

**Caribbean Conservation Corps and Sea Turtle Survival League -
Defenders of Wildlife - Environmental Defense - Environment Florida
Gulf Restoration Network - Hernando Audubon Society -
Ocean Conservancy - Natural Resources Defense Council -
Surfrider Foundation- Reef Relief - Sierra Club**

July 27, 2007

The Honorable Governor Charlie Crist
Office of the Governor
The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor Crist,

We are writing to you today because we share your love of Florida's natural resources. We collectively represent tens of thousands of hikers, birders, hunters, fisherman, divers, scientists, researchers, and conservationists who are passionate about protecting all that is wild and free in Florida.

We greatly appreciate your strong commitment to the conservation and preservation of Florida's natural resources. We encourage you to continue to raise the bar and ensure that Florida goes beyond the status quo in conservation management and policymaking. As you know, Florida's increasing population growth continues to change the landscape – quite literally - making conservation issues more challenging than ever. Much like your recent commitment to addressing climate change issues, we are looking to you to be a national leader in protecting terrestrial, aquatic, and marine habitats and the wildlife and plants that call them home.

With three upcoming vacancies on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) you have the ability to select individuals who share our concern that sound conservation science and policy must drive decisions that manage and conserve Florida wildlife. You have the ability to ensure that Commissioners appreciate the values of both consumptive and non-consumptive users of Florida's natural resources, including those committed to the scientific understanding or the intrinsic value of conserving those resources. In short, you can leave a lasting and incredibly important legacy on the FFWCC by appointing Commissioners who understand and will support conservation and sustainable ecosystems management and who will put the resource first.

We, the undersigned conservation and community groups, urge you to fulfill the expectation of Florida voters that you will lead Florida in a new and sustainable direction. We urge you to follow the four principles below in selecting and appointing new FFWCC Commissioners:

1. FFWCC's decisions should be science-based, and directed at conserving these resources for future generations. Commissioners with a background in the biological sciences or conservation policy have a better understanding of the various tools they will need to evaluate the important decisions they are being asked to make.
2. Florida's ecological diversity is some of the highest in the country, and varies dramatically by region. Accordingly, FFWCC commissioners should be geographically distributed so no part of the state is unrepresented.
3. FFWCC's constituents today include a greater diversity of recreational users (hikers, birders, photographers, scuba divers, conservationists, etc.) than they did even twenty years ago. Diversity on the Commission to represent these different viewpoints is important.
4. Regardless of the constituency any commissioner represents, their first priority should be a commitment to the conservation of Florida's fish and wildlife resources.

Florida's wild places and wild creatures face incredible threats from development, pollution, climate change, and human population increase. Effective conservation action and science based management should lay the foundation for sound public policy decisions to be made by the FFWCC and will ensure future generations can enjoy and rely on healthy ecosystems and the full complement of Florida's native wildlife. We want our grandchildren to know the Florida our grandparents passed down to us. It is our shared natural heritage.

There are few moral callings greater than being entrusted with the future of another species' survival on this planet. Please select Commissioners who have the academic and conservation policy background to ensure that on your watch we do all we can to protect the wild spirit and creatures that define Florida.

Sincerely,

Environment Florida
Gulf Restoration Network
Hernando Audubon Society
Sierra Club
Defenders of Wildlife

Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition:

Caribbean Conservation Corps and Sea Turtle Survival League
Environmental Defense
Natural Resources Defense Council
Ocean Conservancy
Reef Relief
Surfrider Foundation