

Local & State

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St. Marks Greenway gets aid

Department of Community Affairs gives \$915,285 to purchase 160 acres

By Jeff Burlew

DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

The state, the city of Tallahassee and Leon County are teaming up to preserve hundreds of acres of land at the St. Marks River headwaters.

On Tuesday, Department of Community Affairs Secretary Tom Pelham presented a \$915,285 check to

city and county officials. The grant money is being used to help purchase an additional 160 acres for the St. Marks Headwaters Greenway, a passive park that the county is expected to develop over coming years.

Blueprint 2000 and the Florida Communities Trust have been teaming up to

acquire property around the river since 2002, said David Bright, a Blueprint 2000 planning manager. Combined, they've spent about \$5.2 million to buy 754 acres. Florida Communities Trust has contributed about 60 percent of that in grant money.

"Basically what we're doing is protecting

something that's relatively pristine and using it in some ways that are educational to the public," Bright said.

Once finished, the park will include multi-purpose trails for biking, hiking and horse riding. It will have a picnic area, a swing and a couple of boardwalks over wetlands, which will be

good for watching wildlife.

Pat Plocek, director of the county's parks and recreation, said an entrance has been proposed by Baum Road about halfway between Buck Lake Road and the railroad tracks. He said it could be five or more years before the park is ready. For now, workers will be removing exotic plants and improving the habitat for wildlife.

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