



TEAM REPORT

Natural Resources

Submitted by Pattie Gertenbach

Volusia Forever Update: The Natural Resources has been busy following the County Council's continued questioning of our Volusia Forever program. On the Council's January 8th Goals Workshop, one of the stated potential goals was "Modify Volusia Forever to a non-in-perpetuity program (ex: 100 years)." Several members of our team spoke to the Council (as citizens) at their January 8th meeting opposing any changes to Volusia Forever. Nancy Vaughn, representing the League, spoke as well, asking the Council to leave Volusia Forever as is. Subsequent to the Workshop, several NR team members have written to and/or met with their County Councilman and/or have written locally published letters to the editor and Opinion pieces. Our team will continue to watch this closely and urge the County Council to leave this extremely successful and proven program AS IS. Volusia Forever was passed in 2020 with over 75% of voters approving extending the program for another 20 years. Lands purchased under this program since 2020 have had a 4:1 match in funds from other state and regional land acquisition programs, as well as often being managed by these partners. The Volusia Forever program will be on the County Council Agenda again early in 2026, possibly in March. The LWVVC Board again is supporting this program, as they did in 2000.

Field Trip: The Natural Resources team organized a field trip that took place on February 12th to Farmton, an unincorporated area comprising about 70,000 acres primarily in southern Volusia County (Edgewater area) but also extending into northern Brevard County. The purpose of the field trip was to learn about the Farmton/Deering Park development plans. We learned so much! Following are some key facts:

- Of the 70,000 acres, 46,000 have been placed under a permanent conservation easement that will be managed by Miami Alternatives, LLC (formerly known as the Miami Corporation) at no cost to the public. These lands are all within the Florida Wildlife Corridor.
- They are constructing a 60-acre treatment wetland park that will serve the Deering Park community and include receiving reclaimed water via a reclaimed line from Edgewater. Not only will this provide Edgewater additional water treatment capacity, it eliminates current permitted discharges from Edgewater to the Indian River Lagoon. Farmton has additional land that can be used to expand the wetland park if needed.
- Deering Park streetlights will be Dark Sky compliant.
- They have been doing their homework on best management practices to incorporate into the HOA agreements for preserving their native plant and Florida Friendly landscaping once they start selling homes.

- In preparation for the large quantities of native plants they will need – the lack of which is often cited by developers as a problem -- Farnton started their own native plant “nursery”.
- Their plan includes an extensive bike/pedestrian trail network that will connect to existing trails.
- Following Hurricane Milton, they studied the flooded areas and incorporated what they learned into their stormwater plan, which is being designed to a 100-year + 20% storm.

We are very grateful to Farnton for such an excellent tour led by their very knowledgeable and quite personable Land Manager, Robbie Lee.



Farnton Field Trip group photo taken at picturesque Cow Creek, left to right: Pat Northey, Jeff and Pam Novy, Peter Sigman, Nancy Vaughn, Suze and Fred Peace, Melissa Lammers, Robbie Lee, Pattie Gertenbach, Joyce Palmer, Saralee and Tom Morrissey, and Nancy Nausbaum.

Legislation: There are several bills in the current Florida Legislative session that are of particular interest to our team as they are relevant to our April Hot Topic panel discussion (see details below), these include:

- HB479/SB718 prevents local governments from adopting policies on water quality or quantity.
- HB105/SB588 prohibits certain municipal enforcement actions deemed “arbitrary”.
- HB299/SB354 bypasses local comprehensive plans by automatically approving so-called Blue Ribbon Projects, i.e., projects comprising over 10,000 acres.



- SB840/HB1465 amends portions of SB180 that passed last year but still leaves some restrictions on local governments to amend their comp plans or land development regulations.

We will continue to monitor these bills.

Hot Topic: April's Hot Topic details:

- Panel Discussion topic: What is Home Rule and How Does It Affect You?
- Date: April 23, 2026
- Time: 4 – 6 pm
- Place: the Anderson-Price Memorial Building, 42 North Beach Street, Ormond Beach.
- Optional dinner afterwards at the Gastropub Tiki Bar.