

Wonderful news here. The state has acquired more than 78,000 acres of conservation lands, including over 76,000 within the Ocala to Osceola (O2O) Wildlife Corridor. North Florida Land Trust, which leads the O2O Wildlife Corridor Partnership, played several key roles in the deals.

The O2O is 1.6 million acres of public and privately owned forested land that stretches 100 miles from the Ocala National Forest to the Osceola National Forest.

The biggest conservation project encompasses a more than 61,000-acre conversation easement that is a working forest in Baker and Union counties in the core of the O2O. It stretches from the Raiford Wildlife Management Area to the Osceola National Forest.

Protecting the land secures a contiguous landscape for a wide range of species, including the Florida black bear and American kestrel, and helps safeguard significant aquifer recharge, wetland habitats and rural forestry economies. The second largest conservation easement is over 14,000 acres in Baker and Bradford counties, also within the O2O that connects to Jennings State Forest and Camp Blanding Military Training Center.

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At the same time, on Friday, the state legislature nearly eliminated conservation funding from their proposed state budgets. This analysis comes from [Audubon Florida](#):

“In negotiations, both chambers agreed on a paltry \$3 million for Florida Forever funding in the main budget, and the Senate provided \$15 million in its discretionary water project money, for a total of \$18 million for land buying in FY25-26.

“While both chambers agreed to fund the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program with \$150 million, this important program buys the development rights off farms—the properties stay in agricultural production and have no public recreational use.

“Florida Forever is the program used to expand existing state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas, while also buying new ones.

“(Friday’s) result is disappointing and does not reflect the importance of Florida Forever to voters.”

The budget is expected to be voted on Monday.

If you’d like to voice your displeasure, use this email form:

<https://act.audubon.org/a/floridaforeverjune?contactdata=CoiRZSVnQZYBI8fHVND%2fHibJiviqSPWtcliGTjGhCiLMI2BXwkERUSOdo7tRDCMp9mgbQ9JAgyuooWF4Wof8w%2fnhOAXxhAaesaWgb50OdLwMtl78kkhla01pyGJN5aXi7GPVcjGWRBNKHCMsEdWlxdOvydvkKq1qgZPmmKxf7bpgcj6f%2f%2f4MX+Mswro%2fpsjDNXbhmZpbGM6JCgEMgYQAWHgA4VTWtyxk>

[WSvGb+kvSTGWgplq2WM4vLQweWLR0ewb&ms=aud-email-advocacy\\_\(fl\)\\_ff\\_2025\\_june\\_13&utm\\_source=ea&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=advocacy\\_\(fl\)\\_ff\\_2025\\_june\\_13&emci=43173290-9048-f011-8f7c-6045bdf8e9c&emdi=eb3ee37c-9848-f011-8f7c-6045bdf8e9c&ceid=7011912](https://www.wfsu.org/news/state-news/2019-11-04/five-years-after-amendment-1-passed-conservationists-call-for-revival-of-florida-forever-funding)

Bear in mind, Florida Forever funding was made part the state constitution in 2014 by an overwhelming 75% of voters. Constitutions don't seem to matter for much in 2025.

Full funding for Florida Forever was supposed to be \$300 million per year for 20 years.

State legislators have shortchanged Florida Forever and denied the will of the people to protect conservation land almost as soon as the ballot measure was approved.

LINK: <https://news.wfsu.org/state-news/2019-11-04/five-years-after-amendment-1-passed-conservationists-call-for-revival-of-florida-forever-funding>

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But wait! There's more!

Last year – JUST LAST YEAR – the state legislature UNANIMOUSLY approved a law called the “Seminole Gaming Compact.”

Long story short, the Compact ceded control of legal sports gambling in state to the Seminole Tribe of Florida in exchange for an annual kickback from the tribe totaling roughly \$500 million ANNUALLY. That money – ALL OF IT – was earmarked for conservation land acquisition, preserving wildlife & native plants, and protecting waterways.

Last week, [the Florida legislature voted to repeal the law](#).

Conservation and politics are inseparable. I wish that weren't the case, but these two stories prove they are. This is the reason readers see politics mentioned so often in my weekly newsletter.

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2025/06/12/florida-lawmakers-save-state-parks-from-golf-then-yank-away-funding-for-preserving-land/>

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To wit, a new lawsuit alleges that members of the [current administration](#) last summer worked to keep secret a [plan to build](#) golf courses, pickleball courts and luxury hotels at nine state parks.

The suit is being brought by the whistleblower who caught wind of the plan as a then-employee of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Leaking the proposal to the media allowed conservation groups and citizens to rally against the plan.

The whistleblower was fired in retaliation for exposing the parks sellout and [he has now brought suit for damages](#).

LINK: <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/local/state/2025/06/11/desantis-named-in-lawsuit-over-secret-plan-to-develop-florida-parks/84136569007/>

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The Conservancy of Southwest Florida has announced a record-breaking Burmese python research and removal season of 6,300 pounds of invasive snake. This marks a milestone for the Conservancy's python program, with more than 20 tons of Burmese pythons removed from a 200-square-mile area in Southwest Florida since 2013.

Using radio telemetry and tagged male pythons known as scout snakes, the team currently tracks 40 pythons. These scout snakes help locate reproductive pythons during the breeding season, November through April. Conservancy staff monitors scout snakes across a 200-square-mile area of public and private land from Naples through the Western Everglades.

The Conservancy's python program is one of the leading research and removal initiatives globally, with its scientists recognized for capturing the largest female python ever documented to date, measuring 18 feet long and weighing 215 pounds, as well as the largest male python on record at 16 feet and 140 pounds.

Pythons can consume meals over 100% of their body mass, feeding on a diet that includes more than 85 species, including deer, bobcats, foxes, rabbits, birds, various reptiles, and other native wildlife.

Watch how they capture the monsters in [this unsettling video](#).

Remember, these snakes are beautiful animals here through no fault of their own.

The population exploded after finding ideal habitat in the Everglades, released there by pet owners decades ago – probably as far back as the 1980s – after the snakes became too large for home confinement. This ecological tragedy is owed to the grotesque exotic pet trade, the same villains who sell birds and turtles from across the globe and big cats to freak collectors for their immoral profit.

LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEd0k9OcH4M>

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The Hernando Board of County Commissioners recently considered changing the county's fertilizer ordinance. Thanks to the Sierra Club Adventure Coast Group, local residents, businesses, and springs protectors, the strong rainy season ban remains in place and went into effect again on June 1st.

Over 17% of nitrogen pollution in Weeki Wachee springs there comes from urban fertilizer; if more people in the community chose to skip using fertilizer, it would make a big impact for Weeki Wachee. If that behavior were repeated statewide, the improvement of water quality would be dramatic.

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A member of the Center for Biological Diversity attempted to speak at a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting in opposition to the state's proposed black bear hunt. The bear advocate was cut off and the state continues barreling ahead with the maniacal scheme opposed by a majority of Florida citizens.

[Here's what the man wanted to say.](#)

LINK: <https://www.theinvadingsea.com/2025/06/03/black-bear-hunt-florida-fish-and-wildlife-conservation-commission-human-interactions-habitat/>

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Cool visual here – [scroll down to bottom of page](#) – showing how water flow in the Everglades historically worked, how it works now, and how Everglades restoration could repair it if the process isn't hijacked by Big Sugar and developers.

LINK: <https://www.everglades.org/rescue/?emci=4476df6c-6b45-f011-8f7c-6045bdfe8e9c&emdi=cb78a80d-ea45-f011-8f7c-6045bdfe8e9c&ceid=5919352#flow-maps>

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Florida Native Plant Society members are trying to raise awareness about an endemic – existing nowhere else – [endangered species of mint](#) that is at risk of extinction by a new proposed toll road in Polk County.

LINK: <https://www.wfla.com/news/polk-county/proposed-toll-road-could-threaten-rare-plant-found-only-in-polk-county-advocates-say/>

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The federal government's war on nature continues apace. I'll keep it quick.

The Environmental Protection Agency has [rolled back power plant pollution emission limits](#).

More than 200 health experts [wrote](#) to the EPA last week warning the moves “would lead to the biggest pollution increases in decades and is a blatant give-away to polluters.”

In announcing the proposal, Secretary of the Interior Lee Zeldin referred to climate change as a “cult.” The same Lee Zeldin who a previous Conservation Newsletter quoted as saying the administration's two top priorities are making sure America is the world's leading producer of Artificial Intelligence and preventing Iran from starting a nuclear war.

LINK: [https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/11/trump-administration-epa-pollution?utm\\_term=684ab4634cb9488643aed16cee13f703&utm\\_campaign=USMorningBriefing&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&CMP=usbriefing\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/11/trump-administration-epa-pollution?utm_term=684ab4634cb9488643aed16cee13f703&utm_campaign=USMorningBriefing&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=usbriefing_email)

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A quick aside: high levels of mercury have been found in [alligators in the Okefenokee Swamp](#). The EPA also intends to ease regulations on the amount of mercury power plants are allowed to emit.

LINK: <https://www.ecowatch.com/alligators-mercury-okefenokee-swamp.html>

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The Justice Department believes the president has wide discretion to [reduce protected lands designated as national monuments](#) by previous administrations.

LINK: <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/11/politics/national-monuments-trump-justice-department>

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Speaking of public lands, remember how I mentioned recently that a mass sell-off of public lands was kept out of the House of Representative's version of the spending bill? [The Senate put it back in](#).

The Senate wants 3 million acres sold supposedly to free up land to build affordable housing but it could ultimately end up being bought by housing developers who will use our land to build homes for the ultra-wealthy in beautiful, once-natural settings.

LINK: [https://grist.org/politics/senate-republicans-want-to-sell-3-million-acres-of-public-land/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_campaign=daily](https://grist.org/politics/senate-republicans-want-to-sell-3-million-acres-of-public-land/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily)

MORE: [https://www.landdesk.org/p/sen-mike-lee-revives-public-land?utm\\_source=post-email-title&publication\\_id=258189&post\\_id=165901927&utm\\_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=g2ims&triedRedirect=true&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.landdesk.org/p/sen-mike-lee-revives-public-land?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=258189&post_id=165901927&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=g2ims&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email)

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While we're on the subject of the ultra-wealthy and the spending bill, the Senate version includes a giveaway to private-jet owners called bonus depreciation. It lets businesses deduct the full cost of equipment, including private jets, immediately – rather than spreading the deduction in smaller pieces over many years.

This change will make it cheaper for the billionaires to purchase and use private jets.

Private jets and private yachts are the most carbon intensive way for individuals to travel. Existing tax law allows “business” jets to be used for personal, non-business use up to 50% of the time.

The average private jet owner has a net worth of \$190 million.

Politics and conservation.

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A recent episode of my “Welcome to Florida” podcast discussed [the state’s crocodile population](#).

LINK: <https://welcometoflorida.buzzsprout.com/1169570/episodes/17222203-episode-257-florida-crocodiles>