



**Florida's Water and Land Legacy**  
**Water and Land Conservation Amendment**  
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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment?**

The Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment dedicates funding for water and land conservation, management and restoration by amending the state constitution. The amendment sets aside one-third (33 percent) of Florida's existing documentary stamp tax revenues (paid when real estate is sold) and guarantees that these funds can be used only for conservation purposes, such as acquiring conservation and recreation lands, managing existing lands, protecting lands that are critical for water supply and restoring degraded natural systems.

### **Where will the money go? How does this measure benefit Floridians?**

The money will be used for land and water conservation, management and restoration in Florida. The funds dedicated by the measure will:

- Restore, manage and acquire lands necessary to protect Florida's drinking water sources and protect the water quality in our rivers, lakes and streams;
- Protect our beaches and shores;
- Protect and restore the Everglades and other degraded natural systems and waterways;
- Manage fish and wildlife habitat, protect forests and wetlands, and restore conservation lands that are an important part of Florida's natural heritage, economy and quality of life;
- Provide funding to manage existing state and local natural areas, parks and trails for water supply, habitat and recreation.

All this will be achieved with no increase in taxes.

### **Why do we need to amend the state constitution?**

After almost two decades of support, water and land conservation is not a priority for the Legislature or the Governor. Since 2009, the Legislature has reduced funding for these programs by almost 100 percent. The state currently spends **less than one dollar per Floridian** for water and land conservation. The amendment would ensure that water and land conservation projects are adequately funded by funds – requiring that they not be diverted to other purposes. The only way to secure significant, sustainable resources for water and land conservation, management and restoration for the long-term is to take this issue directly to Florida voters through a constitutional amendment.

### **How much will this cost me? Will it increase my taxes?**

The measure will not increase taxes, nor will it increase state spending. It simply allocates a portion of the existing documentary stamp tax – which is paid when real estate is sold and has been collected since the early 1900s – to water and land conservation, management and restoration. This is the same funding source that the state has used for water and land conservation for the last two decades.

### **Aren't there more important needs in our state?**

In Florida, we depend on our natural systems for clean drinking water, unpolluted rivers, lakes, and streams, and the unspoiled natural beauty that makes our state unique. Because Florida relies on its beaches, springs, rivers, lakes and parks as a key part of our tourism economy, we can't afford not to protect our land and waters. Florida has many critical funding needs, including education, health care, public safety and transportation – but water and land conservation are a vital component of Florida's future. The current state budget is more than \$60 billion, and this amendment would set aside **less than 1 percent** for water and land conservation.

### **If this funding goes to conservation, will that mean cuts to other vital services?**

No. The amount of funds that would be set aside in the future by this amendment is almost the same as what the Legislature currently appropriates every year to pay off the bonds that were used in the past to buy conservation and recreation lands. In other words, the amendment would take an amount that had been used for water and land conservation and dedicate it for that same purpose, but with constitutional protections. The amendment would have very little real impact on existing state funds for other services.

### **How do I know the funds will be spent wisely?**

Florida's conservation programs have a great track record of spending these funds wisely. The amendment ensures that funds are used solely for conservation purposes and cannot be used for any other purpose by the Legislature. Using the state's existing successful programs as a model, objective criteria will continue to determine how funds are spent in order to keep politics out of the process. As they have in the past, state funds will be used to attract federal matching funds.

Florida Forever and its predecessor Preservation 2000 have been the most successful state land conservation programs in the nation, protecting more than 2.4 million acres of critical water resources, natural areas, wildlife habitat, parks, greenways and trails. Restoration of the Florida Everglades is the most comprehensive ecological restoration project in history. Florida's land managing agencies and water management districts have done a tremendous job restoring degraded natural systems, including the state's longleaf pine forests, the Upper St. Johns River watershed and Rookery Bay. This amendment ensures funding so this critical restoration work will continue.

### **Haven't we bought enough land already?**

Florida cannot thrive without an abundant supply of drinking water for its 19 million residents. But the state's drinking water sources and its rivers, lakes and streams are threatened by continued degradation. Our natural systems, including those already in public ownership, will continue to decline and will be unable to provide the benefits we all depend on without adequate funds for management and restoration. The current Florida Forever priority list identifies almost 2 million acres in need of protection, and this does not include the land acquisition needs of water management districts or local governments.

### **Why the documentary stamp tax?**

The documentary stamp tax is the same funding source that has been used for almost 20 years to protect natural areas, wildlife habitat and water quality in Florida. Recently, however, it has been diverted for other purposes. The "doc stamp" has paid for Preservation 2000, Florida Forever and Everglades restoration in the past. It makes sense that when land is developed or changes hands, at least a portion of the transaction fees go to help conserve other lands and waters. The amendment dedicates the historic state funding source for these purposes.

## **How many signatures are needed?**

To place a constitutional amendment on the November 2014 ballot through the initiative petition process, we need to collect about 1 million total signatures in order to make sure we have the required 676,811 verified signatures. This effort will use volunteer and paid signature gatherers to collect the required number of signatures.

## **If this passes, when will it take effect?**

Our goal to place this constitutional amendment on the November 2014 ballot. Once approved by the voters, it would go into effect on July 1, 2015.

## **How much money will be generated?**

Based on current projections, the amendment would provide more than \$5 billion over the next 10 years for conservation and restoration of land and water resources.

## **How long will it last?**

The amendment would dedicate one-third of funds from the documentary stamp tax for the next 20 years. This is the amount of time necessary to generate sufficient funds to complete critical land and water conservation, management and restoration projects.

## **Who is involved?**

We hope you will be! Leading state environmental organizations launched the campaign and every day new organizations and individuals join our coalition. Founding organizations include: Florida Audubon, the Florida Wildlife Federation, the Trust for Public Land, the Sierra Club's Florida Chapter, Defenders of Wildlife, The Conservation Fund, 1,000 Friends of Florida, the Alachua Conservation Trust and The Nature Conservancy. We're building a broad coalition that includes conservation groups, outdoor recreation organizations, business leaders, local communities and volunteers across Florida.

## **How can I help?**

Volunteers are needed to collect **at least half** the total number of signatures required to place this important measure on the ballot. You can **order petitions** by contacting the campaign headquarters at **(850) 629-4656** or by completing the volunteer form at [www.FloridaWaterLandLegacy.org](http://www.FloridaWaterLandLegacy.org). We greatly need volunteers to gather signatures at events and stores, because **80 percent** of signatures will be collected at public locations like these. You can also volunteer to gather signatures from friends, family and neighbors. Campaign staff will provide all the materials and training you need to get started.

You can also contribute financially to the campaign. A statewide campaign of this size is expensive and your contribution will help conserve water and land for future generations.

## **Can a "501(c)(3)" non-profit organization support this constitutional amendment initiative?**

Yes! There are a number of things they can do to help, including endorsing the campaign, sending out email or mail alerts about or on behalf of the campaign, donating staff time for collecting signatures, phone calling or other activities, donating organizational resources such as office space, phones, computers, and copiers, and even by making a financial contribution to support Florida's Water and Land Legacy Campaign! For a more detailed information about how your 501(c)(3) organization can participate in our campaign, download our Factsheet on Ballot Initiative Participation by Non-profit Organizations from <http://4fla.org/outreachmats>.