

Dear everyone,

Please take a few minutes to complete the Citrus County Land Conservation Survey. This survey is available for a limited time.

Why this matters: **water supports everything.**

All of the conservation choices in this survey ultimately depend on clean, reliable water. Without protected drinking water, surface water, and aquifer recharge areas, we risk losing the foundation that supports agriculture, wildlife corridors, recreation, and even cultural and historic resources.

Land Conservation Survey
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CitrusConservation>

This is a quick and simple survey that asks you to select your top three (3) conservation **priorities for Citrus County**. The results will be used to create a prioritized conservation map that helps guide future land protection decisions.

Organizations like land trusts work to protect land before it is damaged or irreversibly altered. That can include conserving sensitive aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, and open space through land acquisition or conservation easements, tools that permanently limit harmful uses like mining or intensive industrial development. While land trusts do not regulate permits or stop projects on their own, they can help protect vulnerable lands and strengthen long-term water protection for the community.

For those following the Stop the Sand Mine effort, this survey is especially important. One of the biggest lessons we've learned is that once land-use decisions move into the permitting stage, options become limited. Conservation programs offer a way to act earlier by identifying and prioritizing lands that are critical for drinking water, surface water, springs, and aquifer recharge, and keeping those lands protected for future generations.

The survey asks you to choose from the following conservation values:

- Drinking Water Protection
- Surface Water Quality
- Preservation of Agricultural Lands
- Access to Recreation
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Wildlife and Conservation Corridors
- Protection of Historic and Cultural Resources

From our perspective, the two water-related choices are foundational, because protecting water directly supports all the other conservation values on the list.

As of February 6, Citrus County is under a Phase II water shortage. That makes it especially important that conservation priorities reflect how limited and vulnerable our water resources are.

This is not about stopping growth or targeting a single project. It's about making sure decisions made today do not compromise our water, springs, wetlands, and local economy tomorrow especially in a county that depends almost entirely on the Floridan Aquifer.

This week, many of us attended meetings hosted by the North Florida Land Trust, which was invited by BOCC Commissioner Holly Davis to gather public input on land conservation priorities. Because these were not BOCC meetings, residents were not able to raise specific concerns about water use, development, roads, or infrastructure capacity. However, Stop the Sand Mine did raise water-related concerns at the first meeting, and the survey itself is where residents can make their voices count.

By prioritizing drinking water and surface water protection, residents can send a clear message to County leadership that water must come first, especially while residents are being asked to conserve during a declared water shortage as growth and infrastructure decisions continue to increase demand.

This survey is one of the easiest ways to make your voice heard right now. Please consider taking a few minutes to complete it and sharing it with others who care about our water and quality of life.

Coming up next: Mark you calendars for Saturday, February 21 10:00 am-12:00 Stop the Sand Mine meeting for an in person update.

A lot has happened behind the scenes over the past several months. The application is still active, new information continues to emerge, and recent developments raise serious questions about environmental risk, transparency, and long-term impacts to our groundwater, wetlands, and springs. This is not the moment to step back, it is the moment to stay informed and engaged.

Thank you,
Stop the Sand Mine Committee
Colleen Farmer Chair & Tony Ayo Co-Chair