

Will I be able to visit these properties?



Yes, if purchased outright. The amount of access will vary depending on the character of the property and the site's management plan. Public access for compatible, nature-based recreation such as hiking, wildlife viewing, fishing, canoeing, and camping will be offered on appropriate sites.

No, if the property is under a conservation easement. A conservation easement conserves resources on the property at less cost while keeping the land in private ownership. This is a voluntary, legally binding agreement that keeps land in agricultural and/or open space. The agreement is customized to meet the landowner's objective and will be perpetual.

How will lands be selected for acquisition?

A citizens committee (known as CLASAC - Conservation Lands Acquisition Selection Advisory Committee) will review all properties nominated for consideration using an established detailed criteria to evaluate and rank the properties. The criteria determines whether the land has true conservation value and can be managed effectively. Once the properties are evaluated, CLASAC will make recommendations to the County Commission. Anyone can make a nomination. Only properties from willing sellers or donors which meet the criteria will be considered.

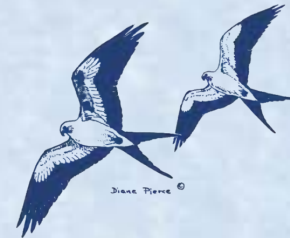
Environmental Lands Referendum November 8, 2022

COUNTY REFERENDUM

ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS BOND REFERENDUM

To acquire, preserve, protect, manage, or restore water resources, environmental lands and important fish and wildlife habitat, shall Polk County levy an additional 0.20 mill ad valorem tax and issue bonds payable therefrom in one or more series in an aggregate principal amount not exceeding \$75 million, excluding previously-authorized indebtedness, maturing no later than 20 years from the date of issuance of such bonds, bearing interest not exceeding the maximum lawful rate?

YES, FOR BONDS
 NO, AGAINST BONDS



For more information on the referendum visit: Polkforever.com



Campaign contributions are appreciated; go to our website and press Donate, or use the QR Code or mail to:

Polk Forever
PO Box 773
Winter Haven, FL 33882-0773



For more information on Polk County's Environmental Lands Program visit: polknature.com

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Protect Our Water, Wildlife and Wilderness

Vote November 8, 2022



Environmental Lands Acquisition and Management Referendum

Why acquire environmentally sensitive lands?

Water is essential.

Our water supplies have been degraded by the ditching, draining and destruction of wetlands and by the over-pumping of groundwater. Regulations alone will not ensure the protection of our water resources. Uplands and wetlands recharge and clean our water cheaply and effectively if left in their natural state.

Wildlife needs habitat.

There are 25 plant and 18 animal species in Polk County in danger of extinction if natural habitats that support them are not protected. Destruction and fragmentation of habitat are the greatest threats to the survival of wildlife.

Wilderness is vanishing.

It is important that we act now if we are to preserve what remains of our natural heritage for generations to come.



What land will be acquired?

Four distinct areas are identified for conservation efforts. These lands are part of our natural and cultural heritage.

The Green Swamp is Central Florida's most vital drinking water resource. It is also a critical hub of the Florida Wildlife Corridor as four rivers radiate from the swamp providing wildlife corridors of statewide significance.

The Lake Wales Ridge is the home of ancient sand dune scrubs containing the highest concentrations of endangered species in North America. All of them are in danger of extinction due to the loss of nearly 90% of this habitat to citrus production and residential development.

The Upper Kissimmee Basin, located along Polk's eastern border, is home to the largest concentrations of bald eagle nests south of Alaska. Its freshwater marshes, hardwood swamps, dry prairies and scrub woods provide quality habitat for crested caracaras, kestrels, fox squirrels and gopher tortoises.

The Peace River, extending from the Green Swamp over 100 miles to the Gulf of Mexico, offers opportunities to re-create a critical natural corridor for wildlife and recreation.



What is the purpose of this referendum?



To continue the work begun by the 1994 voter approved referendum that created the Polk County Environmental Lands Program. If approved, funding will be dedicated to purchase and conserve the environmentally sensitive lands needed to protect our county's water resources and wildlife habitat.

Lands can be purchased outright or protected by conservation easements. The goal is to expand, buffer and connect existing preserves and wildlife corridors and provide citizens with high-quality resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities.

How will we pay for this land?

If approved, the referendum will provide funding through a dedicated 0.2 mill ad valorem property tax for a period of 20 years.

Monies will be dedicated to the acquisition and management of lands purchased outright or to the purchase of conservation easements that will keep the land in private ownership while protecting important natural resources.

How much will this cost me?

Approximately \$30 per year. The average single-family home in Polk County is assessed at \$150,000. The tax for the average homeowner would be \$30 per year or \$2.50 per month.

For example: $\$150,000 \div 1,000 \times 0.2 \text{ mills} = \30

Additional exemptions (Homestead, Senior (Age 65 and older), Widow/Widower, Disability, and Disabled Veteran Exemptions) can further lower the amount you would pay.