

**FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
RESOLUTION FAVORING FLORIDA FOREVER**

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE CREATION AND FUNDING BY THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE OF A SUCCESSOR PROGRAM TO THE FLORIDA FOREVER LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM AND URGING THE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION TO VIGOROUSLY SUPPORT THE CREATION AND INCREASED FUNDING OF SUCH A SUCCESSOR PROGRAM AND REQUESTING THE SUPERINTENDENT TO FORWARD A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE FLORIDA SENATE, THE SPEAKER OF THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, GOVERNOR CHARLIE CHRIST, AND THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION.

February 19, 2008

WHEREAS, the Florida Forever program and its predecessor Preservation 2000 program immeasurably contributed to environmental health, quality of life, recreation, and sustainability in Florida for this and future generations; and

WHEREAS, Florida Forever has acquired over 600,000 acres throughout Florida since 2000 and allocates \$300 million annually to purchase environmentally sensitive and other lands, and has done so through numerous successful partnerships with cities, counties, state agencies, water management districts, nonprofit organizations, private landowners, and others in achieving its conservation purposes; and

WHEREAS, Florida Forever, through its partnerships with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Water Management Districts, and others, produces benefits that include clean air and water; healthy fisheries and wildlife habitat; improved water supply protection; and protected open spaces including greenway corridors park lands forests and water bodies; and

WHEREAS, Florida Forever, through Florida Communities Trust, has assisted Florida's cities and counties in protecting their cultural and historical resources, meeting the challenges of growth management, directing development away from coastal high hazard areas and floodplains, fostering a healthier lifestyle for Floridians, and providing recreational outdoor experiences in both urban and rural settings; and

WHEREAS, Florida Forever has helped to save many of Florida's beaches, rivers, bays, forests, coral reefs and estuaries that provide the foundation for our \$3 billion tourism industry that attract more than 70 million visitors each year; and

WHEREAS, more than 50 Florida local governments have enacted land acquisition financing programs in the past decades, and this conservation finance programs serve to leverage Florida Forever funding and increase the impact of State land conservation funding; and

WHEREAS, Florida is experiencing rapid population growth, with approximately 1,100 new residents every day; and Floridians demand a high quality of life that includes green space, access to water, pastoral settings and recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Florida Forever and other land conservation programs must compete in a land and housing market that has escalated dramatically in recent years; and

WHEREAS, the effectiveness of Florida Forever has diminished because of escalating land prices and the impacts of inflation; and

WHEREAS, virtually all of the funding for the Florida Forever program through the Fiscal Year 2009-10 is already obligated to or anticipated for planned land purchases, having virtually no funding for new conservation projects for two years; and

WHEREAS, research by the Florida Forever Coalition has found that over \$20 billion is currently needed to purchase parks and recreational facilities, wildlife and wilderness areas, and open space for our state's increasing population, and

WHEREAS, a 2007 public opinion survey conducted by members of the Florida Forever Coalition found that more than 70% of Florida's voters approve of the Florida Forever program; and

WHEREAS, the benefits of Florida Forever have included the purchase of such valuable local resources as Plantation Tropical Preserve, Green Turtle Hammock, Marathon Waterfront Park, Key West Tropical Forest and Botanical Garden, portions of the Overseas Heritage Trail and numerous natural areas from Key Largo to Big Coppitt Key within the North Key Largo Hammocks, Florida Keys Ecosystem and Coupon Bight/Key Deer Florida Forever projects; and

WHEREAS, the benefits of Florida Forever have included purchase of important portions of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council:

Section 1. That the Council hereby declares its support to the Florida Legislature for the creation and funding of a successor program to the Florida Forever program and requests Monroe County's legislative delegation to advocate for the creation and funding of a successor program to Florida Forever.

Section 2. That the Council hereby declares its support to the Florida Legislature for an immediate doubling of funding for Florida Forever because of the enormous need for land conservation funding in all parts of Florida and request Monroe County's legislative delegation to work actively for this increase in funding.

Section 3. The Superintendent is hereby requested to forward a copy of this resolution to the President of the Florida Senate, the Speaker of the Florida House of

Representatives, Governor Charlie Christ, and to the members of the Monroe County legislative delegation.

Passed unanimously on this date: February 19, 2008.

The Council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.