

CONSERVATION TRUST FOR FLORIDA

THE POST

PROTECTING OUR RURAL LANDS



Summer 2015

A VISIT TO THE

Adams RANCH

BUD ADAMS' WISH: PRESERVING HIS RANCHES AND WAY OF LIFE.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

DANCING WITH THE BEARS
A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Susan Carr is a native of Florida and is passionate about protecting Florida's diverse landscapes. Her family has a long history of protecting the environment. Her Aunt and Uncle, Marjorie and Archie Carr, were pioneers in environmental issues and sea turtle biology. Susan has a PhD in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from the University of Florida and works for the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Consider that about a quarter of Florida is public land, including several large tracts that anchor a potential network of ecologically functioning landscapes. Then consider the landscape of Florida is a mixture of densely and sparsely populated regions. The latter regions often contain large tracts of privately owned lands suitable for wildlife habitat and natural resources protection. Connecting these private lands with public lands into a network of interconnected landscapes, as described by the Florida Ecological Greenways Network, is our vision for the future of Florida.

But there is a more compelling reason for optimism, and it centers on what I like to call the "emerging conservation market" in Florida. Important tools such as conservation

A Letter from the President

Florida's population has more than tripled in my lifetime. Tripled! As a resident of the third most populated state in the nation, it's easy to focus on the negative aspects of population growth: the sea of Central Florida rooftops where citrus once grew, the traffic congestion in small North Florida towns, hazy water of formally crystalline swimming spots. However, turning this problem around, I think about "growing" conservation along with our population and economy. To this end, the Conservation Trust for Florida can help create a better future for Florida. Why? Because the current environmental and political circumstances favor land and resource conservation along with sustainable growth.

easements have been around for decades. However, their use and availability is expanding in complexity, sources, value and geographic breadth. More importantly,

we are seeing increased demand for conservation options, as private land owners want financially viable conservation options for their land.

Our phones ring with calls from land owners every week as we are becoming Florida's leading "conservation entrepreneur" linking landowners with conservation programs. We have the expertise and passion to implement our mission: *working with landowners to save Florida's wild and working landscapes for future generations.*

There is one final reason for optimism: Floridians support more land and natural resource conservation. The public recognizes that, in the absence of funding for land protection, landowners' options will be severely limited in the face of unrestrained growth and economic challenges to family land holdings. Last November, the voters overwhelmingly approved the Water and Land Conservation Amendment. As the public's will takes form, there will be increased need for our services to landowners, particularly in the large swaths of Florida where there is currently no land trust activity.

I invite you to look at our growth as our conservation projects expand in size, number and geographic and environmental breadth. In addition to north Florida projects centered on protecting springs and conservation corridors, we now have projects in the ranching heartland of the Kissimmee River Basin, and the longleaf pine forests of the Florida Panhandle.

We are pleased to announce that we received a generous donation from the Felburn foundation this year. The Foundation issued a challenge for \$35,000 in matching donations. You can help us meet that challenge today, and join us as we continue our growth as Florida's leader in private land conservation!



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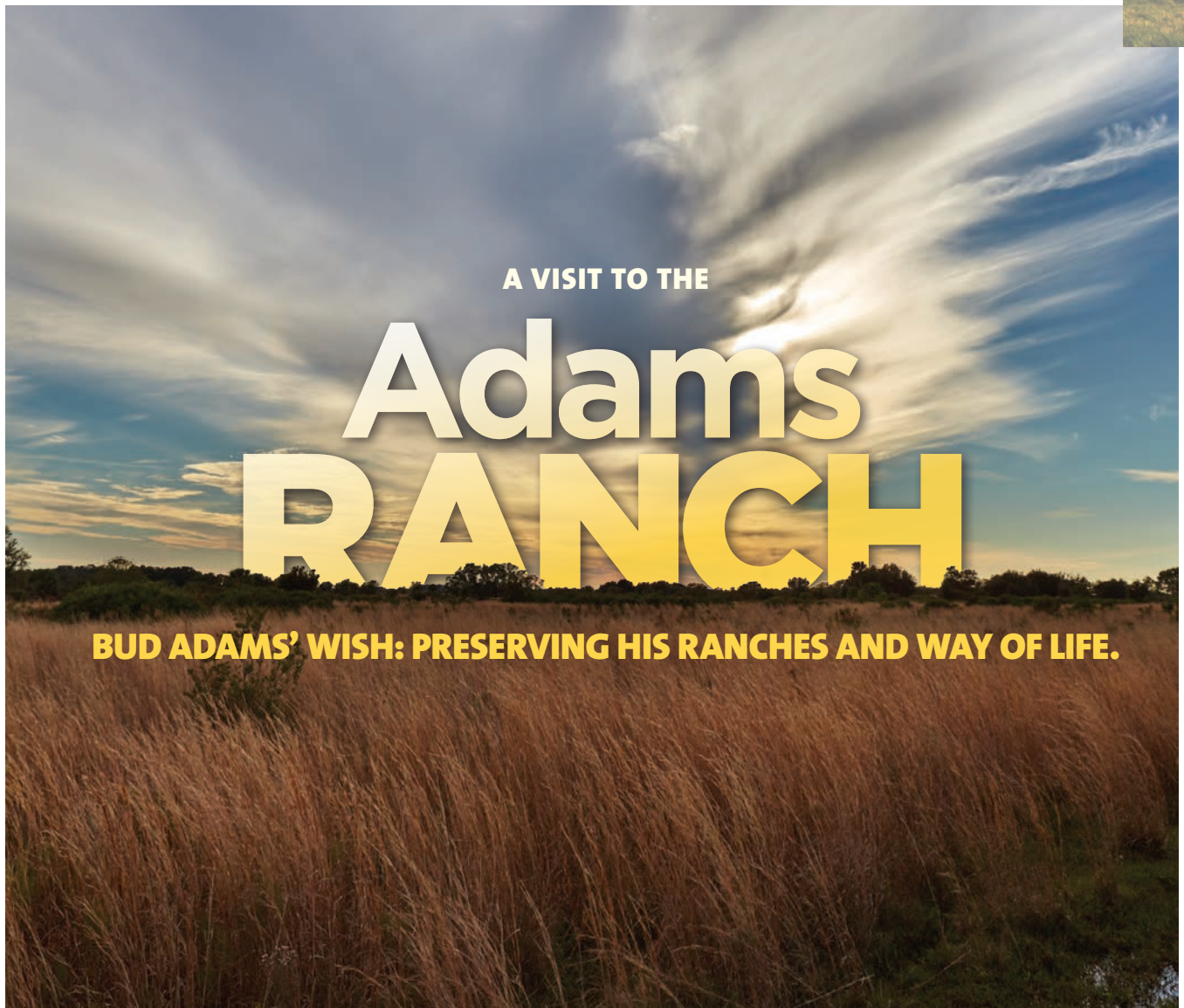
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Conservation Trust for Florida, Inc.
1731 NW 6th Street, Suite F
Gainesville, FL
Phone: 352-376-4770
www.conserveflorida.org

CTF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust. The mission of the Conservation Trust for Florida is to work with landowners to save Florida's wild and working landscapes for future generations.



A VISIT TO THE

Adams RANCH

BUD ADAMS' WISH: PRESERVING HIS RANCHES AND WAY OF LIFE.

Story by Lisa M. Gearen, CTF Board of Directors
Photos by Randy Batista

In early 2015...

I, along with Keith Fountain, Randy Batista, Cheryl Mall, and my husband, visited Bud Adams and his family at their 24,000-acre Lake Marian Ranch in Osceola County which lies in the heart of the recently authorized Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area. The Conservation Trust for Florida as well as several state and federal agencies have worked with the family to protect some of their long-held family ranch property with a conservation easement, and we wanted to photograph the ranch at the time of the easement. The most recent is a 1,536-acre conservation easement that the Conservation Trust facilitated for the Florida Forest Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

My hope was to tell their story as an inspiration for other willing landowners who might want to work with The Conservation Trust for Florida. The story below is taken from some journal entries I made during the visit.

Saturday, Late Afternoon The first thing I notice is the light. Driving south on Canoe Creek Road the land seems to shed civilization's pavement like a pair of heavy, hobbling boots and recovers its ancient rhythmic march through pine and wiregrass, metered by the





occasional, but not accidental, hardwood hammock. This iconic landscape is marching in the direction of water's flow, south to the Everglades and then to the sea. We can't see the water, but its eternal presence shapes everything around us. We feel it everywhere. The sky feels it too and responds in kind; the light changes and we are traveling under a dome of gentle reflection that casts haunting mid-January shadows.

I'm intrigued because, although I have never been to this place before, it is completely familiar. Then I realize the smell of the air is identical to that of my childhood, spent in pre-boomtown Ft. Lauderdale circa 1960. I look out across vast unbroken stretches of wilderness as the silhouettes of migratory birds and the odd raptor weave across the sky. There are deer prancing over culverts and racing with our car before they veer off into a patch of cabbage palm. A flock of wild turkeys, moving with their square-dance gaits, sashay left and then right before disappearing into a clump of long leaf pine saplings. We drive on, into the dusk, on our way to the Adams Ranch that borders Lake Marian in Osceola County.

Sunday, 5:00 AM The dark is cool and impenetrable. With few human light sources, we can easily see the Milky Way. The early hour has been dictated by photographer's need to frame the sunrise over the ranch, and we drive in the dark through a gate and down a rutted

road. We are quiet in the car, as if in church, no one dares break the reverence of the hour and the mood. I close my eyes and wait.

It doesn't take long for my ears to hear it, minutes before I can see anything at all. The Earth around me is coming alive. Like dawn's advance team, birds rustle in the ground cover and, I imagine them stretching their necks and wings, calling to each other, tentatively at first as if to ask, "Have you made it through the night?" Then as the calls are answered, their voices become powerful and the responses rise with joy as the first few faint fingers of light have appeared to the east. The end of another night and the start of another day are celebrated.

Sunday, Noon We have been invited for lunch at another Adam's property, closer to Fort Pierce. We are greeted by the family and Mr. Bud Adams, the family patriarch now in his ninth decade, invites us for a drive out on the property. We pile into his car and head out for a tour. The land's lushness cannot be overstated, and it is home to the award-winning herd of cattle that have been





developed on the Adams Ranch over the last half century. Mr. Adams speaks with eloquence and pride, pointing out various places on the property that define its history. His cattle are beautiful.

Over lunch, we learn about the family's decision to protect the ranch. The three sons and the grandchildren have a strong attachment to the land. Bud Adams' wish is to leave the ranch lands, that carry his name, as he found them and to know that they will always be as they are. Part of Bud's wish came true last year, as the Conservation Trust facilitated a joint acquisition project for the Florida Forest Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to purchase a conservation easement on 1,536 acres of the Lake Marian Ranch. The family is actively working with the Conservation Trust and other agencies to expand the number of protected acres at the ranch.

Speaking later in the day, Bud Adams tells me, "I've enjoyed the life I've had as a cowboy, it's been my dream. This way of life should not be destroyed by fragmentation and development. This (easement) gives us the possibility of making choices we might not otherwise have." After a pleasant visit, we say goodbye to the family with gratitude. I am inexplicably sentimental when it's time to leave.

Monday, 6:00 AM The next morning we are scheduled to

follow the ranch cowboys as they drive a small herd from a pasture into a corral, about two miles from one of the ranch roads. Passing through a different gate, we now see different habitat. We cruise through stands of longleaf pine and century live oaks, stopping briefly to photograph some Sandhill Cranes. We converge with the cattle and their keepers in time to see them swarm onto an old road, headed toward a working barn that stands on the shore of Lake Marian.

The cowboys wear fleece jackets in the early morning cool, but otherwise they are time travelers. Their horses move intuitively behind and through the herd. Their powerful necks, short legs and intelligent faces tell the story of the timeless equine and human partnership that stretches back across 500 years of cattle keeping in Florida. Arriving at the barn, we have a brief conversation with one of Bud Adams' grandsons. The cows, having made their way into the corral, rest in the warming sun. The cowboys water their horses and head back out on another herding errand.

Eventually the conversation lags, and we all understand it is time to go. We distribute ourselves into four different cars and four different destinations, all of them located in that "Other World" down the road. We arrive at the gate, I get out to open it and then close it behind us. Our cars turn north, back toward Kissimmee, Orlando, Ocala, and Gainesville. The Turnpike, I-75. As we drive along, somewhere in the northbound lane, I notice the light has again changed. ■

"We can't see the water, but it's eternal presence shapes everything around us."





The Dancing With the Bears rock 'n' roll dance party on Sunday, September 14, 2014 at Akira Wood celebrated the protection of a critical property in the Wekiva to Ocala Greenway and the Conservation Trust for Florida's 15th Anniversary.

About a hundred people danced the night away while The Shambles band played classic rock tunes by Steely Dan and The Beatles. Special guests Cathy DeWitt and Stephen Langer introduced The Shambles by singing the "bear song" as an opening song. Over \$7,500 was raised to support our land conservation projects and outreach activities.

The Go Lab dancers, dressed in bear costumes, from Santa Fe College also helped us celebrate with a modern dance routine complete with a "real" dancing bear! The event celebrated the Conservation Trust for Florida's role in facilitating the protection of a 155-acre property in the Wekiva to Ocala Greenway that was acquired by the state of Florida. This property will help complete the corridor that connects the Ocala National Forest to Wekiwa Springs State Park and other conservation lands in the area.

These corridors will allow bears to continue to travel up either the west bank of the St. John's River or through the Seminole State Forest. This area contains the largest bear population in the state, estimated at about 1,000 and it is also an important area for the Florida scrub jay. In addition, it is a high aquifer recharge area.

The Conservation Trust was founded in 1999 and we also celebrated our 15th Anniversary at the event. Since then, we have grown from a small provincial land trust to an organization that is facilitating major conservation projects on a statewide level. We are the only land trust in Florida with a mission that focuses both on large landscape scale conservation and the protection of working landscapes.

We currently have 10 active conservation projects totaling over 100,000 acres and spanning three Florida regions: the Northern Everglades Headwaters region of south-central Florida, the North-Central Florida Forests, and the Florida Panhandle.

A Special Thank You to Jacquelyne Collett for doing an amazing job organizing the event!

Thanks so much to these businesses and generous sponsors that made the event special!



The Shambles, Go(LAB) (a group of professional dancers), The Humble Pie, Off the Griddle, The Hyppo, The Wine and Cheese Gallery, Swamp Head Beer, Ed and Sheila Crapo, Jacquelyne Collett - Glass and Mixed Media Construction, The Doris Bardon Community Cultural Center, Trader Joes

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2014 UF Campaign for Charities

The Conservation Trust for Florida is honored to have been chosen for the 2015 University of Florida Charities Campaign (UFCC). The UFCC provides an opportunity for UF employees to give to the local charity of their choice through payroll deduction. More than \$1 million in donations have been given to area agencies over the last seven years.


During the campaign, UF employees will receive e-mails from the UFCC with links to the online contribution site. If you are part of the UF faculty or staff, please consider donating to us through the UF Campaign for Charities.


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For additional information go to:
www.UFCC.ufl.edu

 An artist of Cuban heritage, Randy Batista brings passion and creativity to every project. Schooled in Fine Art Photography, he also brings a keen eye and an artistic quality to each of his photographs. Randy is well known for capturing the human element in his photographs, for being able to bring forth, and record, the specific moment that depicts a message or that captures personal significance for the subject.

352.375.1911
www.randybatistaphotography.com

 CTF Board Member Ed Montgomery was chosen as the Florida Wildlife Federation's 2015 Forest Conservationist of the Year. He was chosen to receive this award because of his outstanding efforts over many years to appropriately manage and conserve Florida's important forest resources.

 Thank you to Xerographic Copy Center for their amazing design work and support of the newsletter.