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FLORIDA

Healthy lands and waters are the cornerstones of Florida's economy and quality of life. With strategic stewardship and thoughtful management, Florida's natural infrastructure can provide even bigger economic benefits in the future.

NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IS CRUCIAL TO OUTDOOR RECREATION, BOOSTING THE ECONOMY AND ATTRACTING BUSINESSES AND TOURISTS.

Florida's natural treasures underpin the state's economy and quality of life, with 11.8 million (55.7%) residents participating in outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing.¹

- The outdoor recreation economy adds \$57.8 billion to the economy and supports 469,357 jobs with \$28.7 billion in wages.²
- Florida State Parks experienced more than 28 million visitors in 2025, creating \$3.6 billion in direct economic impact. State Park operations supported over 49,000 jobs.³
- National Park lands attracted 13.5 million park visitors in 2024, who spent \$935 million in local gateway regions. This spending supported 9,490 jobs and \$455 million in labor income.⁴
- Over 157 million tourists visited in 2024, contributing \$134.9 billion in visitor spending, which helped sustain 1.8 million jobs and generated \$15.8 billion in state and local tax revenue.⁵

INVESTING IN NATURE PROVIDES CLEAN DRINKING WATER.

Conserved natural lands, such as the Everglades, help protect drinking water sources by filtering stormwater runoff and recharging aquifers, which supply nearly 8 million people with drinking water. This alone contributes

\$3.2 billion in value each year to the region's water supply and quality.⁶ Forested lands in Florida improve water quality too, with a recent study finding a value of almost \$17 million for programs that used land protection or conservation easements to protect surface water resources.⁷ Unfortunately, a report released last year found that the state could experience water shortages as soon as this year and projected that Florida will need to invest \$1.7 billion in critical water projects, such as One Water, through 2040 to avoid a significant water supply shortage.⁸ Protecting and restoring natural systems is key to ensuring Floridians have access to clean drinking water.

Runoff to Resilience: A case study on emerging technology that improves water quality and reduces flooding. Development and pollution negatively impact our rivers, lakes, and drinking water as well as food and habitat for fish, dolphins, and manatees. Ponds have been designed to collect, slow, and filter pollutants from stormwater to help address this issue. The Nature Conservancy and partners are also now implementing new technologies to monitor and manage the ponds for additional community benefits--retaining water longer to improve water quality and lowering water levels in advance of storms to provide flood storage.⁹

HEALTHY UPLAND HABITATS AND COASTAL WATERS SUPPORT THE OCEAN ECONOMY.

With a vibrant marine and coastal landscape, Florida supports a diverse set of industries that rely on healthy ocean resources, from ports and seafood to tourism and recreation. Florida is the largest ocean economy by employment in the United States and one of the most ocean-dependent economies in the world.¹⁰

In 2023 alone, ocean-related activity sustained approximately 909,000 jobs, generated \$59 billion in labor income, and contributed \$96 billion in economic output, over 6% of the state's total economic output.

INVESTING IN NATURE KEEPS FLORIDIANS OUT OF HARM'S WAY BY REDUCING THE RISKS POSED BY FLOODING AND EXTREME WEATHER.

Mangroves protected more than 626,000 people and averted \$1.5 billion in storm damages during Hurricane Irma, amounting to a 25% savings in counties that have mangroves.¹¹ Efforts to restore this necessary natural infrastructure can also create thriving economies.¹²

- One study in Florida found that for every \$1 invested in restoration, \$1.40 ripples through the local economy.¹³
- \$72.5 million invested across 12 habitat restoration projects in Florida is estimated to support more than 1,000 jobs and \$70 million in wages and increase both spending and economic activity.¹⁴

HEALTHY WORKING LANDS ARE CRITICAL TO FLORIDA COMMUNITIES.

Florida farmers are leaders in private land conservation, helping to steward working lands and support rural communities. Florida has 9.7 million acres in farmland, and the food and agriculture sector in Florida directly employs over 3 million people with \$165.4 billion in wages.¹⁵ Healthy forests and a healthy forest products economy benefit each other. The forest products industry generates \$13.4 billion in economic impact and supports over 29,000 jobs.¹⁶

CONSERVATION STRENGTHENS MILITARY READINESS.

Military installations in Florida face increased pressures from surrounding land uses that hamper their ability to fulfill their missions. The Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program has been a resounding success in addressing this challenge in ways that benefit both military readiness and conservation. The program uses partnerships with the military, conservation groups, and state and local governments to share the cost of acquiring easements or land from willing sellers to preserve compatible land uses and natural habitats near installations. The REPI program has invested over \$310 million in support of 13 Florida installations from 2004 to 2024.¹⁷



For the full report
*Nature's Dividends: The Economic, Health,
and Safety Benefits of Investing in Nature.*



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