falcons.

The National Estuarine Research Reserve program is designed to sustain the environmental integrity of undisturbed estuarine ecosystems and to promote, implement and coordinate opportunities for scientific research, environmental education, public stewardship and nature appreciation on uplands and submerged lands. A couple of objectives of the GTMNERR are to provide access and acquire land to better protect and to manage the natural and cultural resources within the associated GTMNERR estuaries ecosystems that are consistent with the reserve's educational, research and management goals. The GTMNERR mission and goal compliments and promotes the protection of ecological natural systems by providing environmental and historical/archaeological interpretive education as well as promoting additional recreational access. Although the GTMNERR is not identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map, this program has an indirect impact on the Intracoastal blueways and the county's Greenway and Blueway initiatives.



The **Northern Coastal Basins Program** began in 1995 in response to the Intracoastal Waterway water quality issues in the region. The project boundary area is defined by the Intracoastal Watershed Area, beginning at Ponce Inlet in Volusia County and continuing north to Guana River Marsh in St. Johns County. The program addresses water quality concerns, estuarine ecosystems protection, stormwater management and coordinated joint ecosystem management strategies.

The SJRWMD hopes to maintain healthy estuarine ecosystems that support the economic, recreational and educational resources of the Intracoastal Watershed Area. The Northern Coastal Basins Program (NCBP) supports local land acquisition and greenway/blueway initiatives in an effort to maintain healthy estuarine ecosystems along the Intracoastal. Although the NCBP is not identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map, this program compliments the county's greenways/ blueways initiatives.

The major SR A1A and Intracoastal Waterway (east coast) federal, state and local recreational and conservational resources are located in **Appendix D**.

Nocatee DRI – The Nocatee DRI owner and developer have chosen to create a completely integrated greenway network within their development. The Nocatee Greenway is an interconnected network of upland and wetland corridors running through the Nocatee community. In relationship to the overall Nocatee land use pattern, the greenways serve as edges and greenbelts that define developed villages and emphasize their identity, as well as providing for non-vehicular travel corridors. The Nocatee Greenway preserves important wildlife habitat corridors and offers unique opportunities to the general public to enjoy activities such as hiking, bicycling, canoeing, equestrian activities, bird watching and environmental education. The final Nocatee Greenway Plan will include localized trail improvements consisting of trails and trailhead design, trail routing, structures and the overall passive recreational improvements. The St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) will review the final Greenway Master Plan before it is implemented.

The Greenway Master Plan will also help to connect valuable regional environmental corridors and areas ranging from the Atlantic Ocean to the St. Johns River. The Nocatee Greenway and Nocatee Preserve combine to form an integrated corridor connecting ecologically sensitive lands and landscape features including the Guana/Tolomato River Basin and Durbin Creek. The Nocatee Preserve is a separate but integral part of the Greenway, comprising an additional 2,400 acres, of which 1,630 acres are above mean high water line. The Preserve provides a critical link between the Greenway and the Tolomato River Basin. The contiguity of the Greenway and the Preserve provides significant protection from the habitat fragmentation protects regionally significant natural communities and creates a unique wildlife corridor.

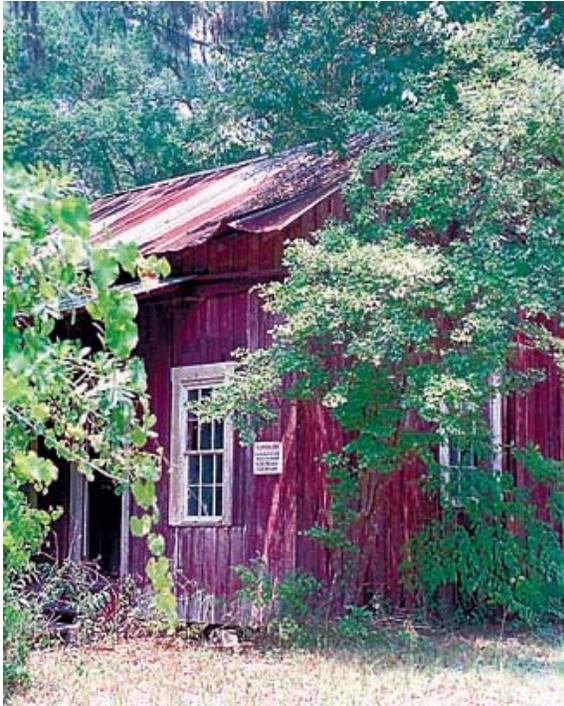
The **Northwest Sector Plan** boundary area is defined by Julington and Durbin Creeks to the north, SR16/CR 208 to the south and I-95 west to the St. Johns River. The Northwest Sector Plan (NSP) was prepared in combination with a North-South Corridor Plan, as required by FDOT due to rapid growth occurring in the area. In 2001, the county received a FDOT variance. The conditions of the variance were to improve the capacity of the existing roads between SR 16 and International Golf Parkway and to prepare a Sector Plan. The Sector Plan was required to address all the previously approved development plans (e.g., Plan Unit Developments (PUD's) and Developments of Regional Impact (DRI's)), the existing land uses, future land use, natural resources protection, public facilities, urban design needs of the area and other matters consistent with the state's comprehensive plan requirements.

In addition to FDOT's variance requirements, as an effort to address the directives established in the county's own adopted comprehensive plan (policy E.2.2.19.), the Northwest Sector Plan was required to address infrastructure, tree preservation, scenic, historic, archaeological, wildlife corridors and greenways needs of this area.

Included in the Sector Plan are a number of greenway policies, which directly affect the St. Johns Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan. The major Northwest Sector Plan greenway policies include A.2.1.3., A.2.1.4. (a), A.2.1.4. (b), A.2.1.5. and A.2.1.6.

Policy A.2.1.4. (a) Scenic Edges, briefly states that a 75-foot width area shall be located outside the right-of-way (ROW) for all major arterials, major collectors and proposed roads. The scenic edges and wildlife crossings have been identified on the County's Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map. Policy A.2.1.4. (b) states, trails and bikeways should connect to elementary schools. Policy A.2.1.5.

states, that the county shall initiate planning for the creation of a blueway system including river access. Policy A.2.1.6. states that the county shall initiate planning for a greenway system including wetlands, uplands, parks/open spaces, natural corridors, aesthetics and wildlife habitat.



William Bartram Scenic Highway – In 1980, the Florida Legislature (House Bill 987 (Chapter 80-427)) designated SR 13 as a scenic highway from the Julington Creek Bridge to SR 207. However, the Florida Legislature’s House Bill 987 scenic highway designation is a name only designation and regulatory protective techniques were not established at that time. Since that time, the William Bartram Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) has been participating in the FDOT Scenic Highway Program to address the issue. In 2002, William Bartram Scenic Highway was determined to be eligible to become a State Scenic Highway. Today, the William Bartram Scenic Highway CAG is in the process of completing their Corridor Management Plan (CMP) to officially become designated as a State (FDOT) Scenic Highway. It is anticipated that William Bartram Scenic Highway will become a designated State (FDOT) Scenic Highway in the Fall/Winter of 2003.

The William Bartram Scenic Highway corridor is 17.3 miles long and begins at the Julington/Durbin Creek bridge and continues to SR 16 at Wards Creek. The mission of the Florida Scenic Highway is to preserve, maintain, protect and enhance the identified intrinsic resources within the corridor while allowing economic development. This scenic highway strives to educate the traveler by “*telling a story*” that represents Florida’s lifestyles, from the past to the present.

William Bartram Scenic Highway has many natural, historical/ archaeological and cultural resources including majestic 200-300 year old Oak Trees, the Wesley Manor (now Westminster Woods) old Naval Store Operation, Horse Racing Road, 1870 AME Church, Theophilus Wilson Moore Plantation, prehistoric Indian Camp – Mill Creek, Lake Beluthahatchee and dam on Mill Creek,



Amity Anchorage Marina, San Juan Del Rio Church, Mary Wood Retreat Center, 1893 Grove Bluff Plantation, Steel’s General Store and Post Office, Swiss Lane steamboat mail delivery area, the old Community Center, Hartley’s General Store and Post Office, Alpine Groves River Park, historic plaque state markers, 1869 Moreman Plantation, Switzerland Cemetery, Francis Fatio Plantation, Prehistoric

Native American Settlement, Vitality Springs, Kentucky Branch Saw Mill, Hallowes Cove, Orangedale Cemetery, Shands Bridge and Pier, William Bartram Plantation, Florence Cove, Jack Wright Island Conservation Area and Trout Creek Park. It is the desire of the William Bartram Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) to interconnect all these resources through parallel green open space and through the construction of a continuous multi-purpose path running parallel to SR/CR 13 as identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map.

St. Johns River Blueway – Florida Forever Project boundary was designated as a Category A project by Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) in 2002. Projects that are ranked as Category A projects are eligible for 100% state funding. The proposal included undeveloped properties along the St. Johns River in St. Johns County. Within the St. Johns River Blueway project boundary area there are approximately 28,174 acres of privately owned land and 494 acres of publicly owned lands. The publicly owned lands include Watson Island State Forest (managed by DoF), Julington/Durbin Creek Preserve, Trout Creek and Deep Creek Conservation Area (managed by SRWMD)). In addition to the state owned conservation lands, there are several County owned parks including Jack Wright Island, Trout Creek, Alpine Grove Park (Bennett), old Shands Bridge Fishing Pier, Riverdale Park and Switzerland Point School Park.

Rich in eco-system diversity, this approved project boundary identified for future acquisitions includes 12 types of natural communities and possibly 70 or more Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) listed species. These areas are recognized by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s (FWCC) Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (SHCA) map. Through this program, the ecological integrity (natural communities, wildlife and water quality) of the area will be protected. The Division of Historical Resources Master Site Files recognizes several archaeological sites in this area. This area



reflects a long settlement history and attests to more than 11 cultures including Orange, St. Johns, St. Johns, St. Johns IB, St. Johns II, Spanish, Spanish First Period, Spanish Second Period, American, Nineteenth Century American and Twentieth Century American. Site types include prehistoric burial mounds, prehistoric mounds, prehistoric campsite, a historic refuge, a historic fort (Fort Picolata), a mill (Deep Creek Sawmill) and the last remaining active turpentine operation in northeast Florida (on the Ms. Jo Meldrim property).

The acquisition will protect the last remaining uplands and wetlands along the river, ensuring that the area continues to provide quality outdoor experiences by increasing boat access and providing additional recreational opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, birding, picnicking, hiking, horseback riding, fishing as well as environmental and historical/archaeological interpretative education (through signage).

The St. Johns River Blueway furthers the initiatives of the 1987 SJRWMD’s St. Johns River Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program and the nationally recognized American Heritage River (AHR). Acquiring land within the St. Johns River Blueway project boundary area will

compliment the AHR Board of Directors (previous Steering Committee) and the Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council's (NEFRPC) efforts to identify the St. Johns River as an Eco-Heritage Corridor. The St. Johns River will soon be officially designated as the "St Johns, an American Heritage River" through the DEP's Office of Greenway and Trails. Both the St. Johns River Florida Forever boundaries and the "St Johns, an American Heritage River" are identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map.



American Heritage River - On July 30, 1998, the St. Johns River was officially designated an American Heritage River by President Clinton. This is the only river that received this designation in the State of Florida. This designation recognizes the river's ecological, historic, economic and cultural significance. It was mutually agreed upon by the signatory partners (federal agencies, state agencies, and the river community) that enter into this agreement to work together to preserve and enhance the water quality, ecological and cultural

resources while stimulating economic revitalization in cooperation with other partners in serving their common St. Johns River interests. The partners of the river community will foster appropriate action to enhance the St. Johns River and improve the quality of life in communities along the river's banks.

At the 2003 St. Johns River Summit, the St. Johns River community decided that they wanted to preserve the natural ecosystems along the river, restore water quality (through identification and improvement of point source pollution, non-point source pollution, aquatic/wildlife habitat restoration) and enhance the river by increasing recreational opportunities, river access, and greenway connections and provide archaeological/historical interpretive educational displays.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) River Navigator is also in the process of seeking special blueway designation through the DEP's Office of Greenways and Trails for the "*St Johns, an American Heritage River*". "*St. Johns, an American Heritage River*" has been identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map. The American Heritage River greenway initiative compliments and further implements the William Bartram Scenic Highway, the county's St. Johns River Blueway Florida Forever project and the St. Johns County's Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan.

In 1987, the SJRWMD's **St. Johns River Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program** was approved by the Florida Legislature. Its mission is to protect and restore the surface water and the associated natural systems. The program efforts focus on reducing point and non-point sources of pollution, restoring degraded aquatic habitat, improving interagency coordination and increasing awareness of the river issues. Although the St. Johns River 1987 SWIM



program is not identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map, the program compliments the county's greenways/ blueways initiatives.

Bartram/Durbin Creek Canoe Trail is a beautiful creek that begins in southeast Duval County and northern St. Johns County. Here the headwaters of the Julington/Durbin Creeks join and move westward under US 1, just south of CR 210. This rural area is known as Durbin. Durbin Creek is tidal water that flows northward under the large concrete bridge on Racetrack Road. As the stream meanders northward, it picks up another oncoming branch and then turns westward for about seven miles where it meets Julington Creek, then the creek continues west before it empties into the St. Johns River.

As with many of St. Johns County's canoe trails, the natural scenery is beautiful. This canoe trail, unlike any other, contains some of the largest remaining centennial cypress trees in the region. In this location, the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) has documented that it takes 7-8 people arm spans, with their fingers touching, to wrap around the trunk of many of the cypress trees in this area. There are many other documented flora and fauna that have been identified in this area depending on the season, such as but not limited to, cardinal flower, wild hibiscus, bartram ixia, fall asters, bear grass, pitcher plants, orchids, osprey, pileated woodpecker, wild turkeys, mergansers ducks, eagles, deer, fox squirrels, gophers, water turtles, manatees, otters and alligators.

There isn't any formal access to this canoe trail; however, the local citizens access this canoe trail on the north side of the bridge where there is a dirt road leading to the dirt parking area or access the canoe trail from Clark Restaurant's boat ramp. As the Julington-Durbin Creek Preserve Park is developed by the City of Jacksonville, there will be canoe access to the Julington/Durbin Creeks from this location in the future. The Boy Scouts and the Jacksonville Seabees have maintained this highly used local canoe trail over the years.

The major St. Johns River and SR 13 state and local recreational and conservational resources are located in **Appendix E**.



SR 207 Rails-to-Trails is a 21-mile Florida East Coast (FEC) Railroad Company abandoned right-of-way now owned by FDOT. This rails-to-trail corridor connects Putnam County to St. Augustine. Although FDOT still owns this right-of-way, the county can and is planning on developing 12 miles of SR. 207 into a greenway. Much of the SR 207 trail travels through the rural communities of Vermont Heights, Elkton, Armstrong, Spuds and Hastings. The development of the trail will offer the surrounding citizens an alternative safe means of transportation connecting parks, schools, churches, natural features, historic sites and retail centers while providing additional recreational

opportunities. Funding is being sought for significant greenway improvements and land acquisition. The SR 207 greenway has been identified on the St. Johns County Greenway, Blueway & Trails Master Plan map.

St Augustine to Lake City Rail Trail is a multi-county effort (traveling through St. Johns, Putnam, Clay, Bradford, Union and Columbia counties) that connects the St. Johns SR 207 rails-to-trails project with neighboring Putnam County and beyond to Lake City. The SR 207 rail-to-trails project will serve as the anchor to the larger greenway/trail that will ultimately connect St. Augustine to Lake City. The St. Augustine to Lake City Rail-to-Trail's alignment will follow SR 100 from Putnam to Lake City. Currently in the planning stages, a representative from each County along the trail, as well as citizen volunteers meet quarterly to coordinate activities, plan the trail, pursue funding for development, establish management strategies and establish an official name for this rail-trail.

Nine Mile Road is a locally designated scenic road in St. Johns County.

A list of the major recreational and conservational park resources lying in the central portion of the county can be found in **Appendix F**.