

# Florida

Our Land, Our Water, Our Heritage

# #SaveLWCF

America's most important conservation and recreation program will expire in less than a year unless Congress acts. For 52 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has protected national parks and open spaces in every corner of the United States. But in less than 52 weeks, it could be gone forever and along with it, future protection of the places we love.

[LWCF](#) has invested more than \$1 billion to protect Florida's outdoor places, protect water resources, increase sportsmen's access, and to build close to home parks. From national wildlife refuges and national forests to soccer fields and city parks, LWCF has protected the Everglades—both Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area and Everglades National Park—Biscayne National Park, Osceola National Forest, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Caroline National Monument, Caspersen Beach in Sarasota County, and Cape Florida State Recreation Area in Dade County.

In addition to all the tourism these natural wonders attract to the state, Florida's \$58.6 billion [outdoor recreation industry](#) is an economic powerhouse – supporting 485,000 jobs which generate \$17.9 billion in wages and salaries and produces \$3.5 billion annually in state and local tax revenue.

## Florida National Scenic Trail

The Florida National Scenic Trail (commonly known as the Florida Trail) currently offers more than 1,100 miles of long distance hiking, from Big Cypress National Preserve in the south to Gulf Islands National Seashore in the northwest panhandle, crossing three national forests and the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Because of the variety of environments along the trail, from swamps and beaches, to forests and rivers, activities such as biking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, paddling, camping, and hunting are encouraged. The trail is within easy access of many of the nation's most densely populated communities and is hailed as a great escape into the outdoors for adventurers. Since the trail was founded in 1966, over \$18 million in LWCF funding has been invested in trail lands, but 300 miles of trail are still in limbo and need protection. The Florida Trail is awaiting FY18 LWCF funding for the protection of 29 acres, to fill trail gaps and protect shoreline areas along the Suwannee and Withlacoochee Rivers.



*Florida National Scenic Trail Credit: USFS*

**“Florida has enjoyed a successful history of implementation of Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriations that conserve and protect special places across the Sunshine State. We look forward to further land conservation efforts through LWCF that benefits all Floridians.”**

**- Garrett Wallace, Manager, Government Relations, Florida Chapter of The Nature Conservancy**

## St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

The St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, one of the oldest refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, was established in 1931 to provide wintering habitat for migratory birds. It encompasses over 70,000 acres spread out between Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor counties, and about 43 miles along the Gulf Coast of northwest Florida. The refuge includes coastal marshes, islands, tidal creeks and estuaries of seven north Florida rivers, and is home to a diverse community of plant and animal life. The refuge also has strong ties to a rich cultural past, and is home to the St. Marks Lighthouse, which was built in 1842 and is still in use today. Over \$11 million in LWCF funding has been used to invest in St. Marks NWR, continuing the tradition of conservation in Florida.



*TNC staff discuss LWCF with Congressman Soto at Disney Wilderness Preserve Credit: TNC*

**#SaveLWCF to protect the places we love in Florida!**

[www.lwcfcoalition.org/lwcf52weeks/](http://www.lwcfcoalition.org/lwcf52weeks/)