



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS CATHOLIC DAYS AT THE CAPITOL

FUNDING FOR PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MESSAGE:

Please support full funding of Governor Ron DeSantis' recommended environmental budget of \$625 million for Everglades restoration and protection of water resources.

BUDGET PROPOSAL:

Governor Ron DeSantis' Bold Vision for a Brighter Future budget recommends \$625 million for protection of Florida's environment and water quality.

BACKGROUND:

Governor DeSantis has moved quickly to make protection of Florida's environment one of his priorities upon taking office. On January 10, 2019, Governor DeSantis signed Executive Order Number 19-12, Achieving More Now for Florida's Environment. The order recommends securing \$2.5 billion over the next four years to invest in Everglades restoration and protecting Florida's water resources. In addition, the order created new state level positions focused on scientific analysis and accountability as well as a task force focused on preventing blue-green algae blooms in waterways and on shorelines.

On January 29, 2019, Governor DeSantis announced his environmental budget, which recommends an investment of \$625 million for the coming fiscal year. Specifically it recommends:

- \$360 million for Everglades restoration – The funding will be used to complete 22 projects in the Everglades which will provide 672,000 acre-feet of storage and remove almost 200,000 pounds of total phosphorus annually, a major source of nutrient pollution.
- \$150 million for targeted water quality improvements to achieve significant nutrient reductions in key waterbodies in the state.
- \$50 million to restore Florida's world-renowned springs.
- \$25 million total investment to improve water quality and combat the effects and impacts of harmful algal blooms, including blue-green algae and red tide.
- \$40 million for alternative water supply development to help communities plan for and implement vital conservation, reuse and other alternative water supply projects.

RATIONALE:

The Church's social teaching calls on Catholics to uphold the life and dignity of every human person, to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters worldwide, and to care for God's creation. Pope Francis brought renewed focus to this in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015).

Protection of our state's natural environment and water resources are one of the most critical issues facing our state and requires immediate action. Our water and natural resources are the foundation of Florida's communities, economy and way of life.

Florida's water and natural resources are critical in many ways to each one of us. Our communities rely on the fresh water the Everglades and springs provide us. Florida's beaches and coastlines provide us recreation and fuel our state's strong economy by attracting millions of visitors from around the world every year.

Recently, algae blooms have resulted in an increasing threat to our environment and fragile ecosystems, including our rivers, beaches and wildlife, as well as causing the issuance of health advisories, closures of recreational areas and economic losses in neighboring communities.

Governor DeSantis' recommended environmental budget recognizes the importance of restoring the Everglades, protecting our water resources and preserving our state's natural beauty for the next generation.

OPPONENTS' LIKELY OBJECTIONS AND RESPONSES:

OBJECTION 1: There are many competing priorities in this year's budget and limited funds.

RESPONSE 1: There are various needs facing the Legislature. However, Florida's environment is a critical concern and should be one of the top priorities in the budget this year. Florida's environment is directly linked to our economy through tourism. If Florida does not protect its natural resources today, our strong economy and way of life could be negatively impacted.

OBJECTION 2: My district is in an urban part of the state. I do not see how protecting the Everglades or Florida's springs would affect my constituents.

RESPONSE 2: One in three Floridians -- more than eight million of us -- gets drinking water from the Biscayne Aquifer a few feet below the southeastern Everglades. In addition, some springs support entire ecosystems with unique plants and animals and flow into other rivers that are dependent on the springs' clean fresh water. The springs also represent the visible part of the Floridian Aquifer, the underground supply of most of Florida's drinking water.

OBJECTION 3: Governor DeSantis' environmental budget does not go far enough.

RESPONSE 3: Governor DeSantis' \$625 million is part of a large goal of \$2.5 billion over the next four years to invest in Everglades restoration and protection of our water resources. This would amount to \$1 billion more than was invested to protect our water resources in the previous four years. This stable environmental funding over the longer term will help keep restoration projects on-course, on time and more affordable.

***For additional information, please contact:
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