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First Milestone Achieved in Ambitious Plan to Create Permanent Wildlife Corridor, Protect Hobe Sound Character

Hobe Sound, Fla. – An innovative and ambitious plan christened the Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative, to create a permanently protected ecological corridor in south Martin County between the Loxahatchee and St. Lucie rivers, has achieved a significant milestone with the purchase of its first 138 acres of land along Bridge Road in Hobe Sound.

This two-mile long stretch of land fronts the north side of Bridge Road and extends east and west from Powerline Avenue. Its purchase is cause for celebration as it forms the essential keystone of the long-term vision for conservation of a landscape spanning nearly 70,000 acres, between and including Jonathan Dickinson State Park and the Atlantic Ridge Preserve State Park.

The Loxa-Lucie Initiative's purpose is to protect adjacent properties from future development by either acquisition or the establishment of conservation easements. The objective is to create a permanent wildlife buffer and ecological corridor connecting the two state parks. Very importantly, acquisition of this first parcel will help improve water quality in the South Fork of the St. Lucie River and aid in restoring the historic sheet-flow of fresh water that once moved from the Atlantic Ridge to the federally designated Loxahatchee Wild and Scenic River to the south.

Just as important, the Initiative's continuing acquisition results will provide a permanent conservation buffer along Bridge Road, helping to protect the familiar character of Hobe Sound by limiting future development along the corridor. Historically, this land mass, called the Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem, was recognized by the state as the critical component in the preservation of the Loxahatchee Watershed and the South Fork of the St. Lucie River and was included in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program's (CERP) Indian River Lagoon

South Project. The necessity to preserve the remaining lands that are part of these important watersheds is greater than ever. Saltwater intrusion issues in the Loxahatchee, higher demand for potable fresh water, an increase in development pressure and rising real estate values are all driving this urgency.

As the Steering Committee for the Loxa-Lucie Initiative continues its campaign to generate funds for additional land acquisition, it has also taken its message to Tallahassee. “We’re raising awareness about the project to garner funding through Florida Forever, a well-established state-wide program to buy land for conservation and recreation,” explained Matt Sexton, Senior Vice President and Southeast Regional Director for Conservation Acquisition for The Conservation Fund and Loxa-Lucie Steering Committee member. “Our immediate goal is to boost the ranking of the Atlantic Ridge Ecosystem project on the Florida Forever list.”

The [Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative](#) is a collaboration among three non-profit 501(c)(3) environmental powerhouses, specifically the [Guardians of Martin County](#), the [Treasured Lands Foundation](#) and [The Conservation Fund](#). The Initiative has generated widespread and growing support among citizens, community groups, businesses and government entities, including the Town of Jupiter Island and the Martin County Board of County Commissioners, with Commissioner Harold Jenkins committing \$50,000 in his District funds.

Additionally, the Loxahatchee River Management Coordinating Council, Friends of Jonathan Dickinson State Park, the Rivers Coalition, the Martin County Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, the Hobe Sound Golf Club, Jupiter Island Residents Association, and landowners along the Bridge Road corridor have all expressed their support.

“While we’re celebrating this milestone, we’ve got a long way to go. This Initiative will not only benefit our natural lands, wildlife and water quality, but also preserve our small-town charm for all those who call this area home,” said Greg Braun, Executive Director of the Guardians of Martin County and a member of the Loxa-Lucie Steering Committee. “And it’s a legacy project that will be enjoyed by future generations to come.”

The Steering Committee urges all who care deeply about the Loxa-Lucie Initiative and its noble objectives to contribute generously to its on-going efforts to purchase adjacent and related properties in Martin County.

- To make a tax-deductible contribution, [click here](#)
- To schedule a presentation to your group, contact Greg Braun at 561.758.3417 or dgregbraun@aol.com
- For more information, visit www.LoxaLucieHeadwaters.org

Attachments: Location Map that includes the boundary area for this 138-acre parcel; Aerial of Loxa-Lucie Headwaters (*Photo credit: Geoffrey Smith*)