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## Environmentally Speaking

by Governor Jeb Bush

### GUEST COMMENTARY

While President, Theodore Roosevelt told a gathering of state governors, “As a people, we have the right and the duty...to protect ourselves and our children against the wasteful development of natural resources.” As Governor of Florida, I have worked to emulate the great conservation achievements of Theodore Roosevelt, making the protection of Florida’s unique environment one of my top priorities.

Running for governor in 1998, I proposed the \$3 billion Florida Forever land-buying program as an extension of Preservation 2000. With bipartisan support from the Florida Legislature, we were able to pass this solid blueprint for continued land stewardship into law during my first legislative session. As a result of Florida Forever, we are now saving the great wilderness areas of Florida, restoring lakes and rivers, and creating new recreational opportunities.

In 2000, we championed legislation in both Tallahassee and Washington to restore the natural beauty and diverse ecosystem of Florida’s Everglades, and have recently worked to provide a dedicated funding source to fulfill the state’s \$100 million annual commitment to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, the largest environmental restoration project in history.

The Lee Island Coast and the barrier islands along Southwest Florida are home to some of Florida’s most beautiful natural waterfronts and preservation havens. The island of Boca Grande has long been a Bush family favorite, a place for enjoy-

ing the natural wonders of the island lifestyle.

Florida, and particularly the Lee and Collier County region, is experiencing rapid growth. Our citizens deserve healthy communities that preserve our natural environment, help raise families and help attract business. Our 2002 growth management reforms create a new vision of partnership and teamwork to do just that. To their credit, the people of Sanibel and Captiva islands have been recognized for their efforts to intelligently manage the inevitable growth, while still retaining the integrity of the natural environment that makes it such a special paradise.

Florida’s wondrous natural environment is the centerpiece of this issue of *Times of the Islands*. Hopefully readers will gain valuable insight into what makes our state such a unique place.

The lands we save today, and the parks and preserves we create tomorrow, will serve as our legacy to future generations of Floridians. I applaud *Times of the Islands*, and other publications like it, for encouraging Florida residents and visitors alike to become involved in conserving our natural resources. Working together to assure that Florida’s natural resources remain the key to our future should be the goal of all Floridians.

You'll know you've arrived on our Islands off the coast of Southwest Florida when that weight on your shoulders suddenly lifts. A scenic drive across our causeway will transport you to another world where tranquility is the norm and pristine beaches lined with exotic seashells are always nearby. Capture the essence of the island lifestyle; from charming, intimate retreats to full-service fun.

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