



Frequently Asked Questions

Lake County voters will have the opportunity to vote FOR BONDS for the CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAILS measure on the November 5, 2024 presidential election ballot. The measure would provide dedicated county funding for protecting drinking water sources, springs, the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams and protect natural area from overdevelopment in Lake County.

What would the money be used for?

Funds would be used to protect Lake County's last remaining natural area and wildlife habitat before they are lost forever to development. Funds can only be used to:

- Conserve lands that protect drinking water sources;
- Protect springs;
- Protect natural area from overdevelopment;
- Improve the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams;
- Prevent polluted storm water runoff from flowing into rivers, lakes, and streams;
- Protect wildlife habitat; and
- Provide parks and trails.

What's the bottom line? How much will it cost me? If approved, how much will my taxes go up?

The most the average homeowner would pay is \$1.75 a month. This is a very small price to pay to protect our water quality and preserve natural area. This is a continuation of an existing land conservation program that Lake County residents have previously approved and the average homeowner in Lake County would pay \$21 per year. This is based on an average residential taxable value in Lake County of \$185,550 and assumes all the bonds are issued at once in 2024.

How will I know the money will be wisely spent? What kind of accountability is there for the taxpayers?

The ballot language requires full public disclosure of all project spending. A citizen's oversight committee – the Public Lands and Trails Acquisition Advisory Committee -- will review projects, make recommendations to the County Commission, monitor expenditures, and provide added transparency for the public.

Which properties will be protected?

The Public Lands and Trails Acquisition Advisory Committee will use established criteria to evaluate potential properties for conservation. Existing County preserves like Lake Hiawatha Preserve, Green Mountain Scenic Overlook, Ferndale Preserve, Pasture Preserve, and Plymouth Lakes are excellent examples of the kind of properties Lake County would conserve in the future.

Why is this needed now?

Lake County is one of the fastest growing counties in Florida and our last remaining undeveloped natural area and wildlife habitats are disappearing before our very eyes. Many important natural areas have already been lost to development.

Do other Florida counties have dedicated funding for land conservation?

Yes. Polk, Osceola, Nassau, Pasco, Sarasota, Charlotte, Volusia, Brevard, and Martin Counties, to name just a few, have voter-approved, dedicated funds for land conservation.

How much money will be raised?

If approved by the voters, the bonds will generate up to \$50 million. Lake County will apply for matching funds from the State of Florida, the federal government, and private contributors.

Why can't the County pay for this some other way? Why do we need to have a referendum?

Twenty years ago, Lake County voters overwhelmingly approved by 71 percent a \$36 million land conservation bond. These funds have long since been exhausted, having been used to protect places like Lake Hiawatha Preserve, Pasture Preserve, and Plymouth Lakes. We now have the opportunity to protect our last remaining natural areas from development. If voters approve the bonds, dedicated funding would be continued for land conservation. Bonds would provide the County with funds upfront to take advantage of these lands being on the market now. Placing this measure on the ballot gives Lake County voters a chance to decide whether they want to preserve water quality and wildlife habitat.

What will happen if the bonds do not pass?

Lake County would not have dedicated funds to purchase the critical natural area and wildlife habitat threatened by development. Many of our last remaining natural areas and wildlife habitat would be developed. Without matching funds, Lake County would be also leaving millions of dollars on the table in Tallahassee and Washington, DC.

Will trails be funded?

Yes. Recreational trails for walking, bicycling, and jogging trails are specifically listed as an eligible use for the funds in both the ballot language and implementing ordinance.

Whose idea was this anyway?

For years Lake County citizens have approached the County Commission with concerns about the development of natural land in our community. The County Commission has heard repeatedly from its citizens that something must be done to protect our water quality, wildlife habitat, natural area, and quality of life in the face of new development. This year, the County Commission took action by placing the Clean Water, Overdevelopment Protection, Natural Area Preservation, Parks, and Trails measure on the November ballot, giving Lake County voters a chance to decide whether they want to preserve water quality and wildlife habitat.

Isn't there enough land and water already protected?

Much of the remaining land you see as natural land across our county is privately owned and can legally be developed. To protect the clean water, springs, wildlife habitat, and natural area we enjoy today, the CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAILS measure is the best way to save it forever. Protecting our water, wildlife habitat, and natural area will preserve Lake County's natural beauty for future generations, so our children and grandchildren can enjoy them the way we do.

How do I vote on the CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAILS measure?

The CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAILS measure will be on the November 5 presidential election ballot. You can vote by mail or vote early from October 21 until November 2. Early voting locations are listed on www.lakevotes.gov/Voter-Information/Early-Voting

You can cast your ballot at your assigned polling place on Tuesday, November 5. Polls are open from 7:00 AM until 7:00 P.M. For more information you can reach the Supervisor of Elections at 352-343-9734 or visit the website at www.lakevotes.gov.

Where can I find the CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAILS on my ballot?

Look for the CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAIL GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND REFERENDUM on the back of the ballot, right after the state constitutional amendments.

Who is running the campaign? Who is Lake Forever?

Lake Forever is a grassroots, citizen-run committee made up of Lake County residents who represent a wide variety of community values, geographic areas, political affiliations, and public interests in the county. It is the political committee established to advocate for and inform voters about the CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAILS measure.

How can I help?

Vote "FOR BONDS" for the CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAILS measure on Tuesday, November 5. Tell your friends and family to vote "FOR BONDS." Donate funds to Lake Forever to help offset the costs of producing informational materials.

To find out more about how you can help support the CLEAN WATER, OVERDEVELOPMENT PROTECTION, NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND TRAILS measure, please visit our website at votelakeforever.com or contact us at info@votelakeforever.com.