

TIGER CREEK - A Bit of Unspoiled Florida

Tiger Creek is a winding stream that comes out of the ground west of Kissimmee and meanders south for about seven miles into Lake Lenore. The land, for about a quarter mile on both sides of the creek, is owned by The Nature Conservancy, a publicly supported, non-governmental, scientific and educational conservation organization. The Nature Conservancy identifies, buys or protects, and manages unique natural areas throughout North and South America, including 54 such projects in Florida.

The Tiger Creek Preserve, a slice of unaltered Central Florida, includes 2890 acres purchased over several years beginning in 1971. The Nature Conservancy is selling "deeds of gratitude" for \$260 per acre to help defray the costs of purchasing the Tiger Creek Preserve. The deed says: (in part) "This Deed of Gratitude witnesseth that the grantor certifies that the grantee has been instrumental in preserving ___ acres of the Tiger Creek Nature Preserve, to have and to hold all those rare and special places, still in the same unspoiled conditions that existed when Seminole Indians

camped there; and as an example of the development of an ethic that holds land dear and that believes lands of significant ecological value must be preserved. And the grantor hereby covenants with said grantee that the otters, raccoons, bobcats, deer, alligators, scrub jays, ospreys, red-shouldered hawks, wood ducks, green herons, sand pines, swamp maples, loblolly bays, tupelos, and all the wild and beautiful plants and all other wild creatures will not perish or be evicted from their homes because you cared enough to give the gift that will grow in value to Americans each year, as your 'Gift to Future Generations'. Deed of Gratitude not to be recorded in the Public Records of Polk County."

Perhaps a thousand of these deeds of gratitude have been purchased. If you'd like to help write off the cost of an acre of Tiger Creek Nature Preserve, write to Dave Johnson or Ken Morrison, P.O. Box 268, Lake Wales, FL 33853.

AND THEN THERE'S TIGER CREEK FOREST, 1600 acres of private enterprise development adjoining the

Preserve on the north and east. But it's a development with a difference. The entire development is a Wildlife Sanctuary. The roads follow old animal, Indian, and/or hunter trails. The "lots" are a minimum of five acres, some going as much as forty acres if some of the land is swampy. But each lot has a high and dry buildable site.

And the people of The Nature Conservancy have put out a leaflet to be given to purchasers of a lot in Tiger Creek Forest that encourages them to leave the site as natural as possible. No more than 60% of any tract may be cleared or partially cleared for any reason, and trees over seven inches in diameter may not be cut down unless they actually interfere with a building. They encourage the use of shovels instead of bulldozers. They encourage pine needle driveways instead of concrete. They encourage leaving dead trees for the owls and woodpeckers. And they offer a "rusty mower" award for the resident who best blends home and natural landscape.

Maybe FNPS's Local Ordinance Committee can get some ideas from this!