

RESOLUTION 2016-

WHEREAS, ABC County and its citizens endeavor to be good stewards of the environment and its natural resources, including wildlife, for generations yet born;

WHEREAS, ABC County and the entire State of Florida has a unique and irreplaceable natural heritage that includes wildlife which enriches its citizens' quality of life, serves the public interest and is worthy of permanent protection; and

WHEREAS, the Florida black bear was listed on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission ("FWC") Endangered and Threatened Species List until 2012; and

WHEREAS, no hunting of the Florida black bear was permitted in Florida from 1994-2015; and

WHEREAS, hunts serve to thwart and undo long term conservation and of the Florida black bear; and

WHEREAS, the FWC authorized a Florida black bear hunt in 2015 but declined to authorize a hunt in 2016; and

WHEREAS, ABC County would like to recognize FWC Commissioners (LIST OUT) for rejecting the 2016 black bear hunt; and

WHEREAS, by virtue of its broad habitat requirements, the Florida black bear is recognized as an "umbrella species," and thus the protection of bear habitat ensures the protection of many other species' habitat;

WHEREAS, the continued alteration and development of natural and rural areas to accommodate human population growth have contributed

to the diminution and fragmentation of Florida's ecosystems and wildlife, including the Florida black bear and its habitat; and

WHEREAS, multiple Florida black bear populations are now genetically isolated in fragmented habitat and are likely to be extirpated without landscape connectivity with other, larger populations; and

WHEREAS, habitat loss and degradation is the principle threat to the long term survivability of the Florida black bear; and

WHEREAS, the conservation of the Florida black bear and myriad other species and their habitats require immediate protection through State purchase by the Florida Land Acquisition Trust Fund; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Constitution, Article II, Section 7(a) recognizes that the acquisition of conservation lands serves the public interest, providing, "It shall be the policy of the state to conserve and protect its natural resources and scenic beauty. Adequate provision shall be made by law for the abatement of air and water pollution and of excessive and unnecessary noise and for the conservation and protection of natural resources [;]" and

WHEREAS, for many decades, until the present, the leadership of the State of Florida recognized the value of public conservation lands and, until very recently diligently implemented a policy of conservation land acquisition, including the Florida Forever Act; and

WHEREAS, a citizens' initiative to amend the Florida Constitution entitled "Water and Land Conservation - Dedicates funds to acquire and restore Florida conservation" collected 709,976 petitions to qualify for the statewide November 4, 2014 ballot and was approved by 74.96% of Florida voters; and

WHEREAS, Article 10, Section 28 of the Florida Constitution, known as Water and Land Legacy Amendment, now mandates the acquisition of conservation land, providing that the Florida Land Acquisition Trust

Fund shall be used, in relevant part, “to finance or refinance: the acquisition and improvement of land, water areas, and related property interests, including conservation easements, and resources for conservation lands including wetlands, forests, and fish and wildlife habitat; wildlife management areas; lands that protect water resources and drinking water sources, including lands protecting the water quality and quantity of rivers, lakes, streams, springsheds, and lands providing recharge for groundwater....outdoor recreation lands, including recreational trails, parks, and urban open space; rural landscapes; working farms and ranches; historic or geologic sites; together with management, restoration of natural systems, and the enhancement of public access or recreational enjoyment of conservation lands...”; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Legislature has willfully and deliberately failed to implement the citizen’s initiative approved by the Florida electorate and now established in the Florida Constitution as Article 10, Section 8 by failing to purchase natural areas for permanent conservation, including Florida black bear habitat; and

WHEREAS, ABC County and citizens throughout the State decry the Legislature’s willful diversion of Florida Land Acquisition Trust Fund monies from acquisition of conservation lands; and

WHEREAS, without immediate proper implementation of Article 10, Section 28 of the Florida Constitution, the current State government will have failed to adequately protect Florida’s unique natural resources, as previous governments *have* done for us and future generations; and

WHEREAS, land, water and wildlife conservation are *fundamental* nonpartisan imperatives, aspects of the public trust which all elected officials are bound to uphold;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF ABC COUNTY, FLORIDA:

1. That the ABC Board of County Commissioners opposes the hunting of the Florida black bear and supports the permanent prohibition of such hunting.
2. That the ABC Board of County Commissioners finds Land and water (and wildlife) conservation are *fundamental* nonpartisan imperatives, aspects of the public trust which all elected officials are bound to uphold.
3. That the ABC Board of County Commissioners finds that without immediate proper implementation of the Water and Land Legacy Amendment, Article 10, Section 28 of the Florida Constitution, the Water and Land Legacy Amendment, this generation's State government shall fail to adequately protect Florida's unique natural resources, as previous governments *have* done for us and generations yet born.
4. That the ABC Board of County Commissioners urges the Florida Legislature and the Governor of Florida to immediately implement the will of the people as expressed in the Article 10, Section 8, by allocating sufficient land-buying conservation funds to procure meaningful habitat and connective greenways for the Florida black bear.
5. That the ABC Board of County Commissioners urges the FWC, Governor of the State of Florida and the State Legislature to immediately prioritize purchase of candidate conservation lands in accord with the original Florida Forever/Acquisition and Restoration Council criteria (which will thus allay future professed "need" for bear hunts), and which will also serve as healthful, desirable, *needed* recreation lands for Floridians.

6. That the ABC Board of County Commissioners finds that Florida black bear habitat conservation land acquisition shall not only stabilize and protect black bears for future generations, but shall also promote the quality of life for Floridians and future generations.

7. That the ABC Board of County Commissioners will send certified copies of the Resolution to FWC Commission Chairman Brian S. Yablonski, Governor Rick Scott, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House.

8. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.