

Sign the Petition to Help Paynes Prairie Preserve

August 31, 2015

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Paynes Prairie in danger

Petition by Shirley Lasseter

To be delivered to The Florida State House, The Florida State Senate, and Governor Rick Scott

Hands off Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. We, the undersigned, will not allow the privatization of our public land. We stand firmly against Governor Scott's plan to encourage private business to rent our State Parks for grazing cattle or growing trees. We urge you to stand against special interests and work to preserve not privatize!

The following is excerpted from the FCAT reading for Grade 4.

Have you ever heard of Paynes Prairie? It is one of the most important natural and historical areas in Florida. Paynes Prairie is located near Gainesville. It is large, 21,000 acres. This protected land is called a preserve. The Florida Park Service manages the preserve.

Human Occupation

Man has lived on Paynes Prairie a very long time. He lived there as far back as 10,000 B.C. At one time, the Seminoles lived

there. The prairie is thought to have been named after King Payne, a Seminole chief.

Preserve

The Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park is open year round. The Florida Park Service works hard so that the park will appear as it did in the past. It offers many opportunities for recreation. At the park you can camp and picnic. You can hike and bike. You can boat and fish. You can ride on horse trails. And you can see lots of nature and wildlife. You can see Florida as it was in the early days.

Today, Paynes Prairie is preserved land. It is occupied by visitors and Florida Park Service employees.

There are currently 12,383 signatures. NEW goal – We need 15,000 signatures!

Petition Background

You may have read in the papers that Governor Scott is encouraging private business to rent our State Parks for grazing cattle or growing and harvesting trees. Myakka River was first, but Paynes Prairie is now in the sights. The future of Florida's state parks depends on your apathy or your action. It is your choice.

The Ocala Star-Banner reported:

Jim Stevenson, retired Florida Park Service chief naturalist, was chairman of a committee that wrote the management plan for Paynes Prairie when it was bought by the state. They voted to remove the cattle, Stevenson said, adding that state parks have historically been managed for their natural values rather than human uses other than recreation. "We felt the cattle should go and they were removed, and the fences were removed. It became a state preserve instead of a cattle ranch," Stevenson said. "That's been in play for 47 years and everything has been fine

until the DEP secretary decided that he wants cows on state parks.”

But Governor Scott has a different plan – Cattle ranch owners have already been invited to government meetings to discuss setting aside part of the Prairie for grazing cattle. Whether or not you support Governor Scott on other issues, you will hopefully agree that this is a misuse of our park system. Forbidding certain sectors of publicly-owned land to the general public, while allowing a small subset of the public to use those sectors for individual profit, is not what the State Parks were created for, but it seems to be what the current administration has in mind.

A few years ago, Governor Scott’s previous DEP Secretary told his deputy secretary that he wanted to privatize the entire state park system. The deputy advised against it, knowing there would be a huge public outcry.

The current game plan to reach that goal:

1. Exploit the natural resources through hunting, cattle grazing and timbering which will require “private” contractors and further crush morale of the park service staff.
2. Starve the parks by eliminating more staff and funding each year including professional biologists and education staff. DEP has recommended cutting 209 park service positions during the Scott administration. Instead, the Legislature cut 78 positions.
3. In the absence of adequate staff and funding, the parks won’t be able to get their job done.
4. Gov. Scott increases “Free Days” which reduces revenue while park managers are struggling to increase revenue.
5. The parks’ facilities and resources will deteriorate and the

politicians will criticize the poor management.

6. Since the park service will not be able to maintain the resources, DEP is justified to "privatize the state park system." Of course government should be run like a business.

End Game is achieved.

Current petition signers

12383. Mary Dianne Bair from Morriston, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

12382. Megan Hanney from Boynton Beach, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

12381. Arlene Spinnler from Morriston, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

12380. Joan E. Hanney from Gainesville, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

12379. Diane Garte from Morriston, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

12378. M Byrns from St augustine, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

12377. Tara byron from Wpb, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

12376. Kenneth Hanney from Boynton Beach, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

These parks are the last of its kind and need to be preseved forever. The developers have the legislators in their back pockets and are destroying natural florida.

12375. JANE E MANN from Jacksonville, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

Payne's Prairie is a presere. HANDS OFF. PERIOD

12374. Misty Barnett from Gainesville, FL signed this petition on Aug 29, 2015.

Next > >

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