



P.O. Box 1833, Vero Beach, FL 32961-1833

772-567-3520 - piaudubon@yahoo.com - www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org



Clean Water Coalition

CWC

of Indian River County, Inc.



ELC

ENVIRONMENTAL

LEARNING CENTER



**INDIAN RIVER
NEIGHBORHOOD
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

dedicated to quality growth

March 10, 2021

(Via Email)

The Honorable Senator Debbie Mayfield
mayfield.debbie.web@flsenate.gov

The Honorable Representative Erin Grall
Erin.Grall@myfloridahouse.gov

RE: Legislative Priorities 2021

Dear Senator Mayfield and Representative Grall:

At a recent meeting attended by the leadership of the Clean Water Coalition of Indian River County (CWC), the Indian River Neighborhood Association (IRNA), the Pelican Island Audubon Society (PIAS), the Environmental Learning Center (ELC), and the Friends of St. Sebastian River (FSSR), a consensus was reached that, while there are many important legislative matters currently being considered, three matters were of sufficient importance worth addressing in this joint letter:

1. Fully Fund Florida Forever at \$300M. In 2014, after years of neglect by the Legislature, the voters by a 3-1 margin told Tallahassee that preserving land is of vital importance that needed to be a priority *every year*. Amendment 1 (2014) revised Article X, § 28 of Florida's Constitution to require that no less than 1/3 of documentary stamp tax revenue be deposited into the *Land Acquisition Trust Fund* (LATF), which from the plain text of the Amendment emphasizes land conservation. **Our appeal is that the Legislature cease using the LATF as a slush fund and that you honor Art. X, §28, Fla. Const., by allocating \$300M to Florida Forever.**
2. Provide \$100M for Septic-to-Sewer Conversion. Counties and cities across our state face continued threats from polluted waters harming our environment, our economies, and our public health. We recognize that local governments should take the lead on addressing this water crisis, but local governments need help. **A \$100M allocation will not fix the State's septic system challenges, but it will provide matching grants that leverage the impact of monies raised at the local level.** Funding of matching-grant programs should become the norm when addressing water issues.
3. Preserve Regional Planning Councils. We know firsthand the value provided by Regional Planning Councils (RPCs). Citizens across Florida have watched over the last decade as the Legislature- under the guise of returning home-rule authority to the local level- gutted and eliminated a once-vaunted growth-management system to a shell of its former self. Not much remains in terms of regulatory authority, but RPCs still

provide valuable analysis on certain development orders that have regional impacts on quality of life. **Our message is clear: do not support legislation that would undermine what remains of Florida's growth-management system, including those bills that seek to eliminate RPCs.**

There is enormous pressure placed upon individual legislators by deep pocketed special-interest groups seeking to profit from new laws that harm our natural environment. Numerous bills currently being considered in Tallahassee will affect our air, waters, and land. Those bills are important to support or oppose depending on their environmental impact, however, the three above-identified matters are unequivocally important. In the end, what should matter the most is how you represent your constituents.

The organizations executing this letter represent thousands of residents and businesses in Indian River County. Last year, we thanked Senator Mayfield for her work on several important bills and appropriations that benefitted our environment. More importantly, we informed our members of her accomplishments. This year, we are making it a goal to track legislative-session outcomes and will publish these outcomes in the major local newspapers and online social-media platforms.

It is with great hope that when our boards report back to our memberships (and to the general public) on the legislative outcomes and your voting record on bills affecting our natural environment, that those reports are filled with praise for your work this legislative session.

We are all working together for the environment.

Sincerely,

By: *Paul Fafeita*

Paul Fafeita
President, CWC

By: *Richard Baker*

Richard Baker, Ph.D.
President, PIAS

By: *Tim Glover*

Tim Glover
President, FSSR

By: *Mike Johannsen*

Mike Johannsen
Chairman of the Board, IRNA

By: *Donald E. Barr*

Donald E. Barr
Chair, Board of Directors, ELC