

VOLUSIA CONSERVATION CORRIDOR - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General Program Information

Q: What is the Volusia Conservation Corridor?

A: The Volusia Conservation Corridor is a continuous corridor of environmentally significant land. It's part of the larger Florida Wildlife Corridor network.

Q: What is Florida Forever?

A: Florida Forever is a State-funded program designed to protect environmentally sensitive land, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, and water recharge areas, while providing recreational opportunities for Florida residents and visitors. Florida Forever works with local programs like Volusia Forever.

Q: What is Volusia Forever?

A: Volusia Forever is Volusia County's local conservation land program. Since 1986, through the Endangered Lands Program and Volusia Forever Program, the county has helped protect nearly 60,000 acres of land.

Participation and Consent

Q: Is participation in the conservation corridor mandatory?

A: No, participation is 100% voluntary. Both inclusion in the conservation corridor and any future sale are completely voluntary. You must give your consent for your property to be included.

Q: What happens if I don't give consent?

A: Without your consent, your property will not be included in the proposed corridor expansion. There are no penalties or consequences for choosing not to participate.

Q: Does giving consent mean I have to sell my property?

A: No. Giving consent only allows your property to be included in the corridor boundaries, making it eligible for conservation funding should you choose to sell in the future. The County and State only work with willing sellers, and you would be under no obligation to sell.

Property Rights and Ownership

Q: Does opting in change my property ownership?

A: No. Opting in does not change your property ownership. You retain existing control over your land, can still sell to any buyer, or pass your land down through generations.

Q: Can I still use my property normally if it's included in the corridor?

A: Yes. Being included in the corridor does not restrict your current use of your property. Any restrictions would only apply if you later choose to enter into a conservation or agricultural easement.

Types of Acquisitions

Q: What is fee-simple acquisition?

A: In fee-simple acquisition, the County (or another designated entity) becomes the full legal owner of the land. This typically allows for the greatest degree of public access and management for conservation or recreational purposes.

Q: What is a conservation easement?

A: A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement between the landowner and a conservation entity that restricts certain types of development and land uses to protect conservation values (natural habitat, open space, water quality). The landowner retains ownership and can continue using the land in ways consistent with the easement terms.

Q: What is an agricultural easement?

A: An agricultural easement is a legally binding agreement that restricts non-agricultural development to protect the land's agricultural viability. This helps ensure the land remains available for farming in the future. The landowner retains ownership and can continue agricultural operations, subject to the easement terms.

Q: Which option is best for me?

A: The best option depends on your specific situation and goals. If you want to maintain ownership and continue current land uses, easements might be preferable. If you're ready to sell and want maximum compensation, fee-simple might be better.

Financial Aspects

Q: How is the value of my property determined?

A: Fair market value is determined through appraisals conducted by independent appraisers. This ensures you receive appropriate compensation based on current market conditions.

Q: Are there tax benefits?

A: Yes, potential tax advantages are associated with conservation easements and land sales for conservation purposes. Conservation easements can lower property taxes due to development restrictions. Under Florida law, there's a partial property tax exemption of up to 50% on certain land under conservation easement used for commercial purposes such as agriculture.

Q: When would I receive payment?

A: Payment would only occur if you choose to sell your property or easement rights after your property is included in the corridor and the expansion is approved by the State.

Process and Timeline

Q: What happens after I give consent?

A: If you consent and enough landowners participate, Volusia County will request approval of the expansion from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and its Florida Forever program.

Benefits and Conservation Impact

Q: What are the environmental benefits?

A: The corridor helps protect vital water resources (wetlands, rivers, aquifer recharge areas), provides essential habitat and movement routes for Florida's wildlife including endangered species, and preserves Florida's natural heritage for future generations.

Q: Can I continue farming or other agricultural operations?

A: Yes, particularly with conservation or agricultural easements. These options allow you to continue operations while preventing future development and maintaining your property's agricultural uses.

If you have additional questions, please contact Volusia Forever staff at (386) 943-7081.