



THE SPRINGS COAST RESEARCH STATION

A narrow window of opportunity exists to protect the Springs Coast . . .



The Springs Coast Research Station

Florida's "Springs Coast" is one of the world's largest and most globally significant concentration of springs. It also is the most pristine and diverse area remaining in Florida.

Florida's natural springs are, collectively, one of the most precious resources supporting our wildlife and human communities. They also play an enormous part in shaping the ecosystems around them. The future of our springs, however, is unsettling as a 20 percent increase in water extraction is projected to occur over the next 20 years. (That's over 1.4 billion gallons every day!) This would affect life in Florida as we know it, in so many challenging ways.

The time is now to act on the behalf of springs and natural Florida. That's why we are creating The Springs Coast Research Station—a place to gather all levels of Florida's conservation science students and researchers to better understand, inform and protect the Springs Coast and the amazing ecosystems that flow from it. We have found the ideal home—a strategically-located property along the Chassahowitzka River and must complete the sale soon. We are happy to report that we have been approved for partial funding by the Florida Forever Program, but we still have a ways to go.

We hope you will help us reach our funding goal before it's too late. Help us today, to steward natural Florida—for all of us and for generations to come.

"Today's students are tomorrow's experts who will influence the future of Florida's precious springs and surrounding ecosystems."

Margo McKnight
Wildlands Conservation Board Member



The Team

Wildlands Conservation, Inc. will manage The Springs Coast Research Station, guiding it through project completion and operating it successfully into the future. Created in 2003, Wildlands Conservation is a well-established land management and research non-profit. We hold and manage several thousand acres of conservation easements, conduct directed research, have active internship partnerships with the University of Southern Florida and Florida Southern College, and have been an active leader in environmental education since our inception. Our senior staff is comprised of ecologists and land managers with professional experience in the following fields: landscape level planning, wildlife ecology, zoology, land management, wetland and upland restoration, coastal restoration and botany. Wildlands Conservation owns property in Florida and holds several thousand acres of conservation easements on properties throughout Florida and the Commonwealth of Virginia.



Building partnerships is key to our work, so we've already begun! Our goal is to combine our expertise with that of organizations specializing in environmental education and research. To date, we have developed a Memorandum of Understanding between two partners as well as a pending ownership arrangement with the State of Florida.

Property Ownership: Our project has been placed in the Forever Florida Program's "Florida's First Magnitude Springs" Project, which is currently ranked #1 within the Partnerships and Regional Incentives Project category. Under this scenario, and contingent upon funding approval for the Florida Forever Program, the property would be owned by the State of Florida and operated by Wildlands Conservation and its partners.

Research: Our partners at the University of South Florida—with leadership from the College of Marine Science, the Patel College of Global Sustainability, and the Department of Integrated Biology—will lead our research efforts. At the Center they can, with greater efficiency, continue to conduct their ground-breaking research on all aspects of marine, estuarine and spring ecology.

Education: The Florida Aquarium and their program directors will assist us in developing environmental curricula focused on the primary and secondary school levels.



The Work

Comprised of Florida's best experts, The Springs Coast Research Station is perfectly suited to provide "outdoor laboratory" opportunities and experiences.

This mecca for conservation will serve as an "anchor point" research facility at the southern end of Florida's Springs Coast. It will attract local, national and international students and will be a resource for primary, secondary, college, graduate and post-graduate students from Florida and across the U.S. Also, we envision opportunities for international student exchanges and participants in the University of South Florida global sustainability/conservation programs. Our staff will work with various stakeholder groups to develop curriculum tailored to their ecological programs and courses.

Miles of impacted salt marshes and sea grass beds, and potentially impacted springs, palm islands and scattered mangrove will benefit from the services provided by The Springs Coast Research Station. Likewise, the area's marine and nearshore sediments and marine species (including shellfish, shorebirds and manatees) will benefit, thereby safeguarding human-related activities such as fishing, wildlife viewing and boating, which are paramount to the environmental and economic well-being of the Nature Coast (see adjacent map).

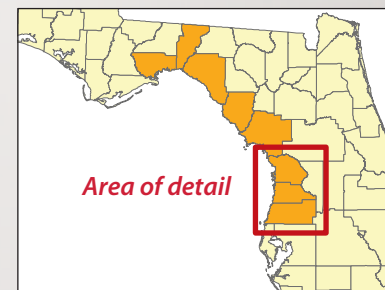


The Location

Florida's water source, the Springs Coast, comprises the southern portion of the Nature Coast and is home base for The Springs Coast Research Station. It also is the last expanse of relatively undisturbed coastline in Florida.

This breathtakingly beautiful region is dotted with freshwater springs and pristine river systems that flow into the Gulf of Mexico. Nowhere else on this continent do we have a relatively undisturbed coastal transition from tropical mangrove ecosystems to more temperate salt marsh estuaries. The rich habitat diversity and subtropical climate result in an amazing diversity of wildlife. The estuaries and salt marshes are nurseries to a vast array of fish and shellfish. Manatees, shorebirds, wading birds, and migratory songbirds forage and seek shelter in the undisturbed coastal forests.

Florida's springs provide the unique freshwater balance that results in species that occur nowhere else on the planet. They also fend off the saltwater intrusion that plagues so much of Florida's coastline to the south.



- Counties of Florida's Nature Coast
- Springs Coast region
- ★ Proposed Research Station site

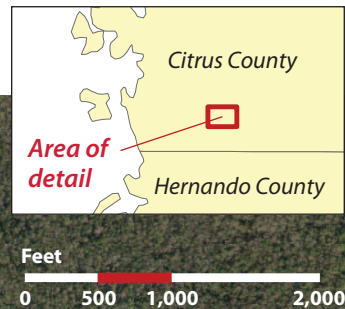




The Site

The Springs Coast Research Station site is uniquely positioned as an anchor point at the southern end of the Nature Coast. Nestled amongst pristine Florida spring-fed wilderness along the Chassahowitzka River (the “Chaz”), the existing facilities are essentially equipped to operate as a research station now. Previously home to a vast yoga retreat center, it is now for sale. Twenty-seven acres comprised of coastal hammock, several freshwater springs, and river/gulf access are situated among thousands of acres of conservation land, prime for research, education and recreation.

Proposed Research Station Site



The Site and Compound Features

- A 4,400 sq. ft. fully-furnished main lodge with an industrial kitchen, elevator, dining amenities, and possible office space
- Four fully-furnished cabins with eight rooms that sleep 32 people
- A common bathhouse that serves the cabins
- A large garage and storage sheds for tractors, airboats, etc.
- A 3,000 sq. ft. meeting center with space that may be retrofitted as a wet laboratory
- A boathouse on Crab Creek, which is a tributary to the Chaz
- An extended dock that leads to the main lodge
- A greenhouse and potting shed
- A large generator capable of keeping the entire center with power during outages
- A tractor, pontoon boat, airboat, and several canoes and kayaks





What's Needed

\$5 million will:

- Generate perpetual funding
- Retrofit our facility
- Hire a director
- Implement our business plan

Cost Item	Cost Estimate
Land & Property Purchase (including all due diligence)	\$2,000,000
Project Initiation (hiring, establishment as research facility etc.)	\$300,000
Insurance Endowment (Interest will be used to generate revenue to pay for insurance.)	\$1,000,000
Management/Maintenance Endowment (Interest will be used to generate revenue for maintenance and management.)	\$2,000,000
Total	\$5,300,000

**Your gift is an investment in the
future of natural Florida.**



The time is now to protect what we cannot afford to lose.

Thank you for considering the value our Springs Coast Research Station will bring to natural Florida and all Floridians. For more information, please contact:

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Our Supporters

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The Southwest Florida Water Management District

Florida Southern College

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USF Patel College of Global Sustainability

USF Department of Integrated Biology

Landscape photos on front cover and inside front cover, all wildlife photos by Paul Marcellini

Paul Marcellini has graciously donated the use of his photographs to this project. Born and raised 20 miles from Everglades National Park, he is a self-taught naturalist. He has won awards in multiple international competitions and has had his imagery shown in Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, Miami International Airport and several museums in South Florida, as well as featured on a USPS stamp celebrating 100 years of U.S. National Parks. His work can be viewed at paulmarcellini.com.

