

**1000 Friends of Florida Endorses Marion County  
Bond for Parks, Trails, Clean Water, Farms and Forests**  
*Vote Yes, For Bonds*

The Ocala metro area, which covers all of Marion County, was the fastest-growing metro area in the nation for the second year in a row, according to Census estimates released this year. That growth puts heavy pressure on the springs, horse farms and forests that define the county.

That's why 1000 Friends of Florida urges Marion County voters to support a measure on the November ballot that would authorize up to \$140 million in bonds for parks, trails, clean water protection, and farms and forests.

Silver Springs and Rainbow Springs are among Florida's most treasured places; both are Outstanding Florida Springs showing the effects of nitrogen pollution. Protecting land in their springsheds protects the aquifer that supplies the county's drinking water. Marion's horse farms and working lands, which earned it the title Horse Capital of the World, are central to the county's economy and identity. New parks and trails will give its growing population more places to hike, ride and play close to home.

Marion County has long worked to protect its rural character, including creating a Farmland Preservation Area of nearly 200,000 acres in 2005. But protecting land takes money, and the county's parks alone face needs estimated at \$195 million.

This past August, the Marion County Commission voted 5-0 to put this measure on the November ballot. If voters approve the measure:

- The county can issue up to \$140 million in general obligation bonds for parks, trails, clean water protection, and farms and forests.
- Property taxes rise by up to 0.35 mills, or up to \$35 per \$100,000 in taxable property value.
- Between 10% and 20% of the money is reserved for buying and preserving land, including natural lands, farms and forests that protect drinking water sources, springs, rivers and lakes. At least 70% goes to designing and building parks and trails, and no more than 10% to management.
- Program money is accounted for separately, with quarterly reports posted online and an annual independent audit.
- An expanded citizen Parks and Recreation Advisory Council reviews the program.

Marion County is home to the Ocala National Forest and the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, key parts of the Florida Wildlife Corridor, a statewide network of natural and agricultural land recognized by state lawmakers for its critical importance in sustaining wildlife and protecting water quality. Land protected through this measure can help keep that network connected.

We urge residents committed to clean springs, thriving farms and a healthy, prosperous future for Marion County to vote Yes, For Bonds.