FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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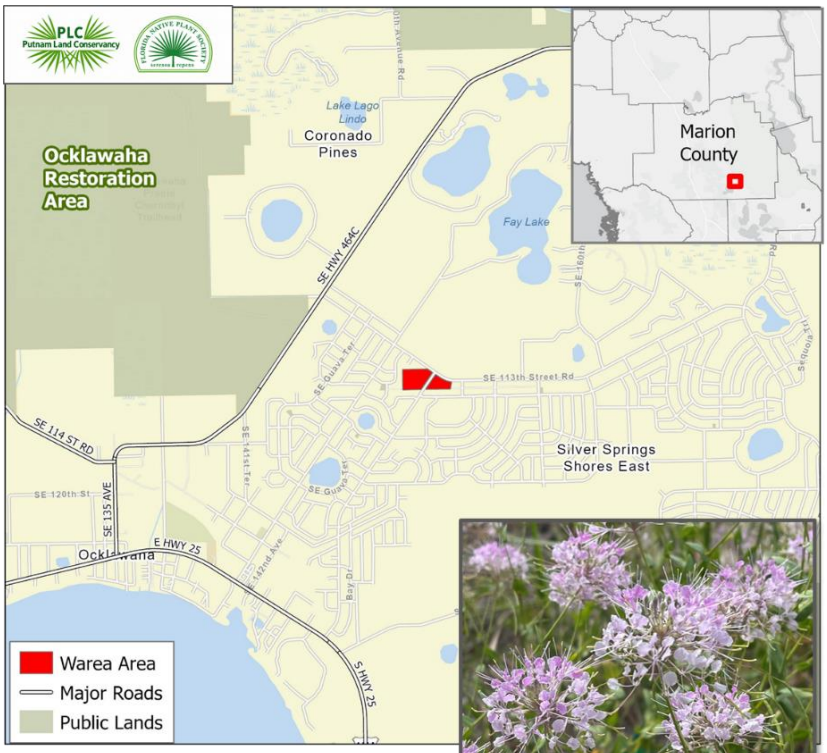
Florida Native Plant Society Transfers Rare-Species Preserve to Putnam Land Conservancy

The 12-acre "Warea Area" in Marion County protects habitat for two imperiled species found only in Florida

MARION COUNTY, Fla. — The Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) recently donated 12 acres of conservation land in southeast Marion County to Putnam Land Conservancy (PLC). PLC is a nonprofit land trust dedicated to protecting conservation lands across North Florida. The land transfer closed in late September 2026.



Location of Warea Area in southwest Marion County FL

Known as the Warea Area, the property provides habitat for two imperiled species: the federally endangered **clasping warea** (*Warea amplexifolia*) and the federally threatened **Florida sand skink** (*Plestiodon reynoldsi*). Both species are endemic to Central Florida, found naturally nowhere else in the world, and both only live in dry sandy upland habitats such as sandhills and scrub.

Clasping warea is a rare annual wildflower and member of the mustard family. Although it is difficult to detect most of the year, the lavender flowers of clasping warea are on full display in the late summer. Clasping warea was historically common in dry habitats in Central Florida. Today, remaining warea populations are extremely limited due to land conversion of most of its habitat. The Warea Area protects a small portion of its remaining habitat, and northernmost population.

The Florida sand skink is a small lizard specially adapted to life beneath loose sand, where it essentially "swims" below the surface. Similarly, the sand skink reaches its northern distribution limit in Marion County and the Warea Area also supports one of the northernmost known sand skink populations.

The Warea Area is located in Silver Springs Shores, a partially developed subdivision near Ocklawaha. In 2019, FNPS acquired the 12-acre property specifically to protect clasping warea habitat as part of a broader strategy to protect small but biologically important parcels. The surrounding landscape was historically high and dry longleaf pine woodlands. Decades ago, Silver Springs Shores was platted for residential development. Today many parcels remain vacant, although the region continues to be developed. The vacant parcels support remnants of the original habitat, including clasping warea and sand skinks.

The land protection efforts of PLC exemplify the importance of small-scale conservation. A property does not have to be large to have conservation value, particularly for protection of rare plants and animals that depend on

small intact habitats. As Florida uplands are being lost to development, small scale conservation areas become increasingly important.

“Effective conservation isn't always about protecting thousands of acres,” said Willy the Losen, PLC Executive Director. “Protecting even a few acres can make a big impact. PLC is committed to managing this property as a refuge for clasping warea, Florida sand skinks and other native species.”

In partnership with FNPS, PLC has managed the Warea Area for several years. With financial assistance through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, PLC implemented habitat restoration, including reducing hardwoods and controlling invasive plants. As the new owner, PLC will continue to manage the Warea Area and monitor the clasping warea population.

The transfer builds on more than a decade of collaboration between FNPS and PLC. “The Florida Native Plant Society acquired this property to protect one of Florida's rarest plants.” said Melissa Fernandez, Executive Director. “This land transfer allows continued protection and management of the Warea Area. We see this as a model for future collaborations to advance small scale conservation for plants and animals.”

About Putnam Land Conservancy

Putnam Land Conservancy (PLC) is a nonprofit land trust working to protect wildlife habitat, natural resources, working lands and important conservation landscapes across North Central Florida. PLC works with private landowners, conservation organizations and public agencies to protect conservation lands.

About the Florida Native Plant Society

The **Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS)** is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation, preservation, and restoration of Florida's native plants and native plant communities. FNPS achieves its mission through science-based education, research, advocacy, horticulture, landscaping, and engaged participation by our members and communities.

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Board and Staff members of Putnam Land Conservancy and the Florida Native Plant Society



Florida Sand skink