



November 24, 2008

Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor
State Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor Crist:

You have been a strong supporter of the Florida Forever program, and the Florida Forever Coalition applauds your leadership, most notably the signing of the historic reauthorization of Florida Forever (SB 542) earlier this year. This was a great achievement for the people of Florida.

Today we stand at a critical juncture. In the next few months our state will decide whether to continue Florida's outstanding tradition of land preservation.

The Florida Forever Coalition respectfully urges you to recommend full funding for Florida Forever in your FY 2009-2010 Budget. Additionally, we request a meeting with you to discuss the many environmental, recreational, and quality-of-life benefits made possible by Florida Forever.

A Great Tradition of Land Protection

As you know, Florida has spent \$300 million a year for 19 consecutive years for land conservation -- through Florida Forever, Preservation 2000 before it, and the CARL and Save Our Rivers programs. As a result, Florida has been able to permanently save more than two million acres of our state's most sensitive and ecologically important land. It has made possible the creation of the two-time National Gold Medal-winning Florida Park System, greenways and trails, ocean and river access areas, and ranches benefiting thousands of Floridians every day.

Florida Forever has also protected many of the beaches, rivers, forests, and estuaries that are the foundation for our \$65 billion tourism industry, generating almost \$4 billion in direct tax revenue annually. Florida Forever helps guarantee the beauty and quality-of-life that attract so many people -- residents and guests -- to Florida.

Honorable Charlie Crist
November 24, 2008
Page 2

Great Need and Strong Support

The nearly two million acres in priority land formally identified for future Florida Forever projects is evidence of the substantial demand for continued funding. In fact, the existing Florida Forever priority lists, maintained by the Department of Environmental Protection and endorsed by the Governor and Cabinet, amount to approximately \$16 billion in land value.

Floridians support land conservation overwhelmingly. This is evident, most recently, on November 4, when more than 68% of Floridians cast votes for Constitutional Amendment 4, the conservation tax exemption.

The Coalition's Request

Please include the approximately \$10 million appropriation for Florida Forever debt service in your proposed 2009-2010 budget. Again, the major benefits of this funding are:

- Florida Forever bonding makes good fiscal sense: Because land is a permanent asset that benefits all Floridians, and because the costs should be shared with future Floridians, this is one of the programs most deserving of borrowing.
- Florida Forever's small appropriation has great impact: \$10 million or less in 2009-2010, combined with future recurring revenue when the state's economy has improved, enables the State to borrow \$300 million to spend on precious land resources today.
- The time is now: A rare benefit to the current economic downturn is that many priority Florida Forever parcels are available for purchase now -- and perhaps only now -- and possibly at a reduced cost.

We look forward to meeting with you and wish to express our gratitude for your support of land conservation.

Sincerely,

STEERING COMMITTEE
FLORIDA FOREVER COALITION



FLORIDA FOREVER COALITION

STEERING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Audubon of Florida	Eric Draper	850-251-1301
Defenders of Wildlife	Sue Mullins	850-590-8000
Florida Recreation and Park Association	Eleanor Warmack	850-878-3221
Florida Wildlife Federation	Preston Robertson	850-656-7113
1,000 Friends of Florida	Charles Pattison	850-222-6277
The Nature Conservancy	Janet Bowman	850-251-9406
The Trust for Public Land	Pepper Uchino	850-727-9040