



By Joe Copeland

The Forever Wild Land Trust was created by a constitutional amendment in 1992 with the approval of 83% of Alabama voters. It is administered by the State Lands Division, part of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The creation of the Trust was due to the recognition by legislators and citizens that the state is losing much of its wild lands to development and population-related pressures, and that the best of these needed to be preserved. Since its inception, Forever Wild has purchased 55 tracts that total over 120,000 acres, with several tracts currently under consideration. Land is purchased for (1) wildlife management areas, (2) additions to state parks, (3) nature preserves, and (4) natural recreation areas.

All properties purchased are public lands and are open to the public for use within the guidelines of the management plan for each tract. Any citizen of the state can nominate a tract of land for purchase, whether they or someone else owns that tract. Once a tract is nominated, the landowner is contacted and asked if they are a willing seller. If the landowner is not interested in selling, no further action is taken. If the landowner is willing to sell the tract, that tract is "scored" by the Natural Heritage Section of the Lands Division and a decision is made whether to present the tract to the Forever Wild Board for further consideration. The Forever Wild Board has four public meetings each year in various locations throughout the state to conduct business including tract acquisitions. For more information concerning the nomination and purchase process you may contact the Natural Heritage Section at

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - State Lands Division
64 North Union Street, Suite 468
Montgomery, AL 36130
Telephone: (334) 242-3484

Forever Wild is funded through a portion of the interest earned from monies received from the offshore gas and oil leases on state lands. The Natural Heritage Section has done a great job of leveraging these funds through federal grants that match state funding to purchase land for conservation. Also, the city or county where a tract is located, as well as conservation organizations are often willing to help fund a purchase.

Two of the largest tracts purchased to date are the 12,510-acre "Walls of Jericho" tract in north Jackson County and the 35,975-acre "Mobile-Tensaw Delta" tract in Mobile and Baldwin Counties. Three recent purchases of note are the 2,310-acre "Perdido River Longleaf Hills" tract in Baldwin County, the 2,433-acre "Post Oak Flat" tract addition to the Walls of Jericho and a 1,533-acre addition to the Mobile-Tensaw Delta Tract. For more information on Forever Wild tracts or any other information concerning the program, log onto <http://www.outdooralabama.com/public-lands/stateLands/foreverWild/>.

You can assist Forever Wild in furthering its goals by purchasing a Forever Wild license plate for your vehicle(s). The license plates are available at all county courthouses and annexes, and you can personalize your tag with up to six letters or letter/number combinations at no additional cost. For more information concerning the Forever Wild tag, contact Joe Copeland at 256-287-1652 or joec@powernet.org.

Forever Wild Adds 20 Acres to Coldwater Mountain Tract in Calhoun County

Twenty additional acres of mountain longleaf pine habitat are now part of Forever Wild's Coldwater Mountain Tract in Calhoun County. The Rowan Tract will eventually contain an extensive mountain bike trail system.

The 20-acre parcel is an addition to the original 4,000-acre Coldwater Mountain Tract purchased by Forever Wild in 1998. That property was dedicated as the Doug Ghee Nature Preserve and Recreation Area, named after the former state senator who is a strong supporter of the Forever Wild Program. The Coldwater Mountain Tract secures a large portion of the local watershed for Coldwater Spring, a unique ecological environment and source of drinking water for local municipalities. The additional 20 acres secures a ridge route for future trail development.

The State Lands Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is managing the forested property. Assistant Division Director Greg Lein says that although this acreage is small, its potential for recreational use makes it a key part of the Coldwater Mountain Tract. "The purpose of Forever Wild is to make sure that lands are put aside for public use, and the Rowan Tract will specifically be used for mountain biking and hiking opportunities," he said.