



# OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

"Connecting people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, native forests."

**Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup> 2020**

## **Myron and Helen Gibbons Preserve inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network!**

On November 17<sup>th</sup>, Myron and Helen Gibbons Preserve in Hillsborough County, FL was formally inducted into the Old-Growth Forest Network as a Community Forest, which celebrates urban and suburban forests that are treasured community assets.

The Gibbons family donated this 60-acre preserve, a favorite piece of their family ranch, to the Tampa Bay Conservancy as a tribute to Myron and Helen Gibbons. The preserve contains a temperate mesic hammock forest that surrounds the confluence of Bell Creek and the Alafia River. There are many large trees among the oaks, pines, mixed hardwoods, and cypress wetlands. However, most notable may be the rare plants throughout the preserve. Among the 120 species that have been identified by the Suncoast Native Plant Species are comb polypody fern, basswood, cardinal air plant, Florida milk vine, and several species of terrestrial orchids. This forest provides the surrounding community of Riverview a wilderness oasis that demonstrates how Florida's natural forests looks a century ago. The Gibbons Preserve is managed by the Tampa Bay Conservancy, the local accredited nonprofit land trust whose mission is to protect the Tampa Bay region's natural, agricultural, and scenic heritage. The Gibbons Preserve offers trails and a small parking area at the entrance.

The mission of the Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN) is to connect people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, publicly accessible, native forests. The goal is to preserve at least one forest in every county in the United States that can sustain a forest, estimated to be 2,370 out of a total of 3,140 counties. OGFN's program works to identify forests for the Network, ensure their protection from logging, and inform people of the forest locations. OGFN also educates about the extraordinary ecological and human wellness benefits of old-growth forests, and speaks out regarding immediate threats to specific ancient forests.

Founded in 2012, OGFN has over 140 forests in 26 states currently in the Network. States that have forests in the Network include Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The full list of forests may be viewed at [www.oldgrowthforest.net](http://www.oldgrowthforest.net).

Dr. Horsley states, "We are excited to include the Myron and Helen Gibbons Preserve in the Network. It exemplifies how rich, ecologically-valuable patches of old forest can persist among developed areas and how they serve as a community asset for the surrounding neighborhoods. We depend on local, county-level volunteers to help us identify the special forests they want to see recognized and work with landowners and managers to make sure these forests will remain protected. The Old-Growth Forest Network grows from our network of dedicated forest preservationists." Grayson McCormick, the Hillsborough County Coordinator, has offered valuable support in bringing the Gibbons Preserve into the Network. Interested volunteers are welcome to contact us through our website: [www.oldgrowthforest.net](http://www.oldgrowthforest.net).

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Contact:

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