

From the President

It will not come as news to 1000 Friends of Florida supporters who follow us through our email alerts, website, webinars and social media platforms that we have launched a major effort to fix problems created by a new law passed as Senate Bill 180 during the last hours of the 2025 session of the Florida Legislature.

To the logical questions — Why? What's the big deal? — our history and mission provide clear answers. Since our founding nearly 40 years ago, 1000 Friends has been defending the rights of Floridians to plan the future they want for their communities. SB 180 undermines those rights by suspending the local land-use planning process in every community in Florida. We could not let this stand.

As you will read in this newsletter, SB 180 was sold to lawmakers as a measure to remove obstacles for Floridians to rebuild their homes and lives after hurricanes, but two sections go far beyond hurricane recovery. They rule out any changes to a local comprehensive plan or land development regulation or procedure that might be considered “more restrictive or burdensome” to development from August 2024 until October 2027, and for more years in the future in any county within 100 miles of a hurricane.

This sweeping prohibition has already been referenced by state regulators to block local leaders from making changes to their land-use policies that have absolutely nothing to do with hurricane recovery. Local governments have been told they can't limit development in rural areas, or enhance environmental safeguards, or strengthen flood protection, or recoup the costs of growth by updating impact fees.

We responded to SB 180's passage with a campaign to inform Floridians about its destructive impacts and build grassroots pressure on legislators to fix the law. We have been making our case to key members of the Florida Senate and House. We hope they will do the right thing and fix the law.

But the legislative process is uncertain, and we can't risk waiting until the end of the 2026 session in March to begin pursuing a backup plan. There is simply too much at stake. So in October, we filed a lawsuit to challenge SB 180, citing its provisions that violate the Florida Constitution.

We will keep striving to fix SB 180, one way or another, and restore Floridians' planning rights. With your continued support, we like our chances.

Paul Owens

Paul Owens
President



Paul Owens



Historic Nassau County Courthouse

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

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Amelia Island Intracoastal Sunset

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

PHOTOGRAPHER in FOCUS: Stan Cottle

A long time resident of Amelia Island, Stan Cottle came to photography by way of a career in marketing communications. As a marketing consultant, Stan produces and directs visual communications for corporations which primarily involve digital media, video and photography. Initially, Stan hired writers, cinematographers, photographers and editors for his projects, but eventually took on these roles himself. The addition of another role – drone pilot – extends Stan’s image capturing to include “flying cameras.”

Stan’s work has included award-winning projects for national clients such as AT&T, Anheuser-Busch, Carrier, Chesapeake Utilities, Coca-Cola, Florida Public Utilities, Ford and Humana, among many others. He also works with local businesses including Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, Amelia Island Plantation, Boys & Girls Clubs, Council on Aging, North Florida Land Trust, South Amelia Island Shore Stabilization Association,



Stan Cottle

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

U.S. Constitution Scholarship Foundation and YMCA.

Inspired over the years by his father-in-law, nature photographer Len Messineo, Stan has embarked on the journey of art photography. His focus is on landscape and architectural photography, but he occasionally explores other genres. Stan’s purpose is to capture unique visual perspectives of our environment - natural and built - in order to enhance the human experience.

Stan has exhibited as a member artist in the Plantation Artists Guild & Gallery and the Amelia Island Art Association Gallery, while collections of his work are displayed in corporate offices, boardrooms, and various private homes around the country.

In August 2025, Stan was awarded first place in the Landscapes category of Florida Wildlife Federation’s “Florida in Focus” Photography Contest. Stan can be contacted by email at ccomstan@gmail.com.

Review of 2025 Legislative Session

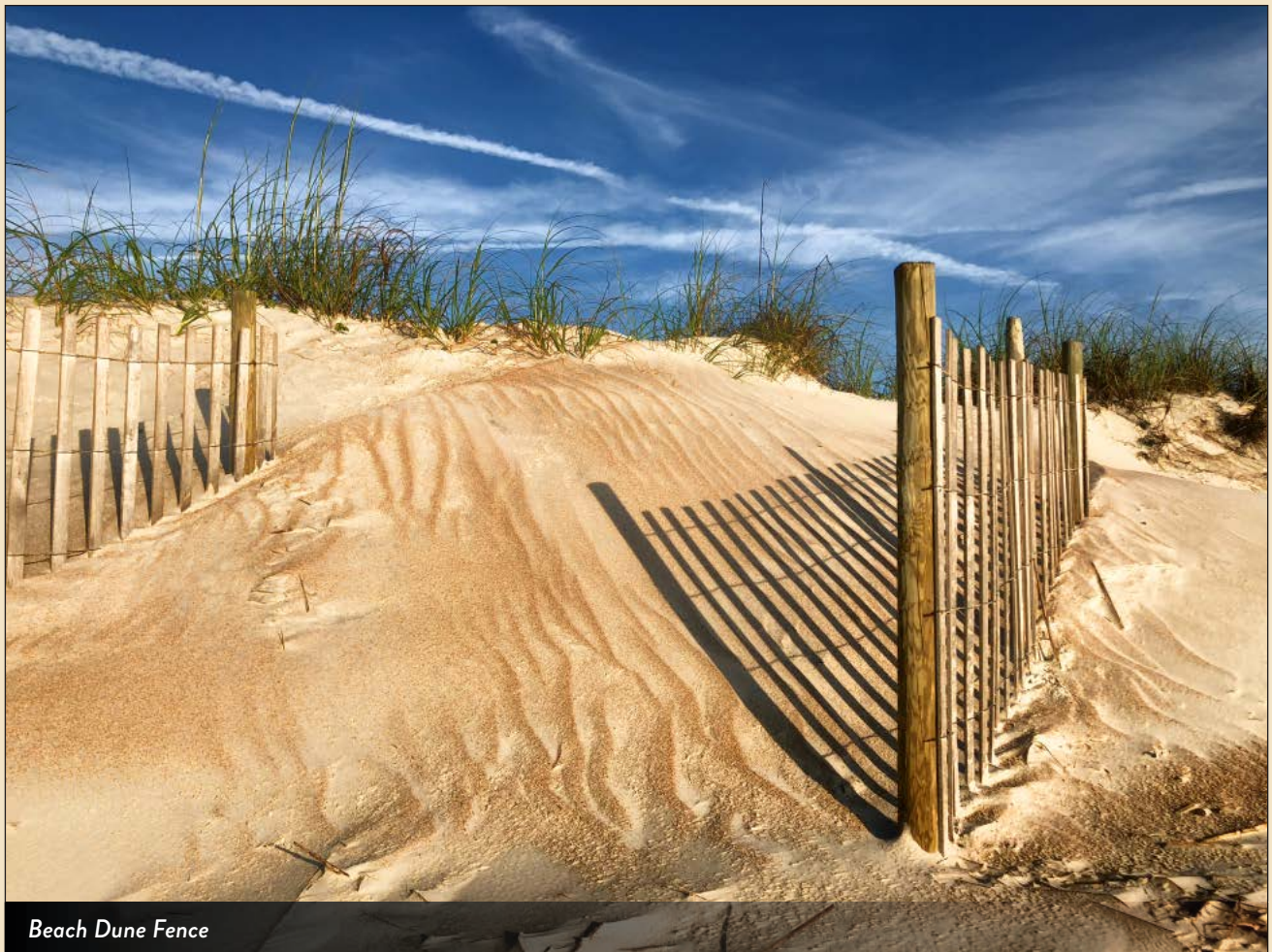
When the 2025 Legislative session ended on June 16, it concluded as one of the longest in recent history. Legislators stayed in Tallahassee an additional 45 days to continue talks about property tax policy and pass this year's state budget.

We are pleased to report that during the regular session, the most important bill we supported - SB 80, which adds protections to stop incompatible development in state parks - was passed. Also, many of the bills we opposed, including those that would have gutted some agricultural protections, eliminated community redevelopment areas and abolished regional planning councils were defeated.

Unfortunately, a last-minute amendment to an otherwise sensible emergencies bill, SB 180, resulted in a statewide freeze on local planning for at least

three years, and will extend the freeze in certain areas for an additional year any time another hurricane hits Florida. We cover the details of the bill in another section of this newsletter, but it's worth noting here that repealing the portions in SB 180 that prohibit communities from planning for their future is a top priority for us in the upcoming legislative session, which begins January 13, 2026.

As always, your calls and emails make a difference. In committee hearings, legislators often refer to how many people have reached out to their offices and we know your contacts are among those that have influenced their perspectives. We appreciate your engagement last session and will need your voice in 2026.



Beach Dune Fence

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

Restoring Community Planning: *Our Fight to Fix Senate Bill 180*

This spring, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 180, a sweeping law that restricts how cities and counties can guide growth and development. Marketed as a “hurricane-recovery” measure, the law goes far beyond storm rebuilding — it freezes local comprehensive plans and land-development regulations through 2027 and lets developers sue if they claim a local rule is “more restrictive or burdensome.” Furthermore, the Department of Commerce, the state’s Land Planning Agency, has notified many local governments that certain proposed amendments are null under SB 180. The result: communities across Florida are losing their ability to plan responsibly for safety, infrastructure, and conservation.

Since its passage, 1000 Friends of Florida has made fixing this law our top legislative priority. Through our advocacy campaign, we’ve been educating Floridians through legal analyses, supporting local governments, and advocating for repeal of the law’s most damaging provisions in 2026.

On October 7, 1000 Friends of Florida filed our

own lawsuit in Leon County Circuit Court, separate from the earlier challenge brought by 25 cities and counties. Our suit, filed jointly with an Orange County resident as co-plaintiff, argues that SB 180’s vague and retroactive language violates Florida’s Constitution, undermines home-rule authority, and unlawfully strips local governments of their power to manage growth in the public interest.

Meanwhile, our team has presented expert testimony at legislative delegation hearings, produced legal and policy analyses, and mobilized thousands of Floridians through email action alerts, advocacy strategy coaching and using social media. We’re documenting how SB 180 is being misused to roll back voter-approved growth limits and threaten rural and environmentally sensitive lands.

As we prepare for the 2026 Legislative Session, 1000 Friends will continue leading the charge to restore local planning, defend home rule, and ensure growth serves the people—not special interests.

Learn more and get involved at

<https://1000fof.org/priorities/restorecommunityplanning/>



Pelicans on Parade

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle



2026 Legislative Priorities

Local Authority & Disaster Planning

- Repeal damaging provisions of Senate Bill 180 passed in the 2025 Legislative Session that undermine local planning, weaken Florida's resilience to natural disasters, and threaten the health, safety, and quality of life of Floridians.

Environmental Protection

- Enforce stricter water quality standards, with enhanced biosolids management and conservation incentives.
- Prevent swapping or selling state-owned conservation lands.

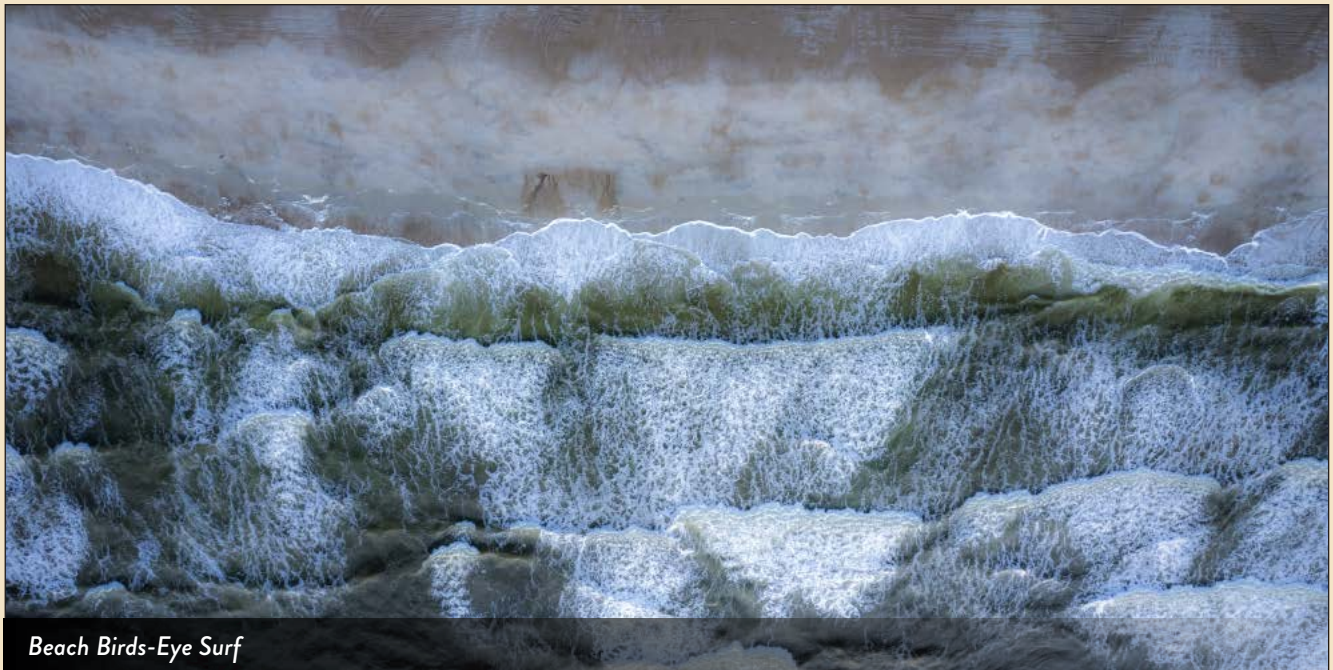
Conservation Funding

- Fund Florida Forever at pre-2008 levels and maintain robust funding for Rural & Family Lands Protection Programs to protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor and other high-priority conservation lands.

- Fund the next installment of the \$3.5 billion Everglades restoration and water-quality commitment and prioritize projects by public need.

Housing & Infrastructure

- Direct Housing Trust Fund revenue exclusively toward affordable housing, plus \$150 million annually in additional investment.
- Fully fund the FY 2026-2027 Historic Preservation Grant list and provide support for Florida Main Street program.
- Support programs that provide flexible, cost-effective transportation options to Floridians.



Beach Birds-Eye Surf

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

Biosolids and Florida's Future: *A Call for Better Management*



In 2022, 1000 Friends of Florida launched a study of the environmental and societal impacts of how Florida manages biosolids — sewage sludge — and how to reduce the negative impacts. Our study, released in June and posted on our website at 1000fof.org/biosolids/, concluded that action is overdue.

Most biosolids in Florida are classified as either Class B, which receive the minimum level of treatment, or the more highly-treated Class AA. Treatment removes most pathogens and some heavy metals but does not reduce nitrogen and phosphorous, nutrients that are the primary fuel for harmful algal blooms and degraded water quality.

Florida's most utilized method of managing Class B biosolids is to spread them on hayfields or pastures.

When nutrients exceed what can be readily absorbed by plant growth and soils, a portion of the remainder ends up in lakes, rivers and streams. Biosolids may also contain contaminants of emerging concern, including PFAS.

As we concluded in our report, Florida needs a better, fairer approach to biosolids management that minimizes its environmental impacts, reduces risk transfer from one political boundary or watershed to another, and imposes the management cost on the generators of biosolids, not the recipients or the state's taxpayers. We are now working with partners, including the St. Johns River Waterkeeper, to advance these goals.

NEW REPORT: *Community Visioning & Landscape Conservation Planning*

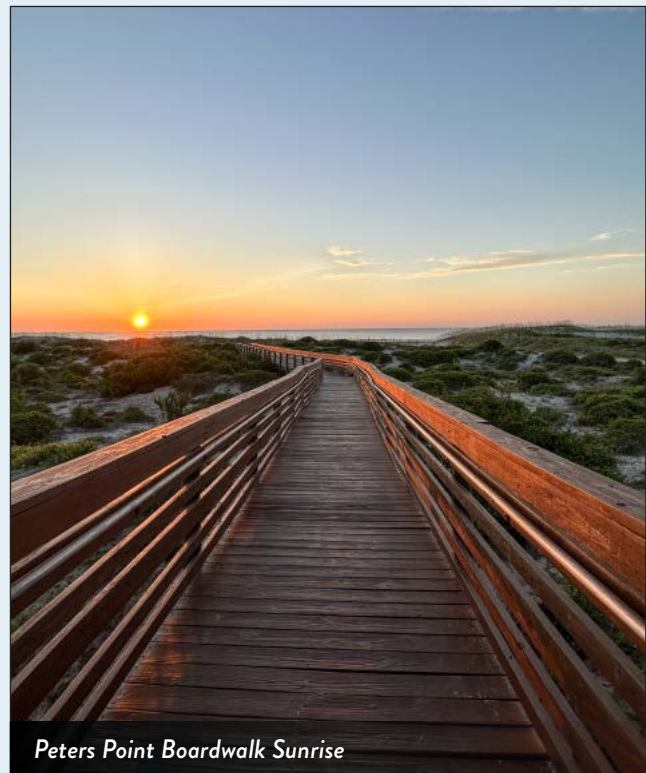
This fall, with support from the University of Florida's Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, we released *Community Visioning & Landscape Conservation Planning*, a new report by Dover, Kohl & Partners showing how science-based mapping and broad public participation can guide growth while conserving Florida's lands and waters.

The report includes a step-by-step framework for integrating land use, conservation, and community values in local planning processes, illustrated through real-world examples and strategies for protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

To share these findings statewide, we hosted a free webinar featuring the report author, Steve Postma, of Dover, Kohl & Partners, and Nassau County planners who successfully applied these methods in their Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan.

Together, this work highlights how data-driven, community-informed planning can guide sustainable development and conservation across Florida.

Check out the report and watch the recorded webinar on our website. 1000fof.org



Peters Point Boardwalk Sunrise

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

Saving Lake Jackson

What would be the third-largest expansion to the Tallahassee-Leon County Urban Services Area (USA) in 30 years was quietly incorporated into a proposed update of the local comprehensive plan. The first set of text and map amendments was publicly released in March 2025, transmitted for required state agency input in early summer, and slated for adoption in mid-summer. However, this fast-tracking, with minimal public engagement, has raised serious concerns. 1000 Friends alerted our local friends.

One set of amendments, if implemented, would expand the USA by about 1000 acres and amend the Lake Protection zone to allow thousands of new homes and a major commercial node in a rural area near Lake Jackson, Florida's only freshwater lake system that is both a State Aquatic Preserve and Outstanding Florida Water. The proposed expansion

could disrupt this delicate ecosystem. Primary access would be provided by the scenic two-lane Meridian Road, a designated canopy road established in 1824 as part of Florida's Prime Meridian. Regulations have been in place for decades to protect these resources.

1000 Friends continues to promote public engagement, sharing our concerns that there has been no demonstration of need, no environmental or transportation analysis, and no fiscal assessment of the cost to taxpayers of expanding the USA. These amendments are now up for adoption by the end of 2025.

1000 Friends also played a leading role in alerting residents about other proposed amendments to upzone swaths of downtown. When blindsided residents shared their concerns, these amendments were quietly withdrawn from consideration.



Lanceford Creek Sunset

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

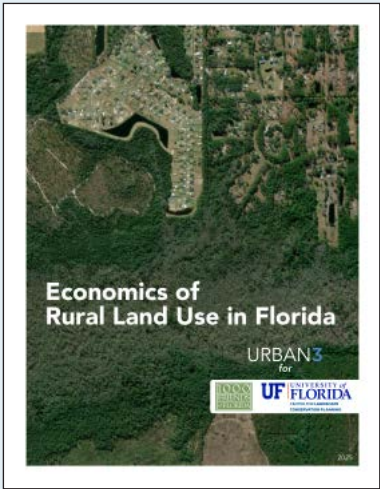
Economics of Rural Land Use in Florida

Understanding the economics of urban and rural land uses is key to guiding policymakers towards a more fiscally sustainable future for our state. The national geo-accounting firm Urban3's study, *Economics of Rural Land Use in Florida*, compares public infrastructure costs, with property tax revenue, and the value of ecosystem services across three scenarios for a 44-acre parcel in rural Florida. Ecosystem services — the hidden values provided by natural land, including flood protection and clean water — are a key focus.

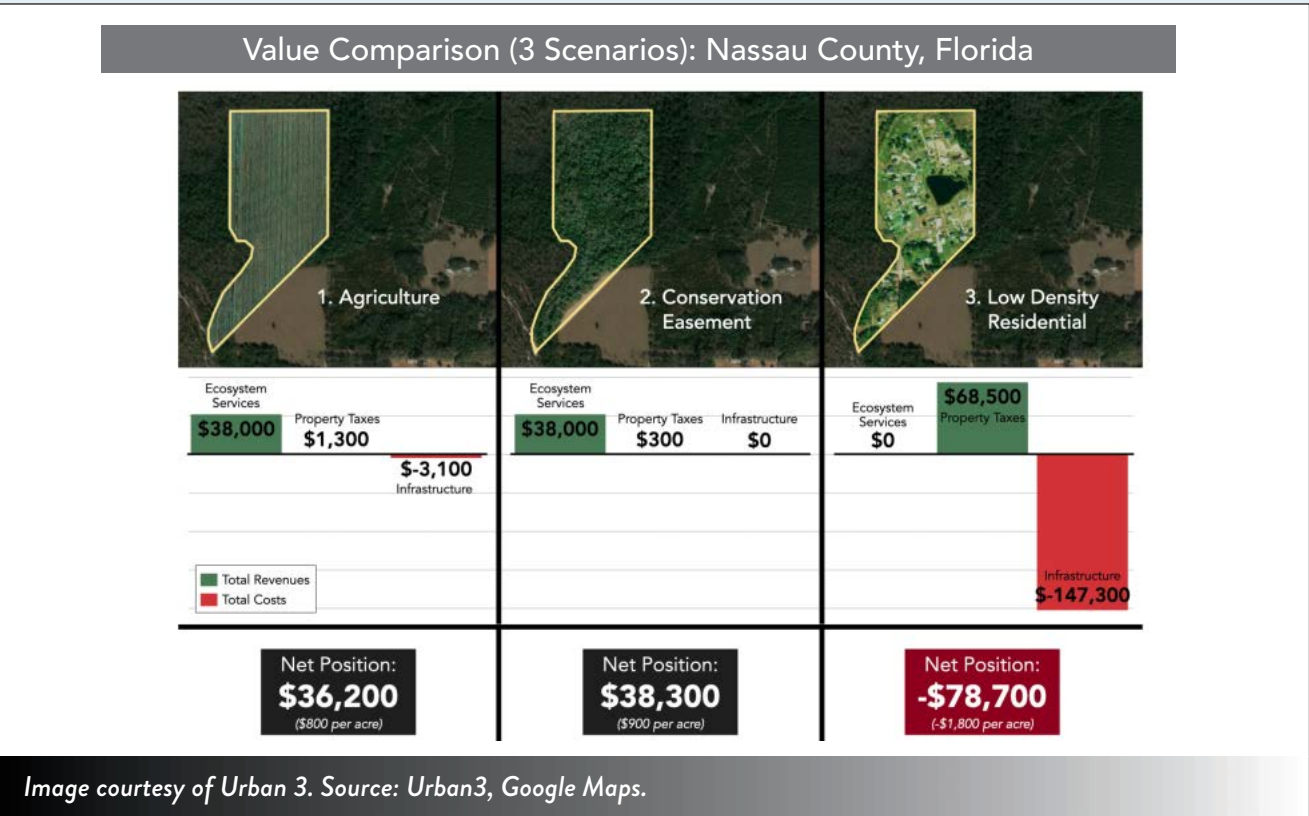
As can be seen in the graphic, Urban 3 finds land in agriculture or under conservation easement generates a net public gain of \$800-\$900 per acre. Low-density residential by contrast, results in a net public loss of about \$1,790 per acre due to infrastructure costs and loss of value related to ecosystem services.

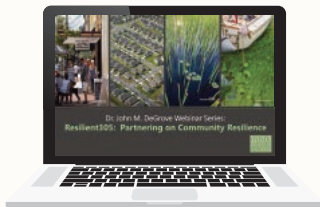
This has significant implications for Florida's future and is consistent with national studies that low-density residential development does not generate enough property tax revenue to cover the

public construction and maintenance costs for the roads, water, sewer, stormwater, and other infrastructure and necessary services. Land remaining in agriculture or under conservation easements, on the other hand, generates a modest surplus for local governments.



Commissioned by 1000 Friends of Florida and the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning, this study deepens our understanding of the economics of rural land use. The full report is available at 1000fof.org/priorities/fiscal.





Highlights from Our 2025-2026 WEBINAR SERIES

Find Out More and Register Now at 1000fof.org/webinars

For more than a decade, 1000 Friends has been proud to offer informative and engaging webinars featuring strategies to build better communities and save special places in one of the fastest growing states in the nation. Offered free of charge, the webinars are also approved for professional certification credits for planners, attorneys, landscape architects, and others.

Our September webinar explored the *Community Visioning & Landscape Conservation Planning* report, highlighting how Florida communities can use visioning and science-based planning to protect land, guide growth, and strengthen connections within the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

Upcoming Webinars

Held on Wednesdays, from Noon to 1:30, Eastern

November 12, 2025 — **Beyond the Zoning Map: How Florida Communities Are Planning for the Future**

December 10, 2025 — **Rethinking Roads: A Complete Streets Approach to Safer Communities**

January 7, 2026 — **2026 Florida Legislative Preview**

February 11, 2026 — **2026 Florida Legislative Update**

March 26, 2026 — **2026 Florida Legislative Wrap Up**

April 2026 — *Coming Soon: Stay Tuned for More Information*

May 26, 2026 — **From Swamp to Suburb: The True Cost of Wetland Loss in Florida**

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In Memory of Jaimie Ross

We are sad to share the passing in August of Jaimie Ross, 1000 Friends of Florida's former director of affordable housing. She went on to become president and CEO of the Florida Housing Coalition in 2013, and retired in 2022.

While working for 1000 Friends, Jaimie spearheaded the successful state legislative campaign in 1992 to draft and pass the William E. Sadowski Affordable Housing Act. This landmark law, considered a national model, created state trust funds that have provided billions of dollars to expand affordable housing for Floridians, including families, seniors, farm workers, veterans, and people experiencing homelessness.

With 1000 Friends and then with the Florida Housing Coalition, she helped establish and sustain affordable housing



Jaimie Ross

policies and programs. She worked with local governments and nonprofits to enhance the success of those programs, and led a broad-based coalition to promote the full funding promised under the Sadowski Act.

1000 Friends President Paul Owens first met Jaimie two decades ago in his former role as a newspaper editorial writer, and went on to work closely with her and other affordable housing advocates as a member of the Sadowski Coalition. He admired her as a passionate, tireless and effective leader.

1000 Friends will continue to be a member of the Sadowski Coalition, and honor Jaimie's life and work by seeking robust funding to expand affordable

housing in communities across Florida.



Walkers Landing Sunset

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

CIRCLE of FRIENDS

We're proud to introduce **Circle of Friends**, a new monthly program that fuels the everyday, year-round work it takes to protect Florida's iconic landscapes, irreplaceable wildlife, and beloved communities.

At 1000 Friends, we know that real change takes time, persistence, and community support. That's why monthly giving is so powerful. It provides a steady foundation, not just for our work, but for our vision of a Florida where growth is balanced with conservation, and where communities and nature thrive together.



Thanks to your support, we've protected treasured places across the state, including joining forces with citizens and partners to spearhead a successful campaign to block efforts to allow harmful development in Florida's state parks. Victories like that aren't won overnight; they take commitment.

Monthly giving, no matter the size, becomes part of that ongoing commitment. It's simple, meaningful, and ensures we can keep showing up every day to protect the places that make Florida special.

Join Circle of Friends today — and be part of something lasting.



Amelia Light

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

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TRIBUTE

In Memory of Lester Abberger

1000 Friends of Florida mourns the passing in August of our dear friend and past chairman, Lester Abberger of Tallahassee. Lester was not only a leader of our organization, but also a tireless advocate for the people and places that make Florida special.

For decades, Lester gave his time, talent, and wisdom to 1000 Friends, helping to shape the direction of our work and inspiring others with his vision of a Florida where growth and conservation could co-exist in balance. Like his friend and mentor, Nathaniel Reed, Lester passionately believed that citizens should have a strong voice in planning the future of their communities, and he worked to ensure that voice was heard. His leadership left an enduring mark on Florida's growth management policies and on generations of advocates who carry forward his example.

Lester's generosity of spirit extended far beyond 1000 Friends. An investment banker and lobbyist by profession, he poured his energy into an extraordinary range of public, charitable, and cultural endeavors. He served as chairman of the LeRoy Collins Institute for Public Policy at Florida State University and Horizon Communities in Prisons, a national faith-based prison ministry. He also gave his leadership to Audubon Florida, Florida Healthy Kids, the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, Leadership Florida, Habitat for Humanity, the Florida Humanities Council, and many other worthy causes. Whether working in education, the arts,



Lester Abberger

conservation, or health care, Lester's constant goal was the same: to strengthen communities and improve lives.

A graduate of Davidson College and a Knight Fellow at the University of Miami School of Architecture, Lester combined intellectual curiosity with a deep sense of responsibility. He had an extraordinary ability to bring people together — across politics, disciplines, and perspectives — to find common ground and achieve lasting progress.

Lester was a dedicated conservationist who cherished the natural world. He loved

spending time outdoors fishing and hunting birds. He earned the title of Florida Master Gardener and Florida Master Naturalist, and he collected Florida landscape art.

Those who knew Lester will remember his sharp mind, his warmth, his humility, and his unwavering dedication to service. He had a gift for mentorship and for making everyone feel valued, whether they were a longtime colleague or someone just beginning their career.

Lester leaves behind not only an extraordinary legacy of civic leadership, but also countless friends and colleagues who are better for having known him. Florida is a stronger, more thoughtful, and more compassionate place because of his life's work. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones, including his wife, Amanda Leigh Stringer, and his two stepchildren.