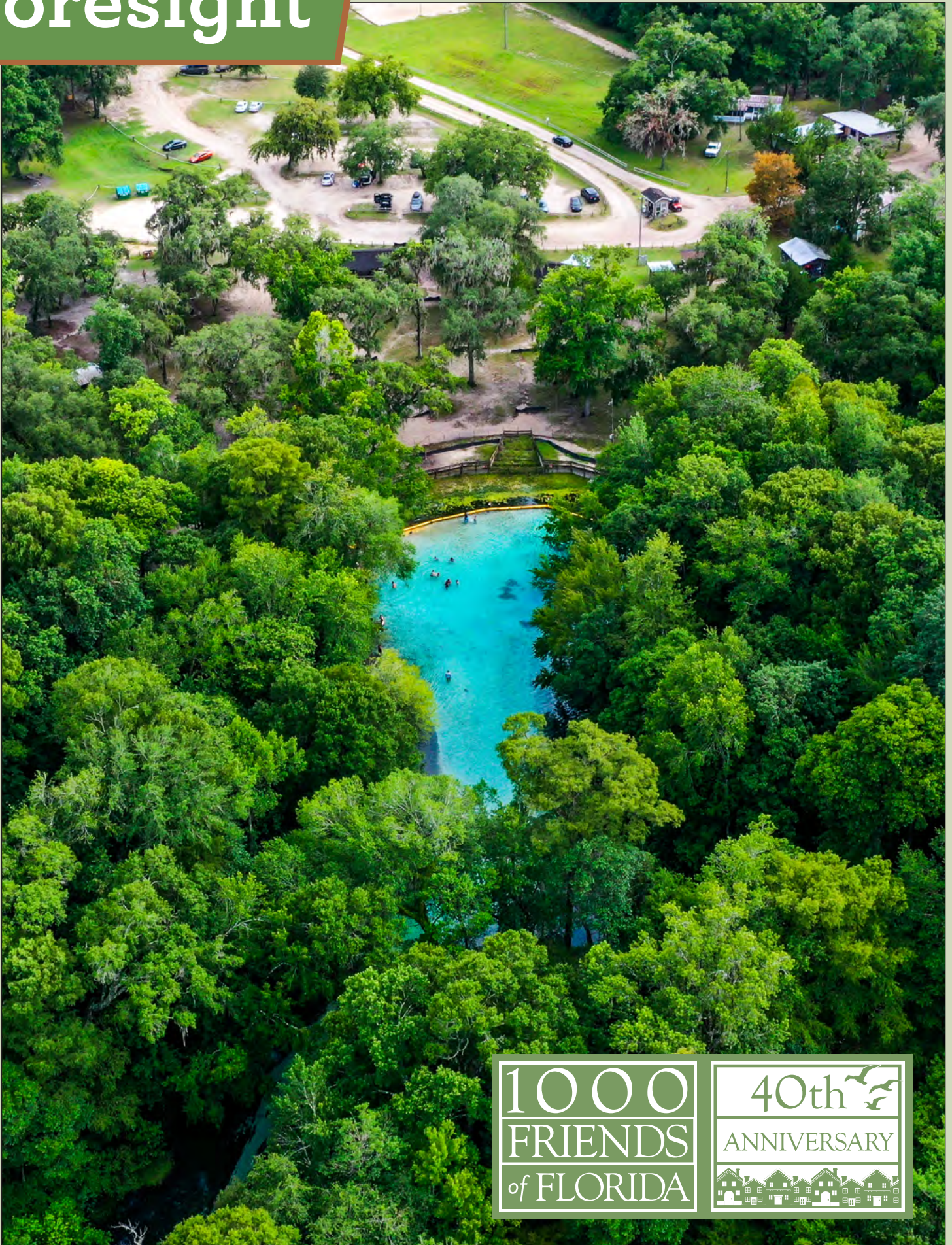


foresight

The Newsletter of 1000 Friends of Florida



SPRING 2026 VOLUME 39 NUMBER 1

1000
FRIENDS
of FLORIDA

40th
ANNIVERSARY



BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES • SAVING SPECIAL PLACES

From the President

During this year's regular session of the 2026 Florida Legislature, multiple attacks were mounted on community planning. Some sponsors and supporters of bills to circumvent or override local comprehensive growth management plans or land development regulations contended they weren't working to prevent traffic jams or incompatible development in rural areas.

This is backward thinking. Where traffic jams or incompatible development or — as another consequence of poorly planned growth — water quality and quantity are issues, thoughtfully conceived and consistently enforced comprehensive plans are the solution, not the problem. They direct growth toward urban areas with roads, water, sewer, schools and other infrastructure in place to accommodate it. They steer it away from undeveloped natural and agricultural land, whose conservation is environmentally and economically essential for Florida's healthy future, and a cornerstone of our state's character.

Communities with leaders who fail to follow their comprehensive plans, or have their authority to implement their plans stolen through misguided state legislation, are far more likely to suffer the downsides of growth, including traffic jams, incompatible development and issues with water quality and quantity. They are less likely to garner the upsides, including affordable housing, viable public transit, walkable neighborhoods and vibrant communities.

Try telling residents of Martin County that comprehensive plans are the problem. The county's plan — which 1000 Friends helped draft decades ago and has defended ever since — is widely recognized as the basis for “the Martin County difference”, the stronger commitment to environmental protection and the higher quality of life that county residents enjoy compared to most other Floridians.

Through determined legislative advocacy, collaboration with a wide range of allies and — most crucial of all — an outpouring of engagement from our members throughout Florida, who responded to our appeals for action with tens of thousands of emails to their representatives and senators, 1000 Friends was able to stop some of this session's most damaging proposals to undermine community planning. And we won't be caught off guard next session if they return. We'll be ready, once again, to fight back with your help.

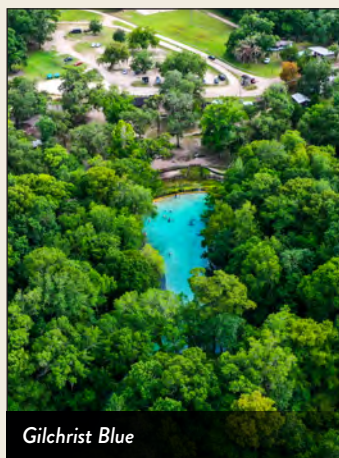
It might seem discouraging that we are still waging these battles as we approach our 40th anniversary, but it's actually energizing. It's a reminder that our commitment to community planning and conservation throughout Florida is still very much needed — and the support of our members makes all the difference in the world.

Paul Owens

Paul Owens
President



Paul Owens



Gilchrist Blue

Photo Courtesy of Brent Fannin

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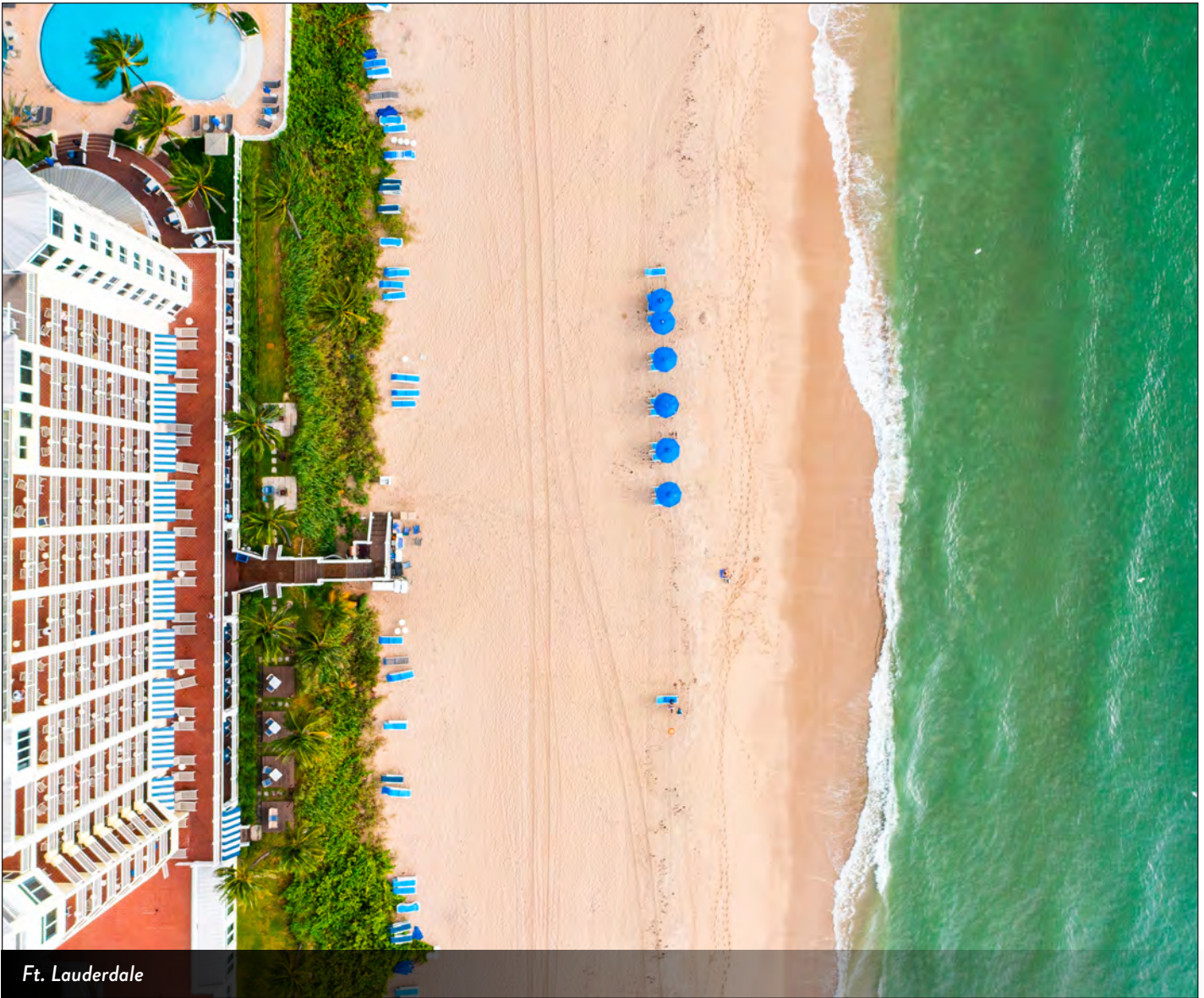
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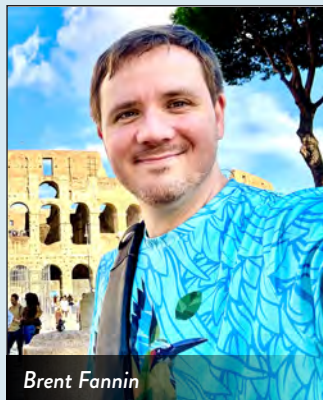


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Photo Courtesy of Brent Fannin

PHOTOGRAPHER in FOCUS: Brent Fannin

Brent Fannin is a drone photographer and documentary filmmaker with a background in environmental education and film production. He uses aerial imagery to tell meaningful environmental stories, capturing natural places from unique perspectives that inspire



Brent Fannin

Photo Courtesy of Brent Fannin

curiosity, connection, and appreciation. His goal is to help people see the beauty of the natural world in a new way and, through that perspective, deepen their love for natural places. Check out Brent's work at <https://www.goldenhawkdrones.com/about>

2026 Florida Legislative Session

Florida's 2026 legislative session has adjourned, and as always, 1000 Friends' team was actively engaged throughout, working to advance our mission of saving special places and building better communities across Florida.

This session came with real wins, real setbacks, and more than a few nail-biting moments in the final days — and once again, your engagement made a difference.

Our top priority this year was scaling back the impacts of SB 180, the 2025 law that restricts local governments' ability to protect their communities following hurricanes. Senate Bill 840, which would have significantly reformed the law, cleared every Senate committee with unanimous support. But the House refused to take up the issue in any form — one of the most frustrating outcomes of the session. What the moment made clear, though, is the power of our movement: more than 22,000 emails were sent to legislators by 1000 Friends members since December. The House may not have listened, but those voices were heard, and we will keep pressing this issue until it's resolved.

On land conservation, a bill requiring greater public transparency around the management of conservation lands passed with our support — a bright spot in an otherwise difficult year for Florida's natural places. Far less encouraging was the conservation funding picture: the Senate proposed just \$35 million for Florida Forever while the House proposed nothing at all. With the budget still being negotiated at the time of this writing, the final number remains unknown — but the proposals on the table are not a promising sign. And despite an overwhelming 107-to-3 vote in the House to restore the ecologically vital Ocklawaha River, the measure died in the Senate. A farm bill that included a provision requiring state review of certain conservation lands for possible sale for conversion to agriculture passed over our objections as well.

On the community planning front, we helped stop one of the more alarming proposals of the session: a bill that would have fast-tracked massive developments of 15,000 acres or more, bypassing comprehensive plans and public hearings. The so-called "Blue Ribbon Projects" bill did not pass, despite heavy lobbying and campaign contributions from its backers. Our advocacy, backed by your engagement, proved to be stronger. We also helped defeat efforts to dismantle urban growth boundaries — the community-driven tools that help preserve Florida's farms, forests, and rural landscapes. However, an agricultural enclave bill did pass over our objection, creating a pathway for large developments on rural lands that local governments had previously denied, taking the community out of meaningful community planning.

The water-policy picture was more encouraging. New laws will limit the use of PFAS-containing firefighting foam and strengthen oversight of biosolids — waste byproducts from sewage treatment — addressing a long-standing gap in Florida's water-quality regulations. And after years of sustained effort, legislation promoting nature-based solutions for coastal resilience finally crossed the finish line.

While the regular session is behind us, legislators' work is far from done. For the second year in a row, members adjourned without completing a state budget — a constitutional requirement — leaving the Legislature to return for one or more special sessions before the June 30 fiscal year deadline. Special sessions on redistricting and a potential cut in property taxes are expected as well. 1000 Friends will be closely watching all of these developments and continuing to advocate for Florida's communities, lands, and waters. Stay connected, watch for our action alerts, and know that your support and engagement are what make this work possible.

The Legal Fight to Restore Local Planning Authority

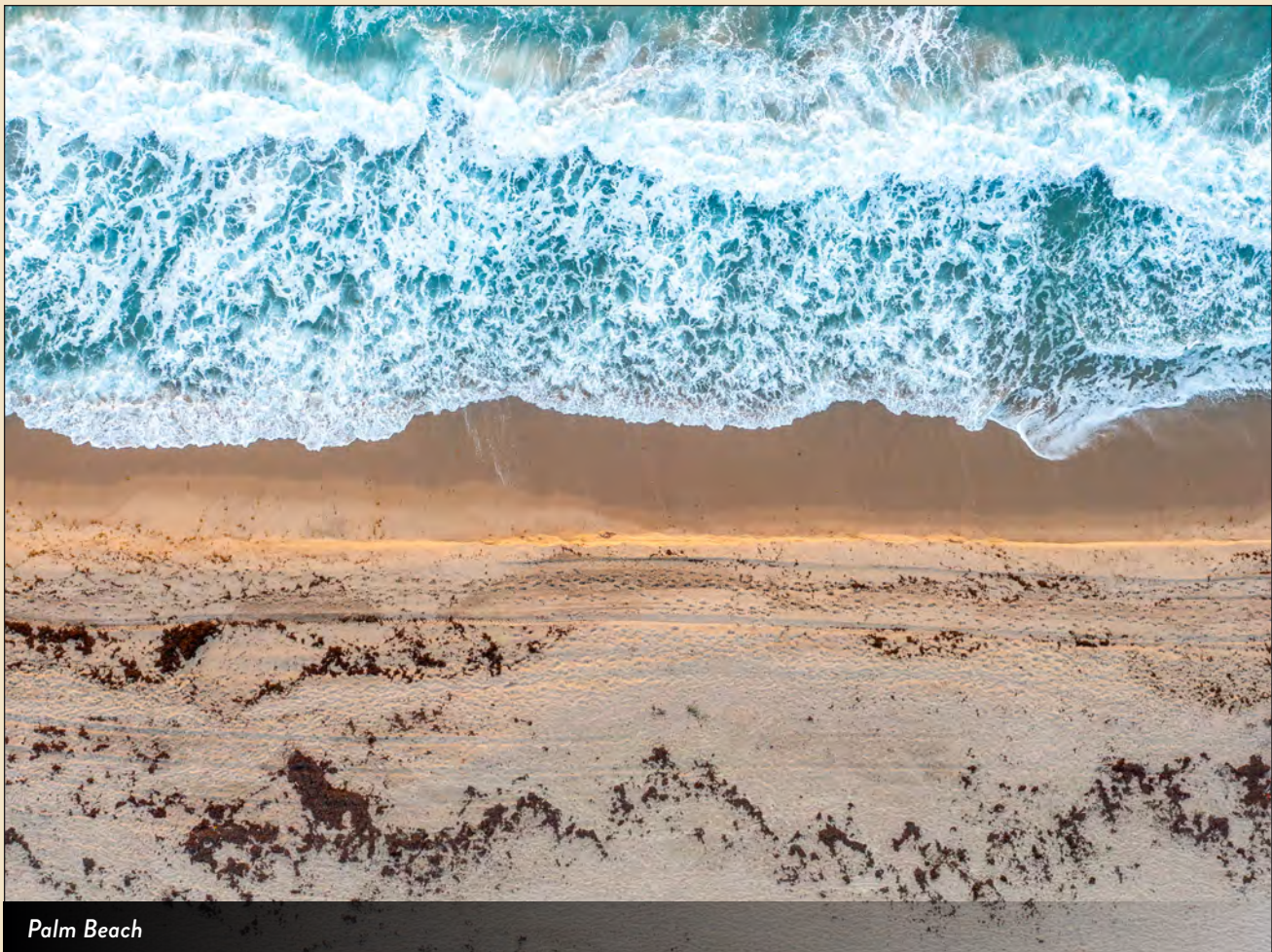
Throughout the state, local governments are dealing with the effects of SB 180, as they attempt to address current stresses related to growth that may have impacts that are not fully realized for decades to come. In the end, it will be Florida's residents who pay the price.

The legal challenge brought by 1000 Friends of Florida and member Rachel Hildebrand against Senate Bill 180 remains unresolved and actively moving through the courts. Our lawsuit was filed in Leon County Circuit Court on October 2025, arguing that the law is unconstitutional on multiple grounds, including violations of the single-subject rule,

improper state preemption of local authority, and restrictions on environmental and land-use planning.

The case was consolidated with similar lawsuits filed by dozens of local governments, reflecting broad opposition to the statute. In February, 1000 Friends of Florida was removed as a plaintiff, though the case will continue to move forward with Rachel Hildebrand.

Since the legislature failed to fix SB 180 this session, we are hopeful that the issue can be resolved by the courts.



Palm Beach

Photo Courtesy of Stan Cottle

Miami-Dade County EAR Task Force

Florida law requires local governments to review and make any necessary updates to their comprehensive plans — their blueprints for growth and development — every seven years. This process is known as an Evaluation and Appraisal Report, or EAR. Local governments have a responsibility to their residents to conduct their EAR process deliberately, providing ample time and opportunity for public engagement. After all, the future of their communities — how they will grow, and the consequences for the health of their environment and economy, and their quality of life — hangs in the balance.

Miami-Dade County launched its EAR in the fall of 2025. In addition to being Florida's most populous county, Miami-Dade includes two of Florida's most valuable yet vulnerable natural resources — the Everglades and Biscayne Bay — a vital agricultural sector and some of Florida's most economically and culturally vibrant communities. To help guide its EAR process, Mayor Daniella Levine Cava appointed an advisory task force of 25 members, including 1000

Friends of Florida President Paul Owens.

Paul and other task force members have been meeting every month in Miami since October. In addition, an online survey was circulated in which county residents could register their priorities for the future of their communities, and six town hall meetings were scheduled over three months throughout the county where residents could meet with planning staff to learn about the CDMP and express their priorities in person.

The EAR Advisory Task Force is scheduled to conclude its work with recommendations in May, based on its discussions and feedback from residents. Given Miami-Dade's prominence in Florida, any revisions to its CDMP could serve as a model for other local governments throughout the state when they review their comprehensive plans. We are grateful for this opportunity to participate in this important process and carry out 1000 Friends' mission of promoting thoughtful community planning with robust citizen engagement.

Thank You to Our Advocates

The 2026 Florida Legislative Session brought significant challenges for communities across the state — and meeting them required more than legal strategies and legislative testimony. It required Floridians speaking up for the places they love. And speak up you did.

Over the course of the session, 1000 Friends supporters sent more than 176,000 emails on priority issues including restoring local planning rights, protecting Florida's land and water, and ensuring communities have meaningful input in decisions that shape their future. Through our advocacy platform, 4,556 individuals took action — many of them multiple times throughout the session — contacting their representatives directly and making their voices part of the legislative record.

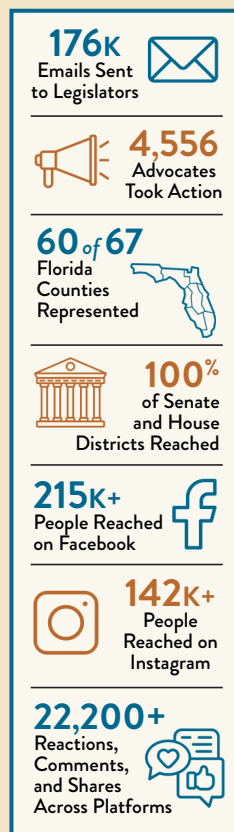
The response from our members, donors, and grassroots supporters was remarkable. Actions came from 60 of Florida's 67 counties, and we connected with **every single one** of Florida's Senate and House districts, demonstrating the truly statewide reach of these

issues and the breadth of Floridians who believe their communities deserve a voice in shaping their own futures.

We also saw strong social media engagement throughout the session. Our legislative session and action alert content reached more than 215,000 people on Facebook and 142,000 on Instagram, generating over 22,200 reactions, comments, and shares across both platforms. Local advocates and planning professionals amplified our message in their own communities, building momentum that was felt in Tallahassee.

None of this happens without you. Whether you sent one email or called your senator five times, your engagement made a difference. 1000 Friends is only as strong as the people who stand behind our mission — and this session, you showed up.

To stay engaged on Florida's planning and conservation issues, sign up for our email alerts at 1000fof.org.



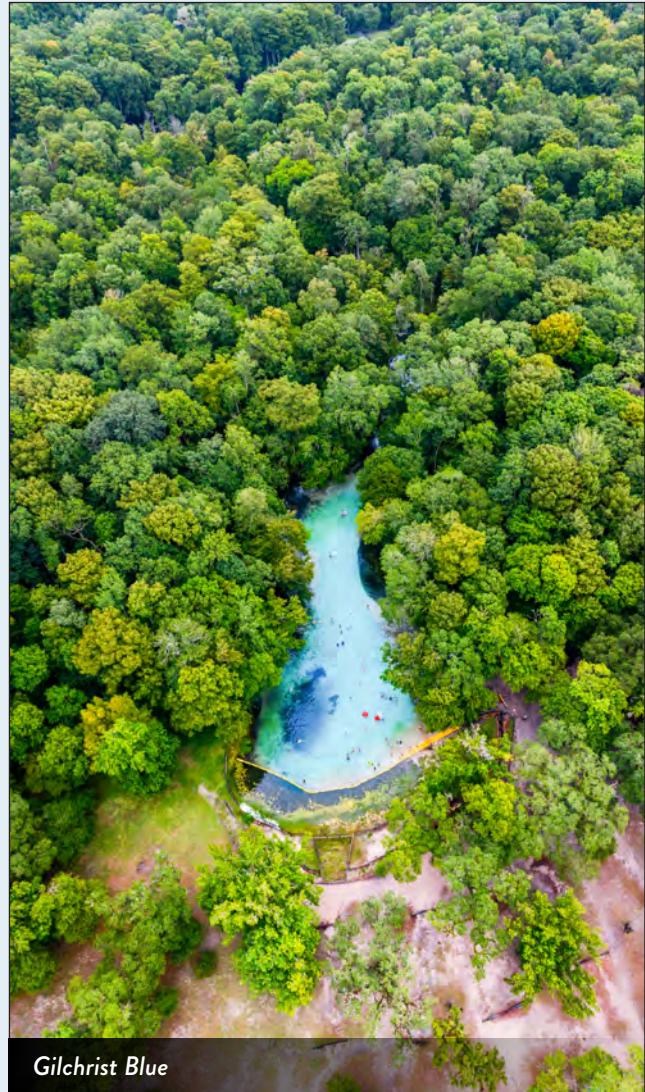
Better Together: How Partnerships Amplify Our Work Across Florida

A state as large and diverse as Florida — with 67 counties and 411 municipalities stretching over more than 53,000 square miles — poses a challenge for nonprofit organizations like ours with modest staff and resources. How can we advance our ambitious priorities over such an expansive landscape? One of the best ways is through partnerships with other organizations whose goals intersect with ours. This is a strategy 1000 Friends has embraced, with significant success. In addition to meeting regularly with representatives of allies in the conservation community, we belong to multiple nonprofit organizations and coalitions, where members work together to achieve common objectives. These affiliations include:

- **The Hold the Line Coalition**, dedicated to maintaining the Urban Development Boundary in Miami-Dade County to protect its water supply, agriculture, the Everglades and Biscayne Bay.
- **Florida TaxWatch**, a think tank that has focused for decades on government fiscal responsibility. Community planning and conservation are taxpayer-friendly practices.
- **The Guardians of Martin County**, a nonprofit long dedicated to a balance between the natural and built environments in the county. We serve on its advisory board.
- **The Everglades Coalition**, an alliance of 55 local, state and national conservation and environmental organizations dedicated to full restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem.
- **The Florida Springs Council**, an advocacy organization dedicated to restoring and protecting natural springs through policy, law and grassroots action.
- **The ROGO Coalition**, multiple community groups committed to upholding the Rate of Growth Ordinance that protects lives, property and the environment in the Florida Keys.
- **Reunite the Rivers**, a coalition dedicated to restoring the Ocklawaha River in northeast Florida.

- **The Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition**, a group of organizations working together to conserve, protect and restore Florida's coastal and marine environment.

Our membership in these organizations or coalitions does not mean we always agree on every objective, or come under any obligation to collaborate when we differ. But more often than not, these partnerships boost our efforts, and help us accomplish the goals our followers expect, and deserve.



Gilchrist Blue

Photo Courtesy of Bent Fennin

New Special Report: *Planning for Data Center Development in Florida*

As cloud computing and artificial intelligence continue to reshape the American economy, data centers — the massive server facilities that power this digital infrastructure — are expanding rapidly across the country. Florida, home to an estimated 120 data centers already, is an emerging market for this growth. With significant new proposals likely on the horizon, 1000 Friends of Florida released a new Special Report in February to help communities navigate what comes next.

Potential Impacts of Data Center Development on Florida Communities examines the full range of planning considerations that state and local decision-makers should weigh when evaluating data center proposals. The report is not a position paper for or against data centers — it is a practical resource for planners, local officials, and community members, because the questions these facilities raise deserve

careful, transparent answers before long-term commitments are made.

The stakes are substantial. A typical AI-focused data center consumes as much electricity as 100,000 households, and national electricity demand from data centers is projected to nearly triple by 2030. In Florida, where groundwater is the primary source of drinking water for roughly 90 percent of residents, the enormous water requirements of data center cooling systems present serious sustainability concerns. These facilities also raise land-use questions: their large industrial footprints can be incompatible with adjacent neighborhoods, agriculture, and wildlife habitat.

As proposals emerge across Florida, local land-use planning remains the most powerful tool communities have. Read the full special report on our website: 1000fof.org/datacenter-report



Ft. Lauderdale

Photo Courtesy of Brent Fannin

1000 Friends at the Future of Florida Summit

This spring, 1000 Friends of Florida was honored to participate in the Future of Florida Summit, hosted by the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida. President Paul Owens delivered the keynote address, speaking to the growth, conservation, and sustainability challenges facing Florida communities — and the role that thoughtful planning and civic engagement must play in meeting them.



The occasion carried special meaning for 1000 Friends. The late Senator Bob Graham was instrumental in the founding of our organization, and his vision for a Florida where communities are empowered to shape their own futures remains central to our mission nearly 40 years later. To address the next generation of Florida leaders in a forum bearing his name was a moment we did not take lightly.

Also representing 1000 Friends at the Summit was spring legislative intern Erin Nadel, who served as both a moderator and event organizer — a testament

to the depth of talent and passion she has brought to our team this session.

Events like the Future of Florida Summit remind us that the work of protecting Florida's land, water, and communities is never finished — and that the leaders who will carry it forward are already stepping up.

Spotlight on Florida's Future

What could Florida's future hold? The relocation of a million residents by 2070 due to land inundation from sea-level rise? The loss of 250 acres of land every day — more than 90,000 acres a year — to sprawling development? Or the protection of priority natural and agricultural lands and the valuable ecosystem services they provide? A thriving agricultural economy? More compact, livable, and fiscally sound communities?

A new report by the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning and 1000 Friends of Florida, *Spotlight on Florida's Future*, tackles these and other critical questions about the impacts of sea-level rise and community design choices in our rapidly growing state. Please check out the report at 1000fof.org/outreach/reports/spotlight

FLORIDA is at a CROSSROADS
and the Choices We Make Today Will
Shape Our State For Generations.

The **GOOD** News?
Florida Can Grow **SMARTER**.

Take a Few
Minutes to
Read . . .

**Spotlight on
Florida's Future**

1000fof.org/outreach/reports/spotlight



Congratulations to Vivian Young, FAICP

We are proud to announce that 1000 Friends of Florida's Special Projects Director, Vivian Young, has been elected to membership in the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP) — the highest honor that the AICP can bestow on a member. Previous honorees include 1000 Friends' Co-founder Dr. John M. DeGrove and current Board of Directors Chair Susan Trevarthen.

According to the Institute, election to the College of Fellows recognizes "achievements as an outstanding planner who has made significant contributions to the planning profession and society ... sustained excellence, leadership and impact

consistent with the highest standards of the profession." Vivian earned this distinction through decades of commitment as a planner for smart growth, urban revitalization, historic preservation, and conservation — with 1000 Friends since 1996, and before that as Florida's first Main Street Coordinator and as Tallahassee and Leon County's first professional Historic Preservation Planner.

Prior to her current role, Vivian served as 1000 Friends' Communications Director, distilling and translating complex planning subjects for citizens, policymakers, and professionals. Her extraordinary body of work includes establishing our grassroots legislative advocacy platform and our popular Dr. John M. DeGrove Webinar Series, which draws thousands of attendees each season to free presentations on cutting-edge planning, conservation, and policy topics. She helped lead the campaign to halt M-CORES, the proposed toll road network that would have run from Collier County to the Georgia border through some of Florida's most pristine rural and agricultural lands. Her other signature projects include authoring a landmark

series of 2070 reports with the University of Florida projecting the impact of population growth, development patterns, and sea level rise on land use, water demand, and agriculture in the decades ahead.

Vivian will be recognized at the American Planning Association's National Planning Conference on April 26 in Detroit. We are grateful she has received this well-deserved distinction for advancing our goals of fiscally sound and sustainable planning.

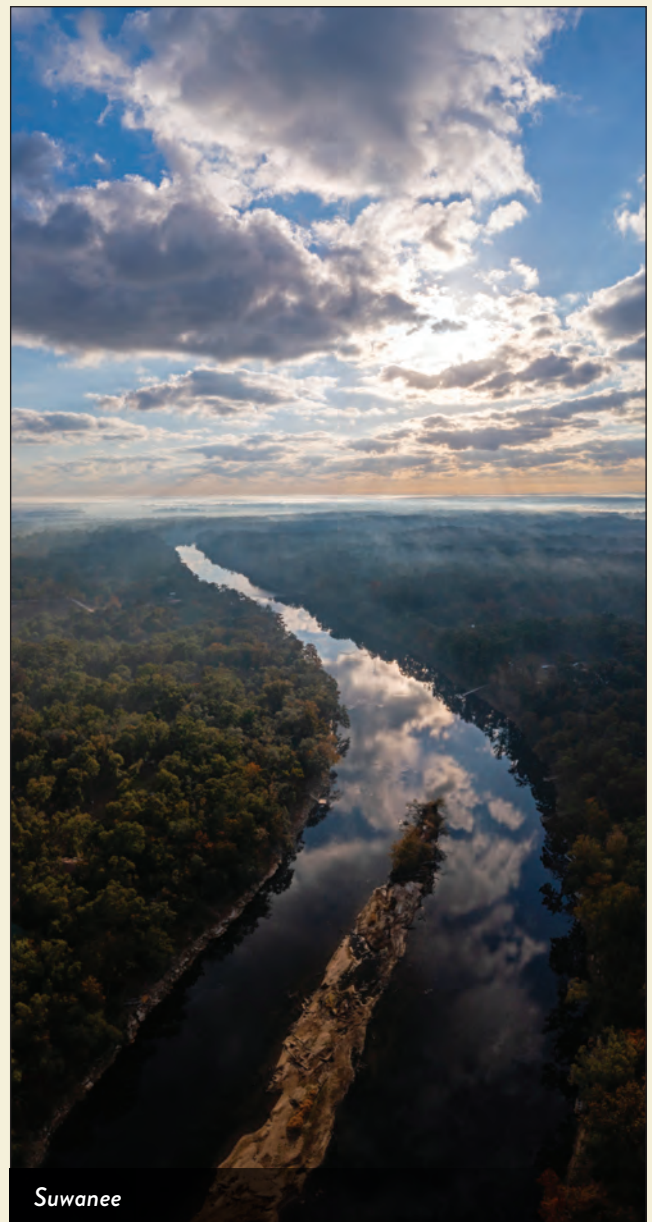


Photo Courtesy of Brent Famin

Welcome, Logan McDonald!

Logan McDonald has joined 1000 Friends of Florida as Special Projects Director. In this role, Logan will lead several initiatives focused on advancing conservation and responsible land-use planning across the state, working closely with Special Projects Director Emeritus Vivian Young and the University of Florida Center for Landscape Conservation Planning (CLCP).

Among her responsibilities, Logan will help organize and facilitate the Planning to Protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor webinar series, developed in partnership with the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, Live Wildly, and other collaborators.

Logan brings a strong background in conservation communications, grant administration, project management, and stakeholder engagement. Prior to joining 1000 Friends, she served as Community Outreach Coordinator for the Pensacola and Perdido



Logan McDonald

Bays Estuary Program, where she developed and administered a community grant program, led public outreach initiatives, and helped produce the State of the Bays Report.

She holds bachelor's degrees in environmental studies and biology from Florida Gulf Coast University and a master's degree in biology from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Logan also serves on the board of Gulf Coast Diplomacy, a host organization for the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program, where she serves

as a professional resource for international leaders exploring conservation and restoration, and frequently welcomes visitors to Florida as a host family.

A Florida native, Logan lives near Pensacola with her husband and loves exploring wild Florida by kayaking, hiking, biking, and camping. Please join us in welcoming her to the team!

Susan Carr joins our Board of Directors

1000 Friends of Florida is pleased to welcome Susan Carr of Gainesville to our **Board of Directors**. Susan brings deep expertise in land conservation, ecology, and conservation finance — along with a lifelong commitment to protecting Florida's natural landscapes.

Born and raised in Gainesville, Susan has dedicated her career to conserving North Florida's natural systems. She currently serves as a project manager with Putnam Land Conservancy, where she works with conservation-minded landowners to secure permanent land protection through state and federal programs. Previously, she worked with Alachua Conservation Trust and North Florida Land Trust, helping protect thousands of acres through Florida Forever and USDA Farm Bill conservation programs. Over the course of her career, Susan has helped secure



Susan Carr

more than \$40 million in federal funding for conservation easements and land management on private conservation lands.

"Susan brings an exceptional combination of scientific expertise and on-the-ground conservation experience," said Board Chair Susan Trevarthen. "Her deep understanding of Florida's landscapes, coupled with her experience securing permanent land protection, will strengthen our ability to advocate for smart growth and lasting conservation across the state."

Susan holds advanced degrees in botany, plant biology, and wildlife ecology and conservation, and currently serves as president of the Paynes Prairie chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. Please join us in welcoming her to the 1000 Friends family!

Celebrating 40 Years of 1000 Friends of Florida

2026 marks the 40th anniversary of 1000 Friends of Florida. For four decades, our community of supporters has helped us advance smarter growth, build stronger communities, and protect the places that make Florida special.

As we celebrate this milestone, we're taking time to reflect on the successes we've achieved together and looking ahead to the opportunities and challenges of the next 40 years. None of



our work would be possible without the steadfast support of our donors, partners, and advocates. Thank you for standing with us over the years.

Throughout this anniversary year, we'll be hosting special celebrations and events to honor our shared accomplishments and chart the path forward. Visit our website's anniversary landing page to learn more and stay updated on upcoming activities.

See: 1000fof.org/40-years



Singer Island

Photo Courtesy of Brent Fannin

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Ruth Mead

For Ruth Mead, love for Florida isn't just a feeling—it's a lifelong legacy, shaped by family, friendship, and a deep respect for the state's natural beauty.

Ruth first came to Hobe Sound in 1935 with her parents, grandmother, and sisters, spending cherished seasons at the Jupiter Island Club. What began as family vacations became something deeper. Friendships formed, traditions took root, and the rhythms of Florida life—tennis, golf, fishing along the Intracoastal, and long walks collecting shells—became woven into her story. Today, her great-grandchildren are the sixth generation of her family to enjoy this treasured place.

In 1973, Ruth and her late husband, Nelson, made their own lasting commitment, purchasing a home along the waterway. By the late 1980s, they officially became Florida residents.

Her love for the state extends beyond the coast. Another favorite place is The Kampong in Coral Gables, part of the National Tropical Botanical Garden. Once home to famed plant explorer David Fairchild, the gardens reflect Florida's extraordinary biodiversity.

Ruth's personal connections helped strengthen her commitment to conservation. She met Nat Reed, who was five years her junior, while they were both growing up on Jupiter Island. Over time, their families became close friends, sharing a passion for protecting Florida's natural beauty.

This sense of environmental stewardship led Ruth to

support 1000 Friends in its earliest years. As one of the organization's Founding Friends—among the first dedicated supporters—she helped build the foundation for 1000 Friends' work across the state. Today, she continues to value the organization that Nat Reed co-founded as a trusted champion for conservation and thoughtful legislation—an advocate for the very qualities that make Florida special.

Ruth is clear-eyed about today's challenges. Climate change, she believes, is Florida's greatest environmental threat. Close behind are uninformed leadership and the pressures of rapid, unchecked development.

Yet she remains hopeful and grounded in action. Ruth believes Florida's future depends on education across all ages and on electing leaders who are honest, informed, and committed to

protecting the state's natural resources. Supporting sustainable agriculture, fishing, and land use is essential to preserving both Florida's economy and its beauty.

Her message to fellow 1000 Friends supporters is simple: Encourage friends and neighbors to join us and support our work. And above all, VOTE—for leaders who will safeguard Florida's wetlands and forests, keeping the state productive, beautiful, and free from overdevelopment.

Ruth's story reminds us that every act of conservation and every vote matters, contributing to a Florida that is thriving, resilient, and enduring for generations to come.



Ruth Mead