

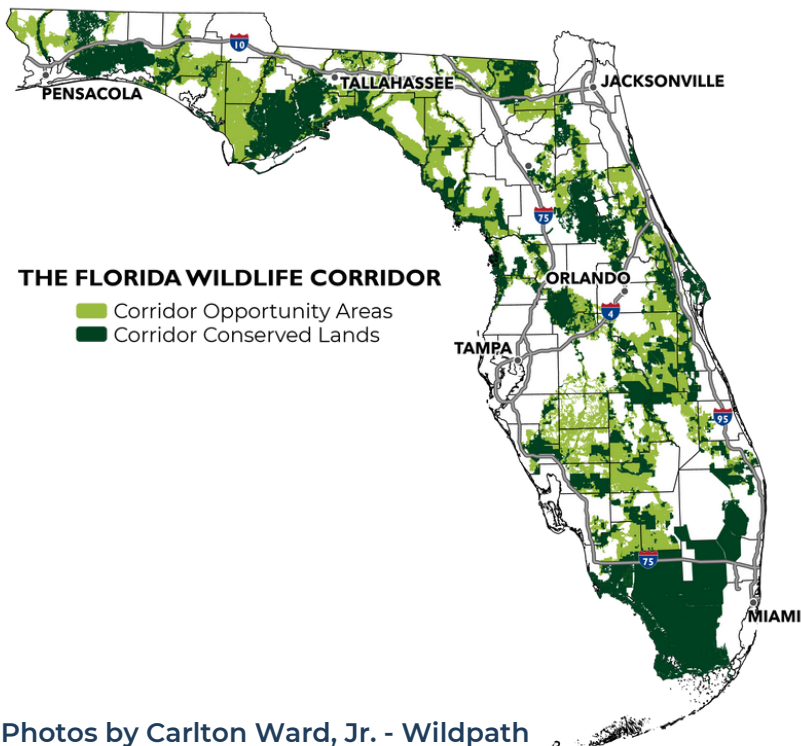
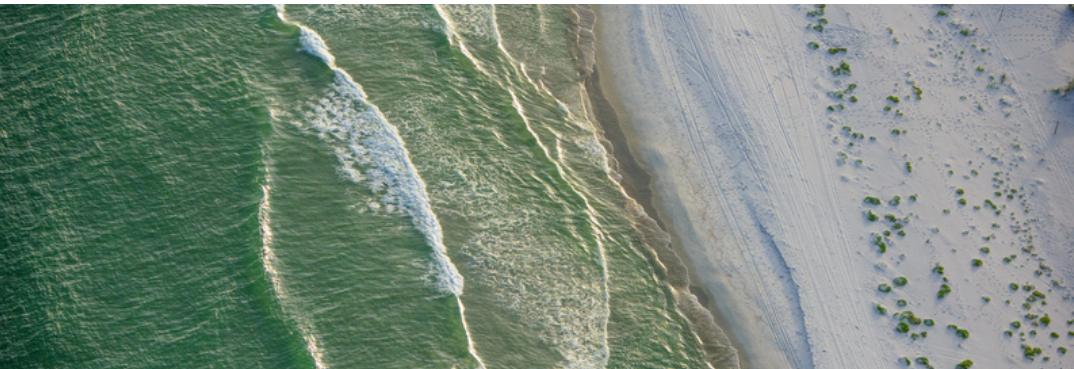
FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

WATER BENEFITS REPORT SUMMARY

FLORIDA

is famous for its water.

The state's iconic attractions include white sand Gulf beaches, the Everglades, alligators, roseate spoonbills, springs and fisheries, all dependent on water. Many at-risk species exist in the state's rivers, lakes, and coastal waters, all 22 million Floridians require drinking water, and the state's vast agricultural economy requires water for irrigation.



Since the campaign to conserve the 18-million-acre Florida Wildlife Corridor (FLWC) accelerated in 2021 with the unanimous passing of a state bill supporting the effort, measuring the benefits of land conservation and connectivity for economies, people, and the environment has been critical to ensure wise spending of conservation dollars.

The University of Florida Water Institute assessed how well the FLWC aligns with key water features and ecosystem services.

The aim was to produce an authoritative report with expert-backed facts on the true benefits of Corridor protection for water resources.

Photos by Carlton Ward, Jr. - Wildpath

Map sources: UF CLCP; FNAI; Archbold Biological Station

Key Messages

1) The FLWC can provide strong protection of spring vents, rivers, estuaries, and wetlands for humans, ecosystem function, and at-risk species.



2) Conservation of the 45% of the FLWC that is yet to be protected (“Opportunity Areas”) can roughly double the permanent protection of many key water resources, including those mentioned in point 1), as well as outstanding Florida springsheds, lake shorelines, and groundwater recharge areas critical to water supply. If allowed to be developed, resources in these areas will be degraded or lost.



3) Aquatic and marine ecosystems provide fisheries production, recreation, cultural values, carbon sequestration, nutrient capture and cycling, water storage, and flood protection.



4) Conserving the FLWC does not fully address all the state’s water resources needs. Strategies complementary to the FLWC should be pursued, especially to safeguard water supply for drinking and agriculture, water quality, springsheds, and lakes.



Highlights of Florida Wildlife Corridor Value for Water Resources

- Conserving Opportunity Areas within the Peace, Myakka, and St. John’s Rivers’ watersheds would help retain natural floodplains that protect Charlotte Harbor and northeast FL communities.
- Opportunity Areas of the FLWC could add 2.5 million acres of swamps and marshes to the state’s conservation lands. These wetlands store water, help filter it, and are habitat for wildlife and sportfish.
- More than 90% of public drinking water in Florida comes from groundwater. 38% of priority aquifer recharge areas are within the FLWC, and less than half of this is already conserved.

Full report access and citation:

Graham, W.D., K.J. Schlatter, A.S. Braswell, M. Brenner, M.J. Cohen, M.J. Deitch, T.G. Gebremicael, A.B. Shortelle, and M.C. Sukop. 2023. Florida Wildlife Corridor Water Benefits Report. An Independent Assessment led by the University of Florida Water Institute for Archbold Biological Station and the Live Wildly Foundation.

Available at: https://www.archbold-station.org/documents/general/UF_Water_Institute_FLWC_Water_Benefits_Final_Report_121922.pdf