

St. Johns River Water Management District

News Release

nr08-099



Jeff Cole, Communications and Governmental Affairs Director (386) 329-4497

CONTACT:

Area 3: Hank Largin (407) 659-4836(Office) or (407) 832-3703 (Cellular)

Board approves Rybolt Ranch land purchase

PALATKA, Fla., Nov. 11, 2008 - The St. Johns River Water Management District's Governing Board voted today to jointly purchase with Orange County 710 acres east of Orlando that will enhance the protection of the Econlockhatchee River.

Located in east Orange County, the Econ Project Addition will add to the corridor connecting the Hal Scott Regional Preserve and Park to the Charles H. Bronson State Forest. The purchase will also preserve green space in a rapidly developing portion of the county two miles east of the University of Central Florida.

"This property, which is part of the Rybolt Ranch, has been on a high priority list with the District for close to two decades," said Ann Moore, chairman of the District's Projects and Land Committee. "This is one of the last large properties along the Econ River and this purchase allows us to secure the most important parts of the property."

The District will pay \$10.5 million of the \$11.5 million purchase price, with Orange County funding the remainder.

"This is a great investment in a property that will help protect one of our environmental treasures," said Orange County Mayor Richard Crotty. "It also reinforces my commitment to keep development from crossing east of the Econ."

Kirby Green, the District's executive director, appreciated the cooperative effort that resulted in acquiring the Rybolt property.

"In these challenging financial times it is exciting that we were able to partner with Orange County to preserve such an important section of land and we look forward to working with the county on the recreational opportunities that this property will provide," Green said.

- END -

© 2007, 2008 St. Johns River Water Management District