STATE, ST. JOE, NATURE CONSERVANCY TAKE FIRST STEP TOWARDS ESTABLISHING NEW STATE PARK NEAR TALLAHASSEE

Purchase will also provide water resource protection and start of greenway corridor to the Gulf.

ALTAMONTE SPRINGS, FL—June 29, 2006—The state purchased land important to the water supply of Tallahassee and a new state park in the shadows of Florida's capitol today from The St. Joe Company with the help of The Nature Conservancy.

The acquisition of 2,589 acres of forested wetlands and upland hardwoods including shoreline of the St. Marks River and 100-year-old cypress trees is part of a potential protected greenway that would stretch from Tallahassee to the Gulf of Mexico. St. Joe's ongoing partnership with the state, The Nature Conservancy and the Florida Forever program has resulted in the protection of more than 155,000 acres of prime Florida forests once owned by the company.

This land is located south of U.S. 27 in Leon County with a small portion in Jefferson County. It is part of an "A" ranked Florida Forever project called the Upper St. Marks Corridor, located along the upper reaches of the St. Marks River. The project is important to the water quality of the St. Marks River, Apalachee Bay and the estuary at St. Marks Wildlife Refuge.

"This purchase will protect water quality in the St. Marks River and nearby waterways, and preserve native habitat for gopher tortoises, migrant bird species and the threatened Florida black bear," said Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Colleen M. Castille. "When complete, this project will help complete a greenway to the Gulf and offer a variety of recreational opportunities for visitors to enjoy."

"The State of Florida and St. Joe have taken a great step toward meeting the goal of buffering the St. Marks River from development and preserving its water quality, while also protecting the natural communities in the floodplain. We are so pleased that St. Joe has made this land available and proud to be part of this project that will benefit so many, especially Tallahasseans," said Victoria Tschinkel, The Nature Conservancy's state director.

"The St. Joe Company is proud to play a role in protecting this important natural resource," said Will Butler, senior vice president of St. Joe Land Company. "We have an outstanding working relationship with The Nature Conservancy and the State of Florida, and together, we will continue our efforts to protect the best of Florida. We are looking for creative ways to restore and preserve some of Florida's most important environmental jewels. Our FloridaWild program is just one way we are moving environmentally-sensitive land into conservation."

The site is also important to neotropical migrant bird species. Many of these birds are in decline due to the loss of this type of habitat, used in spring and fall migration as stopover and foraging places. Other species that inhabit this land include Florida black bear, gopher tortoise and Eastern diamondback rattlesnake. The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. With funding from the voter approved Florida Forever program and our generous donors the Conservancy has helped protect more than 1.1 million acres in Florida since 1961.