

# Florida Coalition for **RESPONSIBLE PRESERVATION** of Public Land

*Enhancing the Future of Florida Forever*

Ten years ago, the state of Florida took a gallant step toward protecting the state's unique natural resources. To date, two million acres of environmentally sensitive land has been acquired through Florida's progressive land acquisition programs.

**A**t a rate of the state issuing \$300 million dollars of bonds each year, the program could reasonably be anticipated to reach its statutory cap of \$3 billion by 2010. Legislators are wise to consider enhancements to this program to further preserve Florida's distinctive lands.

The Florida Coalition for Responsible Preservation of Public Lands (RPPL) supports this commitment to protect pristine lands, wildlife and waterways. As lawmakers deliberate an extension of the Florida Forever funding, Coalition members are seeking adjustments to



ensure all Floridians maintain their rights to responsibly enjoy and use public lands.

Florida RPPL members are seeking the preservation of unique lands in tandem with reasonable access for recreational use by boaters, bird watchers, hunters and other avid outdoorsmen. In addition, the program in the years ahead should provide for environmentally sound use of certain land to responsibly keep up with Florida's growing population and economic needs.

### **Public Access to Water Areas**

Preserving the natural resources of Florida is important to our future. It is just as important to our future economy

and the quality of life for Floridians that these resources also be available for recreational purposes.

- Florida has the highest number of registered watercraft in the U.S. (over 1-million boats) and is a major boating destination. In 2005, the marine industry brought in \$18.4 billion and created 220,000 jobs in Florida.
- Public access to waterways is diminishing and the marine industry is beginning to dwindle. Boating manufacturers are beginning to leave Florida and expand in other states.



## Alternative Water Supplies

A growing population and the depletion of traditional, inexpensive groundwater resources create an urgent need for alternative water supply development. Already, large urban regions of the state have been severely limited in terms of future groundwater withdrawal. By the year 2020, Florida will need 26% more water than it currently uses. The devastating drought of the past two years underscores the need for the development of alternative sources of water. Such sources include:

- Reclaimed water for irrigation and recharge
- Desalination of seawater and reverse osmosis of brackish water
- Storage of excess rainwater/Stormwater in reservoirs and
- Aquifer storage and recovery wells

These alternative water projects are costly and infrastructure intensive. Public lands acquired under Florida Forever should be made available in the future — where reasonable — for potential alternative water supply development sites.

## Imperiled Species

Florida has been a leader in land acquisition over the last two decades, with more than 9 million acres of land having some form of public ownership. The Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission has recognized that Florida, as the largest landowner, can and must play a critical role in the recovery and management of wildlife through the restoration and management of the current public lands holding, but also through the acquisition, restoration and management of lands important to imperiled species.

Substantial gains in the recovery and management of imperiled species could be achieved with the restoration and management of existing holdings. In addition, future acquisitions should target land important to Florida's imperiled species. Such land purchases should include the up-front site preparation costs for imperiled species. The management of public resources for imperiled species does not require limitations of public access to those lands, and could in fact provide better opportunities for public appreciation of Florida's wildlife. To accomplish this, a successor Florida Forever program should

address the following:

- Consistent with the FWCC policy, allow the use of public lands acquisition, restoration or management to offset impacts to imperiled species from public or private projects.
- Elevate the importance of imperiled species habitat as a primary consideration in the use of public funds to acquire lands.
- Redirect and emphasize the importance of and require the restoration and management of public lands as a key component to the recovery and management of Florida's imperiled species, and as a necessary component of keeping Florida's common species common.
- Increase FWCC's funding allocation for the acquisition of habitats for imperiled species.

## Land Use for Linear Facilities (transmission lines/pipelines)

The Florida Energy Commission reports that over 1,100 miles of new or improved transmission lines will be required over the next five to seven years. A considerable percentage of that transmission will intersect or cross with the 5.8 million acres of land owned by the state. It is possible to site electric transmission lines and pipelines without jeopardizing or negatively affecting the public lands. In addition, these linear facilities could provide a revenue source for the state to acquire or manage state lands.

## Land Management

With the vast amount of acreage under the Florida Forever program it is important these lands are managed properly. Specific targets and measurable goals should be developed for each conservation measure. The current list of acquired lands does not have any mechanism in place for achieving conservation goals and the initial funds to purchase the property should include up-front capital costs for site preparation. Also, expanding land management options to include hunting, agriculture leases or timber harvesting, could allow for revenue opportunities to pay for the management of the land while not interfering with preservation efforts.

## Florida RPPL Members

American Watercraft Association  
American Water Works Association  
Association of Florida Community Developers  
Associated Industries of Florida  
Ben Hill Griffin, Inc.  
Boat U.S.  
Citizens for Florida's Waterways  
Florida Agriculture Association  
Florida Airboat Association  
Florida Association of Realtors  
Florida Cattlemen's Association  
Florida Council of Yacht Clubs  
Florida Electric Power Coordinating Group  
Florida Farm Bureau  
Florida Forestry Association  
Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association  
Florida Home Builders Association  
Florida Marine Contractors Association  
Florida Nursery Grower & Landscape Association  
Marine Industries Association of Florida  
Marine Industries Association of South Florida  
Marine Industries Association of Southwest Florida  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
Organized Fishermen of Florida  
USA Water Ski

## For More Information Contact:

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