



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Governor Scott: Florida Families First Budget Invests to Protect Florida's Natural Resources**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Governor Rick Scott today highlighted the Florida Families First budget investments to protect Florida's natural treasures.

**Governor Scott said,** "This budget makes important investments to protect our natural treasures for future generations. From our beaches to the Everglades to our natural springs and parks, Florida has been blessed with a multitude of natural treasures. This budget provides a commitment to protect our environment and is reflected by the highest level of funding in the last five years for Everglades restoration and the Florida Forever program."

The Florida Families First budget makes necessary investments in Florida's natural treasures.

- **Florida Forever:** The Florida Families First budget invests \$81.8 million in the Florida Forever program, including \$70 million for conservation lands, \$11.1 million for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, and \$642,000 for the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program. The conservation lands funds will go toward natural spring protection, military buffering, water resource protection, and targeted land acquisitions. The \$70 million for conservation lands includes \$50 million in authority from the sale of surplus lands.
- **Everglades Restoration:** The Florida Families First investment of \$70 million toward Everglades restoration will provide funding for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), Northern Everglades, Estuaries Protection Program, and the Governor's water quality plan.
- **Springs Protection:** In addition to springs protection as part of the Florida Forever Program, the budget includes monies for water quality restoration, addressing nitrates in springs, and water conservation measures. It invests \$10 million for springs projects generally and earmarked \$5.5 million for springs projects within the Suwannee River Water Management District.

- **Water Projects:** The Florida Families First budget funds \$32.2 million for local water projects, including \$2 million for the Florida Keys to assist in complying with wastewater standards for that community.
- **Beach Projects:** The Florida Families First budget invests \$37.5 million toward financial assistance to local governments for beach and dune restoration, beach nourishment, inlet sand bypassing, regional sediment management and innovative projects. This includes \$10.7 million in available funds from beach projects funded in previous years.
- **Petroleum Storage Tank Cleanup:** The Florida Families First budget funds the cleanup of petroleum storage tank discharges at \$125 million.
- **Wastewater Treatment Facility Construction:** The Florida Families First budget provides \$142.7 million for low-interest revolving loans to local governments for wastewater treatment and stormwater management systems.
- **State Park Facility Improvements:** The Florida Families First budget invests \$19 million toward repairs and renovations to state park facilities.
- **Citrus Greening Prevention:** The Florida Families First budget provides \$9.5 million for research on stopping the bacterial disease known as citrus greening.
- **St. Johns River:** The Florida Families First budget invests \$10.5 million (split into a \$7 million water project and \$3.5 million water project) to restore the St. Johns River Ecosystem.
- **Apalachicola Bay:** The Florida Families First budget provides \$4 million for water quality restoration projects in the Apalachicola Bay estuary and more than \$750,000 for oyster shelling and research to help that industry's recovery.
- **Hybrid Wetland Projects:** The Florida Families First budget includes \$11 million for innovative nutrient reduction projects to help restore the Northern Everglades, Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries.

**Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. said,** “I applaud Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature for their support and funding of environmental priorities. Governor Scott has illustrated the importance of our environment by including funding for the Florida Everglades, springs, beach restoration and Florida Forever. The Department and its outstanding group of employees are committed to the preservation and health of our natural treasures. We are here to follow the science and follow the law to make educated decisions on how to best protect Florida’s environment.”

**Robert Coker, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at US Sugar said,** “I applaud Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature for their hard work in building a budget to support all aspects of the State of Florida. We are proud to see a budget that will

help provide the tools to grow our economy and grow our state including funding to support Florida's Everglades in partnership with the agricultural community."

**Eric Draper, Executive Director of Audubon of Florida said,** "Thanks to Governor Scott's leadership the Legislature stepped up funding for Everglades restoration. The appropriations secure the historic water quality plan and makes a new start on the partnership with the nation to restore fresh water flows to the River of Grass. We also appreciate Governor Scott's leadership on recommending funds for parks and springs."

**Eric Eikenberg, CEO, Everglades Foundation said,** "We strongly support Governor Scott's Water Quality Plan and recognize the priority he has placed on protecting and restoring America's Everglades."

**Pepe Fanjul, Jr. Executive Vice President of Florida Crystals Corporation said,** "Sugar farmers are proud of our 20-year Everglades restoration partnership with the state. We have privately funded more than \$400 million for restoration efforts and, this year, continued our on-going commitment by agreeing to extend our dedicated restoration payment for projects through 2035 and operations and maintenance thereafter. Together with \$70 million appropriated by the Legislature, Florida has sufficient funding to build the last Everglades projects. Under Governor Rick Scott's leadership, Everglades restoration is in its final phase."

**Debbie Flack, President of the Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association said,** "Repairing Florida's beaches from the storm damages of 2012 is of considerable importance and priority to sustain our economic growth especially as it relates to tourism as well as providing protection for miles of beaches, public infrastructure and upland development from future storms. FSBPA, as a league of coastal cities and counties, is most pleased with the Governor's budget recommendation and the Legislature's approval of over \$37 million for the maintenance of these valuable economic, recreational and environmental resources."

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