

WOODS 'N WATER

In Leon/Jefferson counties:

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State buys conservation easement on 1,391 acres

Kohler & Associates recently announced the sale of a conservation easement on Old Fields Plantation to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Old Fields totals includes some 1,391 acres in Jefferson and Leon Counties located 12 miles east of Tallahassee and bordering Letchworth Mounds State Park. The state will purchase 109 acres outright and the development rights on the balance of the land by the way of a conservation easement.

The conservation easement purchase will limit the number of homes that can be built. Unencumbered, 160 homes could have been constructed.

The property received its name



largest in north Florida), a 10-acre dove field, three fish ponds, over 37 acres in deer food plots and two horseback quail courses.

George Willson, a consultant to The Conservation Fund, negotiated the easement purchase for the state. The Fund focused heavily on protecting this plantation from development due to the pristine hardwood forest and creek that flows through Old Fields Canyon.

The purchase helps create a conservation corridor that runs from Ted Turner's Avalon Plantation to the famous and affluent Red Hills plantation belt. There are now over 100,000 acres

intact and the property, only 12 miles east of Tallahassee, can be used for recreation forever," said Jon Kohler of Kohler & Associates who represents the landowner.

"There is a difficulty finding recreational land within 40 minutes of Tallahassee that is not priced at development values," Kohler said.

At the cabinet meeting last month in Ft. Myers, Kohler told the Governor and Cabinet that if he put the plantation on the market it would bring at least \$8,200 per acre unencumbered.

During the negotiations Kohler received an offer of \$7,575 per

Recent plantation sales in the area include the Disston Place (4,907 acres at \$4,900 per acre), Bray Plantation (3,228 acres at \$5,000 per acre) and the May's Place (1,230 acres at \$5,200 per acre), among others.

"With the rapidly appreciating land prices in the Red Hills, people feel the development pressure and realize they can't hold out forever," says Kohler. "I put my own property under a conservation easement and can tell you first hand that it appreciates at the same rate, but the value is based on recreation, not the number of homesites. It is a good feeling not to have the



in 1824 when two surveyors described the abandoned area as "Indian Old Fields." The chief archeologist for the state, Ryan Wheeler, calls it one of the most significant archeological sites in the state of Florida and the site of a "prehistoric city."

He says the Lake Drain was an important feature critical to the Native Americans and used to connect plazas and harvest the wealth of flint deposits. Randy King, chief of the Muscogee Creek tribe, said this was a very significant ceremonial and burial site used by Miccosukee, Creek and Seminoles.

Today, Old Fields is a recreational hunting plantation. The same beauty and natural resources that made this the capital center of the Native American culture for over 900 years is what makes this an exceptional recreational property.

The professionally managed plantation is complete with two floodable duck ponds (one is the



of plantations under conservation easement. This amounts to almost one third of all plantations in the Red Hills.

"This is a great win-win situation. Additional acreage was added to the state park and the property will not have 160 houses on it. Everything else is still

acre from a development group from South Florida. Encumbered, the property is worth around \$5,000 per acre which is in line with comparable sales in the region and in line with the normal diminution in value of around 60% with an easement according to Kohler.



development pressure or have to pay for the development value. I know that the memories that my family shares here will never be erased by a bulldozer."

Kohler & Associates was founded in 1991 and has become the leading plantation real estate consulting firm in North Florida and South Georgia. In the last 36 months alone, Kohler & Associates have successfully closed over \$150M in plantations and recreational properties and have been a part of most plantation sales in the region.

