

# 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

1000  
FRIENDS  
of FLORIDA

*Falling Waters State Park, Washington County*



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

I'm pleased to report it's been another strong year for 1000 Friends of Florida. Sustained by our supporters, we stayed in the thick of fights at the state and local levels to promote conservation and defend community planning.

In the 2023 session of the Florida Legislature, lawmakers made a series of substantial investments with our support that are vital to preserving our state's environment and quality of life. They dedicated \$1 billion for land conservation and more than \$800 million for affordable housing, two priorities that were starved of dollars just a few years ago. They boosted funding for Everglades restoration and water quality projects to \$1.6 billion and allocated another \$300 million to help communities prepare for climate change.

Lawmakers also unanimously approved a bill we drafted to create the first Area of Critical State Concern since 1985 on 16 miles of the barrier island in southern Brevard County. This designation will provide extra protection against inappropriate development in this critical nesting area for sea turtles, and it revives a model ripe to be applied to other environmentally sensitive areas in Florida.

Yet over opposition from us and our allies, lawmakers also brought an end to citizens mounting legal challenges to amendments that violate the guidelines for growth in their communities' comprehensive plans. And in the same law that provided record funding for affordable housing, lawmakers removed the authority of local governments and their citizens to limit the height and density of those developments.

We are grateful to Douglas Head of Orlando, a community leader who passed away in November 2021 at age 74. A businessman who cared deeply about his state, he named 1000 Friends of Florida among the beneficiaries of his estate. His generosity will strengthen our efforts to protect the environment and quality of life throughout Florida.

In the 2024 session we will be working to undo or reduce the damage from these and other shortsighted decisions as we keep pushing for policies to advance community planning and environmental protection.

Meanwhile, the new constraints imposed by lawmakers on community planning will make early and informed participation by citizens more important than ever.



We'll keep doing our part to arm Floridians with information through our website, workshops and our webinars, which drew record attendance in the 2022-23 season. We're especially proud of our local engagement over the past year in Martin, Lake and Miami-Dade

counties, in the city of Lake Wales, and in the community of Royal. We're thrilled that voters passed all five of the county land conservation initiatives we endorsed in November 2022.

More battles are inevitable in the upcoming year. With continued support from our friends throughout our state, we will keep helping Floridians win the fight for the future they want for their communities.

*Paul Owens*

Paul Owens  
President



*Fort DeSoto Park, Pinellas County*



*Douglas Head*



# 1000 FRIENDS of FLORIDA

## 2022-2023 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

*Silver Springs State Park, Marion County*

### SAVING SPECIAL PLACES

- **Expanding state land conservation** – With allies, helped secure roughly \$1 billion in funding in the 2023-2024 state budget to protect major sections of the Florida Wildlife Corridor, expand hike and bike access to the Corridor through the SUN Trail system, and establish funding floor for the Florida Forever program. Met regularly with broad-based set of stakeholders seeking consensus on strategies to protect the Corridor.
- **Protecting threatened environments** – Drafted and helped secure unanimous passage of the Brevard Barrier Island Area of Critical State Concern legislation to provide extra protection against inappropriate development in this environmentally sensitive area that provides a vital nesting ground for sea turtles; working with community planning staff at the Florida Department of Commerce to ensure successful implementation of the new law. This is the sixth Area of Critical State Concern in Florida, and the first since 1985.
- **Leading on resilience** – With the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, released the GIS-based analysis, *Florida's Rising Seas: Mapping Our Future*, projecting the impact of sea level rise and population increase on Florida communities in 2040 and 2070, shared through website, reports, webinars, and media outreach. Supported 2023 state appropriation of \$300 million for community resilience programs, and new state law expanding requirement for sea level impact studies before spending on public construction projects. Find out more at [1000fof.org/sealevel2040](https://1000fof.org/sealevel2040)
- **Championing local land conservation**— Endorsed and rallied support for successful conservation ballot initiatives in Alachua, Brevard, Indian River, Nassau, and Polk counties, putting each in a better position to attract matching state, federal and private funding for land conservation.
- **Preserving Seminole County** — Led allies in campaign to create Seminole Forever, an innovative approach to local conservation in Florida to build land and water protection funding into the county's budget as basic priorities of local government.
- **Standing up for Martin County** — After multiple meetings with county leaders, concerned citizens and developers, helped reduce impact of “rural lifestyles” comprehensive plan amendment. Endorsed local effort to protect the headwaters of Loxahatchee and St. Lucie rivers. Continued to serve on advisory board of the Guardians of Martin County. Advised local leaders in drafting county land conservation ballot proposal.
- **Fighting for Palm Beach County** — Collaborated with local allies to oppose inappropriate development proposals in the Agricultural Reserve, an area 1000 Friends helped establish and county taxpayers helped finance.

- **Pushing for water quality improvements** — Continued to co-lead biweekly water-quality working group to share information on relevant legislation and regulatory changes; produced report, with participation from 13 organizations and statewide media coverage, on state's progress in implementing recommendations of Governor's Blue Green Algae Task Force. Advocated stronger water quality protections during legislative session, and opposed proposals to weaken them. Worked with allies on legislation to reduce negative impacts to water quality from land application of sewage sludge. Met with state regulators to urge stronger springs protection rules.
- **Hold the line in Miami-Dade County** — As a leader in the Hold the Line Coalition, helped organize opposition to developments beyond the county's urban development boundary, reform the process for

considering growth proposals, and reinforce challenge to the proposed extension of State Road 836 into the Everglades; met with county mayor and commissioners to emphasize priorities.

- **Protecting the Everglades** — Maintained leadership in the Everglades Coalition, an alliance of 67 local, state, and national conservation and environmental organizations dedicated to full restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem; served as the Board's Advocacy Chair and Growth Team Co-chair.
- **Reuniting the Rivers** — Maintained leadership in regular meetings of coalition seeking restoration of the Ocklawaha River through legislative initiatives and local grassroots efforts.

## BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES

- **Promoting planning at the Capitol** — Held reception including a Land Use for Legislators presentation to educate dozens of legislators and staff on the importance of planning. Led opposition through testimony, newspaper op-eds and news conferences to new law that threatens citizens with financial penalties for challenging incompatible development proposals; helped scale back or stop other legislative attacks on community planning.
- **Securing history** — Working with historic preservation advocates, helped block legislation that would have threatened historic buildings in coastal communities with demolition and helped pass law to identify and protect abandoned African American cemeteries.
- **Advocating for affordable housing** — As a member of the Sadowski Coalition, advocated for robust funding for affordable housing, with the Legislature dedicating \$811 million in the 2023 session, more than double the amount allocated the year before.
- **Steering transportation planning** — For second consecutive year, helped block an arbitrary cap on state spending on public transportation projects. Continued serving on Florida Transportation Plan Implementation Plan Committee and Environmental Partners Working Group. Florida Department of Transportation's progress report on proposed Northern Turnpike Extension heeded 1000 Friends' call for improvements to Interstate 75 and formal declaration of need before

moving forward and placing greater emphasis on protecting natural and cultural resources from impacts.

- **Encouraging sustainability in Lake County** — Conducted Lake 2070 workshop in Tavares to kick off effort with local leaders and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council to pursue joint planning agreements between the county and its municipalities to promote conservation, rural preservation and fiscally responsible decision making; participated in multiple follow-up meetings with county and municipal leaders and concerned citizens; addressed 2023 EcoExpo.
- **Envisioning Lake Wales' future** — Endorsed and participated in community effort aimed at developing long-range plan for environmentally and fiscally sustainable development as this historic city in Polk County grows.
- **Going to bat for Royal** — Continued to advise citizen leaders in historic African-American community of Royal in Sumter County to support their bid for recognition as the state's first Historic African-American Rural Community and assist in their opposition to incompatible development proposals and incursions from highway expansion.
- **Defending community character** — Supported Gainesville residents concerned about sweeping proposal to eliminate single-family zoning throughout the city; concerns were later echoed by state reviewers, and commissioners rescinded the proposal.



## CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH PLANNING

- **Staying on top of legislation** – Monitored dozens of bills on planning and other topics, posting the information on the website; alerted more than 20,000 followers to actions and opportunities for impact in regular email alerts and social media posts. Provided legislative briefings to allied and citizens' groups.
- **Educating citizens and professionals** – Attracted a record 6,250 attendees to our free 2022-2023 Dr. John M. DeGrove Webinar Series, offering a range of free professional credits. Updated and expanded website with information on planning and conservation topics, attracting tens of thousands of viewers. Added a special report on a new law addressing planning for natural emergencies, including changes in local development rules.
- **Combining forces** – Convened weekly strategy meetings with representatives of more than 20 conservation allies; conducted joint press conferences to defend community planning and other common goals. Attended in-person and virtual meetings with partners including Florida TaxWatch, the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida League of Cities, the Florida Regional Councils Association, Smart Growth America and many others.
- **Reaching out** – Provided technical assistance on community planning issues to concerned Floridians around the state; addressed citizens' and students' groups; shared information at community events.

## Florida's Future Leaders

With a focus on fostering a new generation of leaders, 1000 Friends continued working with a new series of interns on community planning, legislative and other critical issues facing our rapidly growing state.

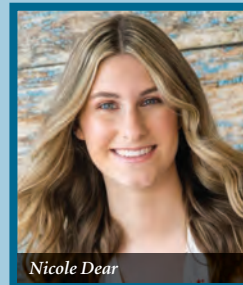
Fall 2022 Intern **Nicole Dear** was a sophomore at Florida State University pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Science and Environmental Science and Policy. Nicole created community planning educational content for Instagram and visited hurricane-impacted counties to document damages to the coastline and local businesses.

**Katie Wedemyer**, a third-year student at the FSU College of Law, also interned with 1000 Friends in the Fall of 2022 and updated the database of legal cases that 1000 Friends engaged in over the last decade.

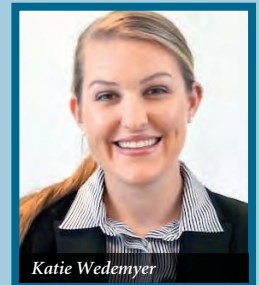
A Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University student pursuing a bachelor's degree in criminal justice with an interest in pre-law, **Camari Simpson** interned with 1000 Friends in the Spring of 2023. Camari used his experience on electoral and advocacy campaigns to evaluate 1000 Friends' outreach to younger audiences.

A University of Florida alumnus and first-year student at the University of San Francisco School of Law, **Alex Smock** interned with 1000 Friends in the Spring of 2023. Her work for 1000 Friends focused on legal research to identify practical and legal barriers associated with managed coastal retreat in Florida.

Entering her third year at the Florida State University College of Law, **Melissa Gallo** interned with 1000 Friends over the Summer of 2023. On behalf of 1000 Friends, she evaluated the implications of just passed climate resilience legislation, and authored our latest special report, *SB 250: Natural Emergencies*. Check it out at [1000f.org/outreach/reports/](https://1000f.org/outreach/reports/)!



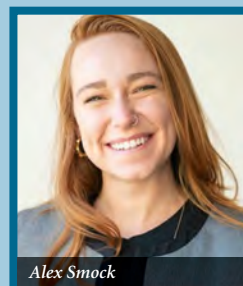
Nicole Dear



Katie Wedemyer



Camari Simpson



Alex Smock



Melissa Gallo

# ~THANK YOU~

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*Donations of \$1,000 and greater for the period from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023*

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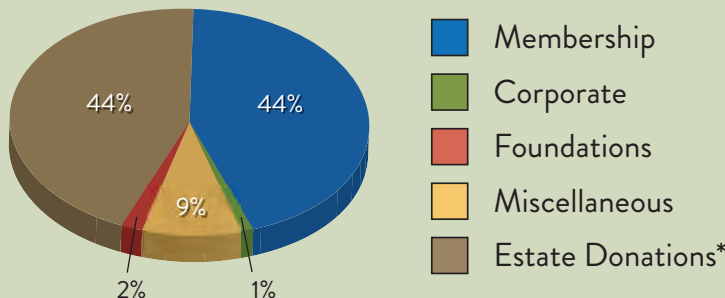
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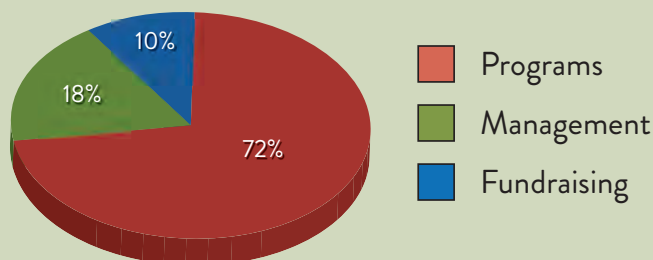
\* Member for 30 or more years.

## JULY 1, 2022 – JUNE 30, 2023

**REVENUE \$1,297,871.42**



**EXPENSES \$865,634**



\*Includes gift from the estate of Douglas Head and investment earnings received from the Board Designated Endowment during 2022-2023 year.

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