



## FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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Gainesville, FL 32627-5007

April 23, 2026

Senate President Ben Albritton  
409 The Capitol  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

House Speaker Daniel Perez  
420 The Capitol  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

SUBJECT: Importance of Funding Both Florida Forever and Rural and Family Lands

Dear President Albritton and Speaker Perez:

The Florida Native Plant Society's 6,000+ members recognize the value of both the *Florida Forever* and *Rural and Family Lands Protection (RFLPP)* programs. We view them as complimentary programs that advance distinctly different objectives. Neither can serve as an effective substitute for the other; however, both the Senate and House have recommended budgets that short-change Florida Forever while providing generous support to RFLPP. That is a funding formula that fails to appreciate the need for a balanced approach to the protection of both natural lands and agricultural lands.

We ask you to dedicate at least \$100 million to Florida Forever when the legislature reconvenes to complete the 2026-2027 budget. You committed to providing at least \$100 million annually in 2023 and have never lived up to that commitment. The rapid pace of development now consuming Florida is no less a threat to natural lands than it is to agricultural lands. And our best remaining unprotected natural areas are, if anything, even more irreplaceable. The budget as currently proposed does not recognize the reality we face and does not keep faith with a taxpaying public that consistently asks you to prioritize land conservation.

The fundamental differences between Florida Forever and RFLPP suggest that a balanced approach would actually provide a higher level of funding for Florida Forever than for RFLPP. Florida Forever protects natural lands through the purchase of either fee title ownership or conservation easements. The higher level of protection afforded by fee title purchases typically comes with a much higher price tag, on an acre-for-acre basis, than the cost of an easement. The return-on-investment for a fee title purchase is also much higher. It serves as the source of new state parks, forests and wildlife management areas, and includes an assurance of public access for compatible recreational enjoyment. Conservation easements purchased through Florida Forever ensure a property's natural resources are preserved while allowing the land to remain in private ownership.

In contrast to Florida Forever, RFLPP can only purchase easements that keep the protected land in agricultural production. Any natural areas within an RFLPP easement can, with few exceptions, be converted to intensive agricultural use at any time, at the discretion of the

*Preserving, conserving and restoring the native plants and native plant communities of Florida*

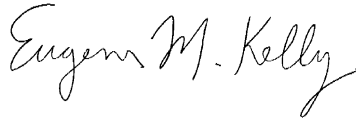
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landowner. Agricultural production supersedes the consideration of natural resource protection, and RFLPP easements do not include any provisions for public access.

The bottom line can be expressed very succinctly: Florida Forever protects nature, while RFLPP protects agriculture. We need to protect both to secure a sustainable future for our state, and these two programs provide the mechanism for us to be successful. The cost of land continues to rise, as it always has. Declining to fund Florida Forever this year will just mean losing even more ground to the bulldozers and subjecting taxpayers to higher costs in the future.

Please make the right choice for Florida by dedicating at least \$100 million to Florida Forever when you meet to finalize the 2026-2027 budget.

Respectfully,



Eugene M. Kelly, President  
Florida Native Plant Society

cc:     Senator Edward Hooper  
          Senator Lori Berman  
          Senator Jim Boyd  
          Senator Jason Brodeur  
          Senator Gayle Harrell  
          Senator Kathleen Passidomo  
          Senator Darryl Rouson  
          Travis Moore, Moore Associates  
          Tim Sadberry, Senate Staff Director  
          Eric Pridgeon, Staff Director of the House Budget Committee

Representative Lawrence McClure  
Representative Alex Andrade  
Representative Demi Busatta  
Representative Jason Shoaf  
Representative John Snyder  
Representative Allison Tant  
Representative Marie Paule Woodson