



January 20, 2021

Chairman Jeremiah Ray Blocker  
Vice Chairman Henry Dean  
Commissioner Christian Whitehurst  
St. Johns County Commission  
500 San Sebastian View  
St. Augustine, FL. 32084

Via electronic mail

Dear Chairman Blocker, Vice Chairman Dean and Commissioner Whitehurst:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and members of 1000 Friends of Florida, we are sincerely grateful to each of you for voting to re-establish and commit \$500,000 to the County's Land Acquisition Management Program (LAMP).

This wise investment will end a more than 15-year drought for a program that had a record of assisting its participating governments — the County and the cities of St. Augustine and St. Augustine Beach — in the acquisition and conservation of lands and sites that have protected water resources, preserved green spaces, secured wildlife corridors, expanded outdoor recreation, and supported historic, educational and scientific activities.

With state leaders in recent years restoring annual appropriations for Florida Forever, the state's premier land acquisition program, a revitalized LAMP will allow St. Johns County to compete with other local governments in Florida for matching state funds when investing local dollars in conservation. Had the majority on the Commission chosen not to revive LAMP, the county would have fallen further behind its rivals for state conservation funds, including three counties — Volusia, Collier and Manatee — whose citizens voted overwhelmingly in November to tax themselves to raise funds locally for land protection.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has squeezed budgets in St. Johns County and throughout Florida, it has also vividly demonstrated the public's strong desire for safe outdoor spaces for recreation and relaxation. With St. Johns County under increasing development pressure, there is no time to waste in permanently protecting the precious natural places that make the county so special.

Congratulations on a decision that will benefit the county and its residents for many years to come.

Sincerely,

*Paul Owens*

Paul Owens  
President

cc: Commissioner Paul M. Waldron  
Commissioner Jeb S. Smith