

From the President

In an especially contentious election year, it's easy to become convinced that Floridians are hopelessly divided along party lines on just about every important issue there is. But there were some heartening reminders in recent months that Sunshine State residents unite when it comes to valuing their environment, their communities and their quality of life.

During the Legislature's 2024 session, members from both parties agreed on a budget with more than \$1 billion for restoring the Everglades, the Indian River Lagoon and natural springs, and funding other water quality improvement projects. They invested \$250 million in conservation land acquisition, and a like amount in planning and protection for communities to make them more resilient to flooding and sea-level rise. They also passed legislation committing most of the annual revenues from Florida's gambling compact with the Seminole tribe — expected to be around \$500 million this year, and more in future years — to water quality, land conservation and community resilience. Some advocates, including us, called for spending more on land conservation. But few, if any, argued for spending less. Among Florida's leaders, there is a bipartisan consensus behind water and land protection and community resilience — a clear acknowledgement that our environment, our distinctive communities and our quality of life are priceless assets well worth protecting.

This viewpoint was underscored in the summer when an ill-considered plan emerged that would have put golf courses or pickleball courts or resort lodges in some of Florida's most cherished state parks. Elected leaders from both parties — at the local, state and federal levels — and their constituents quickly and loudly delivered their response: Don't even think about developing our state parks. Within days, the Governor suspended the plan. Clearly, Floridians are united by their love for their parks, and the wide array of natural and cultural resources they preserve.

For 1000 Friends of Florida, this is encouraging but not surprising. From our founding nearly four decades ago, we have been committed to protecting our state's environment, communities and quality of life, even as Florida continues to grow. And we have always recognized that these are goals that unite us, not divide us. With continued support from our followers, we will keep striving — and succeeding — in strengthening this consensus, for today's Floridians and future generations.

Paul Owens

Paul Owens
President



Paul Owens



Karst

Photo Courtesy of Devin Constant

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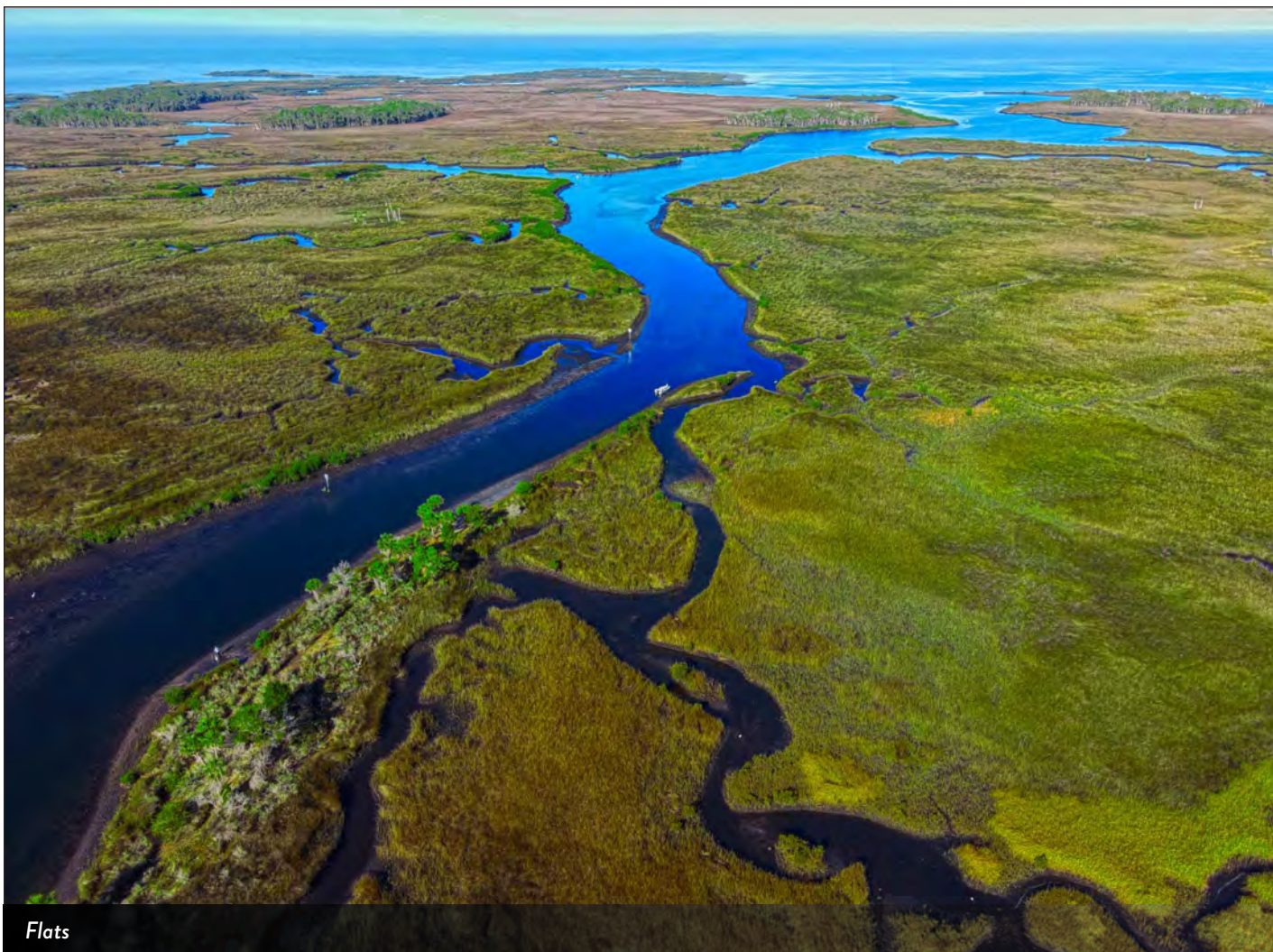


Photo Courtesy of Devin Constant

Flats

PHOTOGRAPHER in FOCUS: Devin Constant

Growing up on the Hillsborough River, Devin's work shows the relationship of our familiar terrestrial environments to the deepest reaches of Florida's hidden ecosystems. His aim has been to serve as a public advocate for our freshwater springs and these sensitive karst environments. Highlighted in his work are notable first magnitude artesian wells, as seen from unique perspectives, as well as untouched geological wonders, typical of our diverse and highly porous limestone substrata,



Devin Constant

Photo Courtesy of Devin Constant

such as sinkholes, caves, karst windows, and other hydrogeologic phenomena that captivate the imagination. A certified Master Freediver, his love for the water and chasing the light help tell a story that unfolds only beneath the waves, searching for viewpoints and experiences that will take your breath away, literally! For more of

his photographic and recent artistic work, you can dive into his website here:

<https://www.harmonicgraffiti.com/graffiti>

Victory in Stopping State Parks Proposal

In August, we were stunned along with other Floridians by news reports of a proposal from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to develop portions of our signature state parks. An internal document

obtained by journalists from DEP, which oversees Florida's State Parks Division, showed the proposal included building three golf courses on rare scrub habitat at Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Martin County, and 350-room lodges and pickleball courts at environmentally fragile Anastasia State Park in St. Johns County and Topsail State Park in Walton County. Nine parks altogether would have been impacted.

These details were belatedly confirmed by DEP, which then announced plans — with just a week's notice — to host simultaneous, one-hour public meetings around the state on plans for the nine parks. None of the meetings offered virtual options, and fans of the targeted parks might have lived hours away from the meeting sites or been unable to take off work on short notice to comment.

What followed was proof that public opinion, when properly organized and directed, can still drive public policy in Florida.

Soon after learning of the proposal, 1000 Friends' staff began meeting with allies to collaborate on an opposition strategy. We sent an email alerting more than 20,000 followers to the proposal, highlighting its fatal flaws and urging them to contact the Governor, DEP secretary and their legislators to declare their opposition. Our allies launched similar campaigns and organized public protests. A tidal wave of citizens responded, along with elected officials from both parties who denounced the proposal. First, DEP rescheduled the meetings to allow more time for citizens to prepare. Then, the Governor suspended the proposal.

If implemented, the proposal would have



Jonathan Dickinson State Park

represented a radical change to the very purpose of the parks system. While a few parks include lodges and cabins, none feature golf courses or pickleball courts. Instead, they provide passive outdoor recreational options, like camping, hiking, and canoeing. They are not

competitors for golf courses or other private recreational complexes, which are common throughout the state. They are sanctuaries for wild lands, wildlife and the millions of people who treasure them. This is increasingly precious in fast-developing Florida.

We will be on guard for similar proposals in the future. Meanwhile, we're grateful for all the Floridians who joined us in standing up for our state parks.



Blueport

Photo Courtesy of Devin Constant

2025 Legislative Priorities

Even though the regular session of the 2025 Florida Legislature does not begin until March, we are already tracking issues that will form the basis of our legislative priorities for next year and anticipate a busy fall schedule.

Legislative delegation meetings, which provide an opportunity for citizens to address their district representatives and senators locally, will begin in November. We will be attending a number of these meetings and encourage you to do the same when your delegation meets in your community. We will be updating our website with scheduled dates and locations as they become available, so be sure to check back frequently if you don't yet see your county meeting date.

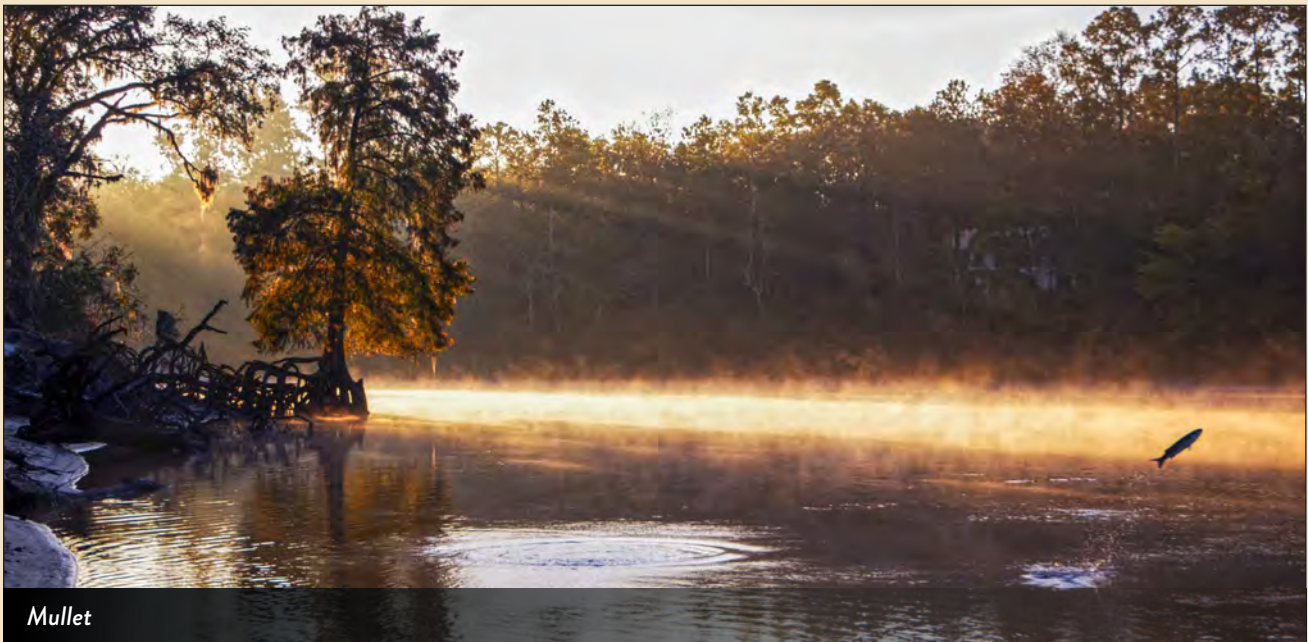
Legislators will also meet in a post-election organization session on Nov. 19, and new members will be sworn in at that time. Members of the House and Senate will get a head start on their legislative agendas in interim committee meetings beginning in December. Although the agendas for those meetings haven't been released yet, we do know that legislators are currently grappling with issues such as the cost for residents of new condominium safety laws that require things like inspections and certain reserve moneys to be set aside for repairs. This is just one concern among many related to the increasing

intensity of storms in Florida, and the economic consequences for state residents.

In the wake of Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton, we expect additional conversations, legislation and funding to promote resilient infrastructure and communities, which has been a priority of 1000 Friends for many years.

Appropriate uses in Florida's state parks is expected to be addressed in legislation, in response to the major public backlash over recent proposals to build golf courses, lodges and pickleball courts in parks around the state. 1000 Friends opposed those proposals and will be keeping track of this issue, along with any other legislation related to parks and conservation lands. We are paying careful attention to any proposals that would make it easier for the state to trade or sell currently owned properties without public input or a robust comparison of any costs and benefits to the public.

Of course, we will be tracking any legislation related to community planning, always among our top priorities, as well as conservation, water protection and transportation. We hope that our bill tracker will be a valuable resource to you as we lead up to, and during the 2025 legislative session. And we'll be posting our legislative priorities for the session soon.



Mullet

Photo Courtesy of Devin Constant

Orange Rural Boundary

This summer, a panel of citizens appointed to review Orange County's charter forwarded a proposal to its County Commissioners asking them to let voters decide whether to require a higher, majority-plus-one level of approval to convert rural lands in the county to urban uses. At the urging of 1000 Friends and other community planning and conservation advocates, Commissioners unanimously endorsed placing this Rural Boundary proposal on the November ballot for voter approval.

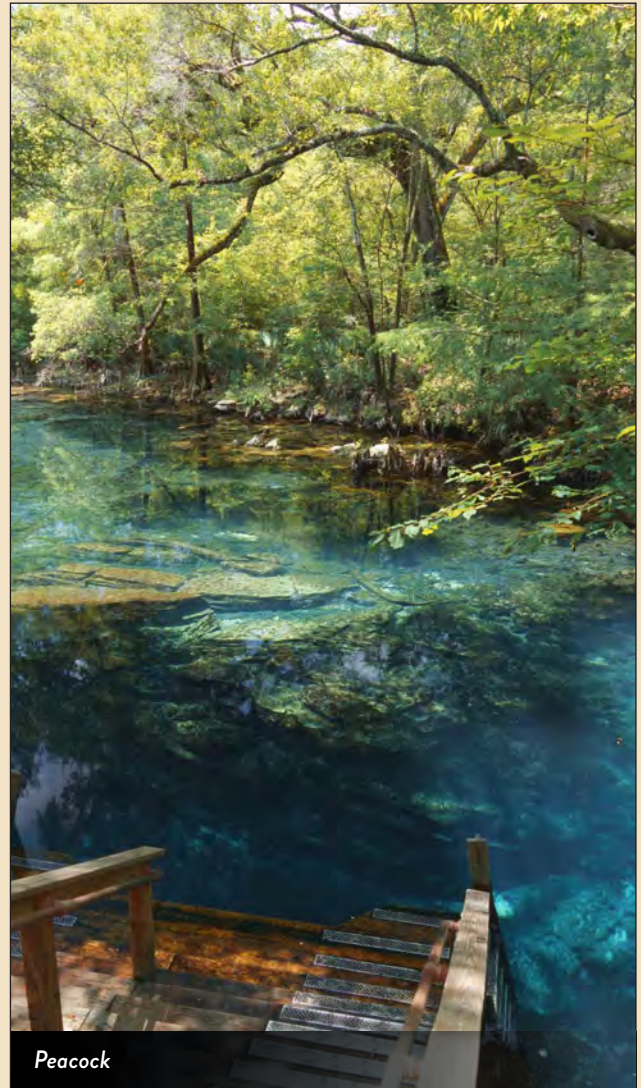
The proposed charter amendment is consistent with provisions in 1000 Friends' Model Property Rights Element, issued in 2021, and our Citizen Planning Bill of Rights, which we unveiled more than a decade ago. In both, we called for super-majority approval of comprehensive plan amendments, major development approvals and rezonings. This recommendation is rooted in the principle that significant and permanent land-use changes deserve a higher level of scrutiny and approval from local leaders, who are elected to be stewards of their communities' land and sense of place.

Contrary to claims from some opponents, the amendment would not stop growth and development in Orange County. Proposals that could earn the required majority plus one could proceed. Moreover, it would not apply to areas in the county where growth is planned. It would not infringe on vested property rights.

Across Florida, communities have implemented similar policies to add a layer of protection to agricultural and environmentally sensitive properties. Voters in Seminole County, Orange County's northeast neighbor, created a Rural Boundary in 2004 through a charter amendment. The concept has proved popular and durable, with Seminole County leaders successfully defending their Rural Boundary against multiple legal challenges.

Whether it's Orange, Seminole or another county in Florida, directing growth away from rural areas and toward urban areas saves taxpayer dollars. The cost of building and maintaining infrastructure is reduced, traffic is less congested, and water pollution

and other impacts associated with urban sprawl are avoided. Also, reducing the impacts of development in rural areas preserves the ecosystem services associated with undeveloped land, including aquifer recharge, flood control, natural water purification, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation and more. When the preserved land is agricultural, food security, farming jobs and a rural way of life valued by many of Florida's citizens is sustained. We hope other counties follow the good examples in Orange and Seminole counties.



Peacock

Photo Courtesy of Devin Constant

Land Conservation Ballot Measures

Since our inception nearly four decades ago, 1000 Friends of Florida has been a strong advocate for land conservation programs. Our co-founder, Nathaniel Reed, played a leading role in establishing the landmark Preservation 2000 program which, together with its successor Florida Forever, have protected more than 2.6 million acres of valuable natural and agricultural lands across our state.

These state land conservation programs, financed from state revenue sources, have been complemented by county programs with locally raised revenues. The local funds can leverage state, federal or private dollars earmarked for conservation.

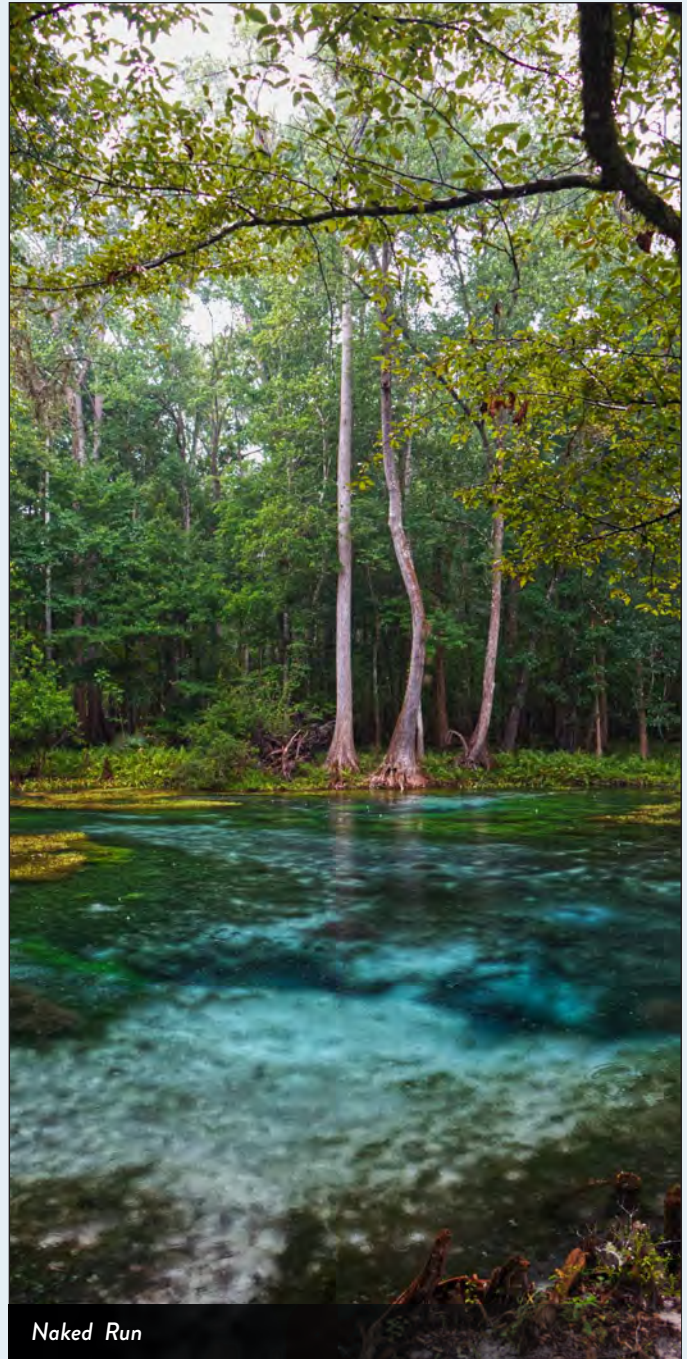
Most of the county programs depend on authorization from local voters, who choose to pay higher property or sales taxes for a set period to provide the local funding. But local voters who authorize conservation programs receive significant returns on their modest investments.

Protecting natural land from development preserves it to recharge underground drinking water supplies, cleanse pollutants from stormwater runoff, reduce flooding, harbor wildlife, support biodiversity, sequester carbon and expand outdoor recreation. Protecting farmland maintains Florida's agricultural production, jobs and food security, and the rural communities and lifestyle they support.

When critical natural and agricultural lands are protected from development, more growth is directed toward already developed areas with the infrastructure to support it. This smarter approach not only reduces the impact of development on fragile land, water and wildlife; it also cushions the blow to taxpayers, who don't get stuck with the bill for stretching public services to distant areas.

In the 2024 election cycle, 1000 Friends endorsed land conservation programs on the November ballot in four counties: Martin, Lake, Clay and Osceola. While the fate of these four programs was not yet decided as this newsletter went to press, our record gave us good reason to be optimistic. In the 2022 election cycle, we endorsed local land conservation programs in five counties. All five programs were passed by voters. In the 2020 election cycle, we endorsed local land conservation programs in three counties. Likewise, each of them also won voters' approval.

Whether at the state or local level, land conservation is a smart investment in the future of Florida's environment, economy and quality of life.



Naked Run

Photo Courtesy of Devin Constant

2040 County Workshops

This fall, 1000 Friends scheduled four workshops along Florida's Nature Coast and in southeast Florida to present and discuss future land development scenarios, based on the findings of our Agriculture 2040/2070 Report. The workshops are also an opportunity to talk with area residents about ways to grow that preserve their communities' environment and quality of life while strengthening the economy. The first workshop was held August 29 in Perry, Taylor County. A second workshop was scheduled for October 24 in Levy County, and we will be scheduling a third in Dixie County later this year. The Nature Coast, along Florida's Big Bend, is not experiencing the same type of development pressure as some other areas of Florida but has been severely

impacted by historic hurricanes and the closure of saw and pulp mills, which were major employment centers and the economic foundation for timber cultivation in the region.

Additionally, we, along with the University of Florida's Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, are updating future land development scenarios in Martin County – especially the largely undeveloped western portion of the county – drawing from our Agriculture 2040/2070 report. We will be presenting these findings, and policy recommendations based on them, in a December 11 workshop in Stuart. More details on all of this year's workshops can be found at our website.

Escambia/Santa Rosa 2040

This year, with a generous grant from the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program, 1000 Friends projected the impact of population growth by 2040 on future land use and water quality in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. Like much of our state, both expect to experience significant population growth, and both are economically dependent on the health of their waterways.

Data gathered by one of our partners in this project, the University of Florida's Center for Coastal Solutions, found that absorbing population growth in the two counties while maintaining current development patterns would significantly increase stormwater runoff and wash tens of thousands of pounds of nitrogen and phosphorus into area waterways, making them more vulnerable to

degradation through harmful algal blooms. But the data also showed that runoff and nutrient loading could be reduced by 75% with more-compact development in urban areas and conservation of high-priority natural and agricultural lands.

1000 Friends President Paul Owens traveled to Pensacola in the spring to present

these findings in a public workshop. Afterwards, Christian Wagley of Healthy Gulf, another partner in the project, took workshop guests on a walking tour downtown to highlight examples of compact, bay-friendly development. We're hopeful that our findings will spur and sustain a community conversation that results in good planning for the future, with a pattern of growth that preserves the region's environment, including its waterways, as well as its economy and quality of life.



Escambia Santa Rosa 2040

Planning to Protect the

FLORIDA

WILDLIFE
CORRIDOR 2.0



The Florida Wildlife Corridor is a visionary 18-million-acre network of interconnected lands and waters which protect our drinking water, connect wildlife habitat, support agriculture, and afford critical ecosystem services.

We are pleased to announce that in partnership with the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning we will be hosting the *Planning to Protect the Florida Wildlife*

Corridor 2.0 online seminar in early 2025.

Consisting of four informative webinars, it will focus on landscape-scale conservation planning strategies to protect the Corridor, building on the first seminar held earlier this year which attracted almost 3,000 attendees.

As these upcoming webinars are finalized, you can find out more and register at 1000fof.org/upcoming-webinars.

Register Now!

- **Wednesday, January 22, 2025, Noon – 2 p.m., Eastern – *What's sprawl got to do with it?***

Good urban policy is essential for good rural policy. If Florida's urban footprint is more compact, more land is left for nature and agriculture. What planning strategies can assist with limiting sprawl and land fragmentation?

Coming Soon!

- **February – *The urban/rural interface.***

Special planning challenges arise in areas where human development meets up with undeveloped wildland. Presenters will focus on the economics of conservation, human/wildland interface planning related to ecosystem maintenance, and trails as a tool to link urban and rural areas.

- **February – *Challenges and opportunities for Florida's agricultural lands.***

Florida agricultural leaders will discuss the conservation values of ag lands, challenges facing the ag community, and opportunities for greater partnerships with the conservation community.

- **March – *Building an even bigger tent.***

This panel discussion will focus on how we can forge stronger partnerships between agricultural interests, conservationists, landowners, elected officials, and others to protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor and other priority natural and agricultural lands.

You can also view this year's webinar broadcasts and presentations at

1000fof.org/floridawildlifecorridor.

Close to 90 percent of all Floridians live in or are within 20 miles of the corridor, so its protection is vital to us all. We hope you will join us as we explore critical planning strategies to ensure that we can continue to enjoy and benefit from these tremendous natural areas.



Our Tribute to Governor Graham: SEPTEMBER WEBINAR

On September 25, 1000 Friends of Florida held a special webinar to honor the late Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Graham, who passed away in April. Governor Graham's leadership significantly shaped Florida's growth management and environmental policies, including the passage of the 1985 Growth Management Act. Speakers included 1000 Friends' board members Victoria Tschinkel and Jake Varn, former Executive



Director Jim Murley, and former board member Bob Rhodes, who were each involved in state leadership roles during the Graham administration. They discussed his lasting impact on Florida's comprehensive planning system and his legacy of environmental stewardship. You can view the recorded webinar on our website at <https://1000fof.org/past-webinar-broadcasts/>



2024-2025 Dr. John M. DeGrove WEBINAR SERIES

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November 13 - 12:00 – 1:30 pm (EST)
Florida's Bert Harris Act: Property Rights Unbalanced?

December 11 - 12:00 – 1:30 pm (EST)
Live Local vs. Local Planning

January 22 - 12:00 – 2:00 pm (EST)
Planning to Protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor 2.0:
What's Sprawl Got to do with it?

February 19 - 12:00 – 1:30 pm (EST)
2025 Florida Legislative Preview

April 2 - 12:00 – 1:30 pm (EST)
2025 Florida Legislative Update

May 14 - 12:00 – 1:30 pm (EST)
2025 Florida Legislative Wrap Up

Professional continuing education credits are offered at these webinars at no cost.

Look for additional Planning to Protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor webinars to be announced soon.

Webinar sponsorships begin at \$250. To learn more about becoming a webinar sponsor, please contact hbusch@1000fof.org or visit our website here <https://1000fof.org/product/donate/>

1000 Friends Receives Award of Excellence for Grassroots Initiatives

We are thrilled to announce that 1000 Friends of Florida received the American Planning Association (APA) Florida's Award of Excellence for Grassroots Initiatives at its annual statewide conference in Tampa on September 4, 2024.

"This recognition from APA Florida is truly gratifying," said 1000 Friends President Paul Owens. "Our top goal is to empower Floridians to participate effectively in the community planning process."

Since our founding in 1986, 1000 Friends has worked to ensure that citizens play a meaningful role in shaping

Florida's future. Through free webinars, landmark studies, legislative advocacy, special reports, and our resource-rich website, we have equipped thousands of "citizen planners" to engage with local, regional, and state planning efforts.

From hosting 120+ webinars with over 45,000 participants to sharing the impacts of population growth on land use through our 2040/2070 studies, we continue to elevate awareness of sound planning and sustainability across Florida. We thank APA Florida for recognizing our efforts, and our members, whose advocacy and engagement make our success possible.



Rolling River Rock

Photo Courtesy of Devin Constant

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

James F. Murley

James F. Murley became 1000 Friends' first Executive Director in 1986. His many subsequent leadership posts include Secretary of Florida's Department of Community Affairs, Director of Florida Atlantic University's Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions, Executive Director of the South Florida Regional Planning Council, and, most recently, Chief Resilience Officer for Miami-Dade County. Jim remains a loyal contributor and advisor to 1000 Friends. He was one of the panelists in our September webinar tribute to the late Governor Bob Graham.



James F. Murley

Your ties to 1000 Friends go back to its origins. What motivates you to keep supporting the organization nearly 40 years later?

Yes, it was an honor to be asked by the original 1000 Friends Board of Directors to accept the position of their Executive Director. Together we created a professional and financial organizational foundation necessary to ensure successful policy and legal actions. That initial commitment to stay the course by doing what is best for Florida, regardless of the politics, continues to justify my support and that of many other friends.

Nat Reed led 1000 Friends' Board during your time as Executive Director. What stands out in your memory about working with him?

Nathaniel was a perfect fit for 1000 Friends. He exuded a love of Florida that was irresistible when he asked someone for financial support. He was the moral touchstone for the balanced stewardship of Florida's special places.

After serving as Miami's CRO, you've recently retired. What are your plans?

I am still trying to figure out the retirement gig. Actually, I plan to dedicate some of my time to several not for profits, for example, Florida Civic Advance. 1000 Friends taught me that much can be accomplished by showing government and the private sector that doing the right thing is a good investment.

What is your fondest hope for Florida's future?

Florida's future is tied to climate change. We must help reduce worldwide carbon emissions and fund creative adaptation measures for our urban and natural environments. We owe that to our children and grandchildren.

Do you have a message for other 1000 Friends supporters?

Stay the course by continuing to provide financial support. Let's build an endowment for Florida's future that honors our founders, Nathaniel Reed, John DeGrove, Bob Graham and many others.

P.S. Make sure you vote!

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the Period from February 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024.*

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