



Florida House of Representatives

Representative Lindsay Cross

House District 60

September 29, 2024

Bird and Nature Lovers:

Welcome friends! I'm delighted that you are spending your weekend at the Florida Birding and Nature Festival. This is truly a celebration of the beautiful and inspiring natural beauty of the West Central region.

As I write this letter, our region and state are beginning a long journey of recovery from Hurricane Helene, one of the most devastating natural disasters of our lifetime. As we extend support for our friends and neighbors, I'm also reminded of the enormous impacts to our ecosystem. Beaches and barrier islands - home to countless birds, small mammals, and invertebrates - have been permanently altered or destroyed. Household and industrial chemicals, debris, and waste washed into our waters, impacting water quality and food sources for fish and wildlife. It will take a long time to recover and our natural systems will require additional support -in the form of more aggressive and proactive policies and funding to restore habitats and water quality.

Land conservation and more sustainable development practices are at the top of the list as critical to the long-term success of our state. We must fully invest in programs like Florida Forever at the state level, as well as local land-buying and restoration programs. As we redevelop following Helene, particularly in coastal areas, we must incorporate more green infrastructure, areas for wildlife, and limit development in vulnerable areas.

Another key is recognizing and leveraging the value of nature-based recreation. As evidenced during the recently defeated attempts to privatize our state parks through construction of golf courses, pickleball courts and hotels, Floridians will fight for their beloved parks. Our parks and conservation areas are economic generators - but also worthy in their own right. If we are to inspire the next generation of conservationists, they need access to nature.

Friends, there is much work to do. This time of fellowship, field trips, seminars, and nature expos is a critical time to recharge and be inspired. I am confident that each of you will use what you've learned this weekend and leverage the relationships you've made to address the myriad challenges and opportunities to protect, restore, and celebrate our phenomenal natural environment. I am happy to be in the fight alongside each of you!

Happy Birding,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindsay Cross".

Representative Lindsay Cross