

THE CABINET
STATE OF FLORIDA

Representing:

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
DIVISION OF BOND FINANCE
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The above agencies came to be heard before THE FLORIDA CABINET, the Honorable Governor Scott presiding, in the County Commission Chambers of the Osceola County Administration Building, Kissimmee, Florida, on Wednesday, January 22, 2014, commencing at approximately 9:24 a.m.

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Governor

PAM BONDI
Attorney General

JEFF ATWATER
Chief Financial Officer

ADAM PUTNAM
Commissioner of Agriculture

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I N D E X

INVOCATION by Pastor Javier Figueroa.....	4
INVESTMENT IN FLORIDA'S EVERGLADES	
(Presented by Secretary Herschel Vinyard).....	7
(Presentation by Stan Meiburg).....	13
(Presentation by Blake Guillory).....	19
(Presentation by Dan Kimball).....	28
(Presentation by Eric Eikenberg).....	35

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Good morning. Welcome to
3 the January 22, 2014, Cabinet Meeting. I'd like
4 to welcome Javier Figueroa, Pastor at Centro de
5 la Familia Christiana de Poinciana, to lead
6 invocation. Please remain standing after
7 invocation for the Pledge of Allegiance, which
8 will be led by Osceola High School ROTC. Please
9 rise.

10 PASTOR FIGUEROA: Let's pray.

11 Father, in the name of Jesus we thank you
12 for our nation, our state, and our Government.
13 We pray, and we have before you, our Governor and
14 his staff, a great leader in our community,
15 congressmen, senators, and judicial system. We
16 pray for every department of our Government and
17 everyone in authority over us.

18 We pray for our police, mayors, and
19 representatives. We ask that your spirit will be
20 open to them.

21 Father, we believe that divine wisdom and
22 ability has entered in the heart of our Governor
23 Scott and his staff and that his knowledge is
24 increasing before you. We declare that
25 discretion and good judgment guards him and his

1 staff in understanding, and keeps him away from
2 evil and wickedness.

3 We pray for them believing that your
4 integrity guards them and guides them to proceed
5 in obedience in respect to us, and that we may
6 live in a peaceful environment in full holiness
7 and honesty.

8 We pray for the righteous to remain in our
9 Government, and the wicked to be stopped, and
10 your work will be preserved. And, Lord, we thank
11 you because the good news of the gospel is
12 preached in our State, and your work prevails and
13 grows in the minds and hearts. In the name of
14 Jesus we pray, amen.

15 (The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the
16 Osceola High School AF JROTC.)

17 (Various resolutions, updates and
18 recognitions were presented before the Cabinet.)

19 *****

20 GOVERNOR SCOTT: We have a lot to be
21 thankful for. We have great educators all across
22 our State taking care of our education every day.

23 As we have seen today, there are many
24 things that make Kissimmee such a special place.
25 One of the most important is the fact Kissimmee

1 is the headwaters of the Florida Everglades.
2 This unique ecosystem shapes Florida from Orlando
3 south, provides drinking water for one in four
4 Floridians, and is key to a vibrant economy coast
5 to coast. That is why when I took office, I made
6 it a priority to find out why the basic and
7 central goal of providing clean water to the
8 Everglades has been in litigation for more than
9 20 years.

10 With the help of Secretary Vinyard, the
11 South Florida Water Management District and this
12 Cabinet, we got to work, and now we have gotten
13 all parties to agree to an \$880 million Water
14 Quality Plan to provide clean water to the
15 Everglades. We've also begun an expedited
16 planning process, called the Central Everglades
17 Planning Project, to move more clean water south.
18 This year we will continue to make great progress
19 on Everglades restoration.

20 I now recognize Secretary Herschel Vinyard
21 of the Department of Environmental Protection to
22 review what we have accomplished today. Good
23 morning, Herschel, and thank you for all of your
24 hard work.

25 (Applause)

1 MR. VINYARD: Good morning, Attorney
2 General Bondi, CFO Atwater, Commissioner Putnam.
3 I am going to talk about Governor Scott's
4 landmark, "landmark", Everglades Water Quality
5 Plan. It's a masterful plan, created by
6 Florida's scientists. It's, in many respects,
7 coming in under time. In fact, I was at a
8 groundbreaking last week. This plan is coming in
9 under budget, which we always like to see. It's
10 a plan that sends billions and billions of
11 gallons of clean water into America's Everglades.
12 It didn't happen by accident. It took the
13 personal leadership of Governor Scott, and some
14 great partners, to make this happen.

15 What I'd like to do is quickly outline how
16 we got here. And Blake Guillory, with South
17 Florida Water Management District, will go into
18 some greater detail.

19 Three years ago I was brand new to DEP, and
20 Governor Scott was brand new to being a governor.
21 And one of the first memos I got was Governor
22 Scott wanted to hear about Everglades water
23 quality. As you can tell by my accent, I'm from
24 North Florida. My view of the Everglades was, it
25 was a national treasure, but it was something

1 that I did with my family as an eco tourism
2 destination. I did not have the background of
3 the water supply and the tremendous amount of
4 attention focused on the Everglades. It was a
5 fun place to visit.

6 So I remember when I got to visit with the
7 Governor. Really it was one of my first
8 briefings with him. I said, Governor, the State
9 of Florida is fighting the Federal Government
10 over Everglades water quality. There are two
11 federal lawsuits in front of two different
12 federal judges and a special master. And there
13 are a number of litigants, but there's a great
14 crowd around this issue. DEP, the Water
15 Management District, local governments,
16 agriculture, two federally-recognized native
17 American tribes, the Department of Interior, the
18 Corps of Engineers, Department of Justice, a host
19 of environmental organizations, the Everglades
20 National Park. The State of Florida has hired
21 two outside law firms to fight the Feds on this
22 issue.

23 And I remember the Governor asking me, he
24 says, "When was this litigation filed?" And I
25 said, "In the 1980's." And you all know the

1 Governor is very solutions oriented, and he
2 leaned over his desk and said, "Herschel, we're
3 going to solve this Everglades water quality
4 issue."

5 So I went back to the scientists -- because
6 that's where all the hard work happens -- the
7 scientists at DEP and the Water Management
8 District. And I will tell you that Floridians
9 are very, very blessed to have the scientists
10 working for our state. They have made a right
11 choice to protect the environment. We're very,
12 very fortunate to have them on our team.

13 And what they did, these Florida scientists
14 that work for the South Florida Water Management
15 District and DEP came up with this landmark plan.
16 We think it's a better plan than any other plan
17 presented, and it comes in at a lower cost.

18 The Governor got personally involved then.
19 He said, "If this is a plan, we're going to make
20 this work." And the Governor flew to Washington,
21 D.C. I went, Melissa Meeker, who was then the
22 executive director of the Water Management
23 District, and the federal family had all
24 gathered. The meeting was hosted by Secretary
25 Salazar, who was then Department of Interior

1 secretary.

2 I will tell you it's pretty heavy stuff.
3 We walked in, and it's a 150-year old building,
4 and wood paneling, and busts of famous Americans
5 in his office. Beautiful oil landscape
6 paintings. And again, you had all of the people
7 that you read about in the New York Times at this
8 meeting, all the heads of the federal agencies
9 involved in Everglades. And the Governor stood
10 up and presented the plan.

11 And I think there was a moment in time
12 right there that everybody realized we have a
13 governor that's focused on solutions, solving the
14 Everglades water quality problem. And then we
15 had a host of federal agencies that saw that.
16 And I think that sent a great signal to the
17 lieutenants that were all in the room that day,
18 that we were going to get there. We were going
19 to get there.

20 So now we had -- there were some tweaks to
21 the plan. But the good news is, is that the
22 scientists in EPA, the Water Management District,
23 DEP, the scientists representing the Everglades
24 Foundation, Audubon, were all in agreement that
25 this was the path forward. This was how we were

1 going to solve our Everglades water quality
2 problem.

3 When I figured out that we had an agreement
4 with our partners, I went to Senate President
5 Gates and Speaker Weatherford and said, "We have
6 a really once-in-a-generation opportunity. Would
7 you please support this plan?" And they said,
8 "Absolutely."

9 And they assigned Representative Matt
10 Caldwell and Senator Simpson with the obligation
11 to shepherd a bill that would enshrine Governor
12 Scott's plan into state law and provide the
13 funding. And that bill passed unanimously.
14 Unanimously.

15 (Applause)

16 And for me, it was a great -- it was a
17 great example of water quality is not a
18 Republican or Democratic issue. It was one we
19 all cared about. We had unanimous support, it
20 was fantastic. They all got behind Governor
21 Scott. The State of Florida is finally moving
22 from litigation to restoration of the Everglades.

23 As I mentioned, this would not have
24 happened but for Governor Scott's leadership.
25 But also some great, great partnerships were

1 formed in this. We had partnerships with the
2 Federal Government, agriculture, environmental
3 organizations.

4 I'm going to recognize our next two
5 speakers, and also recognize three members in the
6 audience today that were key partners in the
7 agriculture community.

8 First, Commissioner Putnam, thank you for
9 your support for Everglades water quality. We
10 also have Gaston Cantens from Florida Crystals,
11 and Robert Coker with U.S. Sugar. And they all
12 have been supportive of this plan.

13 Our first speaker is Stan Meiburg. And
14 Stan is a three-decade veteran of EPA. He's
15 acting regional administrator in Atlanta. He's a
16 friend. He was one of the guys, the boots on the
17 ground, that when he saw the timing was right, he
18 saw the solution was near, and he was a great,
19 great help to the State of Florida. So I want
20 Stan to come up here.

21 He's going to be followed by Eric Draper,
22 who you all know Eric, he's always in the
23 trenches fighting with Audubon Florida. Does a
24 fantastic job. So I'll let those two folks talk.

25 GOVERNOR SCOTT: First off, none of this

1 would have happened, Herschel, but for you.
2 You've done a great job leading this effort.
3 You've done a great job the last three years with
4 EPA. You've built great relationships across
5 this state and across this country.
6 Congratulations on what you've done.

7 MR. VINYARD: Thank you, Governor.

8 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Stan, everything you tried
9 to do, and Lisa Jackson, she got criticized a
10 lot, but she worked tirelessly to make this
11 happen. And it wouldn't have happened but for
12 her support and her hard work. I know a lot of
13 people at EPA did it. If Lisa hadn't been
14 involved from the beginning, it wouldn't have
15 happened.

16 MR. MEIBURG: Governor, that's absolutely
17 right. It's very gracious for you to say so.
18 This has been a great relationship all along,
19 really, Attorney General Bondi, and you,
20 Governor, and CFO Atwater and Commissioner
21 Putnam. This is a remarkable effort.

22 What I want to do is touch on what
23 Secretary Vinyard said. Without Secretary
24 Vinyard, this would not have happened. He has
25 been a strong, strong partner; and we have been

1 very grateful for the partnership and friendship
2 that has been developed in the course of doing
3 this work as part of the great effort of
4 environmental protection here in Florida.

5 As Secretary Vinyard noted, and as you
6 know, we have been working on this for a long
7 time; and we have made a lot of progress.

8 Commissioner Putnam, I wanted to note over
9 the time between 2006 and 2013 through the use of
10 agricultural best management practices, that's
11 removed over 2500 metric tons of phosphorus from
12 water that was tested in Florida Everglades. And
13 it's important to recognize that.

14 In addition, stormwater structures
15 constructed in 2013 removed additional
16 1560 metric tons of phosphorus. So we've been
17 making a lot of progress. I think it was
18 apparent to everyone there was still more left to
19 be done. The fact it was apparent to everyone
20 that still more needed to be done didn't keep a
21 lot of people from fighting about it for a long
22 period of time.

23 But I think I now am confident in saying
24 that we have turned the corner on water quality
25 protection for the Florida Everglades and there's

1 several very specific things as a result of the
2 plan and the work we've all done together. We
3 now have protective water quality standards in
4 place, we have expanded treatment areas, we have
5 protective effluent levels and schedules
6 enforceable by the State, and we have monitoring
7 to see just how well we are doing. All of these
8 things have gotten into place over the last three
9 years.

10 And it's really been quite remarkable,
11 Governor, as a result of your leadership,
12 Secretary Vinyard, as well as with South Florida
13 Water Management District. And I too want to
14 affirm the partnership we have with the District
15 and its executive director Blake Guillory, and
16 Melissa Meeker before him, as really strong
17 partners in this effort. We really have embarked
18 on a new path.

19 As a result of the plan now in place, we
20 have a permit that was issued by Florida DEP in
21 2012, kind of like unanimous passage by the
22 Legislature. When this permit went out, no one
23 appealed it. This never happened. It was really
24 quite remarkable.

25 Just to close out, I don't want to leave

1 people with any illusions. Restoration of the
2 Everglades is ongoing work, and it's going to be
3 hard work. It's going to take time, and it's
4 going to be extensive. And we still have more
5 challenges ahead. We did it right on all of the
6 aspects of Everglades restoration. Famous
7 quantity, quality, timing and resolution all have
8 to be taken into account.

9 The only way forward is to sustain and
10 build upon that partnership we have established
11 here. And I want to thank you, Governor, and
12 thank you members of the Cabinet for your
13 continued support for protecting and restoring
14 this unique national treasure. Thank you very
15 much.

16 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thanks for your help.
17 (Applause).

18 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Good morning, Eric.

19 MR. DRAPER: Good morning, Governor Scott,
20 and thank you very much for allowing us to talk
21 about the incredible success of Everglades water
22 quality strategies. I'm glad to speak to you and
23 members of the Cabinet today, and to be here, as
24 you noted, in the headwaters of the Everglades.
25 This is really an exciting place to be.

1 I know there are many people in the
2 audience here who are ranchers in this area, and
3 working hard on their part to move these things
4 forward.

5 Last week I joined Secretary Vinyard and
6 Blake Guillory from South Florida Water
7 Management District, and Dan Kimball from the
8 Park, and many other people with the Everglades
9 Foundation for the groundbreaking at the A-1 FEB.
10 And that's one of the projects that's really
11 going to make this flowing of clean water move
12 forward. It's a do-over project, and it's a
13 terrific do-over.

14 60,000 acre-feet of water will be managed
15 in that facility, allowing it to be stored and
16 treated and moved south to help replenish the
17 Everglades and help us to deal with some of the
18 problems we've had over the summer.

19 When I looked up at the landscape -- it
20 looks like a moonscape right now, but it's on its
21 way to being something incredible -- I thought
22 this is actually 60,000 acre-feet of
23 partnerships. This is a realization of a long
24 overdue getting together of the Department of
25 Environmental Protection, State of Florida, EPA,

1 Department of Interior, and others, including our
2 constituents, to get something done.

3 Now there's more good news in the
4 Everglades too. A project that you had a ribbon
5 cutting on last year, the C-111 project down at
6 the very bottom of the Everglades, in Everglades
7 National Park. There was a new story today that
8 reported one year success, one year after the
9 project started, we first opened the project to
10 go online, built by the South Florida Water
11 Management District. The water is cleaner, the
12 sea grass is coming back, the fish are coming
13 back into that part of the Everglades, migration
14 of the birds are coming back also.

15 I'll complete by saying we are excited to
16 see the progress, excited to see the
17 partnerships, excited to see things get done.
18 It's good to be here in the headwaters. There's
19 more that we can do up here. But things are
20 moving forward. When you build these things, we
21 get results. Thank you very much.

22 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you, Eric.

23 (Applause).

24 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Blake's a newbie to South
25 Florida. How long have you been there now,

1 Blake?

2 MR. GUILLORY: Five months.

3 GOVERNOR SCOTT: And Leslie Meeker did a
4 good job before Blake got there.

5 MR. GUILLORY: Yes, sir. She's a good
6 friend. Governor, members of the Cabinet, thank
7 you so much for allowing me the opportunity to
8 update you on how South Florida Water Management
9 District is working to improve our water quality
10 and restore flow to the Everglades. I was told I
11 have about ten minutes to do this. So I have had
12 to really boil it down.

13 It's an exciting time to be at the
14 District. I think everybody feels there's
15 momentum building. After many years of inaction,
16 we are now moving forward under the continued
17 leadership and support from Governor Scott, the
18 Legislature, Department of Environmental
19 Protection, Department of Agriculture and
20 Consumer Services. This path forward turns
21 meaningful plans into action to benefit the
22 people and environment of our state.

23 As the Secretary pointed out, restoration
24 strategies is the result of the Governor's
25 direction to develop a plan that was

1 scientifically sound and economically feasible to
2 address water quality for existing flows to the
3 Everglades. The State's plan utilizes land and
4 infrastructure that were already in place and
5 will save over one billion dollars, compared to
6 the plan proposed by the Federal Government.
7 These projects will provide additional storage
8 and treatment of water and will help us meet
9 water quality standards set for the Everglades.

10 The projects and restoration strategies
11 will be built on an expedited schedule and
12 completed in ten years. Currently there are five
13 stormwater treatment areas, or STAs, as we like
14 to call them, for 57,000 acres of treatment.
15 This plan creates an additional 6500 acres of
16 treatment. If you add that together, that's a
17 hundred square miles of STAs.

18 This plan also creates 110,000 acre-feet or
19 36 billion gallons of additional storage that
20 will be created for the construction of three
21 flow equalization basins. These impoundments
22 capture runoff during storm events; and, like a
23 surge tank, they can be filled several times
24 during the year, they'll provide a more steady
25 flow through our STAs needed to achieve optimal

1 performance. The strategies also feature
2 implementation of additional source controls in
3 areas of the eastern Everglades where phosphorus
4 levels and stormwater runoff are traditionally
5 higher.

6 In addition, very important, a robust
7 \$55 million science plan will insure that
8 continued research and monitoring will take place
9 to optimize the performance of our STAs.

10 Three major capital projects are already
11 underway, and in addition to providing storage
12 and treatment, these projects provide jobs. A-1
13 flow equalization basins will provide
14 60,000 acre-feet of storage. It's ahead of
15 schedule; construction will be completed in July
16 of 2016. The \$69 million construction budget
17 will create 1632 jobs.

18 The L-8 FEB will provide 45,000 acre-feet
19 of storage. Again, already under construction,
20 ahead of schedule, will be completed in December
21 of 2016. The \$62 million construction budget
22 will create 1680 jobs.

23 And finally, the STA-1 west expansion that
24 was mentioned earlier will provide an additional
25 6500 acres of STA. With the land exchange

1 negotiations complete, the design is underway;
2 and the construction budget of \$215 million will
3 create 4944 jobs.

4 2013 brought extreme rain, high Lake
5 Okeechobee stages, and increased freshwater
6 discharges to the Caloosahatchee River and Saint
7 Johns River estuaries. During this time, water
8 conservation areas were experiencing very high
9 water levels. At the exact statement time,
10 Everglades National Park actually needed the
11 water.

12 A number of measures were conducted to
13 provide some relief, and thanks to the support of
14 Governor Scott and the Legislature, we were able
15 to successfully increase storage and conveyance
16 of water south to Lake Okeechobee to provide
17 temporary structural changes to increase water
18 flow and to store water on public and
19 privately-owned lands.

20 The Governor's support also included
21 direction to DEP to expedite permits, and the
22 Legislature provided emergency funding, both
23 which were necessary to conduct operational
24 changes to maximize discharges through numerous
25 outlets in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade

1 Counties. During this time we were also actively
2 distributing and storing water on public and
3 private lands through an ongoing program called
4 Dispersed Water Management. The District stored
5 nearly 100,000 acre-feet, or 32 million gallons
6 of water this year with this program.

7 One important long-term Northern Everglades
8 project is the Kissimmee River Restoration.
9 Started in 1944, this 20-year project provides
10 substantial storage and treatment north of Lake
11 Okeechobee. The District and DEP have been
12 working close with Army Corps of Engineers to
13 restore the river, channeled back to a meandering
14 river. Two backfill phases have been completed,
15 with only one remaining. This last phase will
16 provide more than 30,000 acre-feet of storage.

17 Following completion of the backfill
18 components, the Headwaters Project, which
19 includes revising regulation schedules on many of
20 the lakes upstream, could provide an additional
21 100,000 acre-feet of storage north of the lake,
22 for a total of 130,000 acre-feet, or 42 million
23 gallons. We can see the goal line on this
24 project and are working closely with the Army
25 Corps to move forward as quickly as possible.

1 For flows that can't be moved south, and to
2 address local basin runoff, the C-44 reservoir
3 and Stormwater Treatment Area project will
4 provide storage and water quality treatment,
5 providing direct benefits to the Saint Lucie
6 estuary and Indian River lagoon.

7 Governor Scott and the Legislature
8 committed \$20 million in funding in FY-13, and
9 the Governor has committed an additional \$40
10 million in FY-14 to complete the construction of
11 the STA component. This financial infusion will
12 expedite the completion of this project.

13 Army Corps of Engineers will be completing
14 the construction of the intake canal you see here
15 on the insert in the picture, and we encourage
16 the Federal Government to appropriate additional
17 funds necessary for the Corps to complete the
18 reservoir.

19 Modified water deliveries to Everglades
20 National Park was started soon after the park was
21 expanded back in 1989, and was designed to move
22 more water east and south into the Shark River
23 Slough and Taylor Slough. After 20 years, the
24 projects are almost complete, including the first
25 mile -- or the first one mile of the Tamiami

1 Trail bridging.

2 Recent analysis determined that more
3 bridging was needed to increase flows under
4 Tamiami Trail and into the park. And under
5 Governor Scott's leadership, the State has
6 committed to match Federal Funds for the next
7 component of the Tamiami Trail bridging project,
8 the 2.6-mile bridge component.

9 The State is committing up to \$30 million a
10 year over three years, or \$90 million total, from
11 the Florida Department of Transportation work
12 plan. Ultimate completion of this project will
13 provide numerous benefits to the region and allow
14 us to move more water south into the Everglades.

15 But to realize the full value of the mod
16 waters and the Tamiami Trail bridging project, we
17 need to move forward with the C-111 South Dade
18 project, a project designed to move water south
19 while providing flood protection to the adjacent
20 area. The Corps has completed seven of the nine
21 project components; contracts eight and nine
22 remain.

23 Looking at the slide before you, we see
24 that contract eight is the yellow. And this
25 small impoundment links mod waters and the

1 Tamiami bridge components above, in red, to the
2 C-111 components to the south, in gray, and will
3 allow more water to move south. Small canal
4 improvements will be designed. The design is
5 complete; and, together with the Governor's
6 office, we are moving -- with the Corps, moving
7 forward to try to complete this project as soon
8 as possible.

9 My last slide is for the Central Everglades
10 Planning Project. With the Governor's
11 encouragement and leadership, the District is
12 actively engaged with our Federal, tribal, State
13 and local partners, along with environmental
14 advocates to create a cost-effective means
15 sending water south and thereby reduce Lake
16 Okeechobee releases to our estuaries.

17 Based on detailed modeling and cost benefit
18 analysis, we have taken components of the 68
19 project Comprehensive Everglades Restoration
20 Plan, CERP, and sequenced their implementation in
21 a way to move water south sooner instead of
22 later. This Central Everglades Planning Project,
23 or CEPP as we like to call it, is designed to
24 send more water south. But it does other things
25 too.

1 The CEPP components include increasing
2 storage treatment and conveyance of water south
3 of Okeechobee, removing canals and levees within
4 the Central Everglades, and retaining water
5 within Everglades National Park. It also
6 continues to protect urban and agricultural
7 interests to the east from flooding. CEPP
8 creates 56,000 acre-feet of additional storage
9 and moves 200,000 acre-feet, or 65 billion
10 gallons per year into the Everglades.

11 That concludes my presentation. Thank you.

12 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you, Blake. Thank
13 you for your hard work.

14 MR. GUILLORY: I've been asked to introduce
15 our next speaker. And I'd really like to
16 recognize how great of a partner he's been with
17 regard to our efforts in the Everglades. Dan
18 Kimball, superintendent of the Everglades
19 National Park, will be leaving us at the end of
20 this month. He's retiring.

21 Dan has been a champion of our collective
22 efforts, and he will be sorely missed. We thank
23 him for his service and wish him well on his
24 future endeavors. And I think Dan would like to
25 say a few words.

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(Applause)

GOVERNOR SCOTT: Secretary of Interior, it wouldn't have happened but for his leadership. He really put a lot of effort into getting all the federal agencies to work together. Interior was so important in getting this settlement done.

MR. KIMBALL: Good morning, Governor Scott and members the Cabinet. I'm Dan Kimball, superintendent of the Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks. And, Commissioner Putnam, we know you had a nice visit out there. Others, we extend the invitation to visit both of our wonderful national parks in South Florida.

It's truly an honor and great pleasure to be here today and talk about Tamiami Trail Bridge, which is one of the most important Everglades projects now underway. And I bring greetings from our leadership in Washington, Director of National Park Service, John Jarvis, and our Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. Both of them are keenly aware of our historic work together on the largest landscape level ecosystem restoration project now underway on the planet.

Although she has been in office only eight months, Secretary Jewell has visited Everglades

1 twice and remarked to me that our work here is
2 currently important because it produces not only
3 lasting environmental benefits, but also supports
4 a strong economy and jobs in South Florida.

5 Like her predecessor, Secretary Ken
6 Salazar, who was also a champion of our work
7 here, together with Secretary Jewell, recognized
8 the absolute importance and necessity of a strong
9 partnership with the State of Florida. And I
10 must say, as Blake said a minute ago, I have been
11 the superintendent at Everglades for ten years,
12 and I believe that our partnership to restore the
13 Everglades has never been stronger. This is due
14 to the leadership of Governor Scott and the
15 Cabinet, and also individuals like Secretary
16 Vinyard and Secretary Prasad, good friend of
17 ours. And also I might mention Fish and Wildlife
18 Conservation Commissioner Nick Wiley, also a
19 great partner with us in the Everglades
20 restoration. They have all worked tirelessly to
21 restore the Everglades.

22 Governor Scott, I can't thank you enough
23 for everything you have personally done to move
24 the Everglades restoration forward. As you've
25 heard this morning, during your administration we

1 resolved important water quality litigation in
2 the State of Florida. The Everglades restoration
3 strategies will insure the water entering the
4 Everglades is clean.

5 The Central Everglades Planning Project
6 that you heard about a minute ago, which you
7 agreed to launch while meeting with Interior
8 Secretary Salazar is nearing completion, and I
9 hope we will be ready to forward it to Congress
10 for authorization once the South Florida Water
11 Management District approves the application of
12 local sponsors later this spring.

13 Most importantly for me as superintendent
14 of Everglades National Park, your pledge of
15 \$90 million to help the National Park Service
16 move forward with the next 2.6 miles of bridging
17 on the Tamiami Trail is truly appreciated.
18 Importantly, Florida's support for this
19 additional bridging on the Tamiami Trail insures
20 that it will get done.

21 The problem of disrupted flow in the
22 Everglades goes back a long, long time, almost
23 90 years, when the 264-mile Tamiami Trail was
24 completed in 1928; and it was a great
25 transportation accomplishment for the State of

1 Florida. But the Tamiami Trail blocked the
2 natural flow of water through the Everglades and
3 effectively became a dam at the north end of
4 Everglades National Park when the park was
5 dedicated in 1944.

6 With the completion in the 1960's of the
7 water conservation areas, most of the water flow
8 was diverted to the west by design, causing
9 significant disruptions in the natural flora and
10 fauna in Northeast Sharp River Slough in the
11 Park. And while Western Sharp River Slough
12 suffered from too much water, Northeast Sharp
13 River Slough suffered the opposite, too little
14 water.

15 While we've studied the situation for a
16 long, long time, and only recently have come to
17 the right solution in the form of bridging, I'm
18 happy to report that the one mile bridge project
19 was completed at the end of last year, in
20 December. And now, with that, we're capable of
21 increasing the water flow of Northeast Sharp
22 River Slough in the Park by 92 percent over
23 current levels. However, we know this is just a
24 first step towards reconnecting the water
25 conservation areas with Everglades National Park.

1 The next phase of Everglades restoration
2 increased the flows on Northeast Sharp River by
3 400 percent over natural levels. And this phase
4 of restoration cannot move forward without
5 completion of the Tamiami Bridge.

6 This dramatic increase in the water quality
7 will restore habitat in the park, increase
8 diversity and significantly benefit waiting
9 calculations in the Park that unfortunately had
10 been reduced by 90 percent. Freshwater
11 deliveries to Florida's bay will be improved as
12 well.

13 In addition to these important
14 environmental benefits in Everglades National
15 Park, the next phase in restoration provides
16 important benefits to the state in central
17 estuaries, and northern estuaries as well. Even
18 prior to completion of the next phase of
19 restoration, the bridging itself provides
20 important flexibility to water managers moving
21 water through the system. This is particularly
22 important when we see damaging high water levels
23 like we did last year in the water conservation
24 areas.

25 Your commitment of \$90 million to fund

1 implementation of the 2.6-mile bridge will be
2 fully matched by the Administration and the
3 National Park Service. As you're aware, the
4 Federal budget process has been difficult and
5 overly lengthy this year. However, I am here to
6 report that of the President's \$30 million FY-14
7 budget request for this project, we received
8 seven and a half million dollars which will,
9 combined with matching state funds, allow us to
10 meet the detailed design necessary for the
11 construction contract, in the latter part of 2015
12 or 2016 at the latest. This time frame was very
13 consistent with the goal that Secretary Jewell
14 included in her speech when she addressed the
15 Everglades Coalition two weeks ago.

16 In addition to funding, the detailed
17 design, we have secured important Legislative
18 language that allows us to enter into a
19 cooperative agreement with Florida Department of
20 Transportation so that FDOT could carry out the
21 project if it chose to do so. After all, FDOT is
22 in the business of building bridges and roads,
23 and will mean significant savings.

24 For our part, we plan to meet the State's
25 funding with funding from -- for roads that

1 National Park Service receives every year without
2 further appropriation from the Federal Lands
3 Transportation Program under Map 21. We hope to
4 secure additional dedicated funding for projects
5 that are of national significance, like the
6 Tamiami Trail and the next highway bill. And we
7 hope that states like Florida, where such
8 naturally-significant road projects are located,
9 will support us in that effort.

10 However, in the meantime, we pledge to use
11 our park road funding to match the State's
12 commitment. The Administration's commitment to
13 Everglades restoration is strong, and our
14 commitment to funding and completing the second
15 Tamiami Trail Bridge is secure.

16 In conclusion, I want to thank you for the
17 opportunity to address you today. Thank you for
18 your interest in partnering with us, particularly
19 on the Tamiami Trail, and thank you for your
20 strong and enduring commitment to restoring the
21 River. Thank you.

22 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you. You're way to
23 young to retire, you know.

24 MR. KIMBALL: Thank you. I'll be retiring
25 at the end of March. So I'll have the

1 opportunity to work with your team for a couple
2 more months.

3 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you. Thanks a lot.

4 MR. GUILLORY: Our next speaker is Eric
5 Eikenberg, CEO of the Everglades Foundation.

6 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Good morning, Eric. How
7 you doing?

8 MR. EIKENBERG: Good morning, Governor, CFO
9 Atwater, Commissioner Putnam, Attorney General
10 Bondi. It's a privilege to be here this morning.
11 I want to thank the Secretary for the invitation
12 to be in Kissimmee with you. I also want to
13 acknowledge your great team, not only at DEP, and
14 the Water Management District. We look forward
15 to working with Drew Bartlett with his new
16 appointment, as well as Blake in West Palm Beach,
17 the important work that the Administration is
18 doing in the protection of America's Everglades.

19 GOVERNOR SCOTT: It's an exciting time.

20 MR. EIKENBERG: It is very exciting. This
21 is an exciting day and moment to be here in
22 Osceola County. We're in earshot, if you will,
23 of the Kissimmee River Restoration. And as Blake
24 mentioned, that is a tangible project that shows
25 many facets that restoration provides. If you

1 haven't seen that project, I encourage you to see
2 the great work that's happening. But restoration
3 is working, and the Kissimmee River example is a
4 case in point.

5 Quickly, I just want to mention that the
6 Foundation was proud to support and endorse the
7 Governor's Water Quality Plan that he announced
8 back in June of 2013. I believe that's the time
9 frame, if I remember right.

10 The Governor took a leadership role in
11 going to Washington and sitting with EPA as we've
12 heard, and negotiating this important plan.
13 \$880 million to further clean water that will be
14 reaching the Everglades.

15 As it was mentioned, last week's the
16 groundbreaking of the A-1 reservoir was a
17 significant moment as that project continues.
18 The Governor's leadership brought together
19 Federal, State and local stakeholders in support
20 of a construction plan that will provide cleaner
21 water for the Everglades ecosystem and the
22 seven-and-a-half million Floridians, including
23 CFO Atwater and his family, that depend on the
24 Everglades for their drinking water.

25 As Blake mentioned, last summer our fellow

1 Floridians residing along in Treasure Coast down
2 in Southwest Florida were adversely impacted by
3 the discharges of polluted water east and west.
4 That had an impact on the local economy and the
5 local ecology. But Governor Scott understood
6 that one solution for this crisis is to move
7 water south. And we thanked him for his
8 voluntary decision to invest \$90 million in the
9 next phase of Tamiami Trail. The 2.6 miles that
10 we've heard about this morning, along with the
11 current one mile bridge, will uncork the southern
12 end of the Everglades that will allow water to
13 finally flow south.

14 And Governor and Cabinet, if I just heard
15 correctly, Superintendent Kimball just stated
16 that the Federal Government will match your
17 \$90 million commitment out of the National Park
18 Service Road Fund.

19 GOVERNOR SCOTT: So it's going to happen.

20 MR. EIKENBERG: Yes, yes.

21 (Applause)

22 MR. EIKENBERG: I also want to acknowledge
23 the Governor, the Secretary, the South Florida
24 Water Management District on the important
25 project of the Central Everglades Plan. This

1 important project goes hand in hand with the
2 bridging along Tamiami Trail. While the Trail
3 project will allow water to flow to the end of
4 the system, the Central Everglades Plan will
5 actually get the water there. CEPP is the
6 project that will allow water to flow from Lake
7 Okeechobee south, through the Central Everglades,
8 under the bridges of Tamiami Trail, into
9 Everglades National Park, and ultimately into our
10 beautiful Florida Bay.

11 I urge each of you, Governor and Cabinet, I
12 urge each of you to encourage Colonel Dodd, the
13 Army Corps of Engineers in Jacksonville, to
14 quickly wrap up the CEPP chief's report so that
15 report can be properly submitted to the United
16 States Congress as Congress works on the Water
17 Resources Development Act that is currently
18 pending.

19 Let me finally add in support of Jessie's
20 update on the economic status of our state, these
21 restoration projects aren't just good for the
22 environment, they are good for Florida's economy.
23 They bring needed high-paying jobs to Florida,
24 from engineers, construction designers, and
25 others. Research done by the Madder Economics

1 Group shows that Americas's Everglades is a
2 long-time job creator, and it's vital to
3 Florida's economy. Industries like real estate,
4 boating, fishing and hunting, all see positive
5 impacts of a restored Everglades.

6 So, Governor, and members of the Cabinet,
7 thank you for your time, and thank you all for
8 your commitment in protecting America's
9 Everglades.

10 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thanks Eric.

11 (Applause).

12 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Secretary of Interior, is
13 that all the speakers?

14 MR. GUILLORY: Yes, sir.

15 GOVERNOR SCOTT: As you've heard, we have
16 made historic strides in Everglades restoration.
17 As you also know, there's still a lot of work to
18 do. This is especially clear for the residents
19 along the East and West Coasts that must have
20 clean, functioning estuaries for their economy
21 and community. That is why in our 2015 "It's
22 Your Money Tax Cut Budget" we recommended
23 \$130 million for Everglades restoration, a
24 \$60 million increase from --

25 (Applause)

1 GOVERNOR SCOTT: -- in addition to
2 providing funds to raise 2.6 miles of Tamiami
3 Trail, and I want to thank Department of
4 Interior, and to construct the C-44 storm
5 treatment area, the \$130 million will further
6 insure the completion of the Kissimmee River
7 Restoration Project, which is very important.

8 As Blake mentioned, this project will
9 provide more than 100,000 acre-feet of storage
10 and treatment to help protect our coasts from
11 excessive flows from Lake Okeechobee, also
12 restore the winding Kissimmee River that will
13 once again become one of Florida's new natural
14 treasures.

15 Restoring Kissimmee River and Everglades is
16 a future we should all commit to providing our
17 children and future grandchildren. I'm excited
18 about the progress we have made to date and the
19 work we're going do in the future.

20 On the State level, while working hard to
21 project and restore our natural treasures, we
22 received some disappointing news from Washington.
23 At the same time I want to thank Department of
24 Interior, I want to thank EPA for things they've
25 done. Congress initially agreed to provide more

1 than \$80 million for the Everglades.

2 Unfortunately, the Obama Administration told
3 Congress they couldn't spend it all, and simply
4 asked for \$46 million. In other words, the
5 administration decided the Everglades didn't need
6 all the funding Congress offered. As a result,
7 the Everglades lost more than \$26 million in
8 Federal funding this year.

9 This is the lowest amount the Federal
10 Government has appropriated for the Everglades
11 projects in the last few years. It is my hope
12 the Administration will not reduce special
13 funding for Florida's future -- for projects in
14 the future.

15 I want to thank everybody for being here.
16 We have a lot of good things happening. I hope
17 the Federal Government will do the right thing
18 and provide the funding we need at the state
19 level. We've turned around our economy, and
20 we're doing our part, so we hope the Federal
21 Government will do theirs.

22 I want to thank everybody for being here.
23 Congratulations! We've made a lot of progress on
24 the Everglades.

25 (Applause)

1 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Now, Secretary Vinyard
2 will present the Board of Trustees agenda.

3 **(Applause)**

4 **MR. VINYARD:** Governor, thank you so much
5 for that funding announcement. That is
6 fantastic.

7 There are three items today for
8 consideration on the Board of Trustees agenda.
9 DEP has two items, and item three is with the
10 Florida Forest Service.

11 Item one is the submittal of minutes from
12 the November 19 and December 10, 2013, Cabinet
13 meetings; and the Department recommends approval.

14 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Is there a motion to
15 approve?

16 **ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI:** So moved.

17 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Is there a second?

18 **COMMISSIONER PUTNAM:** Second.

19 **GOVERNOR SCOTT:** Any comments or
20 objections?

21 Hearing none, the motion carries.

22 **MR. VINYARD:** Item number two is the Board
23 of Trustees and University of South Florida
24 transfer in the All Children's Hospital matter.
25 This is a consideration of the transfer of three

1 parcels totaling just over two acres of
2 non-conservation lands downtown Saint Pete, to
3 the University of South Florida. USF will then
4 transfer two parcels to All Children's Hospital
5 for the construction of a research facility that
6 will further the mission of combatting childhood
7 diseases and development of specific treatments.
8 I would like to introduce Dr. Jonathan Ellen who
9 is President and Physician-In-Chief of the All
10 Children's Hospital.

11 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Good morning, how's it
12 going. I had a great visit to All Children's,
13 what, a month ago? If you haven't had a chance,
14 oh, God, go. You feel so fortunate with what
15 they do. When we were there, what, a little baby
16 had a transplant eight, nine days old.

17 DR. ELLEN: The family that you had met, I
18 guess a couple years back, had a bone marrow
19 transplant. The baby's doing very well. And I
20 had an opportunity to see her doing very well
21 since then.

22 GOVERNOR SCOTT: How is that baby doing
23 that had the transplant?

24 DR. ELLEN: It's still going. Yeah, it was
25 very moving.

1 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thanks for what you do.

2 DR. ELLEN: Very moving day. And thank you
3 all. I wanted to thank you, Governor Scott, the
4 Cabinet, Secretary, and I also want to thank the
5 staff who worked very hard on this. I mean this
6 is a great opportunity, I think, to create jobs
7 along with great healthcare.

8 We've worked very collaboratively with the
9 University of South Florida to think about ways
10 to create a research corridor in this area, a
11 biotech corridor with a lot of the economic
12 development going on. And the hope is that we
13 will be creating more jobs, high-paying jobs,
14 keeping residents who are being trained, coming
15 out of our medical schools to stay in Florida and
16 continue to practice medicine. So all of that
17 work is great. I think the GME, which is the
18 Governor and the State, were very generous in
19 terms of helping the education of residents, and
20 will continue to work with that. And so we look
21 very much forward to improving the health of
22 children and having a great relationship with
23 USF. Thank you.

24 GOVERNOR SCOTT: You all do a great job.
25 Thank you for your what you're doing.

1 (Applause)

2 MR. VINYARD: Governor, the Department
3 recommends approval.

4 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Is there a motion to
5 approve?

6 ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI: So moved.

7 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Is there a second?

8 CFO ATWATER: Second.

9 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Any comments or
10 objections?

11 Hearing none, the motion carries.

12 MR. VINYARD: Governor, the last item is
13 Rural and Family Lands Protection Program
14 Prioritized Acquisition List. And this is being
15 shepherded through by Mr. Jim Karels, who runs
16 our Forest Service.

17 GOVERNOR SCOTT: And does a great job at
18 that. Good morning, Jim.

19 MR. KARELS: Good morning, Governor. Good
20 morning, Mr. Putnam, CFO Atwater, General Bondi.
21 This morning I want to present to you for
22 consideration and approval the recommended 2014
23 Rural and Family Lands Protection Program
24 Prioritized Acquisition List. Mouthful.

25 The purpose of the Rural and Family Lands,

1 as we spoke to the Cabinet a month ago, is to
2 protect our working ag across the state, to
3 protect it from fragmentation, to protect it from
4 other nuisances, to help and preserve, as the
5 Commissioner said earlier, that pillar in
6 economy, that agricultural economy that is so
7 strong in Florida.

8 Initially, back in 2008 the Legislature of
9 the State of Florida appropriated ten-and-a-half
10 million dollars for the Rural and Family Lands
11 Program. 2009 was the first approved list by the
12 Cabinet, a tiered list for Rural and Family Land
13 Acquisition. At that time there was 35
14 applications on that list.

15 During the past three, four years, nine
16 perpetual easements have been completed off of
17 that list. That has been approved and completed
18 through the Cabinet for preserving approximately
19 6,000 acres in working agricultural lands in
20 Florida.

21 And I think, as we said earlier, exciting
22 times are here. I look at it as exciting times
23 again for the Rural and Family Lands Program.

24 In 2013 the Legislative session in Florida
25 provided eleven-and-a-half million dollars for

1 the Rural and Family Lands Program. With that,
2 the Department of Ag put together another new
3 application cycle. We opened that up July 15th,
4 and it ran through August 28th. Closed
5 August 28th.

6 At that time we received 50 applications
7 that met the guidelines for the Rural and Family
8 Lands Program. And on November 15th, a selection
9 committee, appointed by Commissioner Putnam, met
10 in Tallahassee to a full house of families and
11 ranchers, farmers, forestry people that came and
12 spoke and talked about their lands and talked
13 about their commitment, their stewardship to
14 Florida and to agriculture across this state.

15 At the end of that meeting the selection
16 committee completed the list before you that's
17 broken up into three tiers. Tier one is the
18 highest priority, tier two, and tier three, all
19 three tiers. 50 different applications are
20 eligible. But tier one will be the priority that
21 we work on first.

22 And within tier one there's 16 different
23 land applications. And of those, there's about
24 43,000 -- 48,000 acres of land. Total in the 50
25 applications there's 83,000 acres.

1 This kind of represents to me some of the
2 best land stewardships, stewards in the State of
3 Florida, this list of 50. It really shows what
4 you can do to work your land, to be dedicated.
5 Dedicated to it, and to preserve it for both the
6 economy and the environment of this great state.

7 This list, as I said, is -- represents the
8 50 applications. And this map also shows
9 essentially where they're located. And they're
10 located across the Peninsula, and into the
11 Panhandle, many of them associated with, as
12 Herschel talked about earlier, the Everglades,
13 and they're in the headwaters of the Northern
14 Everglades. Many of these projects will be key
15 to preserving that land and helping to work and
16 preserve the water, the environment of our
17 Everglades as well.

18 With that, what I would like to do is I'd
19 like to give an opportunity to a number of
20 speakers that would like to speak. And I'm going
21 to name off in -- a brief opportunity for them to
22 speak on the Rural and Family Lands Program.

23 The first one is Wes Williamson, and he
24 represents Florida Cattlemen's Association. And
25 Wes also has his own cattle business out of the

1 Okeechobee area. Wes.

2 MR. WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much.
3 Thanks, Governor and Cabinet, for this
4 opportunity to speak to you. Welcome to the
5 heart of cattle country. You all know that's
6 where we are right now, Kissimmee and Okeechobee
7 area.

8 A lot of you have been on my family's ranch
9 in Okeechobee. The Governor came and did a work
10 day. When you finish your second term as
11 Governor, you can have a job down there, and do
12 real well. You've been on a horse before. We
13 can tell.

14 GOVERNOR SCOTT: You're hard working.

15 MR. WILLIAMSON: Thank you for the
16 opportunity. I'd like to recognize fellow
17 cattlemen in the room. Most of them have cowboy
18 hats on. If you all would just wave. This is an
19 important thing to cattle ranches.

20 The Rural and Family Lands Protection
21 Program is just very important to landowners,
22 ranch owners. It can help preserve in perpetuity
23 a lot of these ranches that have been here for
24 many, many years. I'm the third generation. We
25 have fourth and fifth generation.

1 Adam, thank you always. Had a couple
2 meetings with Adam in the past; he's always a
3 pleasure, and he understands.

4 Pam, I see you all over, so I know you.

5 I'm here to speak on, of course, behalf of
6 my family. My family is the Doyle Carlton,
7 Junior family. And, Governor, you know where
8 we're at on that. We've been in the ranching
9 business for a long time, or they have. I was
10 fortunate enough to marry into that.

11 I'm going to give you a little advice
12 before I leave here today, Governor, about the
13 bull riding.

14 GOVERNOR SCOTT: I'm not jumping on one.
15 To get the deal done, I might.

16 MR. KARELS: I think this is going to be a
17 great day, 'cause I rode them for 17 years. I
18 was going to advise you not to do that.

19 But we have an opportunity with the Rural
20 and Family Lands, I think it's a wonderful thing.
21 We've been talking about Everglades all morning
22 and what are the solutions. And I think the
23 solutions -- I haven't heard any solutions north
24 of the lake. The solutions north of the lake I
25 think are probably to do absolutely nothing.

1 Don't develop it. Just don't develop it. Let us
2 keep on doing what we're doing. Let us keep
3 ranching. The beef industry in Florida, we need
4 it. We definitely have it.

5 We've got Orlando north. We've got Miami
6 south. We don't need to close this whole state
7 in and add to more of these STAs you all have
8 been talking about this morning. That's what
9 will happen in the future.

10 Our property is probably three-and-a-half
11 miles from the Yeehaw Junction Turnpike. We know
12 all about Destiny and their problems, but I don't
13 know where they are today. But once that
14 development starts there, it's gonna, you know,
15 it's gonna contribute to the problem that we're
16 trying to solve. So, it's a win-win.

17 You guys have been wonderful. I've been
18 going to Washington. A group of us, the Adams
19 family, Karels family, our family, we've been
20 going there about two years now trying to get the
21 Northern Everglades Restoration Area started.
22 And the problem has been for the first two years,
23 or more than half the time we've gone, "What's
24 the State doing?" Well, the State wasn't doing
25 anything. Now you guys have stepped up, and you

1 make our argument really great.

2 We were fortunate enough last week to have
3 the Secretary of Interior on our property; she
4 flew down. So we do have a great interest. I
5 think now it's time that we can do some partners
6 together on a Federal and State level to make
7 this thing happen. So I just really wanted to
8 thank you for what you've done, and hopefully
9 that you'll continue to do.

10 One more thing I would like to add. In the
11 course of our two years, and I'm not going to
12 mention the name, but one of our families that
13 have been going with us, their land has now been
14 fragmented. They had some family members that
15 didn't want to ranch. You take a family, and you
16 start it at four, and you end it at twenty. When
17 you get to twenty, somebody's not going to want
18 to do what you want to do. Somebody's going to
19 be looking for the money, the income off ranch,
20 which there's not a lot of.

21 But in the course of this two-year period,
22 we have already lost I think about 20 percent of
23 one major family in the ranch business, and that
24 really hurts. And hopefully, with your help,
25 your support, we match these dollars with the

1 Federal Government, and we're going to get it
2 done. And I thank you so much for what you do.
3 And don't ride bulls.

4 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you.

5 (Applause)

6 MR. KARELS: Next up is Dykes Everett with
7 Christmas Creek Ranch.

8 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Good afternoon.

9 MR. EVERETT: Good afternoon, Governor,
10 members of the Cabinet. Thank you very much for
11 carving time out for us. I'm Dykes Everett,
12 Dykes Everett and Company.

13 I grew up in Mims, Florida, raising oranges
14 and cattle. And I'm here to speak toward this
15 program. We manage over a million acres of ag
16 and ranch lands around the United States. For
17 the last 15 years we've placed about two million
18 acres in various forms of preservation,
19 conservation in Florida, southeast and western
20 United States.

21 Governor, like you I am, however, a
22 recovering attorney. But I wear a lot of
23 different hats. One of those is a rancher. My
24 wife, Lisa, and I placed a conservation easement
25 on our Volusia County ranch, and we're working on

1 that for our Christmas, Florida ranch.

2 You know, in the conservation of ranching
3 and ag business, we focus on a lot of the things
4 about the land, the flora, the fauna, the
5 biology, ecology, water quality, water storage.
6 And those are all very, very critical and
7 important things.

8 This program though, in particular, focuses
9 on the people. And really it's the people in
10 agriculture that have created these beautiful
11 lands that we have. They've been the stewards
12 that have allowed our various conservation
13 programs to have the success that they enjoy.
14 And the power of this program is in that it's
15 working to keep the people in agriculture. And
16 that's really -- that's the cornerstone. That's
17 the linchpin of the long-time success of
18 conservation in this state.

19 So from that standpoint I appreciate the
20 time, appreciate your interest in this program,
21 and just urge your support to let's grow this
22 thing, let people on the land, keep them engaged
23 in making our state what it is. Thank you very
24 much.

25 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thanks a lot.

1 (Applause).

2 MR. KARELS: Next up is Greg Knecht with
3 Nature Conservancy.

4 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Good afternoon.

5 MR. KNECHT: Good afternoon. Governor
6 Scott, Commissioner Putnam, General Bondi and CFO
7 Atwater, it's an honor to have the opportunity to
8 address the Cabinet on this very important issue.

9 Last year, prior to the Legislative
10 session, the Nature Conservancy established one
11 priority: Increasing the funding for Rural and
12 Family Lands Program. Working with the
13 Commissioner's office, the Legislature, the
14 Florida Cattlemen's Association, Florida Forestry
15 Association and several of our ranching and
16 timber partners, many of whom are in the
17 audience, we were successful in including in the
18 budget a little over \$11 million for this
19 critical program.

20 On May 20th the Governor signed the budget
21 that included funding for several key
22 environmental investments to protect Florida's
23 natural treasures, including protecting Florida's
24 vitally-important agricultural lands. Thank you,
25 Governor.

1 Working with the agricultural community to
2 protect habitat, water, and the State's economy
3 is not a new strategy for the Nature Conservancy.
4 In fact, over 11 years ago, we began relationship
5 with a long-time Florida ranching family and
6 established one of our first conservation efforts
7 on this working cattle ranch. This amazing
8 steward is here today. Well, he was here -- is
9 here today, and this person is none other than
10 Cary Lightsey. Cary is here somewhere.

11 Today's Nature Conservancy holds 45
12 conservation easements, our first one in the
13 state dating back to 1980, and our most recent in
14 April of this last year when we partnered with
15 the United States Air Force to use funds awarded
16 to the Highlands County through the Defense
17 Infrastructure Grant and the program to protect
18 1,064 acres of Rafter T Ranch to support the
19 military mission of the Avon Park Air Force
20 range.

21 Our easements now total over 30,000 acres,
22 and range from the Florida Panhandle to the
23 Florida Keys, including the Everglades. Almost
24 half of our conservations are on working land.
25 We believe in protecting working land.

1 In the decade since establishing with Cary
2 Lightsey we have maintained the commitment to
3 keeping working lands working. Today we are here
4 to express our support for the recommended 2014
5 Rural and Family Lands Program Prioritized
6 Acquisition List. Through the implementation of
7 this program, agriculture lands are protected.
8 Critical native habitats are conserved,
9 groundwater recharges maintained. Lands stay on
10 the tax rolls, and there are no management costs
11 to the taxpayers of Florida.

12 The Nature Conservancy's mission is to
13 conserve the land and water upon which all life
14 depends. Governor and Cabinet members, your
15 support of this Rural and Family Lands Program,
16 and the program as a whole, helps to make the
17 Nature Conservancy achieve its mission.

18 On behalf of our staff, our members, and
19 the citizens of the State of Florida, we thank
20 you for your support.

21 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you.

22 (Appause).

23 MR. KARELS: Next up, Charles Lee with
24 Audubon.

25 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Good afternoon.

1 MR. LEE: Governor Scott, Attorney General
2 Bondi, CFO Atwater, and Adam Putnam, Commissioner
3 of Agriculture, Audubon Florida considers the
4 Rural and Family Lands Program one of the most
5 important elements of our land acquisition
6 efforts in Florida.

7 When I first came to work for Audubon
8 42 years ago, one of the things that I dug into
9 was the survival of the Bald Eagle. And I can
10 tell you definitively that had it not been for
11 the efforts of the ranchers in the Kissimmee
12 prairie, we would have lost the Bald Eagle
13 population. But they were, in fact, the
14 guardians of the reservoir of eagles when it hit
15 its lowest point. They helped to bring them
16 back.

17 If you look at the headwaters of the
18 Everglades today, and recognize the importance of
19 the largely natural areas that these ranchers
20 maintain on over two million acres of land north
21 of Lake Okeechobee, it is easy to see that either
22 the solution to Lake Okeechobee's problems, or
23 the ultimate nightmare about what happens to Lake
24 Okeechobee, is going to play out on these lands.

25 The solution is, as one of our rancher

1 friends said a few minutes ago, let us just keep
2 things the way they are. Let us not do anything
3 to change this land. Let these ranchers continue
4 in perpetuity as ranches to produce food and
5 fiber for the people of the United States. But
6 let's, through the action that you can take as
7 Government, and the action you can take as
8 Governor, Governor Scott, let's do some things to
9 underpin this ranching economy so that it stays,
10 and these ranches do not tragically split up.
11 The Rural and Family Lands lands program can and
12 will do that.

13 We're not only here today to ask you to
14 follow the Department's recommendation and
15 approve this list, we're asking you to take a
16 forward look at this program. And understand
17 that on tier one of the priority list, you have
18 over one hundred million dollars in projects, and
19 yet this year we have had eleven-and-a-half
20 million dollars in appropriations.

21 Next year, Audubon and the Florida Forever
22 Coalition are asking the Legislature to look at a
23 \$25 million appropriation for this program. We
24 think it's right, we think it's reasonable. We
25 hope that you will support it.

1 And in closing, I want to leave you with
2 something that to me tells the story of ranching
3 in the Northern Everglades, and really tells the
4 story of the value of this program. It's a book
5 called "The Old Florida". And it was put
6 together by one of our foremost ranchers, Alto
7 "Bud" Adams. And you may have heard about the
8 Adams Ranch. I know that Lee Ann Adams is here
9 in the audience today. But this ranch, I think,
10 is emblematic of the values, the natural
11 resources, the water resources, that exist in the
12 Northern Everglades that have been preserved by
13 these ranchers, and which can continue if the
14 Rural and Family Lands Program moves forward and
15 helps them do it.

16 You can look at the pictures in this book,
17 and I'm going to hand one to each of you, I'd ask
18 you to maybe keep it with you on the plane back
19 to Tallahassee. Beautiful photos. You will not
20 see more beautiful photos of Florida, Florida
21 birds, Florida landscapes, in Audubon Magazine or
22 any other magazine than you will see in the story
23 of Bud Adams and the Adams Ranch.

24 But this is what can be gained and
25 preserved for all of Florida's future, for all of

1 our families in the future, and to continue the
2 economic activity of these ranches in harmony
3 with the environment if you will let this program
4 move forward and grow the way it should. We hope
5 you will.

6 We congratulate Commissioner Putnam for his
7 leadership on this, and we hope you will all see
8 the value of making this a major program that
9 helps us attain the goals of Northern Everglades
10 conservation. Governor, members of the Cabinet,
11 thank you. And I will now give you each your
12 book.

13 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you.

14 (Applause).

15 MR. KARELS: We have two last speakers,
16 very brief, Larry Rosen with Kissimmee Valley
17 Audubon.

18 MR. LEE: Larry Rosen, on behalf of
19 Kissimmee Valley, had to leave for work. He
20 wanted you to know that an organization
21 representing 2200 families in the Osceola-Orange
22 County area was here to endorse this program as
23 well.

24 MR. KARELS: And the last speaker is Kim
25 Love.

1 MS. LOVE: Good morning -- or no,
2 afternoon. Hello. Thanks for letting me speak.
3 My name's Kim Love, and I live in the Kissimmee
4 Basin. I've lived and worked in the Kissimmee
5 Basin for about 20 years. Recently I've had the
6 great honor of working on a couple of projects
7 about the Basin. We did a Kissimmee Basin
8 Northern Everglades documentary, and most
9 recently worked on a wildlife strategy for
10 preservation up to Orlando.

11 What I've seen in this Basin is that the
12 large parcel of land holdings, water storage,
13 water supply, water quality and wildlife
14 conservation, are all intricately linked.

15 There are, in spite of the restoration,
16 still areas where water can be held and needs to
17 be held. And just to make it very brief, with
18 this program, with Rural Lands, we have more of
19 an opportunity to store more water north of Lake
20 Okeechobee, which will help with the total
21 maximum daily load issues that we still face in
22 the Basin. And encouraging these ranches to stay
23 in operation and continue that heritage, as well
24 as provide for environmental issues and our
25 economy.

1 Just to say, please support the program.
2 Thank you.

3 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you very much.
4 (Appause)

5 MR. KARELS: Thank you. And, Governor and
6 Cabinet, I can't say it any better than that
7 group.

8 In closing, I'd like to say that from our
9 end, from the Florida Forestry Service
10 Department, we're committed to this program and
11 the partnerships that would bring Federal aid to
12 state agencies like DEP and the Water Management
13 District, and the NGOs out there to expand and
14 make the best program possible to protect and
15 preserve Florida's working agriculture.

16 With that, I'd like to recommend approval
17 of the Priority List. And the Department's
18 recommendation is for approval.

19 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you. Is there a
20 motion to approve the item?

21 COMMISSIONER PUTNAM: Approved.

22 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Any second?

23 ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI: Second.

24 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Any comments or
25 objections?

1 Hearing none, the motion carries.

2 I'd like to recognize Director Ben Watkins,
3 with Division of Bond Finance, to present his
4 agenda.

5 MR. WATKINS: Good afternoon, Governor and
6 Cabinet members. Item number one is approval of
7 minutes of the December 10th meeting.

8 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Do I have a motion to
9 approve?

10 ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI: So moved.

11 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Second?

12 CFO ATWATER: Second.

13 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Moved and seconded. Show
14 that it was approved without objection.

15 MR. WATKINS: Item number two is a report
16 on the State's debt. This is not nearly as
17 exciting as Everglades restoration and conserving
18 Family and Rural Lands, but it is important to
19 the business of the State. So if you'll bear
20 with me, I'm going to move very quickly through a
21 presentation that hits the highlights on 2013
22 debt affordability report for the State. Please
23 feel free to stop me at any point in time if
24 you'd like to -- have any questions.

25 As you know, annually we prepare a report

1 to the Legislature on the amount of State debt.
2 The report was prepared, delivered by the
3 statutory deadline, December 15th. So it's been
4 delivered to the leadership of House and Senate,
5 and the Appropriations Committee and staff have
6 been briefed on the state of the State in terms
7 of debt.

8 It's an important tool for managing the
9 State's debt. It establishes a benchmark debt
10 ratio to provide policy targets and limits
11 relative to the amount of debt that's outstanding
12 for the State.

13 The first slide simply shows you the amount
14 of State debt that's outstanding, 24.6 billion at
15 the end of fiscal 2013. The State borrows for
16 infrastructure only. Long life capital assets,
17 bricks and sticks, not for operations, and not to
18 fund operating deficits.

19 You can see the largest investment in
20 infrastructure is the blue portion for schools,
21 with nearly 60 percent of all State debt
22 outstanding invested to build schools, followed
23 by transportation; and, lastly, acquiring land
24 for conservation purposes.

25 That picture is fairly static. Doesn't

1 change very much from year to year. Because of
2 the long-term nature of debt, it's important to
3 take a long-term view to get a perspective on how
4 debt has evolved over time. And this picture
5 shows you the history of how State debt has
6 increased from 2000 to 2010. And then, most
7 importantly, a watershed event, no pun intended,
8 is a reduction in State debt in each of the last
9 three years. State debt has been reduced by 3.6
10 billion dollars. So it reverses a long-term
11 trend of annual increases in State debt.

12 And there's a new piece of information here
13 too, and that's the green trend line. In other
14 words, if we grew at the same rate we had been
15 growing from 2000 to 2010, the amount of debt
16 that we would have had outstanding at the end of
17 2013 would have been 31.2 billion dollars.

18 Relative to the amount that's actually
19 outstanding of 24.6, that would be 6.6 billion
20 dollars more in debt that we would have
21 outstanding, or 27 percent more than we currently
22 have outstanding.

23 (Applause)

24 And the one piece of information that's not
25 here is that this doesn't include the reduction

1 in the Unemployment Compensation. During the
2 financial crisis where Unemployment benefits had
3 to be paid out, we had advances from the Federal
4 Government of two billion dollars. So in
5 addition to this, the traditional State debt, we
6 had that debt outstanding to the Federal
7 Government, which has also been repaid. So the
8 news is actually even better than is depicted on
9 that chart.

10 When we ask ourselves why is the State debt
11 going outstanding, what I'm showing you is the
12 net number. It both includes the amount of debt
13 we've added in the last three years, as well as
14 the amount of debt that's been paid in the last
15 three years. So that's a net change number.

16 So to really answer the question about why
17 is debt going down, this chart is intended to
18 answer that question. So you see over the last
19 three fiscal years, the amount of debt that the
20 State has used to finance capital assets is down
21 significantly.

22 When you look at 2013, we issued about
23 \$450 million of debt. Well, relative to the
24 average annual amount of debt that we had been
25 issuing for a debt of \$2.2 billion, that's an

1 80 percent reduction in the use of debt to fund
2 State capital outlay. So that's significant as
3 well.

4 So what have we been doing? If we haven't
5 been borrowing money, what have we been doing?
6 Well, we've been taking advantage of
7 historically-low interest rates. And 2013 was no
8 exception. We executed, in principal amount,
9 refunded \$2 billion of debt to lower the interest
10 rate on outstanding debt, saving the State
11 \$515 million in avoided future interest costs.

12 And over the last four years we've
13 refinanced \$8.2 billion of debt in 54 different
14 transactions, saving the State \$1.4 billion in
15 avoided interest costs.

16 GOVERNOR SCOTT: This is all good news.

17 MR. WATKINS: All good news.

18 The next slide shows you this is important
19 from a budgetary perspective. It's how much do
20 we actually appropriate annually in order to pay
21 for the debt service on the debt that's already
22 outstanding? For money that's already been
23 borrowed, investments that have already been
24 made, money that's already been spent, it's \$2.2
25 billion.

1 And you can see the increases in annual
2 debt service mirror the increase in the amount of
3 debt that we have outstanding. And it leveled
4 off of significance here, it's leveled off at
5 \$2.2 billion. So that's what it takes in terms
6 of repaying the amount of debt that we have
7 outstanding before we do any -- before the State
8 does anything else. It's 2.2 in annual debt
9 service costs.

10 But importantly, it was flat relative to
11 the last two years. But importantly, in 2014,
12 which is the current fiscal year we're in, is
13 represented by the green bar chart. And what
14 happens is, is because of the final maturities of
15 Preservation 2000, and the combined effect of the
16 refinancing activities we've engaged in, the
17 annual debt service requirements have dropped to
18 \$1.9 billion. So it's \$300 million less in
19 appropriation to pay for the debt that's
20 currently outstanding. And that's on a recurring
21 basis. So that's a significant reduction in the
22 amount of appropriation required to pay our debt
23 service.

24 This chart is a little busy, but this is
25 sort of where it all comes together. This shows

1 you how the State is tracking in the benchmark
2 debt ratio, both on an historical basis, as well
3 as a projected basis. So the horizontal red line
4 is a seven percent policy cap, the benchmark debt
5 ratio is debt service, the amount we have to
6 appropriate annually to pay for our debt,
7 relative to the revenues that we have available
8 to pay with, expressed as a percentage. Seven
9 percent cap, policy cap, and a six percent
10 target.

11 And you can see in 2013 that benchmark debt
12 ratio has improved to 6.79 percent. So it's
13 slightly underneath the 7 percent policy cap,
14 which is the first time that we've been within --
15 underneath the policy cap in the last seven
16 years -- several years. And then when you look
17 at 2014, when we have a reduction in the annual
18 debt service requirements to a billion nine, we
19 have further significant improvement measured by
20 the benchmark debt ratio, with that coming within
21 or falling underneath the six percent target for
22 the first time in many, many years due to the
23 combined effect of lower debt service
24 requirements, as well as increasing revenues
25 because of the improvement in the State's

1 economy.

2 Page eight is intended to show -- this is
3 your eye test for the day, Governor. And just
4 summarizing what it's intended to show, these are
5 the four debt ratios that the rating agencies use
6 to evaluate the State's debt position. And this
7 is intended to show how Florida ranks with these
8 metrics that are used by the rating agencies and
9 analysts.

10 And the short answer is, that we're below
11 the national average on each of these three
12 metrics, except our benchmark debt ratio where
13 we're slightly above the national average. And
14 then what we do is compare ourselves to the ten
15 largest states which we consider our better
16 reflection of our peer group. And we are in the
17 middle of the pack, is the best way to
18 characterize that, measured by these benchmark
19 debt ratios.

20 Then another development in the world of
21 credit has been how do the rating agencies
22 evaluate pension liabilities? And how does that
23 play into their evaluation of the State's credit
24 rating? It's something that there's been an
25 increasing awareness of the financial burden that

1 can be posed by pensions, and how rating agencies
2 evaluate pension liabilities is an important
3 consideration.

4 Most fundamentally, the rating agencies,
5 there's two things. One, they make adjustments
6 to the actuarial assumptions to recalculate what
7 the liability is, and the second thing they've
8 done is to calculate ratios, which are based on
9 the traditional ratios they use to debt, which is
10 your adjusted net pension liability is a
11 percentage average of revenues, is a percentage
12 of net income, and on a per capita basis, as well
13 as relative to the State's GDP.

14 And the bottom line is that Florida
15 ranked -- has a very, very low liability, in fact
16 lower in three of the four metrics, relative to
17 our peer group. So analytically what that tells
18 me is that the State of Florida has managed its
19 pension system and its liability well, both
20 through pension reform, as well as making the
21 full required contributions recommended by the
22 actuary.

23 And the take-away from this is how the
24 pension system is managed, and how it's funded is
25 an important consideration to the credit analysis

1 and to the State's credit rating, and that is a
2 new development relative to historically how the
3 State has been evaluated from a liability
4 perspective.

5 Another important measure to the State and
6 the rating agencies are what are our level of
7 reserves? Reflecting our financial flexibility,
8 we have to deal with economic uncertainty and
9 financial contingencies. And what this does is
10 plot both unspent GR, as well as monies in the
11 budget stabilization fund, those combined
12 balances overtime. That is reflected in both
13 absolute dollars, as well as a percentage of
14 general revenue, or revenues that the State has
15 available to fund its budget with.

16 And I'm happy to report in fiscal 2013, the
17 State ended with general fund reserves of
18 3.6 billion, or 14.2 percent of revenues, which
19 is above the ten percent that the rating agencies
20 consider minimally, "minimally", adequate to have
21 for financial contingencies.

22 And lastly, on the reserve front, adequate
23 reserves are critical to maintaining the State's
24 credit rating and providing the financial
25 flexibility to respond to financial

1 contingencies.

2 Florida's credit ratings are strong. We're
3 AAA rated, which is the highest rating category
4 available by two of the rating agencies, and one
5 notch below the highest rating, AAA1, by Moody.
6 These are unchanged during 2013.

7 There were two very positive developments
8 that occurred during the course of the fiscal
9 year; one is that Fitch changed the outlook on
10 the State's rating from negative to stable. And
11 Moody published a special comment, "Florida Back
12 On Track," which had favorable ratings.

13 (Applause).

14 So summarizing, I think the title says it
15 best, "Florida Back On Track." A summary of the
16 key points embedded within Moody's report, sound
17 fiscal management, reserves are being rebuilt,
18 revenues are growing, and the economy is
19 improving.

20 (Applause)

21 The Fitch outlook, returning the State's
22 rating from negative to stable. Again, some of
23 the key points that they've embedded within that
24 rating report is, Florida's economy is
25 stabilizing, with improved financial flexibility

1 reflected through the reserves. The reserves
2 remain satisfactory and have increased over the
3 last two years, strong financial management
4 practices, and fully funding the pension
5 contribution in fiscal 2014.

6 A summary of the key, the strengths, and
7 the challenges on Florida's credit ratings. The
8 strengths are, a conservative budget and
9 financial management, stabilized economy, and
10 improved financial flexibility, with the
11 challenges recognized as maintaining adequate
12 reserves, and balancing the budget without
13 over-reliance on non-recurring revenues.

14 From a ratings perspective, management of
15 the pension fund is increasingly important and
16 does have an impact on the State's bond rating.
17 And rating agencies will continually evaluate the
18 pace of economic recovery, as well as our
19 maintaining our financial position as reflected
20 by our reserves.

21 The conclusion really, the summary of the
22 highlights that I've already reviewed with you in
23 the take-aways, the State's debt, \$24.6 billion,
24 \$3.6 billion less than it was three years ago,
25 departing fundamentally from how we have been

1 increasing debt in every year. Debt service
2 payments being reduced by \$300 million annually
3 from 2.2 billion to 1.9 billion. General fund
4 reserves at 3.6 billion are up from fiscal 2012.
5 And the State's maintaining its very strong
6 credit ratings of AAA and AA1.

7 And, lastly, management in funding of the
8 pension system and how that's integrated into the
9 credit analysis is increasingly important.

10 So that concludes the report. I'll be
11 happy to answer any questions. Thank you very
12 much for your indulgence in grinding through this
13 dense material.

14 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thank you. It's all great
15 news. Have a great day.

16 Now I'd like to recognize Mike Prendergast
17 with Department of Veterans' Affairs.

18 MR. PRENDERGAST: Well, saving the best for
19 last is always great unless you're what stands
20 between the great news that Ben Watkins and
21 Herschel Vinyard just delivered, and lunch.

22 Good afternoon, Governor Scott, General
23 Bondi, CFO Atwater, Commissioner Putnam. Before
24 we begin our presentation, I'd like to give you
25 an update on Florida's Veterans' Hall of Fame.

1 As you know, we inducted our first class of
2 six veterans into the Hall of Fame on
3 November 12, 2013. The nominations window for
4 the 2014 class just opened this Monday, on Martin
5 Luther King Day. We'd like to encourage the
6 citizens of the state to visit the Hall of Fame
7 website to consider nominating veterans who,
8 through their work and lives during or after
9 military service, have made a significant
10 contribution to the State of Florida.

11 The Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame
12 submission period is from January 20, 2014, until
13 April 30, 2014. The council will subsequently
14 review all of the nominations and then submit its
15 recommended list of finalists to the Cabinet for
16 your approval sometime later this summer or early
17 fall.

18 We look forward to honoring another group
19 of great Florida veterans this year with your
20 help and the help of the citizens of the Sunshine
21 State.

22 The Department of Veterans' Affairs has
23 three agenda items for your consideration today.
24 Agenda item one, consists of the minutes of the
25 Cabinet meeting of September 24, 2013. We

1 respectfully request approval of these minutes.

2 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Do we have a motion to
3 approve the minutes?

4 ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI: So moved.

5 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Is there a second?

6 CFO ATWATER: Second.

7 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Moved and seconded.

8 Approved without objection.

9 MR. PRENDERGAST: Thank you.

10 Agenda item two is the Agency's report for
11 fiscal year 2012/2013. Each of your offices has
12 received a copy of this report as part of our
13 Cabinet material, and we would be pleased to
14 review them with you in further detail in the
15 coming days or weeks if you have any questions.

16 Our Agency's performance measures continue
17 to be met or exceeded in all areas across the
18 board. That is something I'd like to elaborate
19 on very briefly for you this afternoon.

20 Some of the major trends noted in our
21 Annual Report include services provided to
22 veterans by our Division of Benefits and
23 Assistance. In over the past three years this
24 Division has seen an increase of 28 percent in
25 the services provided to veterans and their

1 family members. What this amounted to was more
2 than 619,509 services to the Sunshine State's
3 veteran community over the past fiscal year.
4 These services included assisting our veterans in
5 obtaining medications, eyeglasses, hearing aids,
6 representing them at V.A. hearings, helping them
7 process their claims, and assisting with the
8 appeals to their claims after they went through
9 the first gauntlet of checks with the Federal
10 V.A.

11 Our Benefits and Assistance Division brings
12 the State a return on investment of more than 141
13 federal dollars to every state dollar invested.
14 We work hard to keep administrative costs low and
15 use the most of every dollar the State gives us
16 for direct services to our veterans and family
17 members.

18 Our Homes Program, the great homes division
19 that we've talked about on many occasions before
20 the Cabinet, maintained an occupancy rate in all
21 six of our skilled nursing facilities at
22 99 percent over the past year. As we presented
23 during the November 19th Cabinet meeting, the
24 Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans' Nursing
25 Home in Panama City, and the Alexander "Sandy"

1 Nininger Jr. State Veterans' Nursing Home in
2 Pembroke Pines both received five-star ratings
3 from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid
4 Services in 2013. This was quite an
5 accomplishment for our agency to receive two
6 A-plus ratings last year. It was certainly an
7 accomplishment, led by Dan Gates in our homes
8 division.

9 As you know, Governor, and members of the
10 Cabinet, the ratings take the form of several
11 individual ratings and they take a look at the
12 comprehensive rating over several years to
13 achieve this rating. Overall ratings of five
14 stars place a facility at the top ten percent of
15 all rated facilities in their State.

16 In addition to the five-star rating, the
17 Sims Home in Panama City also received a
18 proficiency survey during their annual survey in
19 2013 when AHCA came to visit. That home was
20 selected as the State Veterans' Home of the Year
21 for 2013.

22 You will be proud to know this most recent
23 development that our Agency was notified on 13
24 January that two more homes in our veterans'
25 nursing home enterprise were selected for

1 five-star ratings by CMS during last year, and we
2 were notified that as of December 31st, 2013, the
3 Clyde Lassen Home, led by Diane King, whom you've
4 met on many occasions in Saint Johns County, and
5 the Douglas Jacobson Home, which you'll be
6 visiting, also received five-star ratings as of
7 December 31, 2013. We're very proud of those
8 teams and their leaders for now giving us four
9 out of six 5-star ratings.

10 We're very proactive in our services to
11 Florida's veterans, yet with more than
12 1.5 million veterans in our state, we have only
13 300,000 who currently receive benefits and
14 services that they so richly earned while serving
15 in harm's way and around the globe to protect our
16 great nation.

17 We are working hard to reach more and more
18 veterans each and every day through our agencies
19 outreach and rebranding campaign which was
20 recognized by Florida Public Relations
21 Association with the 2013 Dick Pope Florida
22 Golden Image Award for having the best public
23 relations campaign in the State of Florida during
24 the last calendar year.

25 In fiscal year 2012-2013 FDVA was also

1 honored to be recognized by the Prudential-Davis
2 awards committee, with two outstanding program
3 recipients.

4 The State Veterans' Nursing Home Program
5 was also honored with a plaque recognizing the
6 achievement of the goal of all six skilled
7 nursing facilities reaching 100 percent occupancy
8 at the same time during the last fiscal year.

9 Two years ago the Department had a
10 95 percent occupancy rate, while the private
11 sector averaged about 87 percent.

12 Finally, the State Approving Agency of the
13 State Veterans' Training was recognized with a
14 certificate of achievement by the
15 Prudential-Davis team as well.

16 Subject to your questions, we respectfully
17 request approval of our annual report.

18 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Any questions? There's a
19 motion to approve.

20 ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI: So moved.

21 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Second?

22 COMMISSIONER PUTNAM: Second.

23 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Any comments or
24 objections?

25 Hearing none, the motion carries.

1 MR. PRENDERGAST: Thank you. Agenda item
2 number three, the Agency's request to proceed
3 with Notice of Proposed Rule Development for Rule
4 55-11.010 which concerns the residents' deposits
5 of money. And it's in accordance with the
6 Florida Administrative Code.

7 Currently, this rule conflicts with state
8 statutes and needs to be removed as recommended
9 by the Joint Administrative Procedures Committee.
10 The Department of Veterans' Affairs has always
11 followed the statute, but not the rule. The
12 interest earned on a resident's trust account
13 remains in the Residents' Deposit Trust Fund, and
14 has never been deposited into the Grants and
15 Donations Trust Fund.

16 Currently, of the 127 residents at the
17 State Veterans Domiciliary, only 53 of the
18 residents have Resident Deposit Trust Fund
19 accounts. As of yesterday we had \$58,178 in that
20 account. And what the rule states is that the
21 interest earned on these Resident Trust Fund
22 accounts is deposited in the Grants and Donations
23 Trust Fund. And what we want to do is make sure
24 it does not contradict with the statute, and puts
25 us in compliance with that.

1 In order to eliminate this conflict, FDVA
2 would like to request approval to publish notice
3 of the proposed rule development.

4 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Is there a motion to
5 approve?

6 CFO ATWATER: So move.

7 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Second?

8 ATTORNEY GENERAL BONDI: Second.

9 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Any comments or
10 objections?

11 Hearing none, the motion carries.

12 MR. PRENDERGAST: Thank you, Governor
13 Scott.

14 GOVERNOR SCOTT: Thanks for your hard work.

15 MR. PRENDERGAST: In closing, thank you all
16 for your leadership and steadfast service to
17 Florida's veterans, the third largest population
18 of veterans in the nation. We are at the
19 forefront for our veterans in the State of
20 Florida, and we look forward to serving our
21 veterans.

22 GOVERNOR SCOTT: This concludes our Cabinet
23 meeting. Our next meeting will be Thursday,
24 February 6, 9:00 a.m., at the Florida State Fair.
25 We are adjourned. It's going to be fun.

(Proceedings concluded at 12:57 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

STATE OF FLORIDA:

COUNTY OF ORANGE:

I, DEBRA BENNETT WORLEY, Certified Shorthand Reporter, Registered Merit Reporter, and Notary Public State of Florida at Large, hereby certify that I was authorized to and did report stenographically the foregoing proceedings, and that the transcript is a true record.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not of counsel for, related to, or employed by any party hereto, nor attorney involved herein, nor am I financially interested in the outcome of this action.

Dated this 29th day of January, 2013.

DEBRA B. WORLEY
Certified Realtime Reporter
Registered Merit Reporter
Florida Professional Reporter
Certified Shorthand Reporter
Notary Public
State of Florida at Large

<p style="text-align: center;">\$</p> <p>\$11 [1] - 55:18 \$130 [2] - 39:23, 40:5 \$20 [1] - 24:8 \$215 [1] - 22:2 \$25 [1] - 59:23 \$26 [1] - 41:7 \$30 [2] - 25:9, 33:6 \$300 [2] - 69:18, 76:2 \$40 [1] - 24:9 \$450 [1] - 67:23 \$46 [1] - 41:4 \$515 [1] - 68:11 \$55 [1] - 21:7 \$58,178 [1] - 83:19 \$60 [1] - 39:24 \$62 [1] - 21:21 \$69 [1] - 21:16 \$80 [1] - 41:1 \$880 [2] - 6:13, 36:13 \$90 [5] - 25:10, 30:15, 32:25, 37:8, 37:17</p>	<p>1980's [1] - 8:25 1989 [1] - 24:21 19th [1] - 79:23</p>	<p>30 [1] - 77:13 30,000 [2] - 23:16, 56:21 300,000 [1] - 81:13 31 [1] - 81:7 31.2 [1] - 66:17 31st [1] - 81:2 32 [1] - 23:5 35 [1] - 46:13 36 [1] - 20:19</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">9</p>	<p>46:19, 47:24, 47:25, 53:15, 53:18, 56:18, 56:21, 58:20</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p>		<p>90 [2] - 30:23, 32:10 92 [1] - 31:22 95 [1] - 82:10 99 [1] - 79:22 9:00 [1] - 84:24</p>	<p>Act [1] - 38:17 acting [1] - 12:15 action [3] - 19:21, 59:6, 59:7 actively [2] - 23:1, 26:12 activities [1] - 69:16 activity [1] - 61:2 actuarial [1] - 72:6 actuary [1] - 72:22 Adam [3] - 50:1, 50:2, 58:2 Adams [6] - 51:18, 60:7, 60:8, 60:23 add [4] - 20:16, 38:19, 51:7, 52:10 added [1] - 67:13 addition [8] - 14:14, 21:6, 21:11, 32:13, 33:16, 40:1, 67:5, 80:16 additional [12] - 14:15, 20:7, 20:15, 20:19, 21:2, 21:24, 23:20, 24:9, 24:16, 27:8, 30:19, 34:4 address [4] - 20:2, 24:2, 34:17, 55:8 addressed [1] - 33:14 adequate [3] - 73:20, 73:22, 75:11 adjacent [1] - 25:19 adjourned [1] - 84:25 adjusted [1] - 72:10 adjustments [1] - 72:5 administration [2] - 29:25, 41:5 Administration [4] - 33:2, 35:17, 41:2, 41:12 Administration's [1] - 34:12 administrative [1] - 79:14 Administrative [2] - 83:6, 83:9 administrator [1] - 12:15 advances [1] - 67:3 advantage [1] - 68:6 adversely [1] - 37:2 advise [1] - 50:11 advise [1] - 50:18 advocates [1] - 26:14 AF [1] - 5:16 Affairs [3] - 76:17, 77:22, 83:10</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">1</p>	<p>2 [1] - 68:9 2.2 [5] - 67:25, 68:24, 69:5, 69:8, 76:3 2.6 [3] - 30:16, 37:9, 40:2 2.6-mile [2] - 25:8, 33:1 20 [5] - 6:9, 24:23, 52:22, 62:5, 77:12 20-year [1] - 23:9 200,000 [1] - 27:9 2000 [3] - 66:6, 66:15, 69:15 2006 [1] - 14:9 2008 [1] - 46:8 2009 [1] - 46:11 2010 [2] - 66:6, 66:15 2012 [2] - 15:21, 76:4 2012-2013 [1] - 81:25 2012/2013 [1] - 78:11 2013 [22] - 14:9, 14:15, 22:4, 36:8, 42:12, 46:24, 64:21, 65:15, 66:17, 67:22, 68:7, 70:11, 73:16, 74:6, 77:3, 77:25, 80:4, 80:19, 80:21, 81:2, 81:7, 81:21 2014 [9] - 4:3, 45:22, 57:4, 69:11, 70:17, 75:5, 77:4, 77:12, 77:13 2015 [2] - 33:11, 39:21 2016 [3] - 21:16, 21:21, 33:12 20th [1] - 55:20 21 [1] - 34:3 22 [1] - 4:3 2200 [1] - 61:21 24 [1] - 77:25 24.6 [3] - 65:14, 66:19, 75:23 2500 [1] - 14:11 264-mile [1] - 30:23 27 [1] - 66:21 28 [1] - 78:24 28th [2] - 47:4, 47:5</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A</p>	
<p>1,064 [1] - 56:18 1.4 [1] - 68:14 1.5 [1] - 81:12 1.9 [2] - 69:18, 76:3 10 [1] - 42:12 100 [1] - 82:7 100,000 [3] - 23:5, 23:21, 40:9 10th [1] - 64:7 11 [1] - 56:4 110,000 [1] - 20:18 12 [1] - 77:3 127 [1] - 83:16 12:57 [1] - 85:1 13 [1] - 80:23 130,000 [1] - 23:22 14.2 [1] - 73:18 141 [1] - 79:12 15 [1] - 53:17 150-year [1] - 10:3 1560 [1] - 14:16 15th [3] - 47:3, 47:8, 65:3 16 [1] - 47:22 1632 [1] - 21:17 1680 [1] - 21:22 17 [1] - 50:17 19 [1] - 42:12 1928 [1] - 30:24 1944 [2] - 23:9, 31:5 1960's [1] - 31:6 1980 [1] - 56:13</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p>	<p>400 [1] - 32:3 42 [2] - 23:22, 58:8 43,000 [1] - 47:24 45 [1] - 56:11 45,000 [1] - 21:18 48,000 [1] - 47:24 4944 [1] - 22:3</p>	<p>A-1 [3] - 17:9, 21:12, 36:16 A-plus [1] - 80:6 a.m [1] - 84:24 AA1 [1] - 76:6 AAA [2] - 74:3, 76:6 AAA1 [1] - 74:5 ability [1] - 4:22 able [1] - 22:14 absolute [2] - 29:8, 73:13 Absolutely [1] - 11:8 absolutely [2] - 13:16, 50:25 accent [1] - 7:23 accident [1] - 7:12 accomplished [1] - 6:22 accomplishment [3] - 30:25, 80:5, 80:7 accordance [1] - 83:5 account [3] - 16:8, 83:12, 83:20 accounts [2] - 83:19, 83:22 achieve [3] - 20:25, 57:17, 80:13 achievement [2] - 82:6, 82:14 acknowledge [2] - 35:13, 37:22 acquiring [1] - 65:23 acquisition [1] - 58:5 Acquisition [4] - 45:14, 45:24, 46:13, 57:6 acre [12] - 17:14, 17:22, 20:18, 21:14, 21:18, 23:5, 23:16, 23:21, 23:22, 27:8, 27:9, 40:9 acre-feet [12] - 17:14, 17:22, 20:18, 21:14, 21:18, 23:5, 23:16, 23:21, 23:22, 27:8, 27:9, 40:9 acres [12] - 20:14, 20:15, 21:25, 43:1,</p>	<p>5-star [1] - 81:9 50 [5] - 47:6, 47:19, 47:24, 48:3, 48:8 53 [1] - 83:17 54 [1] - 68:13 55-11.010 [1] - 83:4 56,000 [1] - 27:8 57,000 [1] - 20:14</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">6</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">7</p>	
<p>1,064 [1] - 56:18 1.4 [1] - 68:14 1.5 [1] - 81:12 1.9 [2] - 69:18, 76:3 10 [1] - 42:12 100 [1] - 82:7 100,000 [3] - 23:5, 23:21, 40:9 10th [1] - 64:7 11 [1] - 56:4 110,000 [1] - 20:18 12 [1] - 77:3 127 [1] - 83:16 12:57 [1] - 85:1 13 [1] - 80:23 130,000 [1] - 23:22 14.2 [1] - 73:18 141 [1] - 79:12 15 [1] - 53:17 150-year [1] - 10:3 1560 [1] - 14:16 15th [3] - 47:3, 47:8, 65:3 16 [1] - 47:22 1632 [1] - 21:17 1680 [1] - 21:22 17 [1] - 50:17 19 [1] - 42:12 1928 [1] - 30:24 1944 [2] - 23:9, 31:5 1960's [1] - 31:6 1980 [1] - 56:13</p>	<p>3.6 [4] - 66:9, 73:18, 75:24, 76:4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">8</p>	<p>6 [1] - 84:24 6,000 [1] - 46:19 6.6 [1] - 66:19 6.79 [1] - 70:12 60 [1] - 65:21 60,000 [3] - 17:14, 17:22, 21:14 619,509 [1] - 79:2 65 [1] - 27:9 6500 [2] - 20:15, 21:25 68 [1] - 26:18</p>	<p>7 [1] - 70:13</p>
<p>1,064 [1] - 56:18 1.4 [1] - 68:14 1.5 [1] - 81:12 1.9 [2] - 69:18, 76:3 10 [1] - 42:12 100 [1] - 82:7 100,000 [3] - 23:5, 23:21, 40:9 10th [1] - 64:7 11 [1] - 56:4 110,000 [1] - 20:18 12 [1] - 77:3 127 [1] - 83:16 12:57 [1] - 85:1 13 [1] - 80:23 130,000 [1] - 23:22 14.2 [1] - 73:18 141 [1] - 79:12 15 [1] - 53:17 150-year [1] - 10:3 1560 [1] - 14:16 15th [3] - 47:3, 47:8, 65:3 16 [1] - 47:22 1632 [1] - 21:17 1680 [1] - 21:22 17 [1] - 50:17 19 [1] - 42:12 1928 [1] - 30:24 1944 [2] - 23:9, 31:5 1960's [1] - 31:6 1980 [1] - 56:13</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">8</p>	<p>8.2 [1] - 68:13 80 [1] - 68:1 83,000 [1] - 47:25 87 [1] - 82:11</p>	<p>7 [1] - 70:13</p>	

<p>affirm [1] - 15:14</p> <p>affordability [1] - 64:22</p> <p>afternoon [9] - 53:8, 53:9, 55:4, 55:5, 57:25, 62:2, 64:5, 76:22, 78:19</p> <p>ag [3] - 46:2, 53:15, 54:3</p> <p>Ag [1] - 47:2</p> <p>agencies [14] - 10:8, 10:15, 28:5, 63:12, 71:5, 71:8, 71:21, 72:1, 72:4, 73:6, 73:19, 74:4, 75:17, 81:18</p> <p>agency [1] - 80:5</p> <p>Agency [2] - 80:23, 82:12</p> <p>Agency's [3] - 78:10, 78:16, 83:2</p> <p>agenda [5] - 42:2, 42:8, 64:4, 77:23, 77:24</p> <p>Agenda [2] - 78:10, 83:1</p> <p>ago [11] - 7:19, 29:10, 30:6, 33:15, 43:13, 46:1, 56:4, 58:8, 59:1, 75:24, 82:9</p> <p>agree [1] - 6:13</p> <p>agreed [2] - 30:7, 40:25</p> <p>agreement [3] - 10:24, 11:3, 33:19</p> <p>agricultural [6] - 14:10, 27:6, 46:6, 46:19, 55:24, 56:1</p> <p>Agriculture [2] - 19:19, 58:3</p> <p>agriculture [8] - 8:16, 12:2, 12:7, 47:14, 54:10, 54:15, 57:7, 63:15</p> <p>AHCA [1] - 80:19</p> <p>ahead [3] - 16:5, 21:14, 21:20</p> <p>aid [1] - 63:11</p> <p>aids [1] - 79:5</p> <p>Air [2] - 56:15, 56:19</p> <p>Alexander [1] - 79:25</p> <p>Allegiance [2] - 4:7, 5:15</p> <p>allow [6] - 25:13, 26:3, 33:9, 37:12, 38:3, 38:6</p> <p>allowed [1] - 54:12</p> <p>allowing [3] - 16:20, 17:15, 19:7</p> <p>allows [1] - 33:18</p>	<p>almost [3] - 24:24, 30:22, 56:23</p> <p>Alto [1] - 60:6</p> <p>amazing [1] - 56:7</p> <p>amen [1] - 5:14</p> <p>America's [3] - 7:11, 35:18, 39:8</p> <p>American [1] - 8:17</p> <p>Americans [1] - 10:4</p> <p>Americas's [1] - 39:1</p> <p>amount [16] - 8:3, 41:9, 65:1, 65:11, 65:13, 66:15, 66:18, 67:12, 67:14, 67:19, 67:24, 68:8, 69:2, 69:6, 69:22, 70:5</p> <p>amounted [1] - 79:1</p> <p>analysis [4] - 25:2, 26:18, 72:25, 76:9</p> <p>analysts [1] - 71:9</p> <p>analytically [1] - 72:17</p> <p>Ann [1] - 60:8</p> <p>announced [1] - 36:7</p> <p>announcement [1] - 42:5</p> <p>annual [8] - 66:11, 67:24, 69:1, 69:8, 69:17, 70:17, 80:18, 82:17</p> <p>Annual [1] - 78:21</p> <p>annually [4] - 64:25, 68:20, 70:6, 76:2</p> <p>answer [4] - 67:16, 67:18, 71:10, 76:11</p> <p>apparent [2] - 14:18, 14:19</p> <p>appealed [1] - 15:23</p> <p>appeals [1] - 79:8</p> <p>applause [1] - 42:3</p> <p>Applause [11] - 6:25, 11:15, 28:1, 37:21, 39:25, 41:25, 45:1, 53:5, 63:4, 66:23, 74:20</p> <p>Applause [5] - 16:17, 18:23, 39:11, 55:1, 61:14</p> <p>applause [2] - 57:22, 74:13</p> <p>application [2] - 30:11, 47:3</p> <p>applications [6] - 46:14, 47:6, 47:19, 47:23, 47:25, 48:8</p> <p>appointed [1] - 47:9</p> <p>appointment [1] - 35:16</p> <p>appreciate [2] - 54:19, 54:20</p> <p>appreciated [1] -</p>	<p>30:17</p> <p>appropriate [3] - 24:16, 68:20, 70:6</p> <p>appropriated [2] - 41:10, 46:9</p> <p>appropriation [4] - 34:2, 59:23, 69:19, 69:22</p> <p>Appropriations [1] - 65:5</p> <p>appropriations [1] - 59:20</p> <p>approval [10] - 42:13, 45:3, 45:22, 63:16, 63:18, 64:6, 77:16, 78:1, 82:17, 84:2</p> <p>approve [8] - 42:15, 45:5, 59:15, 63:20, 64:9, 78:3, 82:19, 84:5</p> <p>approved [5] - 46:11, 46:17, 63:21, 64:14, 78:8</p> <p>approves [1] - 30:11</p> <p>Approving [1] - 82:12</p> <p>April [2] - 56:14, 77:13</p> <p>Area [2] - 24:3, 51:21</p> <p>area [7] - 17:2, 25:20, 40:5, 44:10, 49:1, 49:7, 61:22</p> <p>areas [10] - 15:4, 20:13, 21:3, 22:8, 31:7, 31:25, 32:24, 58:19, 62:16, 78:17</p> <p>argument [1] - 52:1</p> <p>Army [4] - 23:12, 23:24, 24:13, 38:13</p> <p>aspects [1] - 16:6</p> <p>assets [2] - 65:16, 67:20</p> <p>assigned [1] - 11:9</p> <p>Assistance [2] - 78:23, 79:11</p> <p>assisting [2] - 79:4, 79:7</p> <p>associated [1] - 48:11</p> <p>Association [4] - 48:24, 55:14, 55:15, 81:21</p> <p>assumptions [1] - 72:6</p> <p>Atlanta [1] - 12:15</p> <p>attain [1] - 61:9</p> <p>attention [1] - 8:4</p> <p>ATTORNEY [7] - 42:16, 45:6, 63:23, 64:10, 78:4, 82:20, 84:8</p> <p>Attorney [4] - 7:1, 13:19, 35:9, 58:1</p>	<p>attorney [1] - 53:22</p> <p>ATWATER [4] - 45:8, 64:12, 78:6, 84:6</p> <p>Atwater [8] - 7:2, 13:20, 35:9, 36:23, 45:20, 55:7, 58:2, 76:23</p> <p>audience [4] - 12:6, 17:2, 55:17, 60:9</p> <p>Audubon [8] - 10:24, 12:23, 57:24, 58:3, 58:7, 59:21, 60:21, 61:17</p> <p>August [2] - 47:4, 47:5</p> <p>authority [1] - 4:17</p> <p>authorization [1] - 30:10</p> <p>available [3] - 70:7, 73:15, 74:4</p> <p>average [4] - 67:24, 71:11, 71:13, 72:11</p> <p>averaged [1] - 82:11</p> <p>avoided [2] - 68:11, 68:15</p> <p>Avon [1] - 56:19</p> <p>Award [1] - 81:22</p> <p>awarded [1] - 56:15</p> <p>awards [1] - 82:2</p> <p>aware [2] - 28:21, 33:3</p> <p>awareness [1] - 71:25</p> <p>aways [1] - 75:23</p>	<p>38:10, 54:10, 60:19, 60:20</p> <p>became [1] - 31:3</p> <p>become [1] - 40:13</p> <p>beef [1] - 51:3</p> <p>began [1] - 56:4</p> <p>begin [1] - 76:24</p> <p>beginning [1] - 13:14</p> <p>begun [1] - 6:15</p> <p>behalf [3] - 50:5, 57:18, 61:18</p> <p>behind [1] - 11:20</p> <p>below [2] - 71:10, 74:5</p> <p>Ben [2] - 64:2, 76:20</p> <p>benchmark [7] - 65:9, 70:1, 70:4, 70:11, 70:20, 71:12, 71:18</p> <p>benefit [3] - 19:21, 26:17, 32:8</p> <p>Benefits [2] - 78:22, 79:11</p> <p>benefits [7] - 24:5, 25:13, 29:3, 32:14, 32:16, 67:2, 81:13</p> <p>best [7] - 14:10, 48:2, 63:14, 71:17, 74:15, 76:18, 81:22</p> <p>better [4] - 9:16, 63:6, 67:8, 71:15</p> <p>between [2] - 14:9, 76:20</p> <p>bill [3] - 11:11, 11:13, 34:6</p> <p>billion [22] - 20:5, 20:19, 27:9, 65:14, 66:10, 66:17, 66:19, 67:4, 67:25, 68:9, 68:13, 68:14, 68:25, 69:5, 69:18, 70:18, 73:18, 75:23, 75:24, 76:3, 76:4</p> <p>billions [2] - 7:10</p> <p>biology [1] - 54:5</p> <p>biotech [1] - 44:11</p> <p>birds [2] - 18:14, 60:21</p> <p>Blake [11] - 7:16, 15:15, 17:6, 19:1, 19:4, 27:12, 29:10, 35:16, 35:23, 36:25, 40:8</p> <p>Blake's [1] - 18:24</p> <p>blessed [1] - 9:9</p> <p>blocked [1] - 31:1</p> <p>blue [1] - 65:20</p> <p>Board [3] - 42:2, 42:8, 42:22</p> <p>board [1] - 78:18</p> <p>boating [1] - 39:4</p> <p>boil [1] - 19:12</p>
B				
		<p>baby [2] - 43:15, 43:22</p> <p>baby's [1] - 43:19</p> <p>backfill [2] - 23:14, 23:17</p> <p>background [1] - 8:2</p> <p>balances [1] - 73:12</p> <p>balancing [1] - 75:12</p> <p>Bald [2] - 58:9, 58:12</p> <p>bar [1] - 69:13</p> <p>Bartlett [1] - 35:15</p> <p>based [2] - 26:17, 72:8</p> <p>basic [1] - 6:6</p> <p>Basin [6] - 62:4, 62:5, 62:7, 62:11, 62:22</p> <p>basin [1] - 24:2</p> <p>basins [2] - 20:21, 21:13</p> <p>basis [4] - 69:21, 70:2, 70:3, 72:12</p> <p>Bay [1] - 38:10</p> <p>bay [1] - 32:11</p> <p>Beach [2] - 22:25, 35:16</p> <p>bear [1] - 64:19</p> <p>beautiful [5] - 10:5,</p>		

<p>bond [1] - 75:16 Bond [1] - 64:3 Bondi [7] - 7:2, 13:19, 35:10, 45:20, 55:6, 58:2, 76:23 BONDI [7] - 42:16, 45:6, 63:23, 64:10, 78:4, 82:20, 84:8 bone [1] - 43:18 book [3] - 60:4, 60:16, 61:12 boots [1] - 12:16 borrowed [1] - 68:23 borrowing [1] - 68:5 borrows [1] - 65:15 bottom [2] - 18:6, 72:14 brand [2] - 7:19, 7:20 bricks [1] - 65:17 bridge [5] - 25:8, 26:1, 31:18, 33:1, 37:11 Bridge [3] - 28:16, 32:5, 34:15 bridges [2] - 33:22, 38:8 bridging [9] - 25:1, 25:3, 25:7, 25:16, 30:16, 30:19, 31:17, 32:19, 38:2 brief [3] - 48:21, 61:16, 62:17 briefed [1] - 65:6 briefings [1] - 8:8 briefly [1] - 78:19 bring [4] - 28:17, 38:23, 58:15, 63:11 brings [1] - 79:11 broken [1] - 47:17 brought [2] - 22:4, 36:18 Broward [1] - 22:25 Bud [2] - 60:7, 60:23 Budget [1] - 39:22 budget [12] - 7:9, 21:16, 21:21, 22:2, 33:4, 33:7, 55:18, 55:20, 73:11, 73:15, 75:8, 75:12 budgetary [1] - 68:19 build [3] - 16:10, 18:20, 65:22 building [3] - 10:3, 19:15, 33:22 built [3] - 13:4, 18:10, 20:11 bull [1] - 50:13 bulls [1] - 53:3 burden [1] - 71:25 business [6] - 33:22, 48:25, 50:9, 52:23,</p>	<p>54:3, 64:19 busts [1] - 10:4 busy [1] - 69:24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p>C-111 [3] - 18:5, 25:17, 26:2 C-44 [2] - 24:2, 40:4 Cabinet [30] - 4:3, 5:18, 6:12, 16:12, 16:23, 19:6, 28:8, 29:15, 37:14, 38:11, 39:6, 42:12, 44:4, 46:1, 46:12, 46:18, 49:3, 53:10, 55:8, 57:14, 61:10, 63:6, 64:6, 77:15, 77:25, 78:13, 79:20, 79:23, 80:10, 84:22 calculate [1] - 72:8 calculations [1] - 32:9 Caldwell [1] - 11:10 calendar [1] - 81:24 Caloosahatchee [1] - 22:6 campaign [2] - 81:19, 81:23 canal [2] - 24:14, 26:3 canals [1] - 27:3 cannot [1] - 32:4 Cantens [1] - 12:10 cap [5] - 70:4, 70:9, 70:13, 70:15 capable [1] - 31:20 capita [1] - 72:12 capital [4] - 21:10, 65:16, 67:20, 68:2 capture [1] - 20:22 care [1] - 5:22 cared [1] - 11:19 Carlton [1] - 50:6 carries [5] - 42:21, 45:11, 64:1, 82:25, 84:11 carry [1] - 33:20 carving [1] - 53:11 Cary [3] - 56:10, 57:1 case [1] - 36:4 category [1] - 74:3 cattle [5] - 48:25, 49:5, 49:19, 53:14, 56:7 cattlemen [1] - 49:17 Cattlemen's [2] - 48:24, 55:14 causing [1] - 31:8 Centers [1] - 80:3 central [2] - 6:7, 32:16 Central [8] - 6:16,</p>	<p>26:9, 26:22, 27:4, 30:5, 37:25, 38:4, 38:7 Centro [1] - 4:4 CEOP [1] - 35:5 CEPP [5] - 26:23, 27:1, 27:7, 38:5, 38:14 CERP [1] - 26:20 certainly [1] - 80:6 certificate [1] - 82:14 CFO [12] - 7:2, 13:20, 35:8, 36:23, 45:8, 45:20, 55:6, 58:2, 64:12, 76:23, 78:6, 84:6 challenges [3] - 16:5, 75:7, 75:11 champion [2] - 27:21, 29:6 chance [1] - 43:13 change [3] - 59:3, 66:1, 67:15 changed [1] - 74:9 changes [2] - 22:17, 22:24 channeled [1] - 23:13 characterize [1] - 71:18 Charles [1] - 57:23 chart [4] - 67:9, 67:17, 69:13, 69:24 checks [1] - 79:9 Chester [1] - 79:24 Chief [1] - 43:9 chief's [1] - 38:14 childhood [1] - 43:6 children [2] - 40:17, 44:22 Children's [4] - 42:24, 43:4, 43:10, 43:12 choice [1] - 9:11 chose [1] - 33:21 Christiana [1] - 4:5 Christmas [2] - 53:7, 54:1 citizens [3] - 57:19, 77:6, 77:20 City [2] - 79:25, 80:17 claims [2] - 79:7, 79:8 class [2] - 77:1, 77:4 clean [8] - 6:7, 6:14, 6:17, 7:11, 17:11, 30:4, 36:13, 39:20 cleaner [2] - 18:11, 36:20 clear [1] - 39:18 Clifford [1] - 79:24 close [3] - 15:25, 23:12, 51:6</p>	<p>closed [1] - 47:4 closely [1] - 23:24 closing [3] - 60:1, 63:8, 84:15 Clyde [1] - 81:3 CMS [1] - 81:1 Coalition [2] - 33:15, 59:22 Coast [1] - 37:1 coast [2] - 6:4, 6:5 coasts [1] - 40:10 Coasts [1] - 39:19 Code [1] - 83:6 Coker [1] - 12:11 collaboratively [1] - 44:8 collective [1] - 27:21 Colonel [1] - 38:12 combatting [1] - 43:6 combined [4] - 33:9, 69:15, 70:23, 73:11 coming [8] - 7:7, 7:8, 18:12, 18:14, 44:14, 70:20, 78:15 comment [1] - 74:11 comments [5] - 42:19, 45:9, 63:24, 82:23, 84:9 Commissioner [13] - 7:2, 12:8, 13:20, 14:8, 28:10, 29:18, 35:9, 46:5, 47:9, 55:6, 58:2, 61:6, 76:23 COMMISSIONER [3] - 42:18, 63:21, 82:22 Commissioner's [1] - 55:13 commit [1] - 40:16 commitment [9] - 32:25, 34:12, 34:14, 34:20, 37:17, 39:8, 47:13, 57:2 committed [4] - 24:8, 24:9, 25:6, 63:10 committee [3] - 47:9, 47:16, 82:2 Committee [2] - 65:5, 83:9 committing [1] - 25:9 community [5] - 4:14, 12:7, 39:21, 56:1, 79:3 Company [1] - 53:12 compare [1] - 71:14 compared [1] - 20:5 Compensation [1] - 67:1 complete [7] - 18:15, 22:1, 24:10, 24:17,</p>	<p>24:24, 26:5, 26:7 completed [10] - 20:12, 21:15, 21:20, 23:14, 25:20, 30:24, 31:19, 46:16, 46:17, 47:16 completing [2] - 24:13, 34:14 completion [8] - 23:17, 24:12, 25:12, 30:8, 31:6, 32:5, 32:18, 40:6 compliance [1] - 83:25 component [3] - 24:11, 25:7, 25:8 components [6] - 23:18, 25:21, 26:1, 26:2, 26:18, 27:1 Comprehensive [1] - 26:19 comprehensive [1] - 80:12 concerns [1] - 83:4 concluded [1] - 85:1 concludes [3] - 27:11, 76:10, 84:22 conclusion [2] - 34:16, 75:21 conduct [1] - 22:23 conducted [1] - 22:12 confident [1] - 14:23 conflict [1] - 84:1 conflicts [1] - 83:7 congratulate [1] - 61:6 congratulations [2] - 13:6, 41:23 Congress [6] - 30:9, 38:16, 40:25, 41:3, 41:6 congressmen [1] - 4:15 Conservancy [5] - 55:3, 55:10, 56:3, 56:11, 57:17 Conservancy's [1] - 57:12 Conservation [1] - 29:18 conservation [15] - 22:8, 31:7, 31:25, 32:23, 43:2, 53:19, 53:24, 54:2, 54:12, 54:18, 56:6, 56:12, 61:10, 62:14, 65:24 conservations [1] - 56:24 conservative [1] - 75:8</p>
--	--	---	---	---

<p>conserve [1] - 57:13 conserved [1] - 57:8 conserving [1] - 64:17 consider [3] - 71:15, 73:20, 77:7 consideration [6] - 42:8, 42:25, 45:22, 72:3, 72:25, 77:23 considers [1] - 58:3 consistent [1] - 33:13 consists [1] - 77:24 constituents [1] - 18:2 construct [1] - 40:4 constructed [1] - 14:15 construction [12] - 20:20, 21:15, 21:16, 21:19, 21:21, 22:2, 24:10, 24:14, 33:11, 36:20, 38:24, 43:5 Consumer [1] - 19:20 contingencies [3] - 73:9, 73:21, 74:1 continually [1] - 75:17 continue [9] - 6:18, 44:16, 44:20, 52:9, 59:3, 60:13, 61:1, 62:23, 78:16 continued [3] - 16:13, 19:16, 21:8 continues [2] - 27:6, 36:17 contract [2] - 25:24, 33:11 contracts [1] - 25:21 contradict [1] - 83:24 contribute [1] - 51:15 contribution [2] - 75:5, 77:10 contributions [1] - 72:21 controls [1] - 21:2 conveyance [2] - 22:15, 27:2 cooperative [1] - 33:19 copy [1] - 78:12 corner [1] - 14:24 cornerstone [1] - 54:16 Corps [8] - 8:18, 23:12, 23:25, 24:13, 24:17, 25:20, 26:6, 38:13 correctly [1] - 37:15 corridor [2] - 44:10, 44:11 cost [3] - 9:17, 26:14, 26:17 cost-effective [1] -</p>	<p>26:14 costs [5] - 57:10, 68:11, 68:15, 69:9, 79:14 council [1] - 77:13 Counties [1] - 23:1 country [2] - 13:5, 49:5 County [5] - 35:22, 53:25, 56:16, 61:22, 81:4 couple [4] - 35:1, 43:18, 50:1, 62:6 course [5] - 14:2, 50:5, 52:11, 52:21, 74:8 cowboy [1] - 49:17 create [6] - 21:17, 21:22, 22:3, 26:14, 44:6, 44:10 created [3] - 7:5, 20:20, 54:10 creates [3] - 20:15, 20:18, 27:8 creating [1] - 44:13 creator [1] - 39:2 credit [9] - 71:21, 71:23, 72:25, 73:1, 73:24, 74:2, 75:7, 76:6, 76:9 Creek [1] - 53:7 crisis [2] - 37:6, 67:2 critical [4] - 54:6, 55:19, 57:8, 73:23 criticized [1] - 13:9 crowd [1] - 8:14 Crystals [1] - 12:10 current [3] - 31:23, 37:11, 69:12 Cut [1] - 39:22 cutting [1] - 18:5 cycle [1] - 47:3</p>	<p>deadline [1] - 65:3 deal [3] - 17:17, 50:15, 73:8 debt [56] - 64:16, 64:22, 65:1, 65:7, 65:9, 65:11, 65:14, 65:21, 66:2, 66:4, 66:5, 66:8, 66:9, 66:11, 66:15, 66:20, 67:5, 67:6, 67:10, 67:12, 67:14, 67:17, 67:19, 67:23, 67:24, 67:25, 68:1, 68:9, 68:10, 68:13, 68:21, 69:2, 69:3, 69:6, 69:8, 69:17, 69:19, 69:22, 70:2, 70:4, 70:5, 70:6, 70:11, 70:18, 70:20, 70:23, 71:5, 71:6, 71:12, 71:19, 72:9, 75:23, 76:1 decade [2] - 12:14, 57:1 December [7] - 21:20, 31:20, 42:12, 64:7, 65:3, 81:2, 81:7 decided [1] - 41:5 decision [1] - 37:8 declare [1] - 4:24 dedicated [4] - 31:5, 34:4, 48:4, 48:5 Defense [1] - 56:16 deficits [1] - 65:18 definitely [1] - 51:4 definitively [1] - 58:10 delivered [3] - 65:2, 65:4, 76:21 deliveries [2] - 24:19, 32:11 Democratic [1] - 11:18 dense [1] - 76:13 DEP [11] - 7:19, 8:14, 9:7, 9:15, 10:23, 15:20, 22:21, 23:11, 35:13, 42:9, 63:12 departing [1] - 75:25 Department [20] - 6:21, 8:17, 8:18, 9:25, 17:24, 18:1, 19:18, 19:19, 25:11, 33:19, 40:3, 40:23, 42:13, 45:2, 47:2, 63:10, 76:17, 77:22, 82:9, 83:10 department [1] - 4:16 Department's [2] - 59:14, 63:17 depicted [1] - 67:8 Deposit [2] - 83:13,</p>	<p>83:18 deposited [2] - 83:14, 83:22 deposits [1] - 83:4 design [5] - 22:1, 26:4, 31:8, 33:10, 33:17 designed [4] - 24:21, 25:18, 26:4, 26:23 designers [1] - 38:24 desk [1] - 9:2 destination [1] - 8:2 Destiny [1] - 51:12 detail [2] - 7:18, 78:14 detailed [3] - 26:17, 33:10, 33:16 determined [1] - 25:2 develop [3] - 19:25, 51:1 developed [1] - 14:2 Development [2] - 38:17, 83:3 development [7] - 43:7, 44:12, 51:14, 71:20, 73:2, 80:23, 84:3 developments [1] - 74:7 Diane [1] - 81:3 Dick [1] - 81:21 different [5] - 8:11, 47:19, 47:22, 53:23, 68:13 difficult [1] - 33:4 direct [2] - 24:5, 79:16 direction [2] - 19:25, 22:21 director [2] - 9:22, 15:15 Director [2] - 28:19, 64:2 disappointing [1] - 40:22 discharges [3] - 22:6, 22:24, 37:3 discretion [1] - 4:25 diseases [1] - 43:7 Dispersed [1] - 23:4 disrupted [1] - 30:21 disruptions [1] - 31:9 distributing [1] - 23:2 District [20] - 6:11, 7:17, 8:15, 9:8, 9:15, 9:23, 10:22, 15:13, 15:14, 17:7, 18:11, 19:9, 19:14, 23:4, 23:11, 26:11, 30:11, 35:14, 37:24, 63:13 diversity [1] - 32:8 diverted [1] - 31:8</p>	<p>divine [1] - 4:21 Division [4] - 64:3, 78:22, 78:24, 79:11 division [2] - 79:18, 80:8 do-over [2] - 17:12, 17:13 documentary [1] - 62:8 Dodd [1] - 38:12 dollar [2] - 79:13, 79:15 dollars [13] - 20:5, 33:8, 46:10, 46:25, 52:25, 59:18, 59:20, 66:10, 66:17, 66:20, 67:4, 73:13, 79:13 Domiciliary [1] - 83:17 Donations [2] - 83:15, 83:22 done [17] - 13:2, 13:3, 13:6, 14:19, 14:20, 15:2, 18:2, 18:17, 28:6, 29:23, 30:20, 38:25, 40:25, 50:15, 52:8, 53:2, 72:8 Douglas [1] - 81:5 down [7] - 18:5, 19:12, 37:1, 49:11, 52:4, 67:17, 67:20 downtown [1] - 43:2 Doyle [1] - 50:6 Dr [1] - 43:8 DR [3] - 43:17, 43:24, 44:2 dramatic [1] - 32:6 DRAPER [1] - 16:19 Draper [1] - 12:21 Drew [1] - 35:15 drinking [2] - 6:3, 36:24 dropped [1] - 69:17 Dry [1] - 28:9 due [2] - 29:13, 70:22 dug [1] - 58:8 during [15] - 20:22, 20:24, 22:7, 23:1, 29:25, 46:15, 67:1, 74:6, 74:8, 77:8, 79:23, 80:18, 81:1, 81:23, 82:8 Dykes [3] - 53:6, 53:11, 53:12</p>
	D			
	<p>D.C [1] - 9:21 Dade [2] - 22:25, 25:17 daily [1] - 62:21 dam [1] - 31:3 damaging [1] - 32:22 Dan [6] - 17:7, 27:17, 27:21, 27:24, 28:8, 80:7 date [1] - 40:18 dating [1] - 56:13 Davis [2] - 82:1, 82:15 days [2] - 43:16, 78:15 de [2] - 4:4, 4:5</p>			E
				<p>Eagle [2] - 58:9, 58:12 eagles [1] - 58:14 early [1] - 77:16</p>

<p>earned [3] - 81:14, 83:12, 83:21</p> <p>earshot [1] - 35:22</p> <p>easement [1] - 53:24</p> <p>easements [3] - 46:16, 56:12, 56:21</p> <p>east [3] - 24:22, 27:7, 37:3</p> <p>East [1] - 39:19</p> <p>eastern [1] - 21:3</p> <p>easy [1] - 58:21</p> <p>eco [1] - 8:1</p> <p>ecology [2] - 37:5, 54:5</p> <p>economic [5] - 38:20, 44:11, 61:2, 73:8, 75:18</p> <p>economically [1] - 20:1</p> <p>Economics [1] - 38:25</p> <p>economy [17] - 6:4, 29:4, 37:4, 38:22, 39:3, 39:20, 41:19, 46:6, 48:6, 56:2, 59:9, 62:25, 71:1, 74:18, 74:24, 75:9</p> <p>ecosystem [3] - 6:2, 28:22, 36:21</p> <p>education [2] - 5:22, 44:19</p> <p>educators [1] - 5:21</p> <p>effect [2] - 69:15, 70:23</p> <p>effective [1] - 26:14</p> <p>effectively [1] - 31:3</p> <p>effluent [1] - 15:5</p> <p>effort [6] - 13:2, 13:21, 14:3, 15:17, 28:4, 34:9</p> <p>efforts [5] - 27:17, 27:22, 56:6, 58:6, 58:11</p> <p>eight [5] - 25:21, 25:24, 28:24, 43:16, 71:2</p> <p>Eikenberg [1] - 35:5</p> <p>EIKENBERG [4] - 35:8, 35:20, 37:20, 37:22</p> <p>either [1] - 58:21</p> <p>elaborate [1] - 78:18</p> <p>elements [1] - 58:5</p> <p>eleven [2] - 46:25, 59:19</p> <p>eleven-and-a-half [2] - 46:25, 59:19</p> <p>eligible [1] - 47:20</p> <p>eliminate [1] - 84:1</p> <p>Ellen [1] - 43:8</p> <p>ELLEN [3] - 43:17,</p>	<p>43:24, 44:2</p> <p>embarked [1] - 15:17</p> <p>embedded [2] - 74:16, 74:23</p> <p>emblematic [1] - 60:10</p> <p>emergency [1] - 22:22</p> <p>encourage [4] - 24:15, 36:1, 38:12, 77:5</p> <p>encouragement [1] - 26:11</p> <p>encouraging [1] - 62:22</p> <p>end [11] - 27:19, 31:3, 31:19, 34:25, 37:12, 38:3, 47:15, 52:16, 63:9, 65:15, 66:16</p> <p>endeavors [1] - 27:24</p> <p>ended [1] - 73:17</p> <p>endorse [2] - 36:6, 61:22</p> <p>enduring [1] - 34:20</p> <p>enforceable [1] - 15:6</p> <p>engaged [3] - 26:12, 54:22, 69:16</p> <p>Engineers [4] - 8:18, 23:12, 24:13, 38:13</p> <p>engineers [1] - 38:24</p> <p>enjoy [1] - 54:13</p> <p>enshrine [1] - 11:11</p> <p>enter [1] - 33:18</p> <p>entered [1] - 4:22</p> <p>entering [1] - 30:3</p> <p>enterprise [1] - 80:25</p> <p>environment [7] - 5:6, 9:11, 19:22, 38:22, 48:6, 48:16, 61:3</p> <p>Environmental [3] - 6:21, 17:25, 19:18</p> <p>environmental [8] - 8:19, 12:2, 14:4, 26:13, 29:3, 32:14, 55:22, 62:24</p> <p>EPA [7] - 10:22, 12:14, 13:4, 13:13, 17:25, 36:11, 40:24</p> <p>equalization [2] - 20:21, 21:13</p> <p>Eric [7] - 12:21, 12:22, 16:18, 18:22, 35:4, 35:6, 39:10</p> <p>especially [1] - 39:18</p> <p>essentially [1] - 48:9</p> <p>established [3] - 16:10, 55:10, 56:6</p> <p>establishes [1] - 65:9</p> <p>establishing [1] - 57:1</p> <p>estate [1] - 39:3</p> <p>estuaries [5] - 22:7, 26:16, 32:17, 39:20</p>	<p>estuary [1] - 24:6</p> <p>evaluate [4] - 71:6, 71:22, 72:2, 75:17</p> <p>evaluated [1] - 73:3</p> <p>evaluation [1] - 71:23</p> <p>event [1] - 66:7</p> <p>events [1] - 20:22</p> <p>EVERETT [1] - 53:9</p> <p>Everett [3] - 53:6, 53:11, 53:12</p> <p>Everglades [100] - 6:1, 6:8, 6:15, 6:16, 6:19, 7:4, 7:11, 7:22, 7:24, 8:4, 8:10, 8:19, 9:3, 10:9, 10:14, 10:23, 11:1, 11:22, 12:9, 14:12, 14:25, 16:2, 16:6, 16:21, 16:24, 17:8, 17:17, 18:4, 18:6, 18:13, 19:10, 20:3, 20:9, 21:3, 22:10, 23:7, 24:19, 25:14, 26:9, 26:19, 26:22, 27:4, 27:5, 27:10, 27:17, 27:18, 28:9, 28:17, 28:25, 29:11, 29:13, 29:19, 29:21, 29:24, 30:2, 30:4, 30:5, 30:14, 30:22, 31:2, 31:4, 31:25, 32:1, 32:14, 33:15, 34:13, 35:5, 35:18, 36:14, 36:21, 36:24, 37:12, 37:25, 38:4, 38:7, 38:9, 39:1, 39:5, 39:9, 39:16, 39:23, 40:15, 41:1, 41:5, 41:7, 41:10, 41:24, 48:12, 48:14, 48:17, 50:21, 51:21, 56:23, 58:18, 60:3, 60:12, 61:9, 62:8, 64:17</p> <p>evil [1] - 5:2</p> <p>evolved [1] - 66:4</p> <p>exact [1] - 22:9</p> <p>example [2] - 11:17, 36:3</p> <p>exceeded [1] - 78:17</p> <p>except [1] - 71:12</p> <p>exception [1] - 68:8</p> <p>excessive [1] - 40:11</p> <p>exchange [1] - 21:25</p> <p>excited [4] - 18:15, 18:16, 18:17, 40:17</p> <p>exciting [8] - 16:25, 19:13, 35:19, 35:20, 35:21, 46:21, 46:22, 64:17</p> <p>executed [1] - 68:8</p>	<p>executive [2] - 9:22, 15:15</p> <p>exist [1] - 60:11</p> <p>existing [1] - 20:2</p> <p>expand [1] - 63:13</p> <p>expanded [2] - 15:4, 24:21</p> <p>expansion [1] - 21:23</p> <p>expedite [2] - 22:21, 24:12</p> <p>expedited [2] - 6:15, 20:11</p> <p>experiencing [1] - 22:8</p> <p>express [1] - 57:4</p> <p>expressed [1] - 70:8</p> <p>extend [1] - 28:12</p> <p>extensive [1] - 16:4</p> <p>extreme [1] - 22:4</p> <p>eye [1] - 71:3</p> <p>eyeglasses [1] - 79:5</p>	<p>farmers [1] - 47:11</p> <p>father [2] - 4:11, 4:21</p> <p>fauna [2] - 31:10, 54:4</p> <p>favorable [1] - 74:12</p> <p>FDOT [2] - 33:20, 33:21</p> <p>FDVA [2] - 81:25, 84:1</p> <p>feasible [1] - 20:1</p> <p>feature [1] - 21:1</p> <p>FEB [2] - 17:9, 21:18</p> <p>February [1] - 84:24</p> <p>Federal [20] - 8:9, 12:2, 20:6, 24:16, 25:6, 26:12, 33:4, 34:2, 36:19, 37:16, 41:8, 41:9, 41:17, 41:20, 52:6, 53:1, 63:11, 67:3, 67:6, 79:9</p> <p>federal [7] - 8:11, 8:12, 9:23, 10:8, 10:15, 28:5, 79:13</p> <p>federally [1] - 8:16</p> <p>federally-recognized [1] - 8:16</p> <p>Feds [1] - 8:21</p> <p>feet [12] - 17:14, 17:22, 20:18, 21:14, 21:18, 23:5, 23:16, 23:21, 23:22, 27:8, 27:9, 40:9</p> <p>fellow [2] - 36:25, 49:16</p> <p>few [3] - 27:25, 41:11, 59:1</p> <p>fiber [1] - 59:5</p> <p>fifth [1] - 49:25</p> <p>fight [1] - 8:21</p> <p>fighting [3] - 8:9, 12:23, 14:21</p> <p>Figueroa [1] - 4:4</p> <p>FIGUEROA [1] - 4:10</p> <p>figured [1] - 11:3</p> <p>filed [1] - 8:24</p> <p>filled [1] - 20:23</p> <p>final [1] - 69:14</p> <p>finalists [1] - 77:15</p> <p>finally [5] - 11:21, 21:23, 37:13, 38:19, 82:12</p> <p>Finance [1] - 64:3</p> <p>finance [1] - 67:20</p> <p>financial [13] - 24:11, 67:2, 71:25, 73:7, 73:9, 73:21, 73:24, 73:25, 74:25, 75:3, 75:9, 75:10, 75:19</p> <p>finish [1] - 49:10</p> <p>firms [1] - 8:21</p> <p>first [21] - 7:21, 8:7,</p>
F				
			<p>face [1] - 62:21</p> <p>facets [1] - 35:25</p> <p>facilities [3] - 79:21, 80:15, 82:7</p> <p>facility [3] - 17:15, 43:5, 80:14</p> <p>fact [6] - 5:25, 7:7, 14:19, 56:4, 58:13, 72:15</p> <p>Fair [1] - 84:24</p> <p>fairly [1] - 65:25</p> <p>fall [1] - 77:17</p> <p>falling [1] - 70:21</p> <p>Fame [4] - 76:25, 77:2, 77:6, 77:11</p> <p>Familia [1] - 4:5</p> <p>families [4] - 47:10, 52:12, 61:1, 61:21</p> <p>Family [18] - 45:13, 45:23, 45:25, 46:10, 46:12, 46:23, 47:1, 47:7, 48:22, 49:20, 50:20, 55:12, 57:5, 57:15, 58:4, 59:11, 60:14, 64:18</p> <p>family [16] - 8:1, 9:23, 36:23, 43:17, 50:6, 50:7, 51:19, 52:14, 52:15, 52:23, 56:5, 79:1, 79:16</p> <p>family's [1] - 49:8</p> <p>famous [2] - 10:4, 16:6</p> <p>fantastic [3] - 11:20, 12:24, 42:6</p>	

<p>12:8, 12:13, 12:25, 18:9, 24:24, 24:25, 31:24, 46:11, 47:21, 48:23, 51:22, 56:6, 56:12, 58:7, 65:13, 70:14, 70:22, 77:1, 79:9</p> <p>fiscal [12] - 65:15, 67:19, 69:12, 73:16, 74:8, 74:17, 75:5, 76:4, 78:11, 79:3, 81:25, 82:8</p> <p>fish [1] - 18:12</p> <p>Fish [1] - 29:17</p> <p>fishing [1] - 39:4</p> <p>Fitch [2] - 74:9, 74:21</p> <p>five [7] - 19:2, 20:12, 80:2, 80:13, 80:16, 81:1, 81:6</p> <p>five-star [4] - 80:2, 80:16, 81:1, 81:6</p> <p>flat [1] - 69:10</p> <p>flew [2] - 9:20, 52:4</p> <p>flexibility [5] - 32:20, 73:7, 73:25, 74:25, 75:10</p> <p>flood [1] - 25:19</p> <p>flooding [1] - 27:7</p> <p>flora [2] - 31:9, 54:4</p> <p>Florida [80] - 6:1, 6:2, 6:11, 7:17, 7:24, 8:9, 8:20, 9:13, 9:14, 11:21, 12:10, 12:19, 12:23, 14:4, 14:12, 14:25, 15:12, 15:20, 17:6, 17:25, 18:10, 18:25, 19:8, 25:11, 28:13, 29:4, 29:9, 30:2, 30:10, 31:1, 33:19, 34:7, 37:2, 37:23, 38:10, 38:23, 42:10, 42:23, 43:3, 44:9, 44:15, 46:7, 46:9, 46:20, 46:24, 47:14, 48:3, 48:24, 51:3, 53:13, 53:19, 54:1, 55:14, 56:5, 56:22, 56:23, 57:11, 57:19, 58:3, 58:6, 59:21, 60:20, 60:21, 63:9, 71:7, 72:14, 72:18, 74:11, 74:15, 77:10, 77:11, 77:19, 81:20, 81:21, 81:23, 83:6, 84:20, 84:24</p> <p>Florida [1] - 60:5</p> <p>Florida's [17] - 7:6, 30:18, 32:11, 38:22, 39:3, 40:13, 41:13, 55:22, 55:23, 60:25,</p>	<p>63:15, 74:2, 74:24, 75:7, 76:25, 81:11, 84:17</p> <p>Floridians [4] - 6:4, 9:8, 36:22, 37:1</p> <p>flow [12] - 19:10, 20:21, 20:25, 21:13, 22:18, 30:21, 31:2, 31:7, 31:21, 37:13, 38:3, 38:6</p> <p>flowing [1] - 17:11</p> <p>flows [5] - 20:2, 24:1, 25:3, 32:2, 40:11</p> <p>focus [1] - 54:3</p> <p>focused [2] - 8:4, 10:13</p> <p>focuses [1] - 54:8</p> <p>folks [1] - 12:24</p> <p>follow [1] - 59:14</p> <p>followed [3] - 12:21, 65:22, 83:11</p> <p>following [1] - 23:17</p> <p>food [1] - 59:4</p> <p>Force [2] - 56:15, 56:19</p> <p>forefront [1] - 84:19</p> <p>foremost [1] - 60:6</p> <p>Forest [2] - 42:10, 45:16</p> <p>forestry [1] - 47:11</p> <p>Forestry [2] - 55:14, 63:9</p> <p>Forever [1] - 59:21</p> <p>form [2] - 31:17, 80:10</p> <p>formed [1] - 12:1</p> <p>forms [1] - 53:18</p> <p>fortunate [4] - 9:12, 43:14, 50:10, 52:2</p> <p>forward [21] - 10:25, 16:9, 17:4, 17:12, 18:20, 19:16, 19:20, 23:25, 25:17, 26:7, 29:24, 30:9, 30:16, 32:4, 35:14, 44:21, 59:16, 60:14, 61:4, 77:18, 84:20</p> <p>Foundation [4] - 10:24, 17:9, 35:5, 36:6</p> <p>four [7] - 6:3, 46:15, 52:16, 68:12, 71:5, 72:16, 81:8</p> <p>fourth [1] - 49:25</p> <p>fragmentation [1] - 46:3</p> <p>fragmented [1] - 52:14</p> <p>frame [2] - 33:12, 36:9</p> <p>free [1] - 64:23</p> <p>freshwater [2] - 22:5, 32:10</p>	<p>friend [3] - 12:16, 19:6, 29:16</p> <p>friends [1] - 59:1</p> <p>friendship [1] - 14:1</p> <p>front [2] - 8:11, 73:22</p> <p>full [4] - 5:6, 25:15, 47:10, 72:21</p> <p>fully [2] - 33:2, 75:4</p> <p>fun [2] - 8:5, 84:25</p> <p>functioning [1] - 39:20</p> <p>fund [8] - 32:25, 65:18, 68:1, 73:11, 73:15, 73:17, 75:15, 76:3</p> <p>Fund [6] - 37:18, 83:13, 83:15, 83:18, 83:21, 83:23</p> <p>fundamentally [2] - 72:4, 75:25</p> <p>funded [1] - 72:24</p> <p>funding [18] - 11:13, 22:22, 24:8, 33:16, 33:25, 34:4, 34:11, 34:14, 41:6, 41:8, 41:13, 41:18, 42:5, 55:11, 55:21, 75:4, 76:7</p> <p>funds [4] - 24:17, 33:9, 40:2, 56:15</p> <p>Funds [1] - 25:6</p> <p>future [10] - 27:24, 40:16, 40:17, 40:19, 41:13, 41:14, 51:9, 60:25, 61:1, 68:11</p> <p>FY-13 [1] - 24:8</p> <p>FY-14 [2] - 24:10, 33:6</p>	<p>generous [1] - 44:18</p> <p>glad [1] - 16:22</p> <p>globe [1] - 81:15</p> <p>GME [1] - 44:17</p> <p>goal [4] - 6:7, 23:23, 33:13, 82:6</p> <p>goals [1] - 61:9</p> <p>God [1] - 43:14</p> <p>Golden [1] - 81:22</p> <p>gonna [2] - 51:14, 51:15</p> <p>gospel [1] - 5:11</p> <p>Government [15] - 4:12, 4:16, 5:9, 8:9, 12:2, 20:6, 24:16, 37:16, 41:10, 41:17, 41:21, 53:1, 59:7, 67:4, 67:7</p> <p>governments [1] - 8:15</p> <p>governor [9] - 7:20, 10:13, 13:16, 19:6, 42:4, 45:2, 53:21, 57:14, 61:10</p> <p>GOVERNOR [61] - 4:2, 5:20, 12:25, 13:8, 16:16, 16:18, 18:22, 18:24, 19:3, 27:12, 28:2, 34:22, 35:3, 35:6, 35:19, 37:19, 39:10, 39:12, 39:15, 40:1, 42:1, 42:14, 42:17, 42:19, 43:11, 43:22, 44:1, 44:24, 45:4, 45:7, 45:9, 45:17, 49:14, 50:14, 53:4, 53:8, 54:25, 55:4, 57:21, 57:25, 61:13, 63:3, 63:19, 63:22, 63:24, 64:8, 64:11, 64:13, 68:16, 76:14, 78:2, 78:5, 78:7, 82:18, 82:21, 82:23, 84:4, 84:7, 84:9, 84:14, 84:22</p> <p>Governor [58] - 4:13, 4:22, 7:3, 7:13, 7:20, 7:21, 8:7, 8:8, 8:23, 9:1, 9:18, 9:20, 10:9, 11:11, 11:20, 11:24, 13:7, 13:20, 15:11, 16:11, 16:19, 19:17, 22:14, 24:7, 24:9, 25:5, 28:7, 29:14, 29:22, 35:8, 36:10, 37:5, 37:14, 37:23, 38:11, 39:6, 44:3, 44:18, 45:12, 45:19, 49:3, 49:9, 49:11,</p>	<p>50:7, 50:12, 53:9, 55:5, 55:20, 55:25, 58:1, 59:8, 63:5, 64:5, 71:3, 76:22, 80:9, 84:12</p> <p>Governor's [6] - 19:24, 22:20, 26:5, 26:10, 36:7, 36:18</p> <p>GR [1] - 73:10</p> <p>gracious [1] - 13:17</p> <p>grandchildren [1] - 40:17</p> <p>Grant [1] - 56:17</p> <p>Grants [2] - 83:14, 83:22</p> <p>grass [1] - 18:12</p> <p>grateful [1] - 14:1</p> <p>gray [1] - 26:2</p> <p>great [42] - 4:14, 5:21, 6:18, 7:14, 8:13, 10:16, 11:16, 11:17, 11:25, 12:18, 12:19, 13:2, 13:3, 13:4, 13:18, 14:3, 27:16, 28:14, 29:19, 30:24, 35:13, 36:2, 43:12, 44:6, 44:7, 44:17, 44:22, 44:24, 45:17, 48:6, 50:17, 52:1, 52:4, 62:6, 76:14, 76:15, 76:19, 76:20, 77:19, 79:18, 81:16</p> <p>greater [1] - 7:18</p> <p>green [2] - 66:13, 69:13</p> <p>greetings [1] - 28:18</p> <p>Greg [1] - 55:2</p> <p>grew [2] - 53:13, 66:14</p> <p>grinding [1] - 76:12</p> <p>ground [1] - 12:17</p> <p>groundbreaking [3] - 7:8, 17:9, 36:16</p> <p>groundwater [1] - 57:9</p> <p>group [5] - 51:18, 63:7, 71:16, 72:17, 77:18</p> <p>Group [1] - 39:1</p> <p>grow [2] - 54:21, 61:4</p> <p>growing [2] - 66:15, 74:18</p> <p>grows [1] - 5:13</p> <p>guardsians [1] - 58:14</p> <p>guards [2] - 4:25, 5:4</p> <p>guess [1] - 43:18</p> <p>guidelines [1] - 47:7</p> <p>guides [1] - 5:4</p> <p>GUILLORY [5] - 19:2, 19:5, 27:14, 35:4, 39:14</p>
G				
<p>gained [1] - 60:24</p> <p>gallons [5] - 7:11, 20:19, 23:5, 23:23, 27:10</p> <p>Gaston [1] - 12:10</p> <p>Gates [2] - 11:5, 80:7</p> <p>gathered [1] - 9:24</p> <p>gauntlet [1] - 79:9</p> <p>GDP [1] - 72:13</p> <p>General [7] - 7:2, 13:19, 35:9, 45:20, 55:6, 58:1, 76:22</p> <p>general [3] - 73:14, 73:17, 76:3</p> <p>GENERAL [7] - 42:16, 45:6, 63:23, 64:10, 78:4, 82:20, 84:8</p> <p>generation [3] - 11:6, 49:24, 49:25</p>				

<p>Guillory [3] - 7:16, 15:15, 17:6</p> <p>guys [3] - 12:16, 51:17, 51:25</p>	<p>6:23, 9:2, 13:1, 48:12, 76:21</p> <p>high [5] - 22:4, 22:8, 32:22, 38:23, 44:13</p> <p>High [2] - 4:8, 5:16</p> <p>high-paying [2] - 38:23, 44:13</p>	<p>I</p>	<p>increases [2] - 66:11, 69:1</p>	<p>issue [5] - 8:14, 8:22, 9:4, 11:18, 55:8</p>
<p>H</p>	<p>high [5] - 22:4, 22:8, 32:22, 38:23, 44:13</p> <p>High [2] - 4:8, 5:16</p> <p>high-paying [2] - 38:23, 44:13</p> <p>higher [1] - 21:5</p> <p>highest [3] - 47:18, 74:3, 74:5</p> <p>Highlands [1] - 56:16</p> <p>highlights [2] - 64:21, 75:22</p> <p>highway [1] - 34:6</p> <p>hired [1] - 8:20</p> <p>historic [2] - 28:21, 39:16</p> <p>historical [1] - 70:2</p> <p>historically [2] - 68:7, 73:2</p> <p>historically-low [1] - 68:7</p> <p>history [1] - 66:5</p> <p>hit [1] - 58:14</p> <p>hits [1] - 64:21</p> <p>holdings [1] - 62:12</p> <p>holds [1] - 56:11</p> <p>holiness [1] - 5:6</p> <p>Home [7] - 79:25, 80:1, 80:17, 80:20, 81:3, 81:5, 82:4</p> <p>home [2] - 80:19, 80:25</p> <p>Homes [1] - 79:18</p> <p>homes [3] - 79:18, 80:7, 80:24</p> <p>honesty [1] - 5:7</p> <p>honor [3] - 28:14, 55:7, 62:6</p> <p>honored [2] - 82:1, 82:5</p> <p>honoring [1] - 77:18</p> <p>hope [10] - 30:9, 34:3, 34:7, 41:11, 41:16, 41:20, 44:12, 59:25, 61:4, 61:7</p> <p>hopefully [2] - 52:8, 52:24</p> <p>horizontal [1] - 70:3</p> <p>horse [1] - 49:12</p> <p>Hospital [3] - 42:24, 43:4, 43:10</p> <p>host [2] - 8:18, 10:15</p> <p>hosted [1] - 9:24</p> <p>house [1] - 47:10</p> <p>House [1] - 65:4</p> <p>hundred [2] - 20:17, 59:18</p> <p>hunting [1] - 39:4</p> <p>hurts [1] - 52:24</p>	<p>illusions [1] - 16:1</p> <p>Image [1] - 81:22</p> <p>impact [2] - 37:4, 75:16</p> <p>impacted [1] - 37:2</p> <p>impacts [1] - 39:5</p> <p>implementation [4] - 21:2, 26:20, 33:1, 57:6</p> <p>importance [2] - 29:8, 58:18</p> <p>important [33] - 5:25, 14:13, 21:6, 23:7, 28:6, 28:16, 29:2, 30:1, 32:13, 32:16, 32:20, 32:22, 33:17, 35:17, 36:12, 37:24, 38:1, 40:7, 49:19, 49:21, 54:7, 55:8, 55:24, 58:5, 64:18, 65:8, 66:2, 68:18, 72:2, 72:25, 73:5, 75:15, 76:9</p> <p>importantly [5] - 30:13, 30:18, 66:7, 69:10, 69:11</p> <p>impoundment [1] - 25:25</p> <p>impoundments [1] - 20:21</p> <p>improve [1] - 19:9</p> <p>improved [4] - 32:11, 70:12, 74:25, 75:10</p> <p>improvement [2] - 70:19, 70:25</p> <p>improvements [1] - 26:4</p> <p>improving [2] - 44:21, 74:19</p> <p>inaction [1] - 19:15</p> <p>include [3] - 27:1, 66:25, 78:21</p> <p>included [4] - 22:20, 33:14, 55:21, 79:4</p> <p>includes [2] - 23:19, 67:12</p> <p>including [6] - 18:1, 24:24, 36:22, 55:17, 55:23, 56:23</p> <p>income [2] - 52:19, 72:12</p> <p>increase [8] - 22:15, 22:17, 25:3, 32:6, 32:7, 39:24, 69:2, 78:24</p> <p>increased [4] - 22:5, 32:2, 66:6, 75:2</p>	<p>increasing [7] - 4:24, 27:1, 31:21, 55:11, 70:24, 71:25, 76:1</p> <p>increasingly [2] - 75:15, 76:9</p> <p>incredible [2] - 16:21, 17:21</p> <p>Indian [1] - 24:6</p> <p>individual [1] - 80:11</p> <p>individuals [1] - 29:15</p> <p>inducted [1] - 77:1</p> <p>indulgence [1] - 76:12</p> <p>industries [1] - 39:3</p> <p>industry [1] - 51:3</p> <p>information [2] - 66:12, 66:24</p> <p>Infrastructure [1] - 56:17</p> <p>infrastructure [3] - 20:4, 65:16, 65:20</p> <p>infusion [1] - 24:11</p> <p>insert [1] - 24:15</p> <p>instead [1] - 26:21</p> <p>insure [3] - 21:7, 30:3, 40:6</p> <p>insures [1] - 30:19</p> <p>intake [1] - 24:14</p> <p>integrated [1] - 76:8</p> <p>integrity [1] - 5:4</p> <p>intended [5] - 66:7, 67:17, 71:2, 71:4, 71:7</p> <p>interest [9] - 34:18, 52:4, 54:20, 68:7, 68:9, 68:11, 68:15, 83:12, 83:21</p> <p>interests [1] - 27:7</p> <p>Interior [10] - 8:17, 9:25, 18:1, 28:2, 28:20, 30:7, 39:12, 40:4, 40:24, 52:3</p> <p>interior [1] - 28:5</p> <p>intricately [1] - 62:14</p> <p>introduce [2] - 27:14, 43:8</p> <p>invest [1] - 37:8</p> <p>invested [2] - 65:22, 79:13</p> <p>investment [2] - 65:19, 79:12</p> <p>investments [2] - 55:22, 68:23</p> <p>invitation [2] - 28:12, 35:11</p> <p>invocation [2] - 4:6, 4:7</p> <p>involved [3] - 9:18, 10:9, 13:14</p>	<p>issued [2] - 15:20, 67:22</p> <p>issues [2] - 62:21, 62:24</p> <p>issuing [1] - 67:25</p> <p>item [10] - 42:9, 42:11, 42:22, 45:12, 63:20, 64:6, 64:15, 77:24, 78:10, 83:1</p> <p>items [3] - 42:7, 42:9, 77:23</p> <p>itself [1] - 32:19</p>
<p>H</p>		<p>I</p>		<p>J</p>
<p>habitat [2] - 32:7, 56:2</p> <p>habitats [1] - 57:8</p> <p>half [8] - 33:8, 36:22, 46:9, 46:25, 51:10, 51:23, 56:24, 59:19</p> <p>Hall [4] - 76:25, 77:2, 77:6, 77:11</p> <p>hand [3] - 38:1, 60:17</p> <p>happy [3] - 31:18, 73:16, 76:11</p> <p>hard [12] - 6:24, 9:6, 13:12, 16:3, 17:3, 27:13, 40:20, 44:5, 49:14, 79:14, 81:17, 84:14</p> <p>harm's [1] - 81:15</p> <p>harmony [1] - 61:2</p> <p>hats [2] - 49:18, 53:23</p> <p>heads [1] - 10:8</p> <p>headwaters [5] - 6:1, 16:24, 18:18, 48:13, 58:17</p> <p>Headwaters [1] - 23:18</p> <p>health [1] - 44:21</p> <p>healthcare [1] - 44:7</p> <p>hear [1] - 7:22</p> <p>heard [8] - 29:25, 30:6, 36:12, 37:10, 37:14, 39:15, 50:23, 60:7</p> <p>hearing [6] - 42:21, 45:11, 64:1, 79:5, 82:25, 84:11</p> <p>hearings [1] - 79:6</p> <p>heart [2] - 4:22, 49:5</p> <p>hearts [1] - 5:13</p> <p>heavy [1] - 10:2</p> <p>held [2] - 62:16, 62:17</p> <p>hello [1] - 62:2</p> <p>help [14] - 6:10, 12:19, 16:16, 17:16, 17:17, 20:8, 30:15, 40:10, 46:4, 49:22, 52:24, 62:20, 77:20</p> <p>helped [1] - 58:15</p> <p>helping [3] - 44:19, 48:15, 79:6</p> <p>helps [3] - 57:16, 60:15, 61:9</p> <p>heritage [1] - 62:23</p> <p>Herschel [6] - 6:20,</p>	<p>6:23, 9:2, 13:1, 48:12, 76:21</p> <p>high [5] - 22:4, 22:8, 32:22, 38:23, 44:13</p> <p>High [2] - 4:8, 5:16</p> <p>high-paying [2] - 38:23, 44:13</p> <p>higher [1] - 21:5</p> <p>highest [3] - 47:18, 74:3, 74:5</p> <p>Highlands [1] - 56:16</p> <p>highlights [2] - 64:21, 75:22</p> <p>highway [1] - 34:6</p> <p>hired [1] - 8:20</p> <p>historic [2] - 28:21, 39:16</p> <p>historical [1] - 70:2</p> <p>historically [2] - 68:7, 73:2</p> <p>historically-low [1] - 68:7</p> <p>history [1] - 66:5</p> <p>hit [1] - 58:14</p> <p>hits [1] - 64:21</p> <p>holdings [1] - 62:12</p> <p>holds [1] - 56:11</p> <p>holiness [1] - 5:6</p> <p>Home [7] - 79:25, 80:1, 80:17, 80:20, 81:3, 81:5, 82:4</p> <p>home [2] - 80:19, 80:25</p> <p>Homes [1] - 79:18</p> <p>homes [3] - 79:18, 80:7, 80:24</p> <p>honesty [1] - 5:7</p> <p>honor [3] - 28:14, 55:7, 62:6</p> <p>honored [2] - 82:1, 82:5</p> <p>honoring [1] - 77:18</p> <p>hope [10] - 30:9, 34:3, 34:7, 41:11, 41:16, 41:20, 44:12, 59:25, 61:4, 61:7</p> <p>hopefully [2] - 52:8, 52:24</p> <p>horizontal [1] - 70:3</p> <p>horse [1] - 49:12</p> <p>Hospital [3] - 42:24, 43:4, 43:10</p> <p>host [2] - 8:18, 10:15</p> <p>hosted [1] - 9:24</p> <p>house [1] - 47:10</p> <p>House [1] - 65:4</p> <p>hundred [2] - 20:17, 59:18</p> <p>hunting [1] - 39:4</p> <p>hurts [1] - 52:24</p>	<p>illusions [1] - 16:1</p> <p>Image [1] - 81:22</p> <p>impact [2] - 37:4, 75:16</p> <p>impacted [1] - 37:2</p> <p>impacts [1] - 39:5</p> <p>implementation [4] - 21:2, 26:20, 33:1, 57:6</p> <p>importance [2] - 29:8, 58:18</p> <p>important [33] - 5:25, 14:13, 21:6, 23:7, 28:6, 28:16, 29:2, 30:1, 32:13, 32:16, 32:20, 32:22, 33:17, 35:17, 36:12, 37:24, 38:1, 40:7, 49:19, 49:21, 54:7, 55:8, 55:24, 58:5, 64:18, 65:8, 66:2, 68:18, 72:2, 72:25, 73:5, 75:15, 76:9</p> <p>importantly [5] - 30:13, 30:18, 66:7, 69:10, 69:11</p> <p>impoundment [1] - 25:25</p> <p>impoundments [1] - 20:21</p> <p>improve [1] - 19:9</p> <p>improved [4] - 32:11, 70:12, 74:25, 75:10</p> <p>improvement [2] - 70:19, 70:25</p> <p>improvements [1] - 26:4</p> <p>improving [2] - 44:21, 74:19</p> <p>inaction [1] - 19:15</p> <p>include [3] - 27:1, 66:25, 78:21</p> <p>included [4] - 22:20, 33:14, 55:21, 79:4</p> <p>includes [2] - 23:19, 67:12</p> <p>including [6] - 18:1, 24:24, 36:22, 55:17, 55:23, 56:23</p> <p>income [2] - 52:19, 72:12</p> <p>increase [8] - 22:15, 22:17, 25:3, 32:6, 32:7, 39:24, 69:2, 78:24</p> <p>increased [4] - 22:5, 32:2, 66:6, 75:2</p>	<p>increases [2] - 66:11, 69:1</p> <p>increasing [7] - 4:24, 27:1, 31:21, 55:11, 70:24, 71:25, 76:1</p> <p>increasingly [2] - 75:15, 76:9</p> <p>incredible [2] - 16:21, 17:21</p> <p>Indian [1] - 24:6</p> <p>individual [1] - 80:11</p> <p>individuals [1] - 29:15</p> <p>inducted [1] - 77:1</p> <p>indulgence [1] - 76:12</p> <p>industries [1] - 39:3</p> <p>industry [1] - 51:3</p> <p>information [2] - 66:12, 66:24</p> <p>Infrastructure [1] - 56:17</p> <p>infrastructure [3] - 20:4, 65:16, 65:20</p> <p>infusion [1] - 24:11</p> <p>insert [1] - 24:15</p> <p>instead [1] - 26:21</p> <p>insure [3] - 21:7, 30:3, 40:6</p> <p>insures [1] - 30:19</p> <p>intake [1] - 24:14</p> <p>integrated [1] - 76:8</p> <p>integrity [1] - 5:4</p> <p>intended [5] - 66:7, 67:17, 71:2, 71:4, 71:7</p> <p>interest [9] - 34:18, 52:4, 54:20, 68:7, 68:9, 68:11, 68:15, 83:12, 83:21</p> <p>interests [1] - 27:7</p> <p>Interior [10] - 8:17, 9:25, 18:1, 28:2, 28:20, 30:7, 39:12, 40:4, 40:24, 52:3</p> <p>interior [1] - 28:5</p> <p>intricately [1] - 62:14</p> <p>introduce [2] - 27:14, 43:8</p> <p>invest [1] - 37:8</p> <p>invested [2] - 65:22, 79:13</p> <p>investment [2] - 65:19, 79:12</p> <p>investments [2] - 55:22, 68:23</p> <p>invitation [2] - 28:12, 35:11</p> <p>invocation [2] - 4:6, 4:7</p> <p>involved [3] - 9:18, 10:9, 13:14</p>	<p>issue [5] - 8:14, 8:22, 9:4, 11:18, 55:8</p> <p>issued [2] - 15:20, 67:22</p> <p>issues [2] - 62:21, 62:24</p> <p>issuing [1] - 67:25</p> <p>item [10] - 42:9, 42:11, 42:22, 45:12, 63:20, 64:6, 64:15, 77:24, 78:10, 83:1</p> <p>items [3] - 42:7, 42:9, 77:23</p> <p>itself [1] - 32:19</p> <p>Jackson [1] - 13:9</p> <p>Jacksonville [1] - 38:13</p> <p>Jacobson [1] - 81:5</p> <p>January [3] - 4:3, 77:12, 80:24</p> <p>Jarvis [1] - 28:19</p> <p>Javier [1] - 4:4</p> <p>Jessie's [1] - 38:19</p> <p>Jesus [2] - 4:11, 5:14</p> <p>Jewell [4] - 28:20, 28:25, 29:7, 33:13</p> <p>Jim [2] - 45:15, 45:18</p> <p>job [8] - 12:24, 13:2, 13:3, 19:4, 39:2, 44:24, 45:17, 49:11</p> <p>jobs [9] - 21:12, 21:17, 21:22, 22:3, 29:4, 38:23, 44:6, 44:13</p> <p>John [1] - 28:19</p> <p>Johns [2] - 22:7, 81:4</p> <p>joined [1] - 17:5</p> <p>Joint [1] - 83:9</p> <p>Jonathan [1] - 43:8</p> <p>Jr [1] - 80:1</p> <p>JROTC [1] - 5:16</p> <p>judges [1] - 8:12</p> <p>judgment [1] - 4:25</p> <p>judicial [1] - 4:15</p> <p>July [2] - 21:15, 47:3</p> <p>jumping [1] - 50:14</p> <p>Junction [1] - 51:11</p> <p>June [1] - 36:8</p> <p>Junior [1] - 50:7</p> <p>Justice [1] - 8:18</p> <p>K</p> <p>Karels [2] - 45:15, 51:19</p> <p>KARELS [8] - 45:19,</p>

<p>50:16, 53:6, 55:2, 57:23, 61:15, 61:24, 63:5</p> <p>keenly [1] - 28:21</p> <p>keep [8] - 14:20, 51:2, 54:15, 54:22, 59:1, 60:18, 79:14</p> <p>keeping [2] - 44:14, 57:3</p> <p>keeps [1] - 5:1</p> <p>Ken [1] - 29:5</p> <p>key [7] - 6:4, 12:6, 48:14, 55:21, 74:16, 74:23, 75:6</p> <p>Keys [1] - 56:23</p> <p>Kim [2] - 61:24, 62:3</p> <p>Kimball [4] - 17:7, 27:18, 28:8, 37:15</p> <p>KIMBALL [2] - 28:7, 34:24</p> <p>kind [2] - 15:21, 48:1</p> <p>King [2] - 77:5, 81:3</p> <p>Kissimmee [16] - 5:24, 5:25, 23:8, 35:12, 35:23, 36:3, 40:6, 40:12, 40:15, 49:6, 58:11, 61:16, 61:19, 62:3, 62:4, 62:7</p> <p>Knecht [1] - 55:2</p> <p>KNECHT [1] - 55:5</p> <p>knowledge [1] - 4:23</p>	<p>57:15, 58:4, 59:11, 60:14, 62:18, 64:18</p> <p>lands [13] - 22:19, 23:3, 43:2, 46:19, 47:12, 53:16, 54:11, 55:24, 57:3, 57:7, 57:9, 58:24, 59:11</p> <p>landscape [3] - 10:5, 17:19, 28:22</p> <p>landscapes [1] - 60:21</p> <p>language [1] - 33:18</p> <p>large [1] - 62:12</p> <p>largely [1] - 58:19</p> <p>largest [4] - 28:22, 65:19, 71:15, 84:17</p> <p>Larry [2] - 61:16, 61:18</p> <p>Lassen [1] - 81:3</p> <p>last [32] - 7:8, 13:3, 15:8, 17:5, 18:5, 23:15, 26:9, 31:19, 32:23, 36:15, 36:25, 41:11, 45:12, 52:2, 53:17, 55:9, 56:14, 61:15, 61:24, 66:8, 67:13, 67:14, 67:18, 68:12, 69:11, 70:15, 75:3, 76:19, 80:6, 81:1, 81:24, 82:8</p> <p>lasting [1] - 29:3</p> <p>lastly [3] - 65:23, 73:22, 76:7</p> <p>latest [1] - 33:12</p> <p>latter [1] - 33:11</p> <p>launch [1] - 30:7</p> <p>law [2] - 8:21, 11:12</p> <p>lawsuits [1] - 8:11</p> <p>lead [1] - 4:5</p> <p>leader [1] - 4:14</p> <p>leaders [1] - 81:8</p> <p>leadership [14] - 7:13, 11:24, 15:11, 19:17, 25:5, 26:11, 28:3, 28:18, 29:14, 36:10, 36:18, 61:7, 65:4, 84:16</p> <p>leading [1] - 13:2</p> <p>leaned [1] - 9:2</p> <p>leave [4] - 15:25, 50:12, 60:1, 61:19</p> <p>leaving [1] - 27:19</p> <p>led [4] - 4:8, 5:15, 80:7, 81:3</p> <p>Lee [2] - 57:23, 60:8</p> <p>LEE [2] - 58:1, 61:18</p> <p>left [1] - 14:18</p> <p>Legislative [3] - 33:17, 46:24, 55:9</p> <p>Legislature [9] -</p>	<p>15:22, 19:18, 22:14, 22:22, 24:7, 46:8, 55:13, 59:22, 65:1</p> <p>lengthy [1] - 33:5</p> <p>Leslie [1] - 19:3</p> <p>less [2] - 69:18, 75:24</p> <p>letting [1] - 62:2</p> <p>levees [1] - 27:3</p> <p>level [5] - 28:22, 40:20, 41:19, 52:6, 73:6</p> <p>leveled [2] - 69:3, 69:4</p> <p>levels [6] - 15:5, 21:4, 22:9, 31:23, 32:3, 32:22</p> <p>liabilities [2] - 71:22, 72:2</p> <p>liability [5] - 72:7, 72:10, 72:15, 72:19, 73:3</p> <p>lieutenants [1] - 10:17</p> <p>life [2] - 57:13, 65:16</p> <p>Lightsey [2] - 56:10, 57:2</p> <p>limits [1] - 65:10</p> <p>linchpin [1] - 54:17</p> <p>line [4] - 23:23, 66:13, 70:3, 72:14</p> <p>linked [1] - 62:14</p> <p>links [1] - 25:25</p> <p>Lisa [3] - 13:9, 13:13, 53:24</p> <p>List [4] - 45:14, 45:24, 57:6, 63:17</p> <p>list [10] - 46:11, 46:12, 46:14, 46:17, 47:16, 48:3, 48:7, 59:15, 59:17, 77:15</p> <p>litigants [1] - 8:13</p> <p>litigation [4] - 6:8, 8:24, 11:22, 30:1</p> <p>live [2] - 5:6, 62:3</p> <p>lived [1] - 62:4</p> <p>lives [1] - 77:8</p> <p>load [1] - 62:21</p> <p>local [7] - 8:15, 24:2, 26:13, 30:12, 36:19, 37:4, 37:5</p> <p>located [3] - 34:8, 48:9, 48:10</p> <p>long-term [4] - 23:7, 66:2, 66:3, 66:10</p> <p>long-time [3] - 39:2, 54:17, 56:5</p> <p>look [12] - 35:14, 44:20, 46:22, 58:17, 59:16, 59:22, 60:16, 67:22, 70:16, 77:18, 80:11, 84:20</p> <p>looked [1] - 17:19</p>	<p>looking [2] - 25:23, 52:19</p> <p>looks [1] - 17:20</p> <p>Lord [1] - 5:10</p> <p>lost [3] - 41:7, 52:22, 58:12</p> <p>Love [2] - 61:25, 62:3</p> <p>LOVE [1] - 62:1</p> <p>low [3] - 68:7, 72:15, 79:14</p> <p>lower [4] - 9:17, 68:9, 70:23, 72:16</p> <p>lowest [2] - 41:9, 58:15</p> <p>Lucie [1] - 24:5</p> <p>lunch [1] - 76:21</p> <p>Luther [1] - 77:5</p>	<p>78:13</p> <p>Matt [1] - 11:9</p> <p>matter [1] - 42:24</p> <p>maturities [1] - 69:14</p> <p>maximize [1] - 22:24</p> <p>maximum [1] - 62:21</p> <p>mayors [1] - 4:18</p> <p>mean [2] - 33:23, 44:5</p> <p>meandering [1] - 23:13</p> <p>meaningful [1] - 19:21</p> <p>means [1] - 26:14</p> <p>meantime [1] - 34:10</p> <p>measure [1] - 73:5</p> <p>measured [2] - 70:19, 71:18</p> <p>measures [2] - 22:12, 78:16</p> <p>Medicaid [1] - 80:3</p> <p>medical [1] - 44:15</p> <p>Medicare [1] - 80:3</p> <p>medications [1] - 79:5</p> <p>medicine [1] - 44:16</p> <p>Meeker [3] - 9:21, 15:16, 19:3</p> <p>meet [3] - 20:8, 33:10, 33:24</p> <p>Meeting [1] - 4:3</p> <p>meeting [9] - 9:24, 10:8, 30:7, 47:15, 64:7, 77:25, 79:23, 84:23</p> <p>meetings [2] - 42:13, 50:2</p> <p>Meiburg [1] - 12:13</p> <p>MEIBURG [1] - 13:16</p> <p>Melissa [2] - 9:21, 15:16</p> <p>members [15] - 12:5, 16:12, 16:23, 19:6, 28:8, 39:6, 52:14, 53:10, 57:14, 57:18, 61:10, 64:6, 79:1, 79:17, 80:9</p> <p>memos [1] - 7:21</p> <p>mention [3] - 29:17, 36:5, 52:12</p> <p>mentioned [6] - 11:23, 21:24, 35:24, 36:15, 36:25, 40:8</p> <p>met [5] - 43:17, 47:7, 47:9, 78:17, 81:4</p> <p>metric [2] - 14:11, 14:16</p> <p>metrics [3] - 71:8, 71:12, 72:16</p> <p>Miami [2] - 22:25, 51:5</p> <p>Miami-Dade [1] - 22:25</p> <p>middle [1] - 71:17</p>
L				
<p>L-8 [1] - 21:18</p> <p>lagoon [1] - 24:6</p> <p>Lake [10] - 22:4, 22:16, 23:10, 26:15, 38:6, 40:11, 58:21, 58:22, 58:23, 62:19</p> <p>lake [3] - 23:21, 50:24</p> <p>lakes [1] - 23:20</p> <p>Land [1] - 46:12</p> <p>land [18] - 20:3, 21:25, 47:23, 47:24, 48:2, 48:4, 48:15, 52:13, 54:4, 54:22, 56:24, 56:25, 57:13, 58:5, 58:20, 59:3, 62:12, 65:23</p> <p>landmark [3] - 7:4, 9:15</p> <p>landowners [1] - 49:21</p> <p>Lands [19] - 34:2, 45:13, 45:23, 45:25, 46:10, 46:23, 47:1, 47:8, 48:22, 49:20, 50:20, 55:12, 57:5,</p>				

<p>might [2] - 29:17, 50:15</p> <p>migration [1] - 18:13</p> <p>Mike [1] - 76:16</p> <p>mile [4] - 24:25, 31:18, 37:11</p> <p>miles [5] - 20:17, 30:16, 37:9, 40:2, 51:11</p> <p>military [2] - 56:19, 77:9</p> <p>million [39] - 6:13, 21:7, 21:16, 21:21, 22:2, 23:5, 23:22, 24:8, 24:10, 25:9, 25:10, 30:15, 32:25, 33:6, 33:8, 36:13, 36:22, 37:8, 37:17, 39:23, 39:24, 40:5, 41:1, 41:4, 41:7, 46:10, 46:25, 53:15, 53:17, 55:18, 58:20, 59:18, 59:20, 59:23, 67:23, 68:11, 69:18, 76:2, 81:12</p> <p>Mims [1] - 53:13</p> <p>minds [1] - 5:13</p> <p>minimally [2] - 73:20</p> <p>minute [2] - 29:10, 30:6</p> <p>minutes [7] - 19:11, 42:11, 59:1, 64:7, 77:24, 78:1, 78:3</p> <p>mirror [1] - 69:2</p> <p>missed [1] - 27:22</p> <p>mission [4] - 43:6, 56:19, 57:12, 57:17</p> <p>mod [2] - 25:15, 25:25</p> <p>modeling [1] - 26:17</p> <p>modified [1] - 24:19</p> <p>moment [3] - 10:11, 35:21, 36:17</p> <p>momentum [1] - 19:15</p> <p>Monday [1] - 77:4</p> <p>money [5] - 52:19, 68:5, 68:22, 68:24, 83:5</p> <p>Money [1] - 39:22</p> <p>monies [1] - 73:10</p> <p>monitoring [2] - 15:6, 21:8</p> <p>month [3] - 27:20, 43:13, 46:1</p> <p>months [3] - 19:2, 28:25, 35:2</p> <p>Moody [2] - 74:5, 74:11</p> <p>Moody's [1] - 74:16</p> <p>moonscape [1] - 17:20</p>	<p>morning [19] - 4:2, 6:23, 7:1, 16:18, 16:19, 28:7, 29:25, 35:6, 35:8, 35:10, 37:10, 43:11, 45:18, 45:19, 45:20, 45:21, 50:21, 51:8, 62:1</p> <p>most [12] - 5:25, 28:16, 30:13, 31:7, 49:17, 56:13, 58:4, 62:8, 66:6, 72:4, 79:15, 80:22</p> <p>motion [12] - 42:14, 42:21, 45:4, 45:11, 63:20, 64:1, 64:8, 78:2, 82:19, 82:25, 84:4, 84:11</p> <p>mouthful [1] - 45:24</p> <p>move [17] - 6:17, 17:3, 17:11, 23:25, 24:21, 25:14, 25:17, 25:18, 26:3, 26:21, 29:23, 30:16, 32:4, 37:6, 61:4, 64:20, 84:6</p> <p>moved [9] - 17:16, 24:1, 42:16, 45:6, 64:10, 64:13, 78:4, 78:7, 82:20</p> <p>moves [2] - 27:9, 60:14</p> <p>moving [8] - 11:21, 18:20, 19:16, 26:6, 32:20, 43:25, 44:2</p> <p>MR [41] - 7:1, 13:7, 13:16, 16:19, 19:2, 19:5, 27:14, 28:7, 34:24, 35:4, 35:8, 35:20, 37:20, 37:22, 39:14, 42:4, 42:22, 45:2, 45:12, 45:19, 49:2, 49:15, 50:16, 53:6, 53:9, 55:2, 55:5, 57:23, 58:1, 61:15, 61:18, 61:24, 63:5, 64:5, 64:15, 68:17, 76:18, 78:9, 83:1, 84:12, 84:15</p> <p>MS [1] - 62:1</p> <p>must [2] - 29:10, 39:19</p>	<p>71:11, 71:13</p> <p>National [17] - 8:20, 18:7, 22:10, 24:20, 27:5, 27:19, 28:10, 28:19, 30:14, 30:15, 31:4, 31:25, 32:14, 33:3, 34:1, 37:17, 38:9</p> <p>native [2] - 8:16, 57:8</p> <p>natural [8] - 31:2, 31:9, 32:3, 40:13, 40:21, 55:23, 58:19, 60:10</p> <p>naturally [1] - 34:8</p> <p>naturally-significant [1] - 34:8</p> <p>Nature [6] - 55:3, 55:10, 56:3, 56:11, 57:12, 57:17</p> <p>nature [1] - 66:2</p> <p>near [1] - 12:18</p> <p>nearing [1] - 30:8</p> <p>nearly [3] - 23:5, 64:16, 65:21</p> <p>necessary [3] - 22:23, 24:17, 33:10</p> <p>necessity [1] - 29:8</p> <p>need [5] - 25:17, 41:5, 41:18, 51:3, 51:6</p> <p>needed [5] - 14:20, 20:25, 22:10, 25:3, 38:23</p> <p>needs [2] - 62:16, 83:8</p> <p>negative [2] - 74:10, 74:22</p> <p>negotiating [1] - 36:12</p> <p>negotiations [1] - 22:1</p> <p>net [4] - 67:12, 67:15, 72:10, 72:12</p> <p>never [3] - 15:23, 29:13, 83:14</p> <p>New [1] - 10:7</p> <p>new [10] - 7:19, 7:20, 15:18, 18:7, 35:15, 40:13, 47:2, 56:3, 66:12, 73:2</p> <p>newbie [1] - 18:24</p> <p>news [9] - 5:11, 10:21, 18:3, 40:22, 67:8, 68:16, 68:17, 76:15, 76:20</p> <p>next [16] - 12:4, 25:6, 27:15, 30:16, 32:1, 32:15, 32:18, 34:6, 35:4, 37:9, 53:6, 55:2, 57:23, 59:21, 68:18, 84:23</p> <p>NGOs [1] - 63:13</p> <p>nice [1] - 28:11</p> <p>Nick [1] - 29:18</p>	<p>nightmare [1] - 58:23</p> <p>nine [5] - 25:20, 25:21, 43:16, 46:15, 70:18</p> <p>Nininger [1] - 80:1</p> <p>nominating [1] - 77:7</p> <p>nominations [2] - 77:3, 77:14</p> <p>non [2] - 43:2, 75:13</p> <p>non-conservation [1] - 43:2</p> <p>non-recurring [1] - 75:13</p> <p>none [7] - 12:25, 42:21, 45:11, 56:9, 64:1, 82:25, 84:11</p> <p>North [1] - 7:24</p> <p>north [8] - 23:10, 23:21, 31:3, 50:23, 50:24, 51:5, 58:20, 62:19</p> <p>Northeast [4] - 31:10, 31:12, 31:21, 32:2</p> <p>northern [1] - 32:17</p> <p>Northern [7] - 23:7, 48:13, 51:21, 60:3, 60:12, 61:9, 62:8</p> <p>notch [1] - 74:5</p> <p>note [1] - 14:8</p> <p>noted [3] - 14:5, 16:24, 78:20</p> <p>nothing [1] - 50:25</p> <p>Notice [1] - 83:3</p> <p>notice [1] - 84:2</p> <p>notified [2] - 80:23, 81:2</p> <p>November [4] - 42:12, 47:8, 77:3, 79:23</p> <p>nuisances [1] - 46:4</p> <p>number [9] - 8:13, 22:12, 42:22, 48:19, 64:6, 64:15, 67:12, 67:15, 83:2</p> <p>numerous [2] - 22:24, 25:13</p> <p>nursing [3] - 79:21, 80:25, 82:7</p> <p>Nursing [3] - 79:24, 80:1, 82:4</p>	<p>obtaining [1] - 79:5</p> <p>occasions [2] - 79:19, 81:4</p> <p>occupancy [3] - 79:20, 82:7, 82:10</p> <p>occurred [1] - 74:8</p> <p>offered [1] - 41:6</p> <p>office [5] - 6:5, 10:5, 26:6, 28:24, 55:13</p> <p>offices [1] - 78:11</p> <p>oil [1] - 10:5</p> <p>Okeechobee [13] - 22:5, 22:16, 23:11, 26:16, 27:3, 38:7, 40:11, 49:1, 49:6, 49:9, 58:21, 58:24, 62:20</p> <p>Okeechobee's [1] - 58:22</p> <p>old [2] - 10:3, 43:16</p> <p>Old [1] - 60:5</p> <p>once [4] - 11:6, 30:10, 40:13, 51:13</p> <p>once-in-a-generation [1] - 11:6</p> <p>one [45] - 5:25, 6:3, 7:21, 8:7, 11:18, 12:16, 15:22, 17:10, 18:8, 20:5, 23:7, 23:15, 24:25, 28:16, 31:18, 37:6, 37:11, 40:13, 42:11, 47:17, 47:20, 47:22, 48:23, 50:14, 52:10, 52:12, 52:23, 53:23, 55:10, 56:6, 56:12, 58:4, 58:8, 58:25, 59:17, 59:18, 60:6, 60:17, 64:6, 66:24, 72:5, 74:4, 74:9, 77:24</p> <p>ongoing [2] - 16:2, 23:3</p> <p>online [1] - 18:10</p> <p>open [1] - 4:20</p> <p>opened [3] - 18:9, 47:3, 77:4</p> <p>operating [1] - 65:18</p> <p>operation [1] - 62:23</p> <p>operational [1] - 22:23</p> <p>operations [1] - 65:17</p> <p>opportunity [13] - 11:6, 19:7, 34:17, 35:1, 43:20, 44:6, 48:19, 48:21, 49:4, 49:16, 50:19, 55:7, 62:19</p> <p>opposite [1] - 31:13</p> <p>optimal [1] - 20:25</p> <p>optimize [1] - 21:9</p> <p>Orange [1] - 61:21</p>
	N		O	
	<p>name [4] - 4:11, 5:13, 48:21, 52:12</p> <p>name's [1] - 62:3</p> <p>nation [3] - 4:12, 81:16, 84:18</p> <p>national [6] - 7:25, 16:14, 28:13, 34:5,</p>		<p>Obama [1] - 41:2</p> <p>obedience [1] - 5:5</p> <p>objection [2] - 64:14, 78:8</p> <p>objections [5] - 42:20, 45:10, 63:25, 82:24, 84:10</p> <p>obligation [1] - 11:10</p>	

<p>oranges [1] - 53:13 order [2] - 68:20, 84:1 organization [1] - 61:20 organizations [2] - 8:19, 12:3 oriented [1] - 9:1 Orlando [3] - 6:2, 51:5, 62:10 Osceola [4] - 4:8, 5:16, 35:22, 61:21 Osceola-Orange [1] - 61:21 ourselves [2] - 67:10, 71:14 outlay [1] - 68:2 outlets [1] - 22:25 outline [1] - 7:15 outlook [2] - 74:9, 74:21 outreach [1] - 81:19 outside [1] - 8:21 outstanding [15] - 65:11, 65:14, 65:22, 66:16, 66:19, 66:21, 66:22, 67:6, 67:11, 68:10, 68:22, 69:3, 69:7, 69:20, 82:2 over-reliance [1] - 75:13 overall [1] - 80:13 overdue [1] - 17:24 overly [1] - 33:5 overtime [1] - 73:12 own [1] - 48:25 owned [1] - 22:19 owners [1] - 49:22</p>	<p>Park [21] - 8:20, 17:8, 18:7, 22:10, 24:20, 27:5, 27:19, 28:19, 30:14, 30:15, 31:4, 31:11, 31:22, 31:25, 32:9, 32:15, 33:3, 34:1, 37:17, 38:9, 56:19 Parks [1] - 28:10 parks [1] - 28:13 part [7] - 14:3, 17:3, 18:13, 33:11, 33:24, 41:20, 78:12 particular [1] - 54:8 particularly [2] - 32:21, 34:18 parties [1] - 6:13 partner [3] - 13:25, 27:16, 29:19 partnered [1] - 56:14 partnering [1] - 34:18 partners [7] - 7:14, 11:4, 12:6, 15:17, 26:13, 52:5, 55:16 partnership [5] - 14:1, 15:14, 16:10, 29:9, 29:12 partnerships [5] - 11:25, 12:1, 17:23, 18:17, 63:11 passage [1] - 15:21 passed [1] - 11:13 past [5] - 46:15, 50:2, 78:23, 79:3, 79:22 Pastor [1] - 4:4 PASTOR [1] - 4:10 path [3] - 10:25, 15:18, 19:20 pay [5] - 68:20, 69:19, 69:22, 70:6, 70:8 paying [2] - 38:23, 44:13 payments [1] - 76:2 peaceful [1] - 5:6 peer [2] - 71:16, 72:17 Pembroke [1] - 80:2 pending [1] - 38:18 Peninsula [1] - 48:10 pension [9] - 71:22, 72:2, 72:10, 72:19, 72:20, 72:24, 75:4, 75:15, 76:8 pensions [1] - 72:1 people [13] - 10:6, 13:13, 14:21, 16:1, 17:1, 17:8, 19:22, 47:11, 54:9, 54:15, 54:22, 59:5 per [2] - 27:10, 72:12 percent [21] - 31:22,</p>	<p>32:3, 32:10, 52:22, 65:21, 66:21, 68:1, 70:4, 70:9, 70:12, 70:13, 70:21, 73:18, 73:19, 78:24, 79:22, 80:14, 82:7, 82:10, 82:11 percentage [4] - 70:8, 72:11, 73:13 performance [3] - 21:1, 21:9, 78:16 period [3] - 14:22, 52:21, 77:12 permit [2] - 15:20, 15:22 permits [1] - 22:21 perpetual [1] - 46:16 perpetuity [2] - 49:22, 59:4 person [1] - 56:9 personal [1] - 7:13 personally [2] - 9:18, 29:23 perspective [4] - 66:3, 68:19, 73:4, 75:14 Pete [1] - 43:2 phase [6] - 23:15, 32:1, 32:3, 32:15, 32:18, 37:9 phases [1] - 23:14 phosphorus [3] - 14:11, 14:16, 21:3 photos [2] - 60:19, 60:20 Physician [1] - 43:9 Physician-In-Chief [1] - 43:9 picture [3] - 24:15, 65:25, 66:4 pictures [1] - 60:16 piece [2] - 66:12, 66:24 pillar [1] - 46:5 Pines [1] - 80:2 place [9] - 5:24, 8:5, 15:4, 15:8, 15:19, 16:25, 20:4, 21:8, 80:14 placed [2] - 53:17, 53:24 Plan [6] - 6:14, 7:5, 26:20, 36:7, 37:25, 38:4 plan [24] - 7:5, 7:8, 7:10, 9:15, 9:16, 9:19, 10:10, 10:21, 11:7, 11:12, 12:12, 15:2, 15:19, 19:25, 20:3, 20:6, 20:15, 20:18, 21:7, 25:12,</p>	<p>33:24, 36:12, 36:20 plane [1] - 60:18 planet [1] - 28:23 planning [1] - 6:16 Planning [4] - 6:17, 26:10, 26:22, 30:5 plans [1] - 19:21 plaque [1] - 82:5 play [2] - 58:24, 71:23 pleased [1] - 78:13 pleasure [2] - 28:14, 50:3 Pledge [2] - 4:7, 5:15 pledge [2] - 30:14, 34:10 plot [1] - 73:10 plus [1] - 80:6 Poinciana [1] - 4:5 point [3] - 36:4, 58:15, 64:23 pointed [1] - 19:23 points [2] - 74:16, 74:23 police [1] - 4:18 policy [5] - 65:10, 70:4, 70:9, 70:13, 70:15 polluted [1] - 37:3 Pope [1] - 81:21 population [2] - 58:13, 84:17 portion [1] - 65:20 posed [1] - 72:1 position [2] - 71:6, 75:19 positive [2] - 39:4, 74:7 possible [3] - 23:25, 26:8, 63:14 power [1] - 54:14 practice [1] - 44:16 practices [2] - 14:10, 75:4 prairie [1] - 58:12 Prasad [1] - 29:16 pray [7] - 4:10, 4:13, 4:16, 4:18, 5:3, 5:8, 5:14 preached [1] - 5:12 predecessor [1] - 29:5 Prendergast [1] - 76:16 PRENDERGAST [5] - 76:18, 78:9, 83:1, 84:12, 84:15 prepare [1] - 64:25 prepared [1] - 65:2 present [3] - 42:2, 45:21, 64:3</p>	<p>presentation [3] - 27:11, 64:21, 76:24 presented [4] - 5:18, 9:17, 10:10, 79:22 preservation [2] - 53:18, 62:10 Preservation [1] - 69:15 preserve [5] - 46:4, 48:5, 48:16, 49:22, 63:15 preserved [3] - 5:10, 60:12, 60:25 preserving [2] - 46:18, 48:15 President [2] - 11:4, 43:9 President's [1] - 33:6 pretty [1] - 10:2 prevails [1] - 5:12 principal [1] - 68:8 Prioritized [3] - 45:14, 45:24, 57:5 Priority [1] - 63:17 priority [5] - 6:6, 47:18, 47:20, 55:11, 59:17 private [2] - 23:3, 82:10 privately [1] - 22:19 privately-owned [1] - 22:19 privilege [1] - 35:10 proactive [1] - 81:10 problem [5] - 10:14, 11:2, 30:21, 51:15, 51:22 problems [3] - 17:18, 51:12, 58:22 Procedures [1] - 83:9 proceed [2] - 5:4, 83:2 Proceedings [1] - 85:1 process [3] - 6:16, 33:4, 79:7 produce [1] - 59:4 produces [1] - 29:2 proficiency [1] - 80:18 program [22] - 23:3, 23:6, 53:15, 54:8, 54:14, 54:20, 55:19, 56:17, 57:7, 57:16, 59:11, 59:16, 59:23, 60:4, 61:3, 61:8, 61:22, 62:18, 63:1, 63:10, 63:14, 82:2 Program [16] - 34:3, 45:13, 45:23, 46:11, 46:23, 47:1, 47:8, 48:22, 49:21, 55:12,</p>
P				
<p>p.m [1] - 85:1 pace [1] - 75:18 pack [1] - 71:17 page [1] - 71:2 paid [2] - 67:3, 67:14 paintings [1] - 10:6 Palm [2] - 22:25, 35:16 Pam [1] - 50:4 Panama [2] - 79:25, 80:17 paneling [1] - 10:4 Panhandle [2] - 48:11, 56:22 parcel [1] - 62:12 parcels [2] - 43:1, 43:4 park [5] - 24:20, 25:4, 31:4, 32:7, 34:11</p>				

<p>57:5, 57:15, 58:4, 60:14, 79:18, 82:4</p> <p>programs [1] - 54:13</p> <p>progress [6] - 6:18, 14:7, 14:17, 18:16, 40:18, 41:23</p> <p>project [31] - 17:12, 18:4, 18:5, 18:9, 23:8, 23:9, 23:24, 24:3, 24:12, 25:7, 25:12, 25:16, 25:18, 25:21, 26:7, 26:19, 28:23, 31:18, 33:7, 33:21, 35:24, 36:1, 36:17, 37:25, 38:1, 38:3, 38:6, 40:8, 40:21</p> <p>Project [6] - 6:17, 23:18, 26:10, 26:22, 30:5, 40:7</p> <p>projected [1] - 70:3</p> <p>projects [15] - 17:10, 20:7, 20:10, 21:10, 21:12, 24:24, 28:17, 34:4, 34:8, 38:21, 41:11, 41:13, 48:14, 59:18, 62:6</p> <p>properly [1] - 38:15</p> <p>property [2] - 51:10, 52:3</p> <p>proposed [2] - 20:6, 84:3</p> <p>Proposed [1] - 83:3</p> <p>protect [11] - 9:11, 27:6, 40:10, 46:2, 46:3, 55:22, 56:2, 56:17, 63:14, 81:15</p> <p>protected [1] - 57:7</p> <p>protecting [4] - 16:13, 39:8, 55:23, 56:25</p> <p>protection [4] - 14:4, 14:25, 25:19, 35:18</p> <p>Protection [6] - 6:21, 17:25, 19:19, 45:13, 45:23, 49:20</p> <p>protective [2] - 15:3, 15:5</p> <p>proud [3] - 36:6, 80:22, 81:7</p> <p>provide [20] - 6:14, 11:12, 20:7, 20:24, 21:12, 21:13, 21:18, 21:24, 22:13, 22:16, 23:16, 23:20, 24:4, 25:13, 36:20, 40:9, 40:25, 41:18, 62:24, 65:10</p> <p>provided [4] - 22:22, 46:25, 78:21, 78:25</p> <p>provides [5] - 6:3,</p>	<p>23:9, 32:15, 32:19, 35:25</p> <p>providing [7] - 6:7, 21:11, 24:5, 25:19, 40:2, 40:16, 73:24</p> <p>Prudential [2] - 82:1, 82:15</p> <p>Prudential-Davis [2] - 82:1, 82:15</p> <p>public [3] - 22:18, 23:2, 81:22</p> <p>Public [1] - 81:20</p> <p>publish [1] - 84:2</p> <p>published [1] - 74:11</p> <p>pun [1] - 66:7</p> <p>purpose [1] - 45:25</p> <p>purposes [1] - 65:24</p> <p>put [3] - 28:4, 47:2, 60:5</p> <p>PUTNAM [3] - 42:18, 63:21, 82:22</p> <p>Putnam [12] - 7:2, 12:8, 13:21, 14:8, 28:10, 35:9, 45:20, 47:9, 55:6, 58:2, 61:6, 76:23</p> <p>puts [1] - 83:24</p>	<p>54:1, 56:7, 60:9</p> <p>Ranch [4] - 53:7, 56:18, 60:8, 60:23</p> <p>rancher [2] - 53:23, 58:25</p> <p>ranchers [7] - 17:2, 47:11, 58:11, 58:19, 59:3, 60:6, 60:13</p> <p>ranches [6] - 49:19, 49:23, 59:4, 59:10, 61:2, 62:22</p> <p>ranching [7] - 50:8, 51:3, 54:2, 55:15, 56:5, 59:9, 60:2</p> <p>range [2] - 56:20, 56:22</p> <p>ranked [1] - 72:15</p> <p>ranks [1] - 71:7</p> <p>rate [4] - 66:14, 68:10, 79:20, 82:10</p> <p>rated [2] - 74:3, 80:15</p> <p>rates [1] - 68:7</p> <p>rating [21] - 71:5, 71:8, 71:21, 71:24, 72:1, 72:4, 73:1, 73:6, 73:19, 73:24, 74:3, 74:4, 74:5, 74:10, 74:22, 74:24, 75:16, 75:17, 80:12, 80:13, 80:16</p> <p>ratings [13] - 74:2, 74:12, 75:7, 75:14, 76:6, 80:2, 80:6, 80:10, 80:11, 80:13, 81:1, 81:6, 81:9</p> <p>ratio [6] - 65:10, 70:2, 70:5, 70:12, 70:20, 71:12</p> <p>ratios [4] - 71:5, 71:19, 72:8, 72:9</p> <p>reach [1] - 81:17</p> <p>reaching [2] - 36:14, 82:7</p> <p>read [1] - 10:7</p> <p>ready [1] - 30:9</p> <p>real [2] - 39:3, 49:12</p> <p>realization [1] - 17:23</p> <p>realize [1] - 25:15</p> <p>realized [1] - 10:12</p> <p>really [21] - 8:7, 11:6, 13:19, 15:10, 15:16, 15:17, 15:23, 16:25, 17:10, 19:12, 27:15, 28:4, 48:3, 52:1, 52:7, 52:24, 54:9, 54:16, 60:3, 67:16, 75:21</p> <p>reasonable [1] - 59:24</p> <p>rebranding [1] - 81:19</p> <p>rebuilt [1] - 74:17</p>	<p>recalculate [1] - 72:6</p> <p>receive [2] - 80:5, 81:13</p> <p>received [7] - 33:7, 40:22, 47:6, 78:12, 80:2, 80:17, 81:6</p> <p>receives [1] - 34:1</p> <p>recent [3] - 25:2, 56:13, 80:22</p> <p>recently [3] - 31:16, 62:5, 62:9</p> <p>recharges [1] - 57:9</p> <p>recipients [1] - 82:3</p> <p>recognitions [1] - 5:18</p> <p>recognize [9] - 6:20, 12:4, 12:5, 14:13, 27:16, 49:16, 58:18, 64:2, 76:16</p> <p>recognized [6] - 8:16, 29:7, 75:11, 81:20, 82:1, 82:13</p> <p>recognizing [1] - 82:5</p> <p>recommend [1] - 63:16</p> <p>recommendation [2] - 59:14, 63:18</p> <p>recommended [6] - 39:22, 45:22, 57:4, 72:21, 77:15, 83:8</p> <p>recommends [2] - 42:13, 45:3</p> <p>reconnecting [1] - 31:24</p> <p>recovering [1] - 53:22</p> <p>recovery [1] - 75:18</p> <p>recurring [2] - 69:20, 75:13</p> <p>red [2] - 26:1, 70:3</p> <p>reduce [2] - 26:15, 41:12</p> <p>reduced [3] - 32:10, 66:9, 76:2</p> <p>reduction [5] - 66:8, 66:25, 68:1, 69:21, 70:17</p> <p>refinanced [1] - 68:13</p> <p>refinancing [1] - 69:16</p> <p>reflected [3] - 73:12, 75:1, 75:19</p> <p>reflecting [1] - 73:7</p> <p>reflection [1] - 71:16</p> <p>reform [1] - 72:20</p> <p>refunded [1] - 68:9</p> <p>regard [1] - 27:17</p> <p>region [1] - 25:13</p> <p>regional [1] - 12:15</p> <p>regulation [1] - 23:19</p> <p>Relations [1] - 81:20</p> <p>relations [1] - 81:23</p>	<p>relationship [3] - 13:18, 44:22, 56:4</p> <p>relationships [1] - 13:4</p> <p>relative [8] - 65:11, 66:18, 67:23, 69:10, 70:7, 72:13, 72:16, 73:2</p> <p>releases [1] - 26:16</p> <p>reliance [1] - 75:13</p> <p>relief [1] - 22:13</p> <p>remain [4] - 4:6, 5:8, 25:22, 75:2</p> <p>remaining [1] - 23:15</p> <p>remains [1] - 83:13</p> <p>remarkable [3] - 13:21, 15:10, 15:24</p> <p>remarked [1] - 29:1</p> <p>remember [3] - 8:6, 8:23, 36:9</p> <p>removed [3] - 14:11, 14:15, 83:8</p> <p>removing [1] - 27:3</p> <p>repaid [1] - 67:7</p> <p>repaying [1] - 69:6</p> <p>replenish [1] - 17:16</p> <p>Report [1] - 78:21</p> <p>report [15] - 31:18, 33:6, 38:14, 38:15, 64:15, 64:22, 64:25, 65:2, 73:16, 74:16, 74:24, 76:10, 78:10, 78:12, 82:17</p> <p>reported [1] - 18:8</p> <p>Representative [1] - 11:9</p> <p>representatives [1] - 4:19</p> <p>represented [1] - 69:13</p> <p>representing [3] - 10:23, 61:21, 79:6</p> <p>represents [3] - 48:1, 48:7, 48:24</p> <p>Republican [1] - 11:18</p> <p>request [5] - 33:7, 78:1, 82:17, 83:2, 84:2</p> <p>required [2] - 69:22, 72:21</p> <p>requirements [3] - 69:17, 70:18, 70:24</p> <p>research [4] - 21:8, 38:25, 43:5, 44:10</p> <p>reserve [1] - 73:22</p> <p>reserves [9] - 73:7, 73:17, 73:23, 74:17, 75:1, 75:12, 75:20, 76:4</p> <p>reservoir [4] - 24:2,</p>
	Q			
<p>quality [19] - 7:23, 8:10, 9:3, 10:14, 11:1, 11:17, 12:9, 14:24, 15:3, 16:7, 16:22, 19:9, 20:2, 20:9, 24:4, 30:1, 32:6, 54:5, 62:13</p> <p>Quality [3] - 6:14, 7:4, 36:7</p> <p>quantity [1] - 16:7</p> <p>questions [5] - 64:24, 76:11, 78:15, 82:16, 82:18</p> <p>quickly [5] - 7:15, 23:25, 36:5, 38:14, 64:20</p> <p>quite [3] - 15:10, 15:24, 80:4</p>				
	R			
<p>Rafter [1] - 56:18</p> <p>rain [1] - 22:4</p> <p>raise [1] - 40:2</p> <p>raising [1] - 53:13</p> <p>ran [1] - 47:4</p> <p>ranch [10] - 49:8, 49:22, 52:15, 52:19, 52:23, 53:16, 53:25,</p>				

<p>24:18, 36:16, 58:14 Resident [2] - 83:18, 83:21 resident's [1] - 83:12 residents [5] - 39:18, 44:14, 44:19, 83:16, 83:18 residents' [1] - 83:4 Residents' [1] - 83:13 residing [1] - 37:1 resolution [1] - 16:7 resolutions [1] - 5:17 resolved [1] - 30:1 Resources [1] - 38:17 resources [2] - 60:11 respect [1] - 5:5 respectfully [2] - 78:1, 82:16 respects [1] - 7:6 respond [1] - 73:25 Restoration [5] - 23:8, 26:19, 35:23, 40:7, 51:21 restoration [22] - 6:19, 11:22, 16:1, 16:6, 19:23, 20:10, 28:23, 29:20, 29:24, 30:2, 32:1, 32:4, 32:15, 32:19, 34:13, 35:25, 36:2, 38:21, 39:16, 39:23, 62:15, 64:17 restore [7] - 19:10, 23:13, 29:12, 29:21, 32:7, 40:12, 40:21 restored [1] - 39:5 restoring [3] - 16:13, 34:20, 40:15 result [5] - 15:1, 15:11, 15:19, 19:24, 41:6 results [1] - 18:21 retaining [1] - 27:4 retire [1] - 34:23 retiring [2] - 27:20, 34:24 return [1] - 79:12 returning [1] - 74:21 revenue [1] - 73:14 revenues [7] - 70:7, 70:24, 72:11, 73:14, 73:18, 74:18, 75:13 reverses [1] - 66:10 review [3] - 6:22, 77:14, 78:14 reviewed [1] - 75:22 revising [1] - 23:19 ribbon [1] - 18:4 richly [1] - 81:14 ride [1] - 53:3 riding [1] - 50:13</p>	<p>righteous [1] - 5:8 rise [1] - 4:9 River [16] - 22:6, 22:7, 23:8, 24:6, 24:22, 31:10, 31:11, 31:13, 31:22, 32:2, 34:21, 35:23, 36:3, 40:6, 40:12, 40:15 river [2] - 23:13, 23:14 road [2] - 34:8, 34:11 Road [1] - 37:18 roads [2] - 33:22, 33:25 Robert [1] - 12:11 robust [1] - 21:6 rode [1] - 50:17 role [1] - 36:10 rolls [1] - 57:10 room [2] - 10:17, 49:17 Rosen [2] - 61:16, 61:18 ROTC [1] - 4:8 Rule [2] - 83:3 rule [4] - 83:7, 83:11, 83:20, 84:3 runoff [3] - 20:22, 21:4, 24:2 runs [1] - 45:15 Rural [19] - 45:13, 45:23, 45:25, 46:10, 46:12, 46:23, 47:1, 47:7, 48:22, 49:20, 50:19, 55:11, 57:5, 57:15, 58:4, 59:11, 60:14, 62:18, 64:18</p>	<p>science [1] - 21:7 scientifically [1] - 20:1 scientists [7] - 7:6, 9:5, 9:7, 9:9, 9:13, 10:22, 10:23 SCOTT [61] - 4:2, 5:20, 12:25, 13:8, 16:16, 16:18, 18:22, 18:24, 19:3, 27:12, 28:2, 34:22, 35:3, 35:6, 35:19, 37:19, 39:10, 39:12, 39:15, 40:1, 42:1, 42:14, 42:17, 42:19, 43:11, 43:22, 44:1, 44:24, 45:4, 45:7, 45:9, 45:17, 49:14, 50:14, 53:4, 53:8, 54:25, 55:4, 57:21, 57:25, 61:13, 63:3, 63:19, 63:22, 63:24, 64:8, 64:11, 64:13, 68:16, 76:14, 78:2, 78:5, 78:7, 82:18, 82:21, 82:23, 84:4, 84:7, 84:9, 84:14, 84:22 Scott [19] - 4:23, 7:13, 7:20, 7:22, 11:21, 16:19, 19:17, 22:14, 24:7, 28:7, 29:14, 29:22, 37:5, 44:3, 55:6, 58:1, 59:8, 76:22, 84:13 Scott's [4] - 7:3, 11:12, 11:24, 25:5 sea [1] - 18:12 Second [3] - 45:8, 64:12, 78:6 second [14] - 34:14, 42:17, 42:18, 45:7, 49:10, 63:22, 63:23, 64:11, 72:7, 78:5, 82:21, 82:22, 84:7, 84:8 seconded [2] - 64:13, 78:7 Secretary [22] - 6:10, 6:20, 9:24, 13:23, 14:5, 15:12, 17:5, 19:23, 28:20, 28:25, 29:5, 29:7, 29:15, 29:16, 30:8, 33:13, 35:11, 37:23, 42:1, 44:4, 52:3 secretary [3] - 10:1, 28:2, 39:12 sector [1] - 82:11 secure [2] - 34:4, 34:15 secured [1] - 33:17</p>	<p>see [21] - 7:9, 15:7, 18:16, 18:17, 23:23, 24:14, 25:23, 32:22, 36:1, 39:4, 43:20, 50:4, 58:21, 60:20, 60:22, 61:7, 65:19, 67:18, 69:1, 70:11 selected [2] - 80:20, 80:25 selection [2] - 47:8, 47:15 Senate [2] - 11:4, 65:4 Senator [1] - 11:10 senators [1] - 4:15 send [1] - 26:24 sending [1] - 26:15 sends [1] - 7:10 sent [1] - 10:16 September [1] - 77:25 sequenced [1] - 26:20 service [12] - 27:23, 68:21, 69:2, 69:9, 69:17, 69:23, 70:5, 70:18, 70:23, 76:1, 77:9, 84:16 Service [8] - 28:19, 30:15, 33:3, 34:1, 37:18, 42:10, 45:16, 63:9 Services [2] - 19:20, 80:4 services [7] - 78:21, 78:25, 79:2, 79:4, 79:16, 81:10, 81:14 serving [2] - 81:14, 84:20 session [2] - 46:24, 55:10 set [1] - 20:9 settlement [1] - 28:6 seven [6] - 25:20, 33:8, 36:22, 70:4, 70:8, 70:15 seven-and-a-half [1] - 36:22 several [7] - 15:1, 20:23, 55:15, 55:21, 70:16, 80:10, 80:12 shapes [1] - 6:2 Shark [1] - 24:22 Sharp [5] - 31:10, 31:11, 31:12, 31:21, 32:2 shepherd [1] - 11:11 shepherded [1] - 45:15 short [1] - 71:10 Show [1] - 64:13 show [3] - 71:2, 71:4, 71:7</p>	<p>showing [1] - 67:11 shows [8] - 35:24, 39:1, 48:3, 48:8, 65:13, 66:5, 68:18, 69:25 signal [1] - 10:16 signed [1] - 55:20 significance [2] - 34:5, 69:4 significant [8] - 31:9, 33:23, 34:8, 36:17, 68:2, 69:21, 70:19, 77:9 significantly [2] - 32:8, 67:21 simply [2] - 41:3, 65:13 Simpson [1] - 11:10 Sims [2] - 79:24, 80:17 sitting [1] - 36:11 situation [1] - 31:15 six [6] - 70:9, 70:21, 77:2, 79:21, 81:9, 82:6 skilled [2] - 79:21, 82:6 slide [4] - 25:23, 26:9, 65:13, 68:18 slightly [2] - 70:13, 71:13 Slough [6] - 24:23, 31:10, 31:11, 31:13, 31:22 small [2] - 25:25, 26:3 solution [5] - 12:18, 31:17, 37:6, 58:22, 58:25 solutions [6] - 9:1, 10:13, 50:22, 50:23, 50:24 solve [3] - 9:3, 11:1, 51:16 solving [1] - 10:13 sometime [1] - 77:16 somewhere [1] - 56:10 soon [2] - 24:20, 26:7 sooner [1] - 26:21 sorely [1] - 27:22 sort [1] - 69:25 sound [2] - 20:1, 74:16 source [1] - 21:2 south [18] - 6:3, 6:17, 17:16, 22:16, 24:1, 24:22, 25:14, 25:18, 26:2, 26:3, 26:15, 26:21, 26:24, 27:2, 37:7, 37:13, 38:7,</p>
S				
<p>Saint [4] - 22:6, 24:5, 43:2, 81:4 Salazar [3] - 9:25, 29:6, 30:8 Sally [1] - 28:20 Sandy [1] - 79:25 satisfactory [1] - 75:2 save [1] - 20:5 saving [3] - 68:10, 68:14, 76:18 savings [1] - 33:23 saw [3] - 10:15, 12:17, 12:18 schedule [3] - 20:11, 21:15, 21:20 schedules [2] - 15:5, 23:19 School [2] - 4:8, 5:16 schools [3] - 44:15, 65:20, 65:22</p>				

<p>51:6 South [16] - 6:11, 7:16, 9:14, 15:12, 17:6, 18:10, 18:24, 19:8, 25:17, 28:13, 29:4, 30:10, 37:23, 42:23, 43:3, 44:9 southeast [1] - 53:19 southern [1] - 37:11 Southwest [1] - 37:2 Speaker [1] - 11:5 speaker [4] - 12:13, 27:15, 35:4, 61:24 speakers [4] - 12:5, 39:13, 48:20, 61:15 special [4] - 5:24, 8:12, 41:12, 74:11 specific [2] - 15:1, 43:7 speech [1] - 33:14 spend [1] - 41:3 spent [1] - 68:24 spirit [1] - 4:19 spite [1] - 62:15 split [1] - 59:10 sponsors [1] - 30:12 spring [1] - 30:12 square [1] - 20:17 STA [2] - 21:25, 24:11 STA-1 [1] - 21:23 stabilization [1] - 73:11 stabilized [1] - 75:9 stabilizing [1] - 74:25 stable [2] - 74:10, 74:22 staff [6] - 4:14, 4:23, 5:1, 44:5, 57:18, 65:5 stages [1] - 22:5 stakeholders [1] - 36:19 Stan [4] - 12:13, 12:14, 12:20, 13:8 standards [2] - 15:3, 20:9 standing [1] - 4:6 standpoint [1] - 54:19 stands [1] - 76:19 star [4] - 80:2, 80:16, 81:1, 81:6 stars [1] - 80:14 start [1] - 52:16 started [4] - 18:9, 23:9, 24:20, 51:21 starts [1] - 51:14 STAs [5] - 20:13, 20:17, 20:25, 21:9, 51:7 State [63] - 5:12, 5:22,</p>	<p>8:8, 8:20, 11:21, 12:19, 15:6, 17:25, 25:5, 25:9, 26:12, 29:9, 30:2, 30:25, 36:19, 40:20, 44:18, 46:9, 48:2, 51:24, 52:6, 57:19, 64:19, 64:22, 65:1, 65:6, 65:12, 65:14, 65:15, 65:21, 66:5, 66:8, 66:9, 66:11, 67:5, 67:10, 67:20, 68:2, 68:10, 68:14, 69:7, 70:1, 72:18, 73:3, 73:5, 73:14, 73:17, 77:10, 77:21, 79:12, 79:15, 79:24, 80:1, 80:15, 80:20, 81:23, 82:4, 82:12, 82:13, 83:17, 84:19, 84:24 state [22] - 4:12, 9:10, 11:12, 13:5, 19:22, 32:16, 33:9, 38:20, 41:18, 46:2, 47:14, 48:6, 51:6, 54:18, 54:23, 56:13, 63:12, 65:6, 77:6, 79:13, 81:12, 83:7 State's [18] - 20:3, 33:24, 34:11, 56:2, 64:16, 65:9, 70:25, 71:6, 71:23, 72:13, 73:1, 73:23, 74:10, 74:21, 75:16, 75:23, 76:5, 79:2 statement [1] - 22:9 States [5] - 38:16, 53:16, 53:20, 56:15, 59:5 states [3] - 34:7, 71:15, 83:20 static [1] - 65:25 status [1] - 38:20 statute [2] - 83:11, 83:24 statutes [1] - 83:8 statutory [1] - 65:3 stay [3] - 44:15, 57:9, 62:22 stays [1] - 59:9 steadfast [1] - 84:16 steady [1] - 20:24 step [1] - 31:24 stepped [1] - 51:25 steward [1] - 56:8 stewards [2] - 48:2, 54:11 stewardship [1] - 47:13 stewardships [1] -</p>	<p>48:2 sticks [1] - 65:17 still [7] - 14:18, 14:20, 16:4, 39:17, 43:24, 62:16, 62:21 stood [1] - 10:9 stop [1] - 64:23 stopped [1] - 5:9 storage [15] - 20:7, 20:19, 21:11, 21:14, 21:19, 22:15, 23:10, 23:16, 23:21, 24:4, 27:2, 27:8, 40:9, 54:5, 62:12 store [2] - 22:18, 62:19 stored [2] - 17:15, 23:4 storing [1] - 23:2 storm [2] - 20:22, 40:4 Stormwater [1] - 24:3 stormwater [3] - 14:14, 20:13, 21:4 story [4] - 18:7, 60:2, 60:4, 60:22 strategies [5] - 16:22, 19:24, 20:10, 21:1, 30:3 strategy [2] - 56:3, 62:9 strengths [2] - 75:6, 75:8 strides [1] - 39:16 strong [11] - 13:25, 15:16, 29:4, 29:8, 34:13, 34:20, 46:7, 74:2, 75:3, 76:5 stronger [1] - 29:13 structural [1] - 22:17 structures [1] - 14:14 studied [1] - 31:15 stuff [1] - 10:2 subject [1] - 82:16 submission [1] - 77:12 submit [1] - 77:14 submittal [1] - 42:11 submitted [1] - 38:15 subsequently [1] - 77:13 substantial [1] - 23:10 success [4] - 16:21, 18:8, 54:13, 54:17 successful [1] - 55:17 successfully [1] - 22:15 suffered [2] - 31:12, 31:13 Sugar [1] - 12:11 summarizing [2] -</p>	<p>71:4, 74:14 summary [3] - 74:15, 75:6, 75:21 summer [3] - 17:18, 36:25, 77:16 Sunshine [2] - 77:20, 79:2 superintendent [4] - 27:18, 28:9, 29:11, 30:13 Superintendent [1] - 37:15 supply [2] - 8:3, 62:13 support [21] - 11:7, 11:19, 12:9, 13:12, 16:13, 19:17, 22:13, 22:20, 30:18, 34:9, 36:6, 36:19, 38:19, 52:25, 54:21, 56:18, 57:4, 57:15, 57:20, 59:25, 63:1 supportive [1] - 12:12 supports [1] - 29:3 surge [1] - 20:23 survey [2] - 80:18 survival [1] - 58:9 sustain [1] - 16:9 system [6] - 4:15, 32:21, 38:4, 72:19, 72:24, 76:8</p>	<p>73:19, 80:14 ten-and-a-half [1] - 46:9 term [5] - 23:7, 49:10, 66:2, 66:3, 66:10 terms [3] - 44:19, 65:6, 69:5 terrific [1] - 17:13 test [1] - 71:3 tested [1] - 14:12 thanked [1] - 37:7 thankful [1] - 5:21 theirs [1] - 41:21 thereby [1] - 26:15 they've [4] - 40:24, 54:11, 72:7, 74:23 third [2] - 49:24, 84:17 three [26] - 7:19, 12:5, 12:14, 13:3, 15:8, 20:20, 21:10, 25:10, 42:7, 42:9, 42:25, 46:15, 47:17, 47:18, 47:19, 51:10, 66:9, 67:13, 67:15, 67:19, 71:11, 72:16, 75:24, 77:23, 78:23, 83:2 three-and-a-half [1] - 51:10 three-decade [1] - 12:14 Thursday [1] - 84:23 tier [6] - 47:17, 47:18, 47:20, 47:22, 59:17 tiered [1] - 46:12 tiers [2] - 47:17, 47:19 timber [1] - 55:16 timing [2] - 12:17, 16:7 tirelessly [2] - 13:10, 29:20 title [1] - 74:14 today [17] - 5:23, 6:22, 12:6, 16:23, 18:7, 28:15, 34:17, 42:7, 50:12, 51:13, 56:8, 56:9, 57:3, 58:18, 59:13, 60:9, 77:23 today's [1] - 56:11 together [12] - 15:2, 17:24, 20:16, 26:5, 28:5, 28:22, 29:7, 36:18, 47:2, 52:6, 60:6, 69:25 tons [2] - 14:11, 14:16 took [3] - 6:5, 7:12, 36:10 tool [1] - 65:8 top [1] - 80:14 Tortugas [1] - 28:9 total [5] - 23:22,</p>
T				
			<p>take-away [1] - 72:23 take-aways [1] - 75:23 Tallahassee [2] - 47:10, 60:19 Tamiami [18] - 24:25, 25:4, 25:7, 25:16, 26:1, 28:15, 30:17, 30:19, 30:23, 31:1, 32:5, 34:6, 34:15, 34:19, 37:9, 38:2, 38:8, 40:2 tangible [1] - 35:24 tank [1] - 20:23 target [2] - 70:10, 70:21 targets [1] - 65:10 tax [1] - 57:10 Tax [1] - 39:22 taxpayers [1] - 57:11 Taylor [1] - 24:23 team [4] - 9:12, 35:1, 35:13, 82:15 teams [1] - 81:8 temporary [1] - 22:17 ten [7] - 19:11, 20:12, 29:11, 46:9, 71:14,</p>	

<p>25:10, 47:24, 56:21, 62:20</p> <p>totaling [1] - 43:1</p> <p>touch [1] - 13:22</p> <p>tourism [1] - 8:1</p> <p>toward [1] - 53:14</p> <p>towards [1] - 31:24</p> <p>Track [2] - 74:12, 74:15</p> <p>tracking [1] - 70:1</p> <p>traditional [2] - 67:5, 72:9</p> <p>traditionally [1] - 21:4</p> <p>tragically [1] - 59:10</p> <p>Trail [17] - 25:1, 25:4, 25:7, 25:16, 28:15, 30:17, 30:19, 30:23, 31:1, 34:6, 34:15, 34:19, 37:9, 38:2, 38:8, 40:3</p> <p>trained [1] - 44:14</p> <p>Training [1] - 82:13</p> <p>transactions [1] - 68:14</p> <p>transfer [3] - 42:24, 42:25, 43:4</p> <p>transplant [3] - 43:16, 43:19, 43:23</p> <p>Transportation [3] - 25:11, 33:20, 34:3</p> <p>transportation [2] - 30:25, 65:23</p> <p>Treasure [1] - 37:1</p> <p>treasure [2] - 7:25, 16:14</p> <p>treasures [3] - 40:14, 40:21, 55:23</p> <p>treated [1] - 17:16</p> <p>treatment [11] - 15:4, 20:8, 20:13, 20:14, 20:16, 21:12, 23:10, 24:4, 27:2, 40:5, 40:10</p> <p>Treatment [1] - 24:3</p> <p>treatments [1] - 43:7</p> <p>tremendous [1] - 8:3</p> <p>trenches [1] - 12:23</p> <p>trend [2] - 66:11, 66:13</p> <p>trends [1] - 78:20</p> <p>tribal [1] - 26:12</p> <p>tribes [1] - 8:17</p> <p>tried [1] - 13:8</p> <p>truly [2] - 28:14, 30:17</p> <p>trust [1] - 83:12</p> <p>Trust [5] - 83:13, 83:15, 83:18, 83:21, 83:23</p> <p>Trustees [3] - 42:2, 42:8, 42:23</p>	<p>try [1] - 26:7</p> <p>trying [2] - 51:16, 51:20</p> <p>turned [2] - 14:24, 41:19</p> <p>Turnpike [1] - 51:11</p> <p>turns [1] - 19:20</p> <p>tweaks [1] - 10:20</p> <p>twenty [2] - 52:16, 52:17</p> <p>twice [1] - 29:1</p> <p>two [32] - 8:10, 8:11, 8:16, 8:21, 12:4, 12:24, 23:14, 33:15, 42:9, 42:22, 43:1, 43:4, 47:18, 51:20, 51:22, 52:11, 52:21, 53:17, 58:20, 61:15, 64:15, 67:4, 69:11, 72:5, 74:4, 74:7, 75:3, 78:10, 80:5, 80:24, 82:2, 82:9</p> <p>two-year [1] - 52:21</p> <p style="text-align: center;">U</p> <p>U.S [1] - 12:11</p> <p>ultimate [2] - 25:12, 58:23</p> <p>ultimately [1] - 38:9</p> <p>unanimous [2] - 11:19, 15:21</p> <p>unanimously [2] - 11:13, 11:14</p> <p>uncertainty [1] - 73:8</p> <p>unchanged [1] - 74:6</p> <p>uncork [1] - 37:11</p> <p>under [8] - 7:7, 7:9, 19:16, 21:19, 25:3, 25:4, 34:3, 38:8</p> <p>underneath [3] - 70:13, 70:15, 70:21</p> <p>underpin [1] - 59:9</p> <p>understood [1] - 37:5</p> <p>underway [4] - 21:11, 22:1, 28:17, 28:23</p> <p>Unemployment [2] - 67:1, 67:2</p> <p>unfortunately [2] - 32:9, 41:2</p> <p>unique [2] - 6:2, 16:14</p> <p>United [5] - 38:15, 53:16, 53:20, 56:15, 59:5</p> <p>University [3] - 42:23, 43:3, 44:9</p> <p>unless [1] - 76:19</p> <p>unspent [1] - 73:10</p> <p>up [17] - 9:15, 10:10,</p>	<p>12:20, 17:19, 18:19, 25:9, 38:14, 47:3, 47:17, 51:25, 53:6, 53:13, 55:2, 57:23, 59:10, 62:10, 76:4</p> <p>update [3] - 19:8, 38:20, 76:25</p> <p>updates [1] - 5:17</p> <p>upstream [1] - 23:20</p> <p>urban [1] - 27:6</p> <p>urge [3] - 38:11, 38:12, 54:21</p> <p>USF [2] - 43:3, 44:23</p> <p>utilizes [1] - 20:3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <p>V.A [2] - 79:6, 79:10</p> <p>Valley [2] - 61:16, 61:19</p> <p>value [3] - 25:15, 60:4, 61:8</p> <p>values [1] - 60:10</p> <p>various [2] - 53:18, 54:12</p> <p>Various [1] - 5:17</p> <p>veteran [2] - 12:14, 79:3</p> <p>Veterans [1] - 83:17</p> <p>veterans [14] - 77:2, 77:7, 77:19, 78:22, 78:25, 79:4, 79:16, 81:11, 81:12, 81:18, 84:17, 84:18, 84:19, 84:21</p> <p>veterans' [1] - 80:24</p> <p>Veterans' [10] - 76:17, 76:25, 77:11, 77:22, 79:24, 80:1, 80:20, 82:4, 82:13, 83:10</p> <p>vibrant [1] - 6:4</p> <p>view [2] - 7:24, 66:3</p> <p>Vinyard [10] - 6:10, 6:20, 13:23, 13:24, 14:5, 15:12, 17:5, 29:16, 42:1, 76:21</p> <p>VINYARD [6] - 7:1, 13:7, 42:4, 42:22, 45:2, 45:12</p> <p>visit [7] - 8:5, 8:6, 28:11, 28:12, 43:12, 77:6, 80:19</p> <p>visited [1] - 28:25</p> <p>visiting [1] - 81:6</p> <p>vital [1] - 39:2</p> <p>vitality [1] - 55:24</p> <p>vitality-important [1] - 55:24</p> <p>voluntary [1] - 37:8</p>	<p>Volusia [1] - 53:25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <p>waiting [1] - 32:8</p> <p>walked [1] - 10:3</p> <p>Washington [5] - 9:20, 28:18, 36:11, 40:22, 51:18</p> <p>Water [20] - 6:11, 6:13, 7:4, 7:17, 8:14, 9:7, 9:14, 9:22, 10:22, 15:13, 17:6, 18:10, 19:8, 23:4, 30:10, 35:14, 36:7, 37:24, 38:16, 63:12</p> <p>water [77] - 6:3, 6:7, 6:14, 6:17, 7:11, 7:22, 8:3, 8:10, 9:3, 10:14, 11:1, 11:17, 12:9, 14:12, 14:24, 15:3, 16:21, 17:11, 17:14, 18:11, 19:9, 20:2, 20:8, 20:9, 22:7, 22:9, 22:11, 22:16, 22:17, 22:18, 23:2, 23:6, 24:4, 24:19, 24:22, 25:14, 25:18, 26:3, 26:15, 26:21, 26:24, 27:2, 27:4, 30:1, 30:3, 31:2, 31:7, 31:12, 31:14, 31:21, 31:24, 32:6, 32:20, 32:21, 32:22, 32:23, 36:13, 36:21, 36:24, 37:3, 37:7, 37:12, 38:3, 38:5, 38:6, 48:16, 54:5, 56:2, 57:13, 60:11, 62:12, 62:13, 62:16, 62:19</p> <p>waters [2] - 25:16, 25:25</p> <p>watershed [1] - 66:7</p> <p>Watkins [2] - 64:2, 76:20</p> <p>WATKINS [3] - 64:5, 64:15, 68:17</p> <p>wave [1] - 49:18</p> <p>ways [1] - 44:9</p> <p>wear [1] - 53:22</p> <p>Weatherford [1] - 11:5</p> <p>website [1] - 77:7</p> <p>week [3] - 7:8, 17:5, 52:2</p> <p>week's [1] - 36:15</p> <p>weeks [2] - 33:15, 78:15</p> <p>welcome [3] - 4:2, 4:4,</p>	<p>49:4</p> <p>Wes [3] - 48:23, 48:25, 49:1</p> <p>west [3] - 21:23, 31:8, 37:3</p> <p>West [2] - 35:16, 39:19</p> <p>Western [1] - 31:11</p> <p>western [1] - 53:19</p> <p>whole [2] - 51:6, 57:16</p> <p>wicked [1] - 5:9</p> <p>wickedness [1] - 5:2</p> <p>wife [1] - 53:24</p> <p>wildlife [2] - 62:9, 62:13</p> <p>Wildlife [1] - 29:17</p> <p>Wiley [1] - 29:18</p> <p>Williamson [1] - 48:23</p> <p>WILLIAMSON [2] - 49:2, 49:15</p> <p>win [2] - 51:16</p> <p>win-win [1] - 51:16</p> <p>winding [1] - 40:12</p> <p>window [1] - 77:3</p> <p>wisdom [1] - 4:21</p> <p>wish [1] - 27:23</p> <p>wonderful [3] - 28:13, 50:20, 51:17</p> <p>wood [1] - 10:4</p> <p>words [3] - 27:25, 41:4, 66:14</p> <p>works [1] - 38:16</p> <p>world [1] - 71:20</p> <p>wrap [1] - 38:14</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <p>year [32] - 6:18, 18:5, 18:8, 20:24, 23:6, 25:10, 27:10, 31:19, 32:23, 33:5, 34:1, 41:8, 52:21, 55:9, 56:14, 59:19, 59:21, 66:1, 69:12, 74:9, 76:1, 77:19, 78:11, 79:3, 79:22, 80:6, 81:1, 81:24, 81:25, 82:8</p> <p>Year [1] - 80:20</p> <p>years [36] - 6:9, 7:19, 13:3, 15:9, 19:15, 20:12, 24:23, 25:10, 29:11, 30:23, 41:11, 43:18, 46:15, 49:24, 50:17, 51:20, 51:22, 52:11, 53:17, 56:4, 58:8, 62:5, 66:9, 67:13, 67:15, 67:19, 68:12, 69:11, 70:16,</p>
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70:22, 75:3, 75:24,
78:23, 80:12, 82:9
Yeehaw [1] - 51:11
yellow [1] - 25:24
yesterday [1] - 83:19
York [1] - 10:7
young [1] - 34:23