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## **FLORIDA CLOSES ON LAND PROTECTING CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD AND FLORIDA SPRING**

*~Florida Forever acquisition preserves nearly 55 acres adjacent to Natural Bridge  
Historic State Park~*

**TALLAHASSEE—** The state of Florida yesterday closed on nearly 55 acres of land in Leon County adjacent to the Natural Bridge Historic State Park. Purchased through *Florida Forever* funding, the acquired parcel will be managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks, and is significant to the protection of a first magnitude spring and features a Civil War battlefield. This acquisition was approved by the Governor and Cabinet last November.

"Closing on this land is an important accomplishment for the state, as this property is a part of the Florida First Magnitude Springs project and one of the top projects on the *Florida Forever* priority list," said DEP Deputy Secretary Bob Ballard. "This acquisition ensures that the geological, historical and cultural integrity of this property and the surrounding water resources are preserved for Floridians and visitors from all over the world to enjoy for years to come."

This *Florida Forever* project focuses on land that provides increased protection for Florida's First Magnitude Springs that discharge more than 100 cubic feet of water per second. Florida's springs, scattered through northern and central Florida, draw from the Floridan aquifer system, which is the state's primary source of drinking water. Springs, with clear, continuously flowing waters, are among the state's most important natural resources and are famous attractions. This acquisition brings the Florida First Magnitude Springs project closer to completion, with 7,844 acres of the 14,081 acre project remaining.

The property contains many karst features such as sink holes, natural bridges, swallets, karst windows and submerged cave systems. By preserving the surrounding land, this project will preserve the area's geological significance and protect Florida's water resources from the affects of commercial, residential and agricultural runoff and other potential impacts.

The property is also the site of Florida's second largest Civil War battle. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and cited as one of the top ten endangered Civil War sites in the United States by the Civil War Preservation

Trust. In 1865, during the final week of the Civil War, the battle at Natural Bridge preserved Tallahassee as the only Confederate Capitol east of the Mississippi that did not surrender to Union forces. Today, important historical and cultural resources can be found on the property dating from the Paleo-Indian period (10,000 B.C.) to the Civil War.

“We are extremely pleased to be working with the state of Florida to protect a key part of the Natural Bridge Battlefield,” remarked Civil War Preservation Trust President James Lighthizer. “The Rakestraw property saw some of the most intense fighting of the battle, fought just five weeks before General Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. Governor Crist and his administration should be applauded for stepping up to protect this unique part of Florida’s heritage.”

The closing comes just in time for the 32nd Annual Reenactment of the Battle of Natural Bridge at Natural Bridge Battlefield Historic State Park on Saturday, March 7 and Sunday, March 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Reenactment of the Battle of Natural Bridge commemorates the 1865 Civil War confrontation that preserved Tallahassee as the only Confederate capital east of the Mississippi River to avoid Union control.

Originally established in 1999, the 10-year, \$3 billion *Florida Forever* program is the largest land-buying initiative in the nation, conserving environmentally sensitive land, restoring water resources and preserving important cultural and historical sites. More than two million acres throughout the state have been placed in public ownership under *Florida Forever* and its predecessor program, *Preservation 2000* (P2000). For more information on the *Florida Forever* program, visit [www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/fl\\_forever.htm](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/lands/fl_forever.htm).

To view maps that outline the property, visit the following links:

[www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2008/11/files/rakestraw\\_springs76.pdf](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2008/11/files/rakestraw_springs76.pdf)  
[www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2008/11/files/rakestraw\\_springs77.pdf](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2008/11/files/rakestraw_springs77.pdf)