



**Department of Economic
and Development Services**

Memorandum

To: Board of County Commissioners

From: Dodie Selig, AICP
Chief Planner

Date: June 25, 2024

Re: Request for Board Direction (Referendum to fund land conservation program)

Request: Staff is requesting the Board's direction to bring forward a resolution to the July 23rd agenda providing language for a referendum item to be placed on the November 2024 general election ballot. The referendum, if passed by the voters, would provide a means of funding for the proposed Forests and Farms Land Conservation Program.

Background: In late 2022, the Board directed Staff to pursue the creation of a land conservation program for Clay County. Since that time the County contracted with the North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) who have provided a blueprint for creating a conservation program. Part of that blueprint was the need to create a means of funding for both the purchase of appropriate properties and for the operational costs associated with the acquisition and management of the conservation properties.

More recently, the County requested technical advice from the Trust for Public Land (TPL) regarding the development of ongoing sources of public funding for land conservation. The Trust has undertaken a Feasibility Study which will be completed shortly and we anticipate that it will be provided to the Board at the July 23rd meeting.

Conversations with both the NFLT and the TPL have led staff to the conclusion that the funding of the conservation program through a general obligation bond would provide the most benefit to the County for several reasons, one of the greatest being the opportunity to make larger land acquisitions sooner, before the cost of the land rises or the land is altered by development.

Therefore, Staff is requesting the Board's direction to provide a means of funding for the conservation program by bringing forward a resolution to create a ballot referendum.