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CITY HOSTS RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY FOR DUTTON ISLAND PRESERVE

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., March 31, 2008 – Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton was joined today by Jacksonville City Council Members Ray Holt and Art Graham, City of Atlantic Beach Mayor Pro tem Mike Borno, former Jacksonville City Council Member Elaine Brown and the City of Jacksonville Recreation and Community Services Department for a ribbon-cutting ceremony of the newest Preservation Project preserve--Dutton Island Preserve.

Recent enhancements to the preserve includes a one-mile nature trail, three picnic facilities, three overlooks, additional parking spaces, interpretive signage and landscaping. The cost of construction was \$315,374, supported by bond funds, the City of Jacksonville, Preservation North Florida, Inc. and a National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. Other key players in the enhancement project include the Florida Inland Navigation District and Trust for Public Lands.

In addition, Ron Foster, a long-time Jacksonville resident, chairman of Stellar and past-owner of the Palm Cove Marina (located on the Intracoastal Waterway), made a gift of \$175,000 toward the Dutton Island project to help enhance the Intracoastal experience for others in the community.

“The completion of enhancements to Dutton Island Preserve gives residents yet another opportunity to experience natural beauty of Northeast Florida,” said Mayor Peyton. “Expanding access to Preservation Project lands through partnerships in our community and with assistance from people like Mr. Foster is another step toward making our parks the best.”

“I’m very excited about this addition to Dutton Island Preserve,” said Council Member Holt. “Not only will it protect important wetlands, but we’re going to be able to use this area to teach our children about these important ecosystems in our community.”

The Dutton Island Preserve is located just east of the Intracoastal Waterway, adjacent to Dutton Island Road West. A portion of the 386-acre preserve, which features an eight-acre park, resides within Jacksonville, and the remainder lies within the city limits of Atlantic Beach.

The City of Jacksonville will provide routine and long-term maintenance while the City of Atlantic Beach will assist with maintaining public access by opening and closing the gates each day.

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Formerly known as Pine Island, the preserve was renamed for a former owner, Walter Dutton. The City of Atlantic Beach purchased the island from Dutton's estate in 1998, and developed the property in three phases between early 2000 and summer 2003.

Meanwhile, as the first acquisition of the newly-created Preservation Project, the City of Jacksonville purchased a nearby 92-acre tract in 1999. This was followed by additional purchases of 242 acres in 2003 and eight acres in 2005. The cost of acquisition was a Florida Communities Trust grant, the Jacksonville Port Authority and match dollars from the cities of Jacksonville and Atlantic Beach.

Through the initial vision and work of local real estate broker and conservationist Tom Dumas, and the combined efforts of the cities of Atlantic Beach and Jacksonville, state agencies, and conservation organizations such as The Trust for Public Land, the park/preserve was established.

Existing amenities include restroom facilities, a parking lot, two observation areas, three picnic facilities, interpretive kiosks, nature trails and a canoe/kayak launch.

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