



For immediate release

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Weeks Bay Foundation preserves 240 more acres with sale to Forever Wild

FAIRHOPE, AL – The citizens of Baldwin County, and the state of Alabama, became a little more “land rich” February 2 when the Weeks Bay Foundation sold 240 acres of land to the state through the Forever Wild program.

The acres make up three properties situated along Mary Ann Beach Road and County Road 1, south of Fairhope. The three tracts will be added to the state and county preserve area known as “The Meadows.” The Meadows is more than 1,000 acres of undeveloped wetland habitat. The property drains into both Mobile Bay and Weeks Bay. Within this area are ecosystems that support numerous plant and animal species. Native and migratory birds, small freshwater fish, and a variety of reptiles and amphibians all use the protected forest.

“Baldwin County is growing rapidly,” Foundation Executive Director Yael Girard said. “There aren’t many coastal areas of this size left for our native flora and fauna. By working with Forever Wild, we are able to ensure this area will belong to the residents of Alabama and remain undeveloped.”

In keeping with its mission to preserve environmentally-sensitive habitat throughout coastal Alabama, the Foundation hopes to continue growing the boundaries of The Meadows area.

“We have already nominated another suite of properties—totaling 123 acres—to be considered by Forever Wild for the next addition to The Meadows,” Girard said.

“Land preservation is not about limiting access or stopping development,” she noted. “More, it’s about protecting the most critical conservation areas—the coastal lands and waterways—from all the factors that threaten them. In addition to preserving habitat for important native

species--flora and fauna—they are also controlling erosion, acting as a storm buffer, and serving as a filter for pollutants and runoff.”

“So much of the growth in Baldwin County is due to its coastal beauty, its farmlands and pasturelands, and access to miles of waterfront,” Walter Kirkland, chairman of the Foundation’s Land Acquisition Committee said. “Rapid unregulated growth, however, is not a friend of land and water protection. As stated by the Land Trust Alliance, of which the Foundation is a member, ‘We get our food from the land. And our water, which flows clean when we protect the land’.”

According to Kirkland, the Foundation seeks out areas and pieces of property where the landowner might be open to selling or donating the land for preservation purposes, or, might be open to granting the Foundation a conservation easement on the land.

“Our mission, as a land trust, is to safeguard the most sensitive lands—and water—so generations far beyond ours will be able to enjoy the beauty and culture we take for granted today,” Kirkland said. “But even for the present time these strategic areas must be protected to ensure we have a clean water supply.”

The Foundation uses donations from individuals and businesses, as well as grants to purchase properties. When possible, it attempts to sell the land, as in the case of the most recent 240 acres, to the state’s Forever Wild program. This allows the Foundation to recoup some of its expenses and pursue other important acquisition projects.

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Formed in 1990, the Weeks Bay Foundation is a non-profit organization whose members work to protect the natural resources of coastal Alabama and to provide assistance and support for the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve’s goals and programs.