



May 30, 2017

STEERING COMMITTEE:

Chairman
Bob Graham

Vice Chairmen
Nathaniel Pryor Reed
Lee Constantine

Organizations:

CONSERVANCY OF
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

FLORIDA
CONSERVATION VOTERS
EDUCATION FUND

FLORIDA WILDLIFE
FEDERATION

LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS

1000 FRIENDS OF
FLORIDA

FLORIDA SIERRA CLUB

ST JOHNS RIVERKEEPER

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

Individuals:

Craig Diamond
Gary Kuhl
Victoria Tschinkel
Estus Whitfield

The Hon. Rick Scott
Governor of Florida
Plaza Level 05,
The Capitol
400 S Monroe St
Tallahassee, FL 32399

The Hon. Richard Corcoran
Speaker of the Florida
House
17953 Hunting Bow Cir,
Suite 101
Lutz, FL 33558

The Hon. Joe Negron
President of the Florida
Senate
3500 SW Corporate Pkwy,
Suite 204
Palm City, FL 34990

Dear Governor Scott, Speaker Corcoran, and President Negron:

The Florida Conservation Coalition, representing 80 conservation minded-organizations and thousands of Floridians of all political affiliations, requests that any proclamation convening a special session of the Florida Legislature include the appropriation of funds to protect vital natural and working lands. This funding should go to Florida Forever priority projects and the Florida Communities Trust and Rural and Family Lands Protection Programs.

In 2014, conservation and civic groups united to place an amendment to Florida's Constitution on the ballot dedicating funding to this vital program. The Water and Land Conservation Amendment received strong bi-partisan support at the polls, passing with nearly 75% approval.

However, the will of the people remains undone three years after this historic ballot victory. In the recently adjourned Legislative Session, the budget passed by both chambers includes no funds for Florida Forever, no funds for Florida Communities Trust and only \$10 million for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. Without appropriate funding, these programs are at risk of running out of money and will fail to fulfill their missions of protecting natural

resources like the forests, watersheds, and ranches that are essential to Florida's environment and economy.

While the Legislature should be applauded for taking steps to address the environmental crises facing our springs and the Everglades, they cannot ignore the challenges our state will face in the future. Conserving important lands today is the most economical way to prevent the environmental crises of tomorrow.

It appears increasingly likely that a special session will be necessary to deal with several issues important to our state that the Legislature did not resolve during the regular session. It is also likely that, at a minimum, hundreds of millions of dollars will be vetoed from the state budget before it is signed into law, freeing up these funds to be used for state priorities.

The FCC believes that there is no use of excess reserve funds more important to our state's economy and environment or more important to our state's voters than restoring funding to Florida Forever to \$300 million for the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Right now, there are lands critical to preserving Florida's agricultural heritage, maintaining the state's biodiversity, and protecting the state's water supply that will be lost forever if significant funding to these programs is not restored this year.

Floridians are experiencing a crisis of confidence with our state government that transcends political divides. By including Florida Forever appropriations among the purposes listed in the proclamation for a special session, you have the opportunity to reaffirm the faith of Floridians that their votes matter.

Sincerely,



Bob Graham
Chair of the FCC



Nathaniel Reed
Vice Chair of the FCC



Lee Constantine
Vice Chair of the FCC