



**Indian River County (IRC)** – The Indian River Land Trust has acquired a new conservation property, adding 36 additional acres of protected green space in Indian River County. This acquisition marks a special occasion for the Land Trust, as it is the first property protected by the Land Trust that is located off of the Indian River Lagoon. The property is located on the west side of the South Prong of the St. Sebastian River, along the southwestern border of the City of Sebastian.

The St. Sebastian River is classified as a blackwater stream, alluding to its color, originating from tannins leached from leaves along its forested banks. It is home to manatee, alligator, the prehistoric garfish, heron rookeries and several species of globally rare fish. It is the only natural tributary of the Indian River Lagoon in Indian River County, which enhanced its conservation value to the Land Trust.

The property contains Old Florida cypress forests that stood long before the cities of Sebastian and Vero Beach were incorporated. The majority of the property was formerly a citrus grove and now contains approximately 22.7 acres of uplands with oak trees and cabbage palms that have filled in to slowly replace the citrus trees, along with 10.6 acres of forested wetlands and approximately 1,600 feet of frontage along the St. Sebastian River.

The property is strategically located between two protected conservation areas that line a stretch of the river between Route 510 and Route 512. The Land Trust and a partnership of organizations hope to establish a scenic nature trail that would follow this part of the river, an area designated by the County as the St. Sebastian River Greenway. The effort to obtain this designation was spearheaded by the Land Trust and its partners in 2006. Land Trust Executive Director, Ken Grudens, who was part of the greenway effort in 2006, is delighted that new life is being blown into the vision. “The cypress forests along the shallow banks of the river have thrived here since before Europeans settled the region. Now we have an opportunity for residents and visitors alike to experience this unique and special corridor.”

For more than 30 years, the Indian River Land Trust has worked to protect, improve, provide access to, and promote the preservation of waterways, open spaces, and green places in Indian River County. This acquisition moves the conservation needle forward, ensuring access to nature for all, for residents today and those of tomorrow.