



Indian River Land Trust Acquires Critical Property for Future St. Sebastian River Greenway

Indian River County, FL – The Indian River Land Trust has acquired a strategically important 1.6-acre property along the South Prong of the St. Sebastian River, securing a critical link in the future St. Sebastian River Greenway, a continuous conservation and public access corridor planned along one of Indian River County's most treasured natural waterways.

Located on the western edge of the Sebastian Highlands neighborhood, the property connects a future trailhead on County Route 512 with conservation lands owned by the City of Sebastian. Though modest in size, the parcel plays an essential role in preserving the continuity of the planned greenway trail system.

The St. Sebastian River is the only natural tributary of the Indian River Lagoon in Indian River County and supports an extraordinary diversity of wildlife and habitat, including ancient bald cypress forests, manatee, alligator, prehistoric garfish, important bird rookeries, and several species of globally rare fish.

"The importance of this property far exceeds its size," said Ken Grudens, Executive Director of the Indian River Land Trust. "This acquisition protects a vital connection within the future greenway corridor and keeps alive a vision that community leaders have worked toward for decades. By protecting this land today, we are helping ensure future generations can experience the beauty and ecological richness of the St. Sebastian River."

The greenway concept was first introduced in 2004 and was later adopted by Indian River County as part of its long-range conservation and recreation planning efforts. The Land Trust has been a partner in this idea from the beginning. Momentum toward realizing that vision has accelerated in recent years. In 2023, the Land Trust acquired a 36-acre conservation property along the St. Sebastian River. In 2025, the Land Trust protected an additional 20-acre property nearby, further expanding permanently protected green space along the river corridor.

The newly acquired property contains both uplands and wetlands directly connected to the river system. Mature native vegetation, including cypress, oak trees, and cabbage palms, contributes to the ecological integrity and scenic character of the corridor. Protecting the parcel will help preserve water quality, maintain wildlife connectivity, and provide opportunities for habitat restoration.

Prior to acquisition, the property was zoned for residential development. Had development occurred, it could have disrupted the future trail corridor and diminished the conservation value

of surrounding protected lands. By securing the parcel, the Land Trust has ensured that this critical section of the Greenway will remain available for conservation and future public access.

The Land Trust's vision for the St. Sebastian River Greenway extends beyond land protection. The emerging corridor has the potential to become one of Indian River County's most unique outdoor destinations—a place where residents and visitors can hike, paddle, observe wildlife, and experience the natural landscapes that define the region.

For more than 35 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 throughout Indian River County. This acquisition represents another important step toward that mission while creating a lasting conservation legacy for future generations.

