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# CONSERVATION FLORIDA PROTECTS 101 ACRES OF COASTAL MARSH IN PERDIDO BAY, ENHANCING NEWLY DESIGNATED NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT ESTUARY



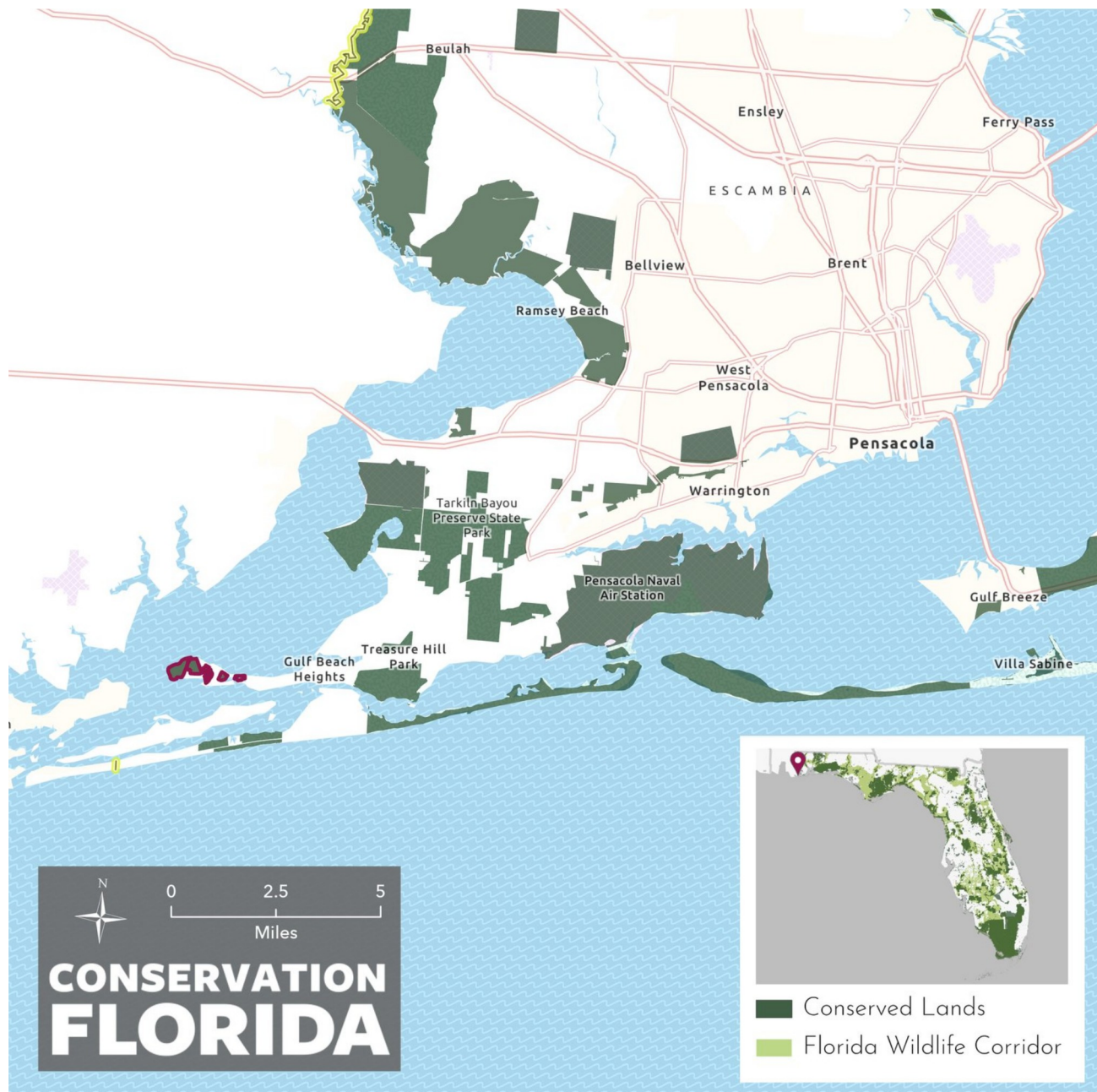
Photos by Michael Riffle

## **INNERARITY ISLAND CONSERVED; STRENGTHENS HABITAT CONNECTIVITY AND SAFEGUARDS WATER QUALITY**

**PENSACOLA, Fla. (February 27, 2025)** — [Conservation Florida](https://conservationfla.org), in partnership with the [Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation](#), is proud to announce the successful conservation of 101 acres on Innerarity Island, a **vital coastal habitat** nestled within

the newly designated Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary of National Significance.

This landmark achievement not only protects essential wildlife habitats, but also strengthens the health of the region's ecosystems, safeguards water quality, and bolsters resilience against environmental challenges for the nearly 5 million Floridians living along the Gulf Coast.



## A CONSERVATION WIN FOR A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED ESTUARY

In December 2024, Congress passed Senate Bill 50, the Pensacola and Perdido



Bays Estuary of National Significance Act, a designation that highlights the critical importance of preserving the delicate ecosystems of Pensacola and Perdido Bays. The Pensacola and Perdido Bay watersheds span over 8,000 square miles, running from Orange Beach, Alabama, westward to Okaloosa County, Florida.

This conservation win is especially timely as the region faces growing development challenges and a legacy of industrial impacts.

“We are incredibly proud to conserve a part of Florida’s coastline,” said **Conservation Florida CEO Traci Deen**. “Innerarity Island is a haven for native species that rely on coastal habitats to thrive. We’re grateful to conserve this land and deeply appreciate those who worked to see this conservation project through. It’s a great way to celebrate the recent designation of Pensacola and Perdido Bays as an Estuary of National Significance.”

This conservation win is especially timely as the region faces growing development challenges and a legacy of industrial impacts. The permanent protection of these 101 acres in Escambia County directly contributes to maintaining the resilience of this coastal community by buffering residential areas from storm surge and sea level rise. The preservation of this coastal area also aids in protecting coastal marsh habitat, supporting nursery habitat for juvenile fish, shrimp, and crabs, and preserving water filtration, essential functions for a healthy bay.

“We are grateful to Conservation Florida and Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation for their leadership in permanently protecting 101 acres of irreplaceable coastal habitat in lower Perdido Bay,” said **Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program Executive Director Matt Posner**. “Congress recognized the importance of the Perdido and Pensacola Bay watersheds with the passage of the Estuaries of National Significance designation. It is imperative we work together to strengthen community resilience, improve water quality, and protect our way of life for future generations.”



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## **PROTECTING WILDLIFE & EXPANDING CONSERVATION CORRIDORS**

Situated in Pensacola, less than a mile from the Florida-Alabama border, Innerarity Island is home to a variety of threatened and endangered species, such as the Gulf sturgeon, white-topped pitcher plant, alligator snapping turtle, and Saltmarsh topminnow. By conserving this critical habitat with its partners, Conservation Florida is ensuring these species have a safe, sustainable environment to thrive for centuries to come.

The conservation of Innerarity Island strengthens wildlife connectivity, linking protected areas such as Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park, forming a larger network of conserved lands. These interconnected habitats are crucial for sustaining biodiversity, providing migration corridors, and supporting the long-term health of Florida’s coastal ecosystems.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Beyond its ecological value, Innerarity Island will offer new opportunities for environmental education; it will create opportunities for nearby universities, such as the University of West Florida, to conduct research and studies that contribute to conservation and environmental understanding.

“This conservation effort has been a long-term vision for our community,” said **Dennis Geary of the Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation**. “By permanently protecting this land, we ensure that future generations can experience the natural beauty of this coastal ecosystem while maintaining the environmental health of Perdido Bay.”

The protection of Innerarity Island is a critical milestone in the broader effort to safeguard Florida’s coastal ecosystems. Conservation Florida remains committed to continuing its efforts to protect vital lands, preserve wildlife habitats, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Florida’s natural landscapes.

“As a Pensacola resident, I’ve spent my life enjoying the incredible natural beauty of our coastal waters—fishing, paddling, and exploring places like Perdido Bay,” said **Conservation Florida Board Treasurer Justin Beck**. “Permanently protecting Innerarity Island is a huge win for our community, our wildlife, and our way of life. This is exactly why I’m proud to serve on the board of Conservation Florida—we’re committed to continuing this momentum to ensure future generations can experience

the same wild and scenic Northwest Florida that we know and love.”

**For more information, contact:**

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**About Conservation Florida:**

*Conservation Florida is an accredited, nonprofit land conservancy dedicated to conserving the Sunshine State’s water, wildlife, wild places, and connecting a functional Florida Wildlife Corridor. Since its founding in 1999, Conservation Florida has saved more than 40,000 acres, serving all 67 counties in Florida, by prioritizing strategic and evidence-based land protection, education, and advocacy.*

For more information, visit [www.conservationfla.org](http://www.conservationfla.org) and follow us on social media [@conservationflorida](https://www.instagram.com/conservationflorida).

**About Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation:**

*Innerarity Island Preservation Foundation was founded in 2022 by community residents that all had a common passion and interest in preserving the natural ecosystem, wildlife and environment within and around the Innerarity Island, Perdido Key, Florida area.*

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