

GOVERNOR SCOTT'S BUDGET RECOMMENDS \$1.4 BILLION TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE FLORIDA'S ENVIRONMENT

~Funding for Everglades, spring and land conservation~

TALLAHASSEE – Today, Governor Rick Scott highlighted his commitment to protect, preserve and improve Florida's environment. The Governor's "It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget" will include support for restoration projects in the Everglades, springs protection improvements, and the purchase of conservation lands. The FY2014/2015 budget places a priority on protecting the health of Florida's natural resources.

"By proposing more than a billion dollars, Governor Scott recognizes the Department's commitment to preserving the environment through sound science," said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "This significant funding will ensure the Department's ability to continue to safeguard and protect the state's natural resources."

Proposed budget items include:

\$180 million investment to restore the Everglades and Florida Keys. Governor Scott has been laser-focused on Everglades restoration. This continues funding for the Governor's landmark \$880 million Everglades water quality plan. The \$180 million also includes \$40 million to speed up completion of the C-44 Stormwater Treatment Area for Martin and St. Lucie counties, and provide the first \$30 million - in a three year installment - for the Tamiami Trail project, providing needed water to Everglades National Park. In addition, the investment of these funds will allow for the completion of the Kissimmee River restoration project, which will improve the environmental health of the area north and south of Lake Okeechobee, the Lake itself, and Lee, Charlotte, Martin and St. Lucie counties. Lastly, \$50 million will support improvements to the Florida Keys wastewater system, helping to protect the coral reefs and water quality of the Keys.

\$286 million for restoring waterways and water supply. This funding represents a continued commitment to assisting Florida's communities with "getting the water right." More than \$276 million is provided for wastewater/stormwater facility construction, drinking water facility construction and water quality planning. Additionally \$9.4 million is provided to continue setting nutrient limits and developing restoration plans for Florida's waters at a record pace. Under Governor Scott's leadership, the Department has implemented the most comprehensive numeric nutrient criteria in the nation.

\$55 million for springs restoration. The "It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget" commits \$55 million for springs restoration, protection and preservation, with \$50 million invested in springs protection projects and to address significant groundwater issues in and around springs. Since 2011, Governor Scott has specifically directed more funding to springs protection than any Administration in Florida's history to protect and restore these natural treasures.

\$70 million for Florida Forever. The Governor's budget recommends \$30 million in cash and an additional \$40 million in budget authority from the proceeds of the sale of surplus non-conservation lands owned by the state. This investment to purchase conservation lands needed for springs protection, military buffering or water resource protection will allow Floridians to enjoy our natural treasures.

\$125 million for Petroleum Tank Cleanup. This funding will support a more efficient and effective petroleum tanks restoration program. DEP will competitively procure contracts providing a better value for the Florida taxpayer.

\$25 million for beach erosion control. The Governor's budget will manage and nourish Florida's beautiful beaches. The local government partners responsible for the state's most valuable and recognizable natural resource will benefit from state assistance for beach and dune restoration, beach nourishment, inlet sand bypassing and regional sediment management.

\$19 million for state park improvements. The funding for state park repairs, renovations and development will keep Florida State Parks on the map. This includes \$4 million in ADA access improvements. Florida is the only state to be awarded three National Gold Medals for Excellence by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

In addition, Governor Scott's "It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget" provides \$1 million to protect Florida's manatees. The Oceanaria Reimbursement Assistance Program, which is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, works to rescue, rehabilitate and release manatees to support their adult population, which is key to the survival of the species.

Representative Holly Raschein said, "Governor Scott's investment to fund key priorities to improve the infrastructure here in South Florida - with Everglades restoration and enhancements to the Keys wastewater system - illustrates his commitment to Florida's environment."

Eric Draper, Executive Director of Audubon Florida said, "Everglades, Florida Forever and springs restoration are critical priorities for Florida. Governor Scott's budget increases funding for these priorities and also renews funding for Florida Keys wastewater to help protect our reefs."

Shelly Lakly, Director of the Florida Chapter of The Nature Conservancy said, "We support the significant investments in water quality that are illustrated in the proposed budget through increased funding for Everglades restoration and springs protection projects to prevent further degradation of our estuaries and springs. With the funding for the Keys wastewater system, the Governor has followed through on his commitment to protect Florida's coral reefs and marine ecosystems, a priority of The Nature Conservancy and important to protecting the economy and quality of life of the Florida Keys.

Eric Eikenberg, CEO of The Everglades Foundation said, "Governor Scott's budget recognizes that we must protect the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers and estuaries, and sharpen our focus on rapidly restoring and protecting America's Everglades."

Sally Hess, Secretary of the Friends of Florida State Parks said, "The continued support by Governor Scott in his budget will help protect, sustain and improve accessibility to Florida's award winning state parks."

Greg Chelius with the Trust for Public Land said, "With this funding, Governor Scott's investment will allow for significant opportunities to protect the state's natural resources."

Patrick Rose, Executive Director of the Save the Manatee Club said, "We applaud Governor Scott for championing this critical investment in the protection of our endangered manatees. His strong support will better ensure that manatees will receive the care they urgently need today and in the future."

For further details on the Governor's recommended "It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget", visit www.FLItsYourMoney.com.