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**News Articles**

**Subject:** Fwd: A comeback ahead for Florida Forever?  
**From:** Diane Salz <[salz.govconsultant@gmail.com](mailto:salz.govconsultant@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Mon, Jun 23, 2014 9:16 am  
**To:** WRWSA <[richardowen@wrwsa.org](mailto:richardowen@wrwsa.org)>  
**Cc:** Nancy Smith <[nsmith@wrwsa.org](mailto:nsmith@wrwsa.org)>

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**From:** Diane Salz <[salz.govconsultant@gmail.com](mailto:salz.govconsultant@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Mon, Jun 23, 2014 at 9:15 AM  
**Subject:** A comeback ahead for Florida Forever?  
**To:** Diane Salz <[disalz@yahoo.com](mailto:disalz@yahoo.com)>

## A comeback ahead for Florida Forever?

*By Lloyd Dunkelberger  
Halifax Media Services*

*Published: Sunday, June 22, 2014 at 3:57 p.m.*

TALLAHASSEE — After years of receiving little funding, Florida's environmental land-buying program is making a modest comeback.

With the decision by Gov. Rick Scott and the Cabinet last week to sell surplus state land — including four prison sites — the state land-buying initiatives, including Florida Forever, may have more than \$50 million in 2014-15. It would be the highest budget amount for Florida Forever since 2008.

Yet even that funding represents only one-sixth of the \$300 million Florida once had annually in its nation-leading conservation program.

Environmental advocates say the funding increase will help but they are still looking ahead to a constitutional amendment on the November ballot that will require the state to set aside a portion of the annual taxes on real estate transactions to pay for conservation programs.

Although the state will have more land-acquisition money in the coming year, the question remains how aggressively state officials will be in trying to negotiate conservation-land deals. Florida Forever funding has been largely at a standstill since the Great Recession, including the last two years of former Gov. Charlie Crist's administration and the four years under Scott.

"It was basically like they put a stop work order on Florida Forever," said Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon Florida.

Without a more aggressive land-buying initiative, environmentalists say the state may lose out on critical areas, such as protecting Florida's natural springs, the Ocala National Forest-Wekiva River area, the Indian River lagoon and host of other environmentally important tracts across the state.

Yet, Draper and other environmentalists were on hand last week to praise Scott and the state Cabinet for taking several steps that could enhance the Florida Forever program.

State officials approved the sale of nonconservation property — including four former prison sites — to generate money for Florida Forever. The new budget allows up to \$40 million of those land sales to go to land conservation projects and it would be coupled with \$12.5 million in other state funding.

The governor and Cabinet also approved a new Florida Forever priority list with 45 potential projects.

And they unanimously agreed to buy a 156-acre tract in Lake County as part of the Florida Forever project to provide a conservation link between the Ocala National Forest and the Wekiva River area near Orlando.

"It is important that we invest in preservation of the state's valuable natural resources like land and water so they are available for Florida families for generations to come," Scott said. "I believe in being a good steward of state resources and believe today's approval of the sale of certain properties and acquisition of conservation land are both win-win scenarios."

But the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway purchase illustrates incremental progress of reviving Florida Forever. The state bought the tract for \$450,000, a bargain price made possible by the conservationists who acquired the land and then resold it to the state at a discount.

The 156 acres represent less than 1 percent of the remaining 23,000 acres in the overall Wekiva-Ocala project that has been targeted for preservation under Florida Forever.

"It's hard to get up and cheer for a project that's less than \$1 million," Draper said. "It's the frustrating thing. Development is increasing. The land values are going up with the development pressure.

"We have this huge backlog of land to be protected through the Florida Forever program and it feels like in places where we should be spending a lot of money we're spending a small amount of money."

To put the overall Florida Forever list into context, Draper said he estimates the value of the potential purchases to be at \$10 billion. "Fifty million dollars is just a tiny dent in the need," Draper said, although he also estimated the state has more than \$100 million in unspent Florida Forever funding from previous years that could also be used.

But Draper said there does seem to be a shift in the Department of Environmental Protection, which is under Scott, to considering more conservation-land acquisitions.

"We're seeing a slow thaw in the Scott administration of their willingness to buy land," Draper said. "We want to recognize that and cheer them on."

The recession, the skepticism over the value of state land purchases from conservative critics and Scott's own fiscal policy have all been part of the Florida Forever slowdown.

Scott has taken a hard line against more state borrowing, resulting in a record decline in the Florida's debt. But it has also meant the state is not issuing bonds for programs like Florida Forever, which it has historically done.

Environmental advocates are backing a constitutional amendment on the November ballot that would require the state to annually set aside a third of the real-estate transaction tax to fund conservation programs like Florida Forever. If approved by 60 percent of the voters, the amendment would provide about \$10 billion over the next decade.

This week, Scott declined to take a position on the land-buying amendment. "We'll see how it comes out," he said.

His likely Democratic rival, former Gov. Crist, said he hasn't read the amendment but favors things "that help the environment."

Draper said he believes candidates running statewide would gain more credibility with voters if they "recognize that people really care about our environment."

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## **SCOTT: LET VOTERS DECIDE ON CONSERVATION AMENDMENT**

By JIM TURNER  
THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

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THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, June 17, 2014.....Gov. Rick Scott said it was "the right thing to do" for the Cabinet on Tuesday to approve the sale of four closed jails and three other sites to raise money for future land preservation.

However, when asked after the Cabinet meeting whether he would support or oppose an amendment in November that would cement funding for land conservation into Florida's Constitution, Scott avoided directly answering the question.

"All the amendments, the public has the opportunity to vote, just like I do," Scott replied. "So we'll see how it comes out."

For some conservationists, the stance by Scott isn't necessarily bad.

Eric Draper, Audubon Florida executive director, said he'd prefer Scott to remain "ambivalent" on the issue. An alternative is to join the chorus of legislators who have already criticized the amendment as an improper constraint on the budget.

"That's a winning message for us, let the voters decide," Draper said.

House Speaker Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, has argued that "legislating via constitutional amendments" doesn't work. And Senate President Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, contends the amendment will shift too much land into state control.

The proposed amendment, backed by a group called "Florida's Water and Land Legacy, Inc.," seeks to set aside 33 percent of the state's documentary stamp tax revenues --- fees paid when real estate is sold --- for 20 years to acquire conservation and recreation lands, manage existing lands, protect lands that are critical for water supply and restore degraded natural systems.

The amendment, which requires approval from 60 percent of voters to pass, could generate \$10 billion over its life, the group says.

Draper, along with other conservationists, backed the Cabinet's action on Tuesday. Still, they continue to say the funding remains.

The idea for the amendment was spawned as funding diminished for the Florida Forever program. Florida Forever, which uses bonds backed with revenue from the documentary stamps, authorizes lawmakers to spend up to \$300 million a year for preservation.

The last year funding approached that mark was in 2008.

During the 2012 session, state lawmakers set aside \$20 million for land conservation and established a surplus land-sale program within the state Department of Environmental Protection.

This year lawmakers included \$12.5 million for the purchase of land to protect springs and water resources, or to provide military land buffering, as part of the \$77 billion budget Scott signed June 2.

The budget also includes a line for up to \$40 million to also be spent on Florida Forever, with the money to come from the sale of non-conservation lands.

Scott and the Cabinet --- Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater and Attorney General Pam Bondi --- on Tuesday approved the sale of sites in Monroe, Volusia, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Hillsborough, Hendry and Broward counties. Those sites include the former Broward, Glades, Hendry and Hillsborough correctional institutions, which were closed as part of a consolidation in 2012.

The sales are expected to fetch the state \$27 million, which would bring the sale of non-conservation land this year to nearly \$44 million. It's not clear if the additional \$4 million can be spent in the budget year that begins July 1.

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6/17/14

## COUNTERPOINT: Amendment 1 a Nightmare for Conservative-Thinking Floridians

By: [NANCY SMITH](#) | Posted: June 6, 2014 3:55 AM



Look closely at the pretty words in Amendment 1, the Water and Land Conservation Amendment. I think you'll find what I did -- the polar opposite of conservative values and common sense. Passing Amendment 1 will not -- repeat, *not* -- guarantee a no-tax-increase future for a clean water supply, or anything else, in Florida as its proponents claim. Quite the opposite. In a state where population is projected to grow to 30 million by 2035, there is no sure-thing magic bullet to funding every priority in 67 counties. What Amendment 1 will guarantee is that for the next 20 years, many other urgent priorities will go begging. Let's look at an honest financial analysis of this misleading amendment: It would embed in the Florida Constitution for 20 years 33 percent of net revenues from the existing excise tax on documents. Proponents claim all that will do is replace the minimum \$300 million a year the Florida Forever program provided from 1990 through 2008. Don't believe it. Mark Hendrickson, president of the Hendrickson Co., is the state's guru of doc stamps -- of anything affordable housing, including finance and related legislative issues. Before he launched the Hendrickson Co., he served six governors as executive director of two different Florida housing finance agencies (HFAs). Hendrickson knows how state government works and best of all, knows when Florida taxpayers are getting the shaft.

Hendrickson explained in steps why Amendment 1 has crushing ramifications: 1. "Doc stamp collection goes up and down," he said, "depending on real estate activity. But (Amendment 1) locks in 33 percent of revenues for environmental programs. That's not 1 percent of the budget. It will vary every year." 2. "To get their 33 percent, they took what has been fairly level environmental spending and divided it by one of the lowest doc stamp collection years, then they say, 'Oh, look, 33 percent only gives us our usual spending.'" 3. "They're locking in significantly more money than their historic averages. It's money that in the revenue projections going forward was heading into general revenue. It's going to put a big hole in the general revenue budget." 4. "To put real numbers on that 33 percent in the last fiscal year, it's \$425 million. Project out to 2015-2016, you're up to \$550 million; in 2021, well over \$700 million. They're acting like they're only getting their current fair share, but they're locking in significantly more than they ever had before." 5. "It's very clever the way they say they're just getting their



share. They claim the debt service on their bonds comes from general revenue now. But between now and next year, the bond will be paid off and the debt service will drop massively. This year the budget has \$430 million in it to pay environmental lands debt service, but next year it will drop to \$173 million. The Legislature may think they're getting back \$257 million, but they won't." 6. "In the end, what happens is, when there's a shortfall in general revenue, as there will be, legislators will be forced to look for money somewhere else. That's when they start deepening their raids on trust funds. They have no choice."

Embedding in the Constitution payouts of vast percentages of revenue is no way to budget state priorities, and it certainly isn't remotely conservative. After 9/11, the state lost a large chunk of its tourism income for months on end. In 2005, lawmakers plowed money into hurricane recovery. Disasters happen. Unforeseen circumstances arise. But the more things we treat like the Class Size Amendment -- and now, maybe, land acquisition -- the more it sews up taxpayer dollars and the fewer options it gives lawmakers to dig their way out of emergencies without beheading other priorities. There are other reasons to roundly dislike Amendment 1 -- for example, the glut of publicly held land it will create because, after all, the Constitution will tell us we *must* buy land. Not only will chunks of it come off the tax rolls, it must all be maintained -- and that will be a sizable taxpayer expenditure. I plan to write more about that before Voting Day. For now, just ask yourself, how many more expenditures are we going to find to seal up in the Constitution? What will the next one be? Taxpayers need to mount an offensive of their own against built-in-forever, pay-up-front causes du jour like the Vote Yes on Amendment 1 Campaign. I feel confident that when Florida voters understand the full implications of this fiscal mess of an amendment -- never mind the assault on the state Constitution and budgeting process -- they will vote a resounding "No."

*Much of the information in this column was first reported in a [May 15, 2013 Nancy Smith column](#), "No' to Budgeting Through the Constitution." Reach Smith at [sunshinestatenews.com](http://sunshinestatenews.com) or at 228-282-2423.*

## **POINT: Florida-Loving Conservatives Have Many Reasons to Support Amendment 1**

By: [ALLISON DEFOOR](#) | Posted: June 5, 2014 1:53 PM



I am not a liberal; just a Florida Cracker. That is why I am voting for Amendment 1, the Water and Land Conservation Amendment. I support Amendment 1 because, without raising new taxes, it will enhance drinking water sources, manage fish and wildlife habitats, add and restore lands, protect beaches and shores, and maintain state and local parks.

Amendment 1 requires that one-third of documentary stamp revenues, generated from house and land sales, be used exclusively over the next 20 years for these purposes. Think protecting the St. Johns from more algae blooms, or our springs from choking further. Down south, think of Indian River Lagoon, or Everglades restoration.

Supporting Amendment 1 falls squarely in line with my belief that conservation is all about conservative values and ideas. Conservation is, by definition, conservative. Republicans have a long tradition of it, nationally and in Florida. Teddy Roosevelt, Richard Nixon, George H.W. Bush were leaders. In Florida, Gov. Martinez created Preservation 2000. Gov. Jeb Bush created a similar effort, Florida Forever. In Jacksonville, Mayor John Delaney led the way in local conservation, creating a legacy that will continue for generations. All Republicans, like me.

Amendment 1 is also about the practical reality that unless we take steps toward conservation ourselves, we cannot count on others -- including lawmakers -- to do it for us. Funding in this area has fallen off the cliff in recent years. Over the 20 years of the life of this amendment, Florida's population will grow to 30 million. We act now, or we act never.

Conservatives believe that government spending should be directed first toward those limited number of things that only government can do well. Securing a clean water supply and the conservation of lands fall in the wheelhouse of this definition.

Conservatives also believe that whenever possible, government funding for these essential functions should not rely on higher taxes to get there.



Finally, conservatives believe that public spending should be tied to measurable returns on investment. In the case of Amendment 1, if clean water and preserved lands for future generations isn't enough, consider the impact of these assets on Florida's No. 1 economy: tourism. Fundamentally, only Hawaii and Alaska have their economy and environments as deeply tied together as we do in Florida.

On top of that, it's important to remember that every segment of Florida's economy depends on the natural beauty that draws people and businesses to our state. Without pristine waters and unspoiled landscapes, Florida will lose the special appeal that has fueled our growth and prosperity.

Amendment 1 fulfills these principles: It ensures that our state dedicates adequate dollars into the most essential of public goods – protecting our waters and conserving our lands; it “lives within our means” by ensuring that taxes aren't raised to do so; and it provides an earnest return on investment for generations to come.

Many point to Theodore Roosevelt as the person who established the great American conservation movement. Indeed, Teddy Roosevelt led by example on this front, in part through the signing of Antiquities Act, which has since been used to proclaim about a quarter of all areas composing the national park system.

Ronald Reagan carried on in this tradition, both as governor of California and our nation's president. "In our own time, the nearly universal appreciation of these preserved landscapes, restored waters, and cleaner air through outdoor recreation is a modern expression of our freedom and leisure to enjoy the wonderful life that generations past have built for us," Reagan said.

If the people of Florida approve Amendment 1, we will together have secured our common interest in the most clear and direct way. And to this old Florida cracker, there's nothing as conservative as that.

*Allison DeFoor is a former vice chair of the Republican Party of Florida and a seventh-generation Floridian. He was the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor in 1990, as running mate to Gov. Bob Martinez and served as “Everglades Czar” under Gov. Jeb Bush, where he helped put together the largest land restoration project in history. Allison currently chairs the Vote Yes On Amendment 1 campaign.*



## Crystal River Begins Reclaimed Water Pipeline Construction

The city of Crystal River and Duke Energy are installing a pipeline, which they say will improve water quality. In our big story tonight, GTN's Mayci McLeod has more on why the city says this \$5 million project is needed.

Duke Energy pulls about three million gallons from the Crystal River aquifer every day.

Crystal River's Director of Public Works, David Burnell, says, "Our aquifer, when we don't have much rain, it suffers because of all the withdrawal. Any reduction in that withdrawal is usually beneficial."

Since 2010, Crystal River and Duke Energy have collaborated on a plan for a seven mile reclaimed water pipeline. The pipeline will redirect water from the waste water spray field to Duke Energy, to offset the amount Duke uses daily.

Burnell says, "We're hoping to send them a million gallons a day in this process."

He says there is also an environmental benefit. Currently, the reclaimed water is used in a spray field, goes back into the ground, and ultimately the aquifer.

Burnell says, "There is a residual amount of nitrogen in that water and that gets into the aquifer and actually potentially part of the issue with Kings Bay."

He says this investment is necessary because Kings Bay is considered 'impaired' and that is because of this slimy, green algae.

The algae is called 'lymbia', and it settles at the bottom of Kings Bay. Burnell says the algae affects the ecosystem and water quality.

"Literally there are mats of this material now that cover parts of the bay and the vegetation, the good vegetation, that the manatee use and that is also used to clean the water, is diminished greatly."

The City of Crystal River is contributing \$2.5 million dollars to the project. We spoke to some local residents off camera and they say while they support cleaning up the bay, they don't agree with the multimillion dollar price tag. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Duke Energy are also chipping in. The DEP is giving \$2.5 million and Duke is spending \$2 million. The pipeline is expected to be completed next year.



# Tampa Bay Times

## Column: Protecting Florida's water resources, now and for the future

By Mark Wilson, special to the Times

Monday, May 26, 2014 5:28pm

All things in life are affected by a myriad of issues and conditions that often require balance to bring them back to a state of restoration. Consider Florida's water needs. The Florida Chamber of Commerce and other environmental advocates agree our state must do more toward meeting Florida's long-term water needs. That includes protecting Florida's springs.

Florida's natural resources are ranked as some of the best in the world. With more than 1,300 miles of coastline and more than 35 first-magnitude natural springs in Florida, our state's natural resources should be protected in sustainable ways that address long-term issues for today and future generations.

This state has some of the toughest water standards in the nation. These tough standards recently prompted the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to agree with the Florida Chamber and withdraw its overlapping water rules in favor of Florida's scientifically backed numeric nutrient criteria rules. These new state water quality protections include robust pollution standards for our springs that will drive restoration projects for years to come. In every corner of the state, Florida's Department of Environmental Protection, led by Herschel Vinyard, is working to help restore the health of rivers, lakes and streams based on science — not science fiction.

The Florida Chamber's commitment to preparing for our state's growth in even smarter and more sustainable ways is long standing. For more than 28 years, the Florida Chamber Foundation has presented the annual Environmental Permitting Summer School — a program attended by more than 800 attorneys, consultants, engineers, state and local government officials, land owners and developers with strong interests in sharing ideas on improving environmental permitting, alternative water projects and statewide water policy in Florida.

Throughout the 2014 legislative session, the Florida Chamber encouraged state leaders to plan smartly for Florida's growing population — 6 million more residents will call Florida home by 2030 and almost 95 million visitors come to our state each year. This means water demand will increase 28 percent between 2013 and 2030. Preparing for growth in even smarter and more sustainable ways will help secure Florida's future. Expanding the use of alternative water supplies and allowing for new water storage efforts on agricultural lands are a few examples of how we get there.

But success comes at a cost. For instance, to clean up impaired springs, substantial taxpayer dollars (billions, in fact) are needed to fund wastewater treatment upgrades, connect homes to centralized treatment, subsidize rural homeowners who cannot afford high-performance septic tanks, pay for storm water treatment upgrades and assist family farms implementing advanced water management practices.

With the proposed Florida Water and Land Legacy constitutional amendment on the 2014 ballot, funding for projects like these will be severely hampered. The amendment ties the hands of future

Legislatures and doesn't provide the flexibility to fund the immediate water needs of the state. State-local and public-private partnerships will be essential.

That was the starting point for Sen. David Simmons, R-Altamonte Springs, and others who championed springs protection legislation this past session. We supported Simmons' desire to provide a funding mechanism for the proposed improvement projects. Our mutual support for maintaining our world-class environmental assets is built around a simple belief that water policy should support the health and prosperity of all Floridians, now and in the future.

What developed, however, was a water protection bill that was stripped of nearly all of its funding — an unfunded mandate — that lacked effective, science-based solutions to help protect Florida's natural resources and promote sustainable economic growth. Simmons' plan was to redirect a portion of the documentary stamp revenue into a springs protection trust fund. However, Florida's revenue estimates were reduced by the amount the proposed constitutional amendment, if passed, will take away — leaving springs protection efforts with only a fraction of needed funding.

Although frustrated that this year's effort did succeed, we hope all of us in Florida's environmental community will take a moment instead to celebrate the more than \$88 million in local water projects that will have a positive, direct effect on the communities we live and work in.

As a leading advocate for quality-of-life and quality-of-places, the Florida Chamber will continue encouraging a comprehensive, statewide and long-term plan that includes protection for all natural resource water bodies. We look forward to leading Florida's long-term policy efforts by working with incoming House Speaker Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, and incoming Senate President Andy Gardner, R-Orlando, in passing legislation that will truly benefit all of Florida's natural resources.

*Mark Wilson, president and CEO of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, wrote this exclusively for the Tampa Bay Times.*

Column: Protecting Florida's water resources, now and for the future 05/26/14 [Last modified: Monday, May 26, 2014 5:27pm]

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