

2026

Policy Blueprint Our Legislative Platform



TNC Policy Blueprint 2026

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A Note from Our Executive Director

As we welcome the 2026 Legislative Session, The Nature Conservancy in Florida is proud to continue partnering with Florida's elected officials to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Our approach is grounded in science and informed by an ambitious plan to secure a thriving planet, which focuses on the most urgent priorities identified by our experts. From longleaf pine restoration in the Panhandle to stormwater management innovations in South Florida, our work reflects the diversity and uniqueness of Florida's natural landscapes and communities.

We recognize that sound public policy is essential to addressing the challenges facing our environment, and we are ready to lend our data and expertise working closely with policymakers to ensure effective, practical solutions. The support we've seen from leaders across the state inspires confidence that, together, we can advance conservation efforts that benefit both people and nature.

As a lifelong Floridian and passionate advocate for our natural world, I am grateful to partner with leaders who share a commitment to preserving Florida's beauty and ecological health. Thank you for your continued collaboration as we work to secure a thriving future for all Floridians. With shared vision and determination, we can create effective policies that safeguard Florida's natural heritage for generations to come. Together, we find a way.



Greg Knecht
Executive Director

[Photo credits]

Front cover: Florida Capitol © Denis Tangney Jr.; Chin up: Two adult manatees share a special moment together while aggregating in a freshwater spring in North-Central Florida © Joseph Ricketts/TNC Photo Contest 2021
Right: Striped bass in the Natural Well at Silver Glen Springs © Melissa Shawn Griffith/TNC Photo Contest 2017





About The Nature Conservancy

Protecting nature. Preserving life.

The Nature Conservancy was founded in the United States through grassroots action in 1951. We have grown to become the world's largest conservation organization and are one of the most effective, wide-reaching environmental organizations on the planet. Guided by our ambitious global 2030 goals to secure a healthy planet for people and nature, we impact conservation in 81 countries and territories, including all 50 U.S. states, thanks to more than a million members and the dedicated efforts of our diverse staff and over 1,000 scientists. Our work addresses climate change; protects oceans, lands, and fresh water; and provides sustainable food and water to ensure a thriving planet for future generations. We operate more than 100 marine conservation projects, have protected over 125 million acres of land, and fund other efforts using innovative finance tools.

Our mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends

2018 Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition from TNC's Disney Wilderness Preserve
© Alexandra Morrison

Since 1961, The Nature Conservancy in Florida has advanced conservation and protected natural environments in our state. Our core strategies address the greatest threats to nature and people, focusing where we are uniquely positioned to make the most significant contributions to Florida's future. We have protected more than 1.3 million acres of vulnerable lands and waters across the state, own and manage about 40,000 acres, and work with landowners on an additional 45,000 acres. We also own and operate a wetland mitigation bank in rapidly growing Central Florida. The rich diversity of landscapes across our Center for Conservation Initiatives campus preserves reflects Florida's unique geography and biodiversity. The renowned preserves are open to the public and feature marine and coastal environments in the Southeast; working forests in the Panhandle; the connected lands, waters, and communities of Central Florida; and Florida's ancient wilderness.

TNC in Florida Board of Trustees



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 of Environmental Protection)

Our Platform

Policy makes conservation possible.

Led by science and data, The Nature Conservancy in Florida builds coalitions and constituencies demonstrating leadership and informing policy decisions. We and our partners in government develop public policy solutions that are vital to our state's legacy of thriving environments and economically productive natural resources. TNC has a track record of informing smart and impactful conservation funding, policy, and practices that serve the Sunshine State's nuanced interests. We must also be strategic about targeting our efforts where we can credibly engage and contribute to meaningful results. Healthy communities, economies, and resources depend on healthy natural environments. Florida faces challenges to our way of life and the wild places that make it possible, but we are committed to a future for Florida that is abundant, connected, and resilient, offering both nature and people the opportunity to thrive. Together, we find a way.

Throughout the 2026 Legislative Session, The Nature Conservancy in Florida will support proposals that (1) protect important and sensitive land and water resources, (2) equip local and rural communities to lead in conservation, (3) produce clean and sustainable energy, and (4) adequately fund the most important conservation tools and opportunities. Focusing on these themes will ensure that "Real Florida" is preserved for generations to come and that taxpayers receive the best return on their investments in conservation.

Have Your Land & Steward It, Too

Empower Homegrown Conservation

Keep the Lights On

Put Your Money Where Your Impact Is



Have Your Land & Steward It, Too

Protect important and sensitive land and water resources.



Florida's landscapes and waterways are the foundation of our prosperity, our way of life, and our resilience in the face of formidable environmental challenges. As a longstanding and active partner with the State in stewarding our lands and waters, The Nature Conservancy in Florida supports conserving, restoring, and responsibly managing these irreplaceable resources ensuring that they continue to provide clean water, wildlife habitat, recreation, and economic opportunity.

We advocate for strong investments in land acquisition through programs including both Florida Forever and the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, securing critical parcels that connect and protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor. We support conservation easements that safeguard working lands and wildlife habitat for future generations while allowing continued private ownership and productive use. We also champion smart growth management policies that guide development away from sensitive areas, reduce infrastructure costs, and protect natural systems. We support peatland restoration projects, which store carbon, filter water, and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

Stewardship does not end at acquisition. The Nature Conservancy in Florida supports stable, increased funding for land, aquatic, and resource management plus coordination between state agencies and private land managers like TNC to streamline funding and boost efficiencies. We support a plan to address Florida's state park main-

tenance backlog so that our public lands remain safe, accessible, and ecologically healthy. Revitalization efforts like river restoration demonstrate the benefits of reconnecting natural systems while science-based solutions such as robust nutrient stewardship standards backed by data from fertilizer rate studies help reduce nutrient pollution and protect downstream waters. We also recognize that agricultural producers help lead the way in protecting water quality while sustaining productive lands.

From ecosystem restoration to community recreation, protecting Florida's land and water resources is a win for people, nature, and our future.

The Nature Conservancy supports public policy that responsibly stewards our lands and waters:

- Land acquisition, including Florida Forever and the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program
- Connecting and protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor
- Enduring conservation easements for working lands and habitat
- Funding for natural resource management and coordinated activity
- Smart growth strategies
- Peatland, river, and other restoration efforts
- Carbon sequestration
- State park stewardship
- Nutrient management
- Nature-based solutions and natural infrastructure strategies

Photo: Field of blooming blue toadflax at TNC's Disney Wilderness Preserve © Eric Blackmore

Empower Homegrown Conservation



Equip local and rural communities to lead in conservation.

Florida is known for its lush greenery, tropical climates, and natural beauty. It is the land of the Muscogee, Apalachee, Timucua, Seminoles, Tocobaga, Ais, Calusa, Jeaga, Mayaimi, Tequesta, and Matecumbe. We are graced with 1,300 miles of shoreline and the greatest concentration of natural springs in the world. People from all walks of life, from cowboys to snowbirds, have chosen our state to plant roots and build their legacies. Stewarding that heritage is an incredible responsibility, and Florida's best conservation wins start close to home crafted by communities who know their lands, waters, and needs best. The Nature Conservancy in Florida supports policies that equip local and rural communities with the tools, resources, and authority needed to safeguard their own natural heritage.

We support local governments' ability to make land use and growth management decisions that reflect their communities' unique characteristics and priorities. We encourage state policy that preserves this local decision-making capacity and allows tailored approaches to development and conservation. Strong regional planning councils foster coordinated strategies for growth and resource protection while bringing much-needed funding to cash-strapped rural populations.

With a long history of partnering with farmers, ranchers, local governments, state agencies, and industry, TNC knows

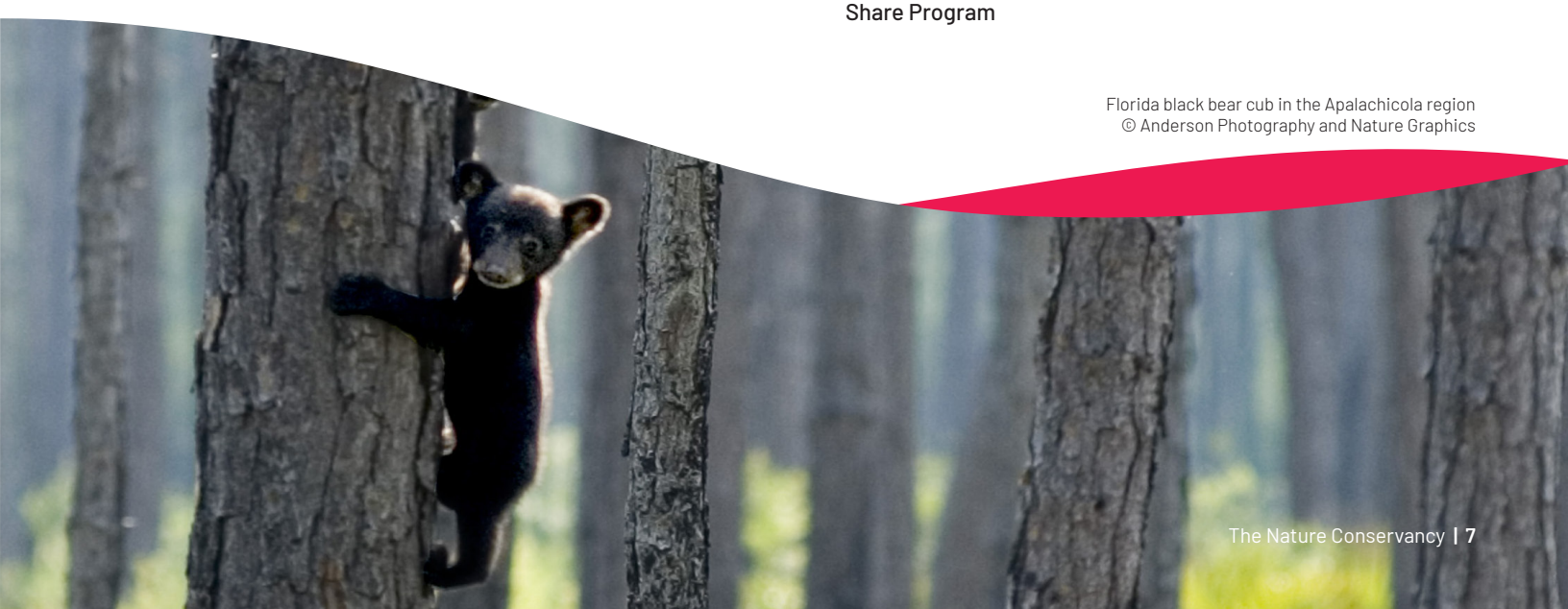
that durable conservation comes from collaboration. We are proud to be a member of the Florida One Water Commission and support One Water strategies that ensure sustainable water supply planning within and across borders while maintaining local leadership. We advocate for continued and expanded funding for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' (FDACS) Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost Share Program, which helps producers implement BMPs that conserve water, protect soil health, and reduce nutrient pollution. We also support communities' ability to address growth and development in ways that protect their environmental and economic futures.

Ensuring that local and overlooked voices have the authority, funding, and technical support they need makes conservation more effective, more enduring, and better aligned with the people it serves.

The Nature Conservancy supports local and rural communities in advancing the conservation policy that makes sense for them:

- Local government authority over land use and growth management policy
- Strong regional planning councils and the robust funding they bring to rural communities
- One Water approaches to water supply planning
- Collaborative, data-proven programs such as FDACS' BMP Cost Share Program

Florida black bear cub in the Apalachicola region
© Anderson Photography and Nature Graphics



Keep The Lights On



Produce clean, sustainable, and reliable energy.

Florida's energy future should be as bright as its sunshine. The Nature Conservancy in Florida supports policies that encourage clean, sustainable energy while ensuring reliable and resilient power for all Floridians.

We champion streamlined solar permitting to reduce barriers for homeowners and businesses who want to harness the Sun's power. Thoughtful energy planning at the state level can guide investment toward diverse, renewable sources and greater grid resilience to help communities prepare for both everyday demand and extreme weather events. TNC also supports innovative solutions such as agrivoltaics, which partners solar energy production with agriculture allowing farmers to generate clean power while maintaining productive land. Net metering policies are critical for making solar investment practical for residents, businesses, and farms, ensuring fair compensation for the clean energy they produce.

By fostering a forward-looking energy landscape, Florida can strengthen its economy, reduce harmful emissions, and protect the natural resources that draw people here in the first place, keeping the lights on for generations to come.

The Nature Conservancy supports public policy that allows Florida to produce clean, sustainable, and reliable energy:

- Energy planning to improve the statewide energy landscape
- Agrivoltaics and incentives that encourage its many applications and benefits
- Thoughtful, fair state and local net metering policies



Adult sandhill crane and chick in Ocala National Forest
© Jennifer Leigh/TNC Photo Contest 2015

Put Your Money Where Your Impact Is

Adequately fund conservation tools and opportunities.



Conservation success depends on sustained, strategic investment. The Nature Conservancy in Florida supports robust, predictable funding that delivers measurable returns for people, nature, and the economy.

We support full funding for land acquisition programs, including \$100 million annually for Florida Forever, \$100 million for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, and appropriations for peat restoration and carbon sequestration projects. These investments protect biodiversity, capture and store carbon, and preserve working lands for future generations. Funding should also prioritize Florida's most productive and vulnerable water resources, including estuary programs such as the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program and the St. Andrew & St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program in the Panhandle (the latter was funded by The Nature Conservancy and is housed at The Florida State University Panama City). As an organization guided by science and data, TNC supports water project appropriations based on metrics that identify return on investment to ensure the best outcomes for communities and ecosystems.

TNC supports stable and increased land and aquatic resource management funding, particularly as new lands are acquired, and ensuring that state agencies have the staffing capacity called for in their Legislative Budget Requests. Additionally, conservation trust funds must be used according to their intended purposes to maximize impact. We support environmental restoration projects, fertilizer rate studies conducted by the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, the FDACS BMP Cost Share Program, regional water supply programs, and strategic member-proposed projects that advance conservation goals statewide. TNC is also piloting stormwater management innovations in the Indian River Lagoon that could help address nutrient pollution while creating scalable, cost-effective solutions for communities across the state.

The right investments today will keep Florida's lands, waters, and communities thriving tomorrow.

The Nature Conservancy supports smart, reliable funding now to ensure a stronger, more resilient Florida for the future:

- TNC Runoff to Resilience Stormwater Pilot Project
- Florida Forever and Florida Communities Trust
- Rural and Family Lands Protection Program
- Natural resource management, state agency staffing, and program capacity
- Resilient Florida
- Water management districts
- Restoration projects from America's Everglades to North Florida

A Florida panther stares at the camera before attempting to pounce on the photographer
© Remie Excutdie/TNC Photo Contest 2018



Roseate spoonbills at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge © Joshua Pelta-Heller/TNC Photo Contest 2019

More About TNC

Our CCI Preserves

Apalachicola Bluffs & Ravines Preserve (Liberty County in North Florida)

10394 NW Longleaf Drive, Bristol, FL |(850)643-2756 | VisitABRP@tnc.org
ABRP protects some of the rarest habitat in the world and massive exposed bluffs along the Apalachicola River. Its unusual geologic features provide refuge for rare and imperiled plants and animals, some of which aren't found anywhere else on Earth making this region one of five biodiversity hotspots in North America.

Blowing Rocks Preserve (Martin County in Southeast Florida)

574 S Beach Road, Hobe Sound, FL 33455 |(561)744-6668 | VisitBRP@tnc.org
BRP is named for its rocky Anastasia limestone shoreline – the largest on the Atlantic coast. At high tide when the sea is rough, seas break against the rocks and force plumes of saltwater up to 50 feet skyward. This peaceful, barrier island sanctuary is a renowned model for large-scale, native coastal habitat restoration.

Disney Wilderness Preserve (Polk and Osceola Counties in Central Florida)

2700 Scrub Jay Trail, Poinciana, FL |(407)935-0002 | VisitDWP@tnc.org
Home to more than 1,000 species of plants and animals, the Disney Wilderness Preserve in Central Florida is an essential part of the Everglades ecosystem. It contains 3,500 acres of restored wetlands that act as nature's "sponges," capturing rain, filtering out nutrients, and replenishing our groundwater. The Walt Disney Company provided funds for restoration and wildlife monitoring on the preserve and continues to partner with TNC on a number of on-site projects today. The preserve stands as a testament not only to Walt Disney's love of nature but also to the power of cooperation, perseverance, and innovative thinking.

Tiger Creek Preserve (Polk County in Central Florida)

674 Pfundstein Road, Babson Park, FL |(863)635-7506 | VisitTCP@tnc.org
TCP is named after the pristine blackwater stream that forms its spine and sits on the eastern edge of the Lake Wales Ridge, one of Florida's ancient islands when much of the state was underwater. Previously separated from the mainland by a shallow sea, the Ridge is peninsular Florida's oldest and highest landmass. That's why TCP has one of the highest concentrations of threatened and endangered plants and animals in the country. Some exist nowhere else on Earth.

The Nature Conservancy in Florida's Center for Conservation Initiatives

Caring for our environment's health is critical for people and nature to flourish, and The Nature Conservancy is a leader in stewarding our natural resources in Florida and around the world. Utilizing our network of preserves, long history of experience in land management, and partnerships across the state, TNC staff have achieved conservation successes that benefit both the environment and the people of Florida. We use our Center for Conservation Initiatives (CCI) as a networked, site-based science and strategy platform to collaborate with state and federal agencies, colleges and universities, other non-profit organizations, and private landowners. CCI's four primary preserves are indispensable, real-world laboratories that environmental scientists use to further our understanding of our planet and its processes. They are also open to the public for recreation and education.

"Landscapes of great wonder and beauty lie under our feet and all around us. They are discovered in tunnels in the ground, the hearts of flowers, the hollows of trees, freshwater ponds, seaweed jungles between the tides, and even drops of water. Life in these hidden worlds is more startling in reality than anything we can imagine."

– Walt Disney



Baby barred owl twins at Myakka River State Park in Sarasota, FL © Heather Chadwick/TNC Photo Contest 2019

Nature's Voice in the Capitol

TNC in Florida Policy Staff

Executive Leadership



Greg Knecht
Executive Director



Jennifer Carpenter
Deputy Executive Director

Government Relations Team



Janet Bowman
Senior Policy Advisor/Climate Policy



Kahreem Golden
Florida Government Relations Manager



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Jack Fahey
Assistant Vice President



Rhett O'Doski
Senior Vice President



Ryder Rudd
Senior Vice President



Sean Stafford
Senior Vice President & Director

The Nature Conservancy's Vision

Our vision is a world where the diversity of life thrives and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives.

Florida's Future Vision

We envision a future for Florida that is abundant, connected, and resilient, offering both nature and people the opportunity to thrive.






Top: Torreya State Park © Jeff Ripple
Middle: Florida alligator © Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Bottom: Brain coral with Christmas tree worms at Dry Tortugas © Rachel Hancock-Davis/TNC



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