

ARPC BOARD NOTES AUGUST 2025



TALL TIMBERS RESEARCH STATION & LAND CONSERVANCY

– Ben Naselius, Red Hills Planner

Tall Timbers was established in 1958 as a research station, with expansion into land conservancy in 1991. Their focus is the Red hills and Albany quail regions, landscapes that are shaped by frequent prescribed fire. With a goal of conserving ecological, scenic, & historical resources of the Red hills and surrounding areas, Tall Timbers primary focuses are:

- Private land conservation through conservation easements
- Landowner outreach & extension services
- Regional planning
- Advocacy

Through Tall Timbers' strategic planning efforts, Extension work has expanded. Tall Timbers applied for the "Red Hills to the Coast" Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RRCP) in 2019 and began related land management & easements in 2021. Currently, 114 contracts are secure.



- 36% are historically underserved
- 13,000 acres of prescribed fire
- over 5,000 trees have been planted
- 2,000+ acres of forest stand improvement
- 900 acres of invasive exotic, non-native plants
- closed 3 entity-held-easements in 2024 (686 acres)

With a track record of success, Tall Timbers was awarded \$25 million from National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to continue the landowner assistance program. Spanning a region of eleven counties, the program will be active through 2029. Technical and financial assistance is available for eligible activities, including prescribed fire, invasive control, forest stand improvement, and tree planting. These services are available to anyone with 10+ acres, and 2025 applications are open from September 2nd - October 3rd.

Consult with one of Tall Timbers dedicated biologists and help conserve this unique Region.

Visit talltimbers.com/wildlife-corridor to learn more!

FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR FOUNDATION

– Jason Lauritsen, Chief Conservation Officer

AUGUST
2025

Floridians love wildlife! And wildlife love the Florida Wildlife Corridor! FWCF has been identifying, conserving, purchasing and stewarding the best wildlife places in the state. But what really brings it all together? Connection! Networks of connected protected areas are inherently more resilient than individual isolated patches. And that's where the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation can help. How do we recognize and retain the connections, while maintaining resiliency and biodiversity?

The Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation champions a collaborative campaign to permanently connect, protect and restore the Florida Wildlife Corridor – a statewide network of connected lands and waters that supports wildlife and people. The organization aligns efforts to lead conservation of the Corridor's highest priorities, accelerates connectivity by providing tools and resources that elevate partners' work, and celebrates collective Corridor successes through storytelling and art.

Corridor Foundation programs include the multi-day summit called Corridor Connect, expeditions, film screenings and presentation, the Corridor mural campaign, and sharing a window into wild Florida through exhibits, installations, and their gallery. These actions raise awareness of the Corridor and inspire support statewide and beyond for the protection of the missing links in the Corridor.

As a part of their stewardship, FWCF is documenting the connected landscape and wildlife, and the people whose lives and livelihoods

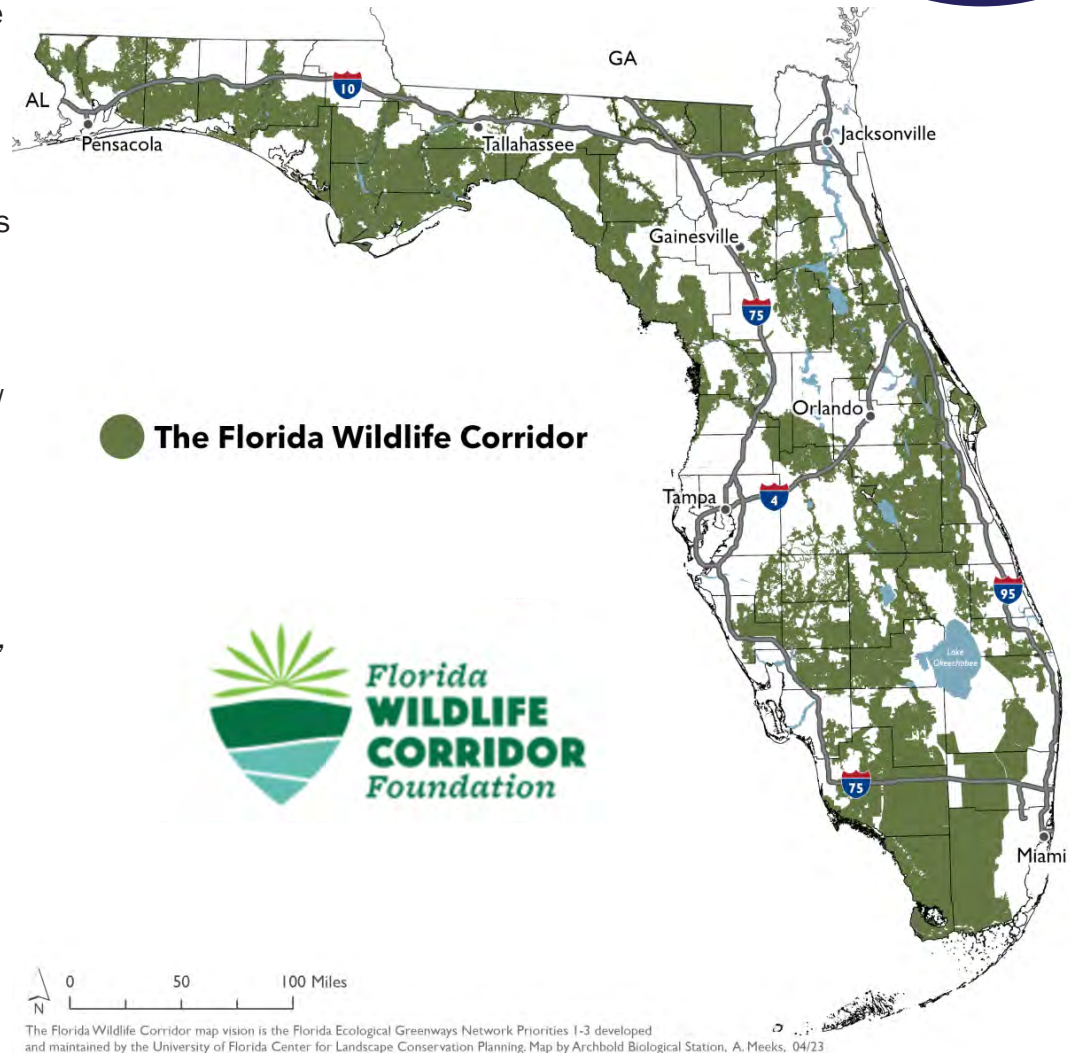
are tied to the landscape. According to a study by the McKenzie Group in 2022, the FWC supports 114,000 jobs in Florida, and the corridor is utilized by over 1,700 species.

There's a footprint of 18,000,000 acres that defines the Florida Wildlife Corridor, Corridor, including both land and water. It represents the best opportunity to safeguard a biodiverse and sustainable Florida for future generations. FWCF aims to partner with local governments and agencies and provide tools and understanding of what neces-

sary to make and keep these connections.

Through murals and films, FWCF's public awareness campaign seeks to raise awareness and continue the rich legacy of conservation investment in Florida. The recently finished film, "O to O" takes viewers on a journey from the Osceola National Forest to the Ocala National Forest. And the latest film, Patchwork Wild: Stitching the Last Strands will premiere September 18th.

Visit floridawildlifecorridor.org to learn more!



NEED A LIFT?

Big Bend Transit (BBT) now offers free weekday transportation for eligible residents in Gulf and Franklin counties through Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program.

This program offers free rides Monday through Friday to help residents get to doctor appointments, jobs & interviews, school, grocery stores, pharmacies, and more. Services are available at no cost once your TD application is approved.

"This program is for people who need transportation help but don't have it," said Shawn Mitchell, General Manager of Big Bend Transit. "We want seniors, low-income families, and people with disabilities to know that reliable, free transportation is now available — and we'll help you apply."

To get started, call your county's transit line to request an application. A staff member will guide you through the eligibility process, help you fill out your paperwork, and schedule your rides once approved.

Gulf County
850.229.6550

Franklin County
850.229.6550

**BIG
BEND
TRANSIT**

Rural Florida counties may be eligible for **Alternative Advance payments** while working on state grant-funded projects.

This option allows for the **funding agency to pay outstanding invoices directly**, providing support to rural and economically constrained counties that may otherwise face challenges utilizing the traditional reimbursement model.

Contact us if you have any questions, or would like further information!

**DID
YOU
KNOW**

GOOD LUCK!

Wishing you all the best! Marcus & Isabella, we will miss you. Thank you for all you do and good luck on your journeys!!



ARPC is thrilled to accept a 2025 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for their development of the Gadsden County Economic Development Plan and the Regional Rural Transportation Plan..

Presented annually, the NADO Impact Awards honor regional development organizations and their partners for strengthening communities, building regional resilience, and enhancing local economies through innovative approaches to economic and community development. NADO is a Washington, DC-based membership association of regional development organizations that promotes programs and policies that strengthen local governments, communities, & economies.



NEXT ARPC BOARD MEETING: OCTOBER 30TH, 2025

HOW CAN WE HELP?

ARPC proudly serves as a dedicated catalyst for responsible growth & development in the Apalachee Region of Florida. Our dedicated staff work closely with local governments, community organizations, & stakeholders on a variety of challenges, developing innovative solutions from a regional perspective. Fully committed to collaboration and community engagement, ARPC is better able to position our member governments, creating access and leverage for funding. Our dedicated team works tirelessly to address the unique challenges and opportunities that shape the landscape of our communities.



**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

**ENVIRONMENTAL
PLANNING**

**GEOSPATIAL
PLANNING**

**TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING**

**EMERGENCY
PLANNING**

HOUSING

**GROWTH
MANAGEMENT**

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**



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