

# Landmark Legal Victory!!! Judge Rules that Florida Legislature Must Spend Amendment One Funds on Land Acquisition as Mandated by Voters in 2014

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The following is from Frank Jackalone of Sierra Club.

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Tallahassee – Florida Circuit Judge Charles Dodson ruled today in favor of environmental organizations that the land conservation constitutional amendment overwhelmingly approved by voters requires funding to be used for land acquisition, and

restoration and management of those lands, not for other purposes. Organizations filed suit because the state legislature was violating the Water and Land Conservation Amendment by spending funds on unallowable expenditures. Background on the issue can be found here: <https://earthjustice.org/news/press/2015/conservation-groups-file-amendment-one-lawsuit-in-florida>

Below are statements from plaintiffs in the lawsuit reacting to the ruling:

Manley Fuller, Plaintiff and President of Florida Wildlife Federation:

“Judge Dodson ruled today that the amendment funds are to be used for new land acquisition management and restoration from the Everglades to the Florida Panhandle! This is what the voters of Florida intended in 2014. The sun was shining in Florida today.”

Becky Ayech, Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida:

“We are very, very happy. This is a great day for all of the people who live in Florida.”

Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns Riverkeeper:

“Protection of Florida’s lands is critical to protecting Florida’s waters. Today’s ruling is a stunning victory for our state’s wild places, rivers, springs, residents and future generations.”

Alisa Coe of Earthjustice, one of the attorneys who represents plaintiffs Florida Wildlife Federation, St. Johns Riverkeeper, Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida, Sierra Club, and Manley Fuller:

“Today’s decision is a big victory for the millions of Florida voters who demanded that the legislature reinstate land buying programs for parks, wild lands and the Everglades. Four million

Floridians approved a constitutional amendment to devote almost a billion dollars a year to purchasing conservation lands. The legislature and agencies thumbed their noses at the voters by spending the money on other things. This ruling will help protect some of Florida's most beautiful and environmentally important areas for generations to come.

In 2014, an overwhelming three out of four Florida voters approved the Land and Water Acquisition Amendment to the state constitution—it was the most popular item on the entire statewide ballot that year. Today's ruling means that the state must honor the voters' will to preserve our precious natural resources through conservation."

Frank Jackalone, Sierra Club Florida Chapter Director:

"Judge Dodson's ruling today is a landmark decision making it clear that amendments to Florida's constitution are orders by the people; they aren't suggestions which the Legislature can decide to ignore. After four years of blatant misappropriation of taxpayers' money, the Legislature has been forced by the Florida Courts to obey the voters mandate that it use a dedicated source of state funds to preserve and protect Florida's natural lands."