

## **Alachua County Forever: Making your money stretch farther, greener, faster.**

One of the well-documented successes of the Alachua County Forever Program is its ability to leverage OPM... **Other People's Money**. But most people are only aware of the acquisition side of the house; and justifiably so. To date, the County has been able to raise two dollars of OPM for each dollar of local tax spent on the Acquisition List.



But did you know the Program has been even more successful leveraging Stewardship dollars? For the last few fiscal years, the resource-management budget for the Program was \$62,000. Using that as seed money for grants and staff time for coordination, the Program was able to leverage almost \$1 million in stewardship costs (table 1). Over five dollars returned in OPM for every general fund dollar invested.

TABLE 1	Offsets	Partners' Expenditures	Total
FY2008	\$71,690	\$412,917	\$484,607
FY2009	\$142,053	\$52,088	\$194,941
FY2010	\$166,306	\$144,843	\$311,149

Note: **Offsets** are avoided costs to the County by using volunteers etc. **Partners' Expenditures** means these are real expenditures by our management partners on jointly owned lands thus minimizing the County's expenditures.

There are myriad ways the Program has creatively leveraged its costs. We have negotiated agreements with the St. Johns River Water Management District and the City of Gainesville to manage jointly-owned sites. We have used License Agreements with neighbors, hunters, previous lease-holders and tenants to continue their care and stewardship of the property on the taxpayers' behalf. Program staff has hosted Community Service Workers and volunteer groups at special events – often on weekends – to pull weeds and exotic plants, clear trash and re-plant native vegetation.

It is especially gratifying to see the diversity of groups that approaches us to volunteer their time. This past year alone we worked alongside a group from Trinity United Methodist Church and the U.F. Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers. Each has “adopted” a site and we know we can call on them as the need arises to assist us take care of these assets. Jim Kauffman, Joel and Polly Smith, who have served as caretakers for Barr Hammock since the 1970s, continue in that same role for us today.



One of the Program's goals in the coming year is to build a Volunteer Conservation Corps where staff is able to match interested groups and individuals to tasks and sites. To volunteer yourself or a group, please contact the Alachua County Forever Program ([landconservation@alachuacounty.us](mailto:landconservation@alachuacounty.us) or (352) 264-6800).

To do this on our own would be cost-prohibitive, inefficient and perhaps even a little selfish. Each of these relationships benefits the County not only in avoiding a direct cost but also to build a sense of place and strengthen our shared commitment to that investment. So we thank our partners and those in the community who have volunteered their time and energy, and we look forward to continuing our tradition of rooting people in the ground.