

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 22, 2010

CONTACT:

GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE, (850) 488-5394

**Governor Crist Recommends \$2.1-Billion Environment Budget,
Revives *Florida Forever***

~ Stewardship of natural resources safeguards Florida's present and future economy ~

ROOKERY BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE – Governor Charlie Crist today announced his \$2.1-billion 2010-11 budget recommendations to safeguard Florida's natural resources. Highlighting projects that will secure Florida's economic future, the Governor proposed investments in the *Florida Forever* land conservation program, renewable energy, water supply, Everglades restoration, and state park improvements.

"Florida's present and future economy depends on the stewardship of our natural resources and our continued efforts to set aside land for water resource protection, recreation and the enjoyment of Floridians and visitors to the Sunshine State," Governor Crist said. "As we continue restoring America's Everglades and investing in renewable energy, Floridians will gain a cleaner and safer environment that will endure for generations to come."

Governor Crist unveiled his environmental budget priorities while visiting the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Collier County. Along with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Michael W. Sole, Governor Crist announced the following items:

- ***Florida Forever*** – Since 1963, Florida has committed more than \$7.5 billion to preserve and conserve roughly 3.8 million acres of land. However, the program was temporarily halted last year due to economic challenges. This year, Governor Crist revives *Florida Forever* by recommending \$50 million to continue the preservation of Florida's unique natural resources and wildlife.
- **Green Energy Technologies** – To ensure continued progress toward advancing Florida's energy future and growing Florida's low-carbon economy, Governor Crist proposed \$10 million for solar energy rebates. Additionally, almost all of \$176 million in federal funding received in Fiscal Year 2009-10 will be expended this year in the following ways:
 - \$126 million for the State Energy Program providing opportunities for state agencies, local governments and businesses to deploy renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies, resulting in economic development and job growth in Florida's clean technology sector. Projects will include:
 - Solar for Schools and Shelters, \$10 million
 - Solar Energy (Water Heating) Loans, \$10 million
 - Solar Energy Rebate Program, \$14.4 million
 - E-85/B20 Public Fueling - Conversion Revolving Loans, \$5 million

- Compressed Natural Gas Fleet Fueling Facilities - Matching Grants, \$4 million
- Florida Residential Retrofit Program, \$15 million
- Shovel Ready Energy Project Grants, \$ 19.5 million
- Florida Clean Energy Grants, \$10 million
- Florida Energy Opportunity Fund, \$36 million
- \$30.4 million for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant to assist local governments, state agencies and citizens with programs to reduce fossil fuel emissions, total energy use, and improve energy efficiency in transportation, building and other sectors. Projects will include:
 - Competitive Grants to Local Governments, \$18.6 million
 - Sunshine State Buildings Initiative, \$8.4 million
 - Energy Conservation Initiatives and Program Administration, \$3.2 million
- \$17.5 million for the Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate program to provide consumer rebates for the installation of both residential and commercial solar energy systems, for residential Energy Star Appliance products and for residential retrofits for older homes.
- \$1.8 million for the Energy Assurance Grant Program to develop new energy emergency response plans and revise existing ones to address Smart Grid applications and vulnerabilities, critical infrastructure, cyber security and energy supply systems.
- **Everglades Restoration** – Continuing his focus on protecting the health of the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers and their estuaries, Governor Crist proposed \$50 million to ensure that Everglades projects will continue to restore a more natural water flow for this unique ecosystem and improve water quality for all of South Florida. Lake Okeechobee is the upstream water source for the Everglades and provides the water supply for nearby towns, agricultural operations and downstream ecosystems. The lake supports a multi-million dollar recreational and commercial fishery, as well as flood control for surrounding communities. During the past three years, Governor Crist has signed budgets designating \$300 million toward Everglades restoration.
- **Sustainable Water Resources** – To ensure adequate quantities of water to support Florida’s population growth and environmental health, Governor Crist proposed \$20 million in matching funds for wastewater and drinking water revolving-loan programs and alternative water supply projects, as well as \$6 million for water quality programs vital to the preservation of Florida’s springs, rivers, lakes, and wetlands.
- **Underground Petroleum Tank Cleanup and State Park Repairs** – To ensure the health and safety of Floridians and visitors, Governor Crist proposed \$144 million to clean

up underground petroleum tanks and \$29.2 million to remediate and restore other previously contaminated sites. The Governor also proposed \$11.2 million for repairs and renovations to existing state park facilities.

- **Protection of Florida's Fish and Wildlife** – Florida's vibrant boating, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing industries economically benefit the state while providing important recreational opportunities for Floridians and visitors. To ensure continued protection of wildlife species, their habitats and economically important recreational activities, Governor Crist proposed \$283.4 million to support the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- **Agriculture** – More than 270 different crops are grown in Florida, making the Sunshine State's agricultural industry the eleventh largest in the nation. Governor Crist proposed \$319.5 million to support the programs and functions of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, under the leadership of Commissioner Charles Bronson, to ensure continued production and promotion of Florida's vibrant agricultural and aquacultural industries; the wholesomeness and safety of consumer products; protection from deceptive business practices; and the conservation and protection of Florida's agriculture.

About the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Governor Crist announced his 2010-11 environmental budget recommendations during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the pedestrian bridge that stretches from the reserve's Environmental Learning Center across Henderson Creek to the planned trail system that offers visitors the opportunity to view native habitats and wildlife. Completed in November 2009, the bridge project was developed through the application of approximately \$444,000 of state funds during Fiscal Year 2005-06, along with a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and private donations. The reserve is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

#