

# Sabal Trail ordered to pay landowners more

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Sabal Trail is in the news again as they suffered another legal defeat. The Gainesville Sun has the full article [here](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

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# Sabal Trail ordered to pay landowners more

By [Andrew Caplan](#)

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A Valdosta jury ruled Tuesday evening that W. Lynn Lasseter was owed nearly five times what Sabal Trail initially offered him in 2016, according to court documents.

A federal court in Georgia has ruled in favor of a property owner who challenged an offer amount made by Sabal Trail Transmission for the right to build its natural gas pipeline on his land.

A Valdosta jury ruled Tuesday evening that W. Lynn Lasseter was owed nearly five times what Sabal Trail initially offered him in 2016, according to court documents.

He rejected the \$20,000 offer, contending his land was worth more. Sabal Trail then filed an eminent domain lawsuit against Lasseter to obtain access to the property.

“Our contention at trial was that they low-balled people,” said Lasseter’s attorney, Jonathan Waters.

Sabal Trail Transmission installed its 516-mile pipeline last year, running from Alabama, into Georgia and through Central Florida. The \$3 billion project was a joint venture between Florida Power and Light, Spectra Energy and Duke Energy.

Throughout North Central Florida, the pipeline [affected](#) residents living in rural parts of Levy, Gilchrist, Marion and Alachua counties. Sabal Trail sued nearly 200 landowners through eminent domain and crossed about 370 bodies of water throughout

construction of the pipeline, causing outrage and protests from environmentalists.

The pipeline is in service with natural gas being transported to power plants in Florida.

Lasseter was awarded \$103,385 by the jury for the 2 acres of land the pipeline company used, five times the original offer of almost \$20,000 that a Sabal Trail-hired appraiser said the land was worth.

Lasseter was also given an additional \$4,530 for timber that was cut down, which Waters said wasn't largely disputed. The timber cost was about \$400 more than what was offered.

In an email, Sabal Trail spokeswoman Andrea Grover said the company "won't comment on ongoing legal matters."

Waters said he has four similar cases upcoming in the Georgia court, which will be heard by the same judge. He said Sabal Trail has requested those cases be consolidated, though he would like to keep them separate.

Sabal Trail construction sites were the center of protests for months as the company laid its line. Sheriff's deputies also arrested at least 24 protesters for trespassing near construction sites.

In April, a federal court in Ocala also ruled in favor of a Lake County landowner who was awarded nearly four times more than Sabal Trail offered.

Janice Sunderman, of Groveland, challenged a \$56,800 offer made to her company, Sunderman Groves Inc. The court ordered Sabal Trail pay \$309,500, a ruling that the pipeline company is appealing.

Sunderman Groves has roughly 480 acres of land in Central Florida, 39 of which Sunderman and her lawyers argued were affected by the pipeline along Lake Erie Road in Groveland.