



## **Volusia Forever**

Volusia *Forever* was created in 2000 when the citizens of Volusia County voted to tax themselves over 20 years to protect the county's natural biodiversity.

To stretch these dollars as far as possible, it was the County's intent to use these funds to apply for matching grants awarded under the Florida Forever Program, and any similar federal funding programs for acquiring property to protect Volusia's natural resources.

Using the Florida Forever Program as a guide, the goals of Volusia Forever are:

- to conserve, maintain and restore the natural environment and provide access for the enjoyment and education of the public;
- provide resources to ensure that sufficient quantities of water are available to meet current and future needs;
- meet the need for high-quality resource based outdoor opportunities, greenways, and trails;
- preserve the habitat and water recharge;
- ensure that the natural resource values of such lands are protected and that the public has the opportunity to enjoy the lands to their fullest potential.

Volusia Forever has been funded with a varying property tax that amounts to .11 mills generating \$3.95 million in FY 2019-2020 with a fund balance of more than \$10 million. Approximately 38,000 acres (fee-simple and less-than-fee) have been acquired since the beginning of the program.

Volusia Forever acquisition projects must contribute to the following conservation goals:

- Increase in the level of protection, as well as the population, of listed species
- Restoration of land areas
- Completion of projects begun under previous land acquisition programs
- Increase in the amount of forest land for sustainable natural resources
- Increase in resource-based public use opportunities
- Improvement of water recharge rates on public lands
- Protection of natural flood plain functions and prevention of or reduction in flood damage
- Restoration of degraded water bodies
- Restoration of wetlands and the preservation of strategic wetlands
- Preservation of, or reduction of contaminants in, aquifers and springs

Priority will be given to acquisitions which achieve a combination of these conservation goals, in addition to improving water resources and natural groundwater recharge, provide recreational opportunities.

Lands shall be managed and maintained to the extent practicable in such a way as to ensure a balance between public access and restoration and protection of their natural state and condition. Public access, as well as public use, will be determined in the management plans.

The Volusia County Council is considering a resolution to levy of an additional 1/5 mill ad valorem tax for an additional twenty years to fund the acquisition of water resource and environmentally sensitive land for conservation and public use.

**Position**

**The Daytona Regional Chamber supports the County's language to renew the proposed Volusia Forever referendum.**

**8/2020**