

FALL 2025

Conservation Newsletter

UWF CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Recent Milestones

Conservation at UWF has grown and impacted our community in some pretty incredible ways throughout 2025. Here are just a few of these successes:

- Prescribed fire introduced in UWF longleaf pine forest
- Nearly 150 UWF students directly impacted by 2024-2025 Living Lab grants
- UWF Conservation Areas added to the Florida Natural Area Inventory

The UWF Conservation Program, founded in Summer 2024, is dedicated to managing and protecting the UWF Conservation areas while engaging and educating our community. It envisions a future where UWF is a local leader in conservation efforts and education.

Read further in this newsletter to find out what the UWF Conservation Program has been getting up to and ways you can get involved!



Edward Ball Nature Trail

FALL 2025 Conservation Newsletter

UWF CONSERVATION PROGRAM



As of August 2025, two University of West Florida Conservation Areas have been added to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) as Conservation Lands!

To earn this kind of recognition, “a significant portion of the property must be undeveloped and retain most of the attributes one could expect it to have in its natural condition” and “the managing agency or organization must demonstrate a formal commitment to the conservation of the land in its natural condition.”

The University of West Florida has pledged to manage and protect both the UWF Living Lab: Forest and the UWF Living Lab: Beach in alignment with these guidelines, officially dedicating over seven hundred acres of natural land to this purpose.

See for yourself! You can check out the map at:
<https://www.fnai.org/>



The following are given as descriptions of the two recognized conservation areas:

UWF Main Campus Conservation Area

“The **UWF Living Lab: Forest** includes secondary growth longleaf pine and mixed hardwood forest and wetlands. A significant number of gopher tortoises actively burrow in this area. There are several hiking and biking trails but no other facilities.”

UWF Beach Reservation

“The **UWF Living Lab: Beach** consists of sand beach, beach dune, coastal interdunal swale, coastal scrub, and salt marsh. Shorebirds such as black skimmers and least terns have been observed nesting on this property. There have also been instances of sea turtle nests along the Gulf-side beach, especially by loggerhead sea turtles.”

FALL 2025

Conservation Newsletter

UWF CONSERVATION PROGRAM

UWF Living Lab Projects

Throughout the 2024-2025 Academic Year, the five inaugural Living Lab projects had a direct impact on **nearly 150 UWF students**, as well as many other members of our community. We are thrilled to see the continued impact of this program through the 2025-2026 AY Living Lab Grant Projects. Here's a sneak peak!

Multimedia Art Conservation Program Collaboration

Art students will behave as design consultants and make creative assets for the UWF Conservation Program.

Using Nature Immersion to Improve Students' Health

Nursing students will learn about mental health care topics through forest bathing and contribution to a campus-wide event.

Interprofessional Education Promoting Mental Well-Being and Environmental Health

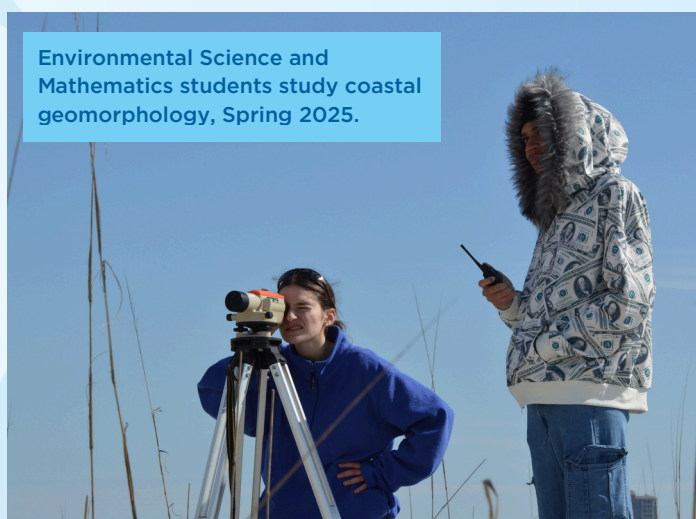
Awareness of the environmental health impacts of litter will be raised through a health literacy panel, teamwork, a conservation area cleanup, and a tree planting.

UWF Explore Trips

Local elementary students will grow as scientists through experiential learning in the UWF Living Lab: Forest.



Nursing students measure the pH of Thompson Bayou, Spring 2025.



Environmental Science and Mathematics students study coastal geomorphology, Spring 2025.



Fifth graders hike Edward Ball Nature Trail, Spring 2025.

FALL 2025

Conservation Newsletter

UWF CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Get Involved!

Upcoming Event: Inaugural West Florida Fire and Nature Festival

The inaugural West Florida Fire & Nature Festival will be a family-friendly, environmental & educational outdoor event sharing the importance of prescribed fire for ecosystem health, wildlife biodiversity, and wildfire mitigation. With a variety of interactive games and exhibits by environmental organizations, live entertainment, food trucks, and exciting activities, there's lots of fun for the whole family!

Join us on March 7, 2026 at the Edward Ball Nature Trail Entrance, 9am-3pm!

Stay Up to Date!

If you haven't already subscribed to our biannual newsletter, you can do so by completing this form: <https://forms.gle/HLbeJVeLZk2w2wox8>

