



Florida Forever:

Investing in Our Natural Assets



Investment in land and water conservation is critical to ensuring water quality and quantity, preserving working lands, protecting our state's wildlife heritage, providing recreation opportunities and improving quality of life for all Floridians. The economic recovery of Florida depends on protecting and enhancing our resources even as the growth that has made us the third largest state in the nation continues. Such investment in our natural assets pays off in many ways:

- Ensures clean and plentiful water resources for natural systems and people.
- Creates conservation areas for protected species, wetlands and other unique natural, cultural and historic resources.
- Helps meet local land use requirements and avoid conflicts over development sites and community natural resource needs.
- Promotes stewardship of working lands, ranches and farms that provide essential products and natural resource benefits such as water, wildlife habitat and flood prevention.
- Enhances the quality of life that attracts people and businesses and builds communities with jobs and transportation infrastructure.

Land and water conservation protects our resources, economy and quality of life

- Supports the state’s tourism industry, the backbone of our economy by protecting our natural attractions including our world-renowned coastline, beaches and estuaries—and our claim to “Fishing Capital of the World.”
- Provides recreational access to waterfronts, natural areas and trails and protects the conservation lands that provide the public with opportunities to hunt and to observe wildlife, an activity that attracts international tourists and generates spending throughout the state.

Tourism Money Talks

In fiscal year 2012:

- The Florida State Parks contributed \$1.2 billion dollars to the state economy.
- Recreational fishing by residents and visitors generated \$8.7 billion.
- 91.5 million people visited Florida, spending \$71.8+ billion, generating 23 percent in sales tax revenue and employing more than 1 million Floridians.

2014 Funding Requests

Banking on these returns on investing in nature, the Florida Forever Coalition requests that the 2014 Florida Legislature approve a 2014-2015 state budget that includes the funding necessary to help address the degradation that has caused ecosystem collapses, to prevent further degradation and support restoration, and to secure the ecological and economic future of our state for the health and well-being of our natural and built communities.

\$100 Million for the Florida Forever Program (F.S. 259.105)

Florida Forever protects the conservation and recreation areas that form the basis of our environmental and economic health. Working from a science-based, prioritized list, the program purchases land and conservation easements from willing sellers. In addition to a multitude of benefits such as protecting Florida’s first-magnitude springs and other water resources, the program also gives

statutory authority for water management districts to use 30 percent of the funds for water restoration projects, protects a network of wildlife habitat and trails, and provides matching grants to local governments through the Florida Communities Trust to acquire parks and waterfronts that enhance the quality of our communities.

\$25 Million for the Rural and Family Lands Program

This investment in our agricultural economy ensures stewardship of natural resources through paid conservation easements on working lands that

remain under the ownership and management of ranchers, farmers, foresters and others who earn a livelihood from the land.