



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Governor Scott: It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget Invests to Protect Florida's Natural Resources**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Governor Rick Scott today highlighted the It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget investments to protect Florida's natural treasures. This Budget provides over half a billion dollars for water resource protection, which includes historic funding of more than \$300 million for South Florida ecosystem restoration projects.

**Governor Scott said**, "From our beaches to the Everglades, to our natural springs and parks, Florida has been blessed with many natural treasures. The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget will ensure we are good environmental stewards so future generations can continue to enjoy our natural resources."

The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget includes the following investments:

- **Everglades Restoration:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget record investment of more than \$250 million toward Everglades restoration will provide funding for the Governor's Water Quality Plan, Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, Northern Everglades Estuaries Protection Program, the Tamiami Trail project, and activities to reduce nutrients into Lake Okeechobee.
- **Keys Wastewater Improvements:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides \$50 million for wastewater treatment upgrades in the Florida Keys.

Additionally, this funding includes over \$200 million for nutrient reduction and wastewater/stormwater infrastructure projects, including:

- **Springs Protection:** In addition to springs protection as part of the Florida Forever Program, the Budget includes a record of \$30 million for spring water quality restoration, and water conservation measures. This includes \$5 million in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for best management practice projects and \$25 million for projects to be identified in a project plan developed by the Department of Environmental Protection.

- **Wastewater Treatment Facility Construction:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides \$182.6 million for low interest loans to local governments for the construction of wastewater treatment and stormwater management systems, including collection and transmission sewers, reclaimed water (reuse) systems, and a variety of other facilities and activities through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF). This Budget provides \$21 million for grants to assist financially disadvantaged small communities with their needs for adequate sewer facilities.

The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget investments in Florida's natural treasures also include:

- **Florida Forever:** The It's Your Tax Cut Money Budget invests \$80 million in the Florida Forever program, including \$5 million for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, and \$2.5 million for the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program. The conservation lands funds will go toward spring protection, military buffering, water resource protection, and other targeted land acquisitions. The \$80 million for conservation lands includes \$40 million in authority from the sale of surplus non-conservation lands and \$20 million from the reversion of prior appropriations.
- **Beach Projects:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget invests \$47.3 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 \$2.2 million in available funds from beach projects funded in previous years.
- **Petroleum Storage Tank Cleanup:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget funds the cleanup of petroleum storage tank discharges at \$110 million.
- **State Park Facility Improvements:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget invests \$19.1 million toward repairs and renovations to state park facilities.
- **Apalachicola Bay:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides over \$8 million for oyster shelling, best management practices, research and upgrades to oyster processing facilities to help that industry's recovery, bringing the amount of funding secured under this administration for this important community to more than \$23 million.
- **Water Projects:** The Budget supports \$88.5 million for local water projects.
- **Citrus Greening Prevention:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget provides \$13.7 million for citrus disease prevention, which includes \$4 million for short-term research projects on how to stop the spread of citrus greening, a bacterial disease, which greatly reduces citrus production and kills trees. Also, included within these funds is \$2 million for the construction of a laboratory and two new

greenhouses at the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' budwood facility in Chiefland.

**Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. said,** "I am thrilled to see Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature invest unprecedented funding for springs protection and continue the recent momentum in Everglades restoration. This funding will empower our scientists to quickly implement solutions to protect Florida's natural resources."

**Eric Eikenberg, CEO, Everglades Foundation said,** "Governor Scott continues to increase funding for America's Everglades, and we appreciate his leadership to protect this unique, natural treasure. Governor Scott, Senate Appropriations Chairman Joe Negron and House Appropriations Chairman Seth McKeel demonstrated strong leadership and have set a pace for future funding that brings us significantly closer to the moment when Floridians can proudly say we have restored America's Everglades."

**Gary Williams CAE, Executive Director, Florida Rural Water Association said,** "The Florida Rural Water Association is glad to see the budget increases for water quality protection this year and the benefits it will provide for Florida's natural resources."

**Janet Bowman, Director of Legislative Policy & Strategy, The Nature Conservancy said,** "The highlight of the legislative session is the record investment in Everglades/Indian River Lagoon Restoration and funding to launch \$50 million in bonds for Florida Keys wastewater improvements. Both of these budget priorities restore and protect important estuaries and marine ecosystems. However, the Nature Conservancy is disappointed that the Governor's strong budget recommendations for Florida Forever and Springs Protection funding were not fully met by the Legislature. However, we look forward to working with DEP to identify and implement projects that further land and springs protection and leverage the funds that are allocated in the budget."

**Debbie Flack, President of the Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association said,** "Protection and restoration of the state's 825 miles of sandy beach is vital to sustaining and growing the state's tourism industry. It provides jobs for Floridians, recreational opportunities for our visitors and residents, as well as protects public infrastructure and upland development from storms. FSBPA, as a league of coastal cities and counties, is most pleased with the Governor's approval of more \$47 million for the maintenance of these valuable economic, recreational and environmental resources."

**Monroe County Mayor Sylvia Murphy said,** "Governor Scott's leadership in helping Monroe County obtain \$50 million in funding will have very beneficial effects on our sea grasses and the only barrier reef adjacent to the continental U.S. Our wastewater projects will have a tremendous impact on the Key's environment, including our canals and the near shore waters. This funding will help improve our island communities' water quality so that our residents and visitors can enjoy our shoreline, and marine life can return once again to the areas currently impacted by impaired waters."

**Eric Draper, Executive Director of Audubon Florida** said, "Governor Scott's budget advanced historic levels of funding for the Everglades and coastal estuaries and for springs recovery."

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