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STATE CLOSES ON CONSERVATION LAND PURCHASE IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

~620 acres acquired within the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed~

TALLAHASSEE – Today, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, in collaboration with The Trust for Public Land, acquired 620 acres of conservation lands within the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Florida Forever project for \$9,765,000.

The CREW project provides connectivity between three conservation areas, offers critical protection for wildlife like the Florida panther and Florida Black Bear, and protects the flow of water into the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and other areas. The project supports at least two species of rare and endangered orchids and includes an unusual strain of dwarf bald cypress.

“Adding this land to CREW will provide many important benefits, including preserving southwest Florida’s water supply and providing connections between three conservation areas critical to the restoration of the Everglades,” said DEP Secretary Jon Steverson.

“At The Trust for Public Land our mission is about conserving land for people. The conservation of this land offers greater opportunity for people to connect with natural Florida as seen by early Floridians. We thank the previous owners, the Gargiulo family, for helping conserve this land,” said Doug Hattaway, Senior Project Manager with The Trust for Public Land.

The property will be managed by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) as an addition to the CREW Wildlife Environmental Area to improve the environmental value and ecological functions of the watershed and provide public recreational opportunities such as hiking, wildlife viewing and birding.

“Restoring this truly significant and special southwest coast ecosystem depends upon placing into public ownership the land needed to link the pieces of this natural expanse,” said SFWMD Executive Director Blake Guillory. “This acquisition is another

great example of real progress in protecting our regional water resources.”

The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund approved the acquisition on Jan. 13, 2015 at the Cabinet meeting in Tallahassee, Florida.

About the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is the state's principal environmental agency, created to protect, conserve and manage Florida's environment and natural resources. The department enforces federal and state environmental laws, protects Florida's air and water quality, cleans up pollution, regulates solid waste management, promotes pollution prevention, and acquires environmentally sensitive lands for preservation. The agency also maintains a statewide system of parks, trails and aquatic preserves. To view the department's website log on to www.dep.state.fl.us.

About the Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Nearly ten million people live within a ten-minute walk of a Trust for Public Land park, garden, or natural area, and millions more visit these sites every year. To support The Trust for Public Land and share why nature matters to you, visit www.tpl.org.

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