



Spring 2012

LANDMARKS

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IRLT Receives \$1 Million Federal Grant!

The Land Trust was recently awarded a one million dollar grant toward its efforts to acquire and preserve miles of shoreline on the Indian River Lagoon. This grant will allow the permanent protection of Bee Gum Point, a 111-acre bird sanctuary located directly along the Atlantic Flyway. The Atlantic Flyway is a narrow corridor along the east coast of the United States used by millions of migrating birds each year. The property includes a mile of mangrove shoreline along with acres of interior ponds that provide food and shelter for dozens of species of birds.

The million-dollar grant was received through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the North America Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Through NAWCA, the Fish and Wildlife Service assists local government and qualified non-profit organizations with large grants to preserve diminishing wetland areas that are critically important to waterfowl as well as many other migratory birds.

In obtaining this significant grant from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Land Trust has become a partner with the most important government agency for protecting wildlife habitat. They rely on local organizations to partner with and discover, then protect and restore environmentally sensitive areas that would otherwise not be reached.

IRLT Board Chairman, Bill Helmly was ecstatic when he heard about the grant and summed up the sentiments of the Board and staff well – “Through this grant we look forward to strengthening our partnerships with both The Conservation Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to allow the Land Trust and its supporters to protect the remaining shoreline of our Lagoon in Indian River County.”



On Friday, March 30 an Eagle Scout and his Melbourne Troop, in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Protection, conducted a planting at the eroded portion of the Bee Gum Point “west end” beach. The group overseen by Jacqueline Owen, IRL Shoreline Restoration Project Coordinator arrived at 10:00 AM bringing lunch for themselves and Land Trust staff and board members that were on hand at the site. Fifteen scouts with their leaders toiled until 3:00 in the afternoon to complete this important project.



What is a Land Trust?

If you are unfamiliar with the term land trust, you may wonder what it means or what constitutes a land trust. A land trust is a non-profit organization with the purpose to obtain and implement the permanent protection of land and its resources. A land trust is the private alternative to land preservation by public or governmental agencies, and it may operate at state, regional and local levels. Creating a land trust gives local citizens a way to work together to preserve areas important to their community. Often they give a voice to the community regarding areas of concern. It provides credibility and funding to make a significant difference in preserving, protecting and responding to those concerns.

The land trust movement has grown significantly, as awareness has spread of the importance of protecting lands before they are lost forever. Today there are more than 1,500 land trusts in the United States. Combined, their approximately one million members and financial supporters have protected more than 4.7 million acres of land.

Land trusts are not "trusts" in the legal sense; some refer to themselves as conservancies, foundations, or associations. Land trusts are funded largely through membership dues and/or donations from individuals, businesses and foundations. As land trusts are private organizations, they are able to offer quick response, flexibility and confidentiality in land transactions.

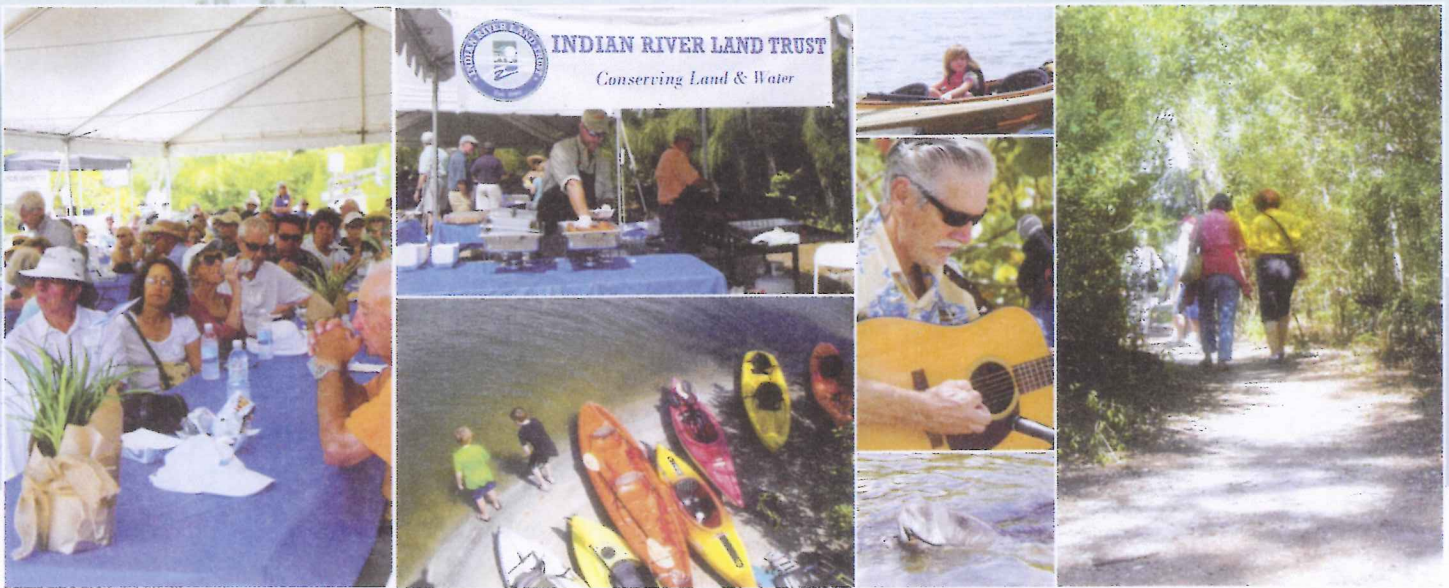
The Indian River Land Trust Cares for the Land

In order to preserve wildlife habitat, protect scenic waterfront, and provide access to the shoreline of the Lagoon, the Indian River Land Trust is developing long-term plans for the care and management of each of its conservation properties. Conservation area management may include an inventory and ongoing monitoring of the plant and animal communities, enhancement of habitat for fish and wildlife, removal of non-native species such as Brazilian Pepper, and the establishment and maintenance of marked trails and boardwalks for hiking and bird watching.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are legal agreements that establish restrictions on the use and development of the land while keeping it in private ownership. A conservation easement is a powerful tool to preserve natural resources, family lands, farmland and other environmental assets. Easements entrust a land trust with the responsibility of monitoring and enforcing the restrictions. The Indian River Land Trust is a trusted steward with the skills, resources and commitment to safeguard a landowner's conservation intentions.

Conservation easements are more than a legal way to protect the land. In exchange for voluntarily surrendering certain rights to develop or alter property, landowners often receive favorable income, gift or estate tax benefits.



Land Trust's 5th Annual Membership Event

More than 200 members and guests of the Indian River Land Trust enjoyed a barbeque lunch catered by Hale Groves River Market, live music by Porch Pickers, kayaking compliments of Adventure Kayaking, and a light walking guided or self-guided tour. The event held on March 31st at Round Island Riverside park was sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Henry G. Stifel, Toni Robinson, Adventure Kayaking, Smith Heating & Air Conditioning, and Vero Marine Center.



We Hooked A Big One

On March 20th the Land Trust acquired a 60-acre Lagoon shoreline property south of the Wabasso Bridge. The property, first identified as being available for purchase by IRLT Board member, John Johnson, was acquired with the assistance of the Land Trust's Treasurer, Kelly Kite, Jr. at a County auction. This important purchase was made possible thanks to an anonymous donation from a long-time supporter of the Land Trust. The property is situated on the 500+ acre Pine Island located in the middle of the Lagoon west of the Jungle Trail and the Historic Jones Pier property purchased by the County in 2010, and directly east of the IRLT's Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail. The property features more than a ¼ mile of shoreline and a myriad of pristine wetlands. IRLT Director of Land Protection Ralph Monticello, who oversaw the transaction, has seen an abundance of birds, including threatened species such as Roseate Spoonbills and Wood Storks taking flight out of the well-protected ponds inside the property. IRLT has now protected more than 500 acres and over four miles of shoreline on the Indian River Lagoon – AND WE'RE NOT DONE FISHING.





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Visit our website! For more information on the projects and events described in this newsletter, visit us at www.irlt.org.

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