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The Honorable
Clay Murphy, Chair
Ann Taylor, Vice Chair
Christian Whitehurst
Sarah Arnold
Krista Joseph

July 20, 2026

VIA EMAIL

Re: Permanent Conservation Funding Mechanisms

Dear Commissioners:

St. Johns Regional Audubon is delighted that you will review the permanent funding alternative study that the Trust for Public Land prepared for the County at your July 21, 2026 meeting. We believe that St. Johns County needs a reliable, long-term source of funding for land conservation put into place as quickly as possible.

The development pressure in St. Johns County continues to be relentless. As more people continue to move to St. Johns County, we are going to continue to lose the natural landscapes and wild places that protect our quality of life, reduce flood risks, support clean water, and preserve our flora and fauna.

Moreover, in your recent planning surveys, our residents ranked land conservation as their No. 1 priority.

As you know, the Florida legislature provided zero dollars in funding for the Florida Forever Program in its new budget. You provided only \$500,000 in funding for LAMP while there are at least \$35 million dollars in projects that are currently waiting for funding on the LAMP list.

Several Florida Counties already have dedicated local funding sources for buying conservation lands (sales tax, bonds, or property tax), which allows them to leverage state and federal grants. Over the past 35 years, other Florida voters have approved 85% of local conservation funding initiatives to secure \$15 billion for their natural lands. St. Johns County needs to study our options and adopt the most appropriate permanent funding mechanism to protect our natural landscapes and wild places.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amy S. Koch
President

Celebrating and protecting birds from the river to the ocean in NE Florida

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