



November 18, 2019

The Florida Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis, Senate President Galvano, Speaker Oliva, Senator Bradley and Representative Cummings,

We ask that you make a commitment today to pass legislation during the 2020 session that restores full funding for the Florida Forever land conservation program, including the Florida Forever Priority List, Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, and Florida Communities Trust program, on an annual basis. Recent appropriations, which have been capped at \$100 million, are not nearly enough to meet the needs of Florida's environment or expectations of Florida voters.

We, and all Floridians, have waited five years since the passage of the Water and Land Conservation Amendment in 2014 to see funding for this vital environmental program restored. During this time, our state has experienced an increasing rate of growth equivalent to losing 10 acres of rural and natural lands per hour to development, as indicated by the *Florida 2070* report.

Conserved lands are critical to ensuring a sustainable water supply; supporting Florida's tourism-based economy; affording residents and visitors recreational opportunities including fishing, hunting, and hiking; restoring the state's springs, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and estuaries; saving Florida's native wildlife; buffering military bases; and providing storm and flood protection for our communities. Fragmentation and loss of critical landscapes will exacerbate the State's environmental problems.

There is no time to lose. Industry and development are encroaching rapidly onto Florida's last remaining natural lands. Ranching families that want to preserve their property and cultural heritage are seeing their land divided over time. If we do not act to save Florida's environmentally sensitive lands from development now, we will lose the opportunity forever.

This is a defining moment in Florida's history, and we are counting on you, our elected representatives, to save the real Florida.

Respectfully,

1000 Friends of Florida

Paul Owens, President

Alachua Conservation Trust

Tom Kay, Executive Director

Anna Maria Island Turtle Watch & Shorebird Monitoring

Skip Coyne, Environmental Director

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Laura Everitt, AICP, LEED GA, President

Apalachee Audubon Society

Peter Kleinhenz, President

Apalachicola Riverkeeper

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Audubon Everglades

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Bear Warriors United

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Big Bend Chapter of Florida Native Plant Society

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Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife

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Defenders of Wildlife

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Friends of Wekiva River

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Healthy Gulf

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IDEAS for US
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Indivisible St. Johns
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Kuhl Photo Art
Gary W. Kuhl, Owner

Lake Worth Waterkeeper
Reinaldo Diaz, J.D., Waterkeeper, President

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Chair

League of Women Voters of Lee County
Patty Duncan, Environmental Chair

League of Women Voters of North Pinellas
Karen Karinja, President
Dave Sillman, Environmental Action Group
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League of Women Voters of Orange County
Dr. Gloria Pickar and Sandi Vidal, Co-
Presidents

League of Women Voters of Tallahassee
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Lee Future
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**Martin County Democratic Environmental
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**Martin County Democratic Executive
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North Florida Land Trust
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Our Santa Fe River
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Rainbow River Conservation
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Save the Manatee Club

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Wild Heart Ecojourneys
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