

RESOLUTION 2016-Purchase US Sugar Option Land

WHEREAS, Palm Beach County and its citizens endeavor to be good stewards of the environment and its natural resources, including wildlife, for generations yet born; and

WHEREAS, Palm Beach County and the entire State of Florida has a unique and irreplaceable natural heritage that includes the Florida Everglades which is worthy of permanent protection; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Everglades has been damaged by water being blocked at the South End of Lake Okeechobee and Florida Bay has experienced a serious algal bloom due to lack of fresh, clean water which historically drained South from Lake Okeechobee; and

WHEREAS, the State has an option to purchase US Sugar land South of Lake Okeechobee; and

WHEREAS, Palm Beach County is experiencing blue green algae from the West Palm Beach Canal along with Martin and St. Lucie Counties from the St. Lucie Canal due to contaminated water being dispersed from Lake Okeechobee into our waters ; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Florida passed Amendment 1 to provide funds to purchase land; and

WHEREAS, Palm Beach County is a major part of the original Florida Everglades and the storage of water South of Lake Okeechobee would enhance the economy of Palm Beach County; and

WHEREAS, by virtue of its broad habitat and extensive wetlands, the Florida Everglades ensures the protection of many species' habitat;

WHEREAS, the continued alteration and development of natural areas to accommodate human population growth and agriculture have

contributed to the diminution and fragmentation of Florida's ecosystems and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the risk of flooding because of too much water held in Lake Okeechobee could be alleviated by storage South of Lake Okeechobee; and

WHEREAS, habitat loss and degradation is the principle threat to the long term survivability of the Florida Everglades; and

WHEREAS, the conservation of the Florida Everglades and its myriad of species and their habitats require immediate protection through State purchase by the Florida Land Acquisition Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Constitution, Article II, Section 7(a) recognizes that the acquisition of conservation lands serves the public interest, providing, "It shall be the policy of the state to conserve and protect its natural resources and scenic beauty. Adequate provision shall be made by law for the abatement of air and water pollution and of excessive and unnecessary noise and for the conservation and protection of natural resources [;]" and

WHEREAS, for many decades, until the present, the leadership of the State of Florida recognized the value of public conservation lands and, until very recently diligently implemented a policy of conservation land acquisition, including the Florida Forever Act; and

WHEREAS, a citizens' initiative to amend the Florida Constitution entitled "Water and Land Conservation - Dedicates funds to acquire and restore Florida conservation" collected 709,976 petitions to qualify for the statewide November 4, 2014 ballot and was approved by 74.96% of Florida voters; and

WHEREAS, Article 10, Section 28 of the Florida Constitution, known as Water and Land Legacy Amendment, now mandates the acquisition of conservation land, providing that the Florida Land Acquisition Trust

Fund shall be used, in relevant part, “to finance or refinance: the acquisition and improvement of land, water areas, and related property interests, including conservation easements, and resources for conservation lands including wetlands, forests, and fish and wildlife habitat; wildlife management areas; lands that protect water resources and drinking water sources, including lands protecting the water quality and quantity of rivers, lakes, streams, springsheds, and lands providing recharge for groundwater....outdoor recreation lands, including recreational trails, parks, and urban open space; rural landscapes; working farms and ranches; historic or geologic sites; together with management, restoration of natural systems, and the enhancement of public access or recreational enjoyment of conservation lands...”; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Legislature has willfully and deliberately failed to implement the citizen’s initiative approved by the Florida electorate and now established in the Florida Constitution as Article 10, Section 8 by failing to purchase natural areas for permanent conservation; and

WHEREAS, Palm Beach County and citizens throughout the State decry the Legislature’s willful diversion of Florida Land Acquisition Trust Fund monies from acquisition of conservation lands; and

WHEREAS, without immediate proper implementation of Article 10, Section 28 of the Florida Constitution, the current State government will have failed to adequately protect Florida’s unique natural resources, as previous governments *have* done for us and future generations; and

WHEREAS, land, water and wildlife conservation are *fundamental* nonpartisan imperatives, aspects of the public trust which all elected officials are bound to uphold;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA:

1. That the Palm Beach Board of County Commission supports the purchase of land to work as either a flow way or reservoir.
2. That the Palm Beach Board of County Commissioners finds Land and water (and wildlife) conservation are *fundamental* nonpartisan imperatives, aspects of the public trust which all elected officials are bound to uphold.
3. That the Palm Beach Board of County Commissioners finds that without immediate proper implementation of the Water and Land Legacy Amendment, Article 10, Section 28 of the Florida Constitution, the Water and Land Legacy Amendment, this generation's State government shall fail to adequately protect Florida's unique natural resources, as previous governments *have* done for us and generations yet born.
4. That the Palm Beach Board of County Commissioners urges the Florida Legislature and the Governor of Florida to immediately implement the will of the people as expressed in the Article 10, Section 8, by allocating sufficient land-buying conservation funds to procure meaningful habitat.
5. That the Palm Beach Board of County Commissioners urges the South Florida Water Management District, Governor of the State of Florida and the State Legislature to immediately prioritize purchase of candidate conservation lands in accord with the original Florida Forever/Acquisition and Restoration Council criteria including lands South of Lake Okeechobee, and which will also serve as healthful, desirable, *needed* recreation lands for Floridians.
6. That the Palm Beach Board of County Commissioners finds that purchase of land South of Lake Okeechobee for water storage

and water quality shall also promote the quality of life for Floridians and future generations.

7. That the Palm Beach Board of County Commissioners will send certified copies of the Resolution to the South Florida Water Management District, Governor Rick Scott, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House.
8. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.