

**FALL 2021** 







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#### THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SIERRA CLUB



Emily Gorman (first row, far left) has been active in Florida Sierra since 2016, working as a national Ready For 100 organizer based in Miami focused on issues relating to clean energy, environmental justice, transportation and disaster resilience. At age 29, Emily is the Chapter's youngest ever director.

### Chapter Takes On New Leader, New Energy

### BY EMILY GORMAN Florida Chapter Director

I am honored to introduce myself as the new Sierra Club Florida Chapter director. Since 2016, Sierra Club Florida has been my home and my family. I have worked with you to organize communities, demand solutions, and fight for change. It is a gift to continue our work in this new role!

Our organization, communities, and society are in a time of transition. Over the last few years, we have lived in a state and a nation in which truth has become a casualty, and division a way of life. Now is the moment to come togeth-



er, to lean on each other, and to grow together toward the future — a future in which all people explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth, and in which the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources is a central tenet of our existence. Sierra Club Florida Chapter is prepared to rise to the moment.

Over the next year, you will see our staff grow and our operations shift to focus on volunteers, members, and local communities. Our love for the wild places of the earth, for the Floridian ecology, and for each other will guide us as we

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# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

STEVE WONDERLY



Last winter's edition of The Pelican included a column from then-Chair Alyssa Cadwalader, who accurately observed, "We find ourselves in the midst of a surging pandemic while battling to preserve democracy." I have to admit that I really didn't expect to be in the same situation nine months later. I thought, no doubt, that we would still be fighting climate battles (we are, and we will be as long as there are climate battles to fight). And it was obvious that we had plenty of work to do to shore up democracy. But we should have put the pandemic behind us by now.

Question: What do you suppose a Venn diagram of climate change deniers, anti-vaxxers, and insurrectionists would look like?

But we have yet to put the pandemic behind us, and we're still muddling through with virtual meetings. Outings and inperson meetings are slowly, haltingly returning, but we're not there yet. We may never return entirely to the old ways — there are just too many advantages to conducting at least some meetings virtually: no travel time, no burning fossil fuels to travel, and you only have to put real clothes on from the waist up.

I imagine you're ready for some good news. And there is good news.

But first, sorry, one more piece of bad news. When Frank Jackalone retired from the position of Chapter Director last February, Deborah Foote, the Deputy Chapter Director, stepped up to fill the role as Acting Chapter Director and has done an exemplary job since then. Now, unfortunately, she is leaving to pursue another opportunity. We owe her a large debt of gratitude and we wish her the best in her future endeavors.

### Gorman

(Continued from page 1)

grow to new heights.

With an upcoming election, the culmination of redistricting, and the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022 will be a defining year for Florida. The need for clean energy, air, and water for all has never been greater. We will continue to seek bold solutions for our planet, communities, economy, and democracy. The challenges of our time demand them.

Editor's Note: For a look at our Florida Sierra Club priorities for 2022, see Page 4. Okay, finally the good news ... The Sierra Club Florida Chapter has gotten stronger over the past year. In the previous edition of The Pelican, we announced the addition of a Chapter Political Director, Luigi Guadarrama, and our political program is bigger and better than ever. Since then, we've also added a Communications Director. We've desperately needed someone in that role for a while, and we're very happy to have Sara Hennenberger there now. Brooke Alexander has become an Organizing Manager, and she'll be great in that role.

Last, but certainly not least, we have a new Chapter Director. You can find more details elsewhere in this edition, but let me say here that we're all excited to have Emily Gorman step into that role and are confident that she will help lead us to being a more effective and inclusive Chapter.

In short, the Chapter is strong. Which is good, because we have plenty of challenges ahead of us; challenges we need your help with. How can you help? We have opportunities for a wide variety of interests and talents. Please contact your local Group (sierraclub.org/florida/groups) or send us an email at SCFloridaChapter@gmail.com.

And we always welcome donations (go to florida.sierraclub.org to find a Donate link).

Be Well,

Steve

UPDATE: The Chapter office in St. Petersburg has been closed permanently as we proceed to search for a new location. Find current staff and leader contact information on the web site at: sierraclub.org/florida/about-us

### The Pelican, Vol. 54 No. 3

Marcia Biggs, Editor

The Pelican is published by Sierra Club Florida and mailed to Sierra Club Florida members. Annual membership dues include The Pelican newsletter. To request digital version, e-mail marcia.biggs@florida.sierraclub.org and include your current mailing address.

#### Sierra Club Florida Director

**Emily Gorman** 

### Sierra Club Florida Executive Committee

Steve Wonderly, Volusia Flagler Group, Chair Debbie Matthews, Miami Group James Scott, Suncoast Group Craig Diamond, Big Bend Group Grant Gelhardt, Big Bend Group Sheila Erdley, Turtle Coast Group Leighanne Boone, Big Bend Group

#### florida.sierraclub.org

# Florida Members Receive National Recognition

Seven leaders from Florida Chapter groups were honored during a virtual Sierra Club National Awards presentation on Sept. 17. Receiving recognition were:

Alyssa Cadwalader, Loxahatchee Group, Atlas Award (Honors extraordinary administrative contributions to groups, chapters and regional entities.) Alyssa's competence, calm nature and willingness to take on new tasks have been extremely valuable to her group and the whole Florida Chapter since 2008. She started as a volunteer in the Inspiring Connections Outdoors program. She progressed to group treasurer, group webmaster and group executive committee member, bringing her diligence and organizational skills to every task.

On the Chapter level she served on the Chapter Executive Committee and was Chapter Chair in 2019-20, providing strategic planning and leadership in Equity, Inclusion and Justice (EIJ) discussions. She is presently chair of the Chapter's Group Empowerment Team (GET), contributor to the chapter on strategic planning issues and still leads ICO outings.

Bill Armstrong and Bill Snow, Northeast Florida Group, receiving a joint Oliver Kehrlein Outings Leadership Award (Honors service to the Sierra Club Outings Program either at the local or national level over an extended period of time.) When COVID-19 hit in 2020 and the Sierra Club outings program was shut down, this pair of veteran outings leaders in Florida hit upon a great idea for keeping Sierra Club members, and indeed many non-members, engaged in the outdoors and in the club. The two Bills began an almost-weekly virtual outings program on Zoom, complete with video clips, trail maps and directions, and a wellresearched narration. The programs, which covered several different areas of Northeast Florida, were well-attended and well-received.

Bill Armstrong has been an energetic group outings leader, helped to administer a National Outings program in Florida in 2010, and is a former treasurer of the



#### CALL FOR CHAPTER AWARD NOMINATIONS

While the pandemic has slowed the pace of our work in the past two years, we know that many members and community supporters have carried on tirelessly to advocate and support the goals and mission of Sierra Club. The Chapter is seeking nominations for volunteers and community supporters who have shown outstanding achievement

and a long-term commitment to the Club.

All nominations must be approved by a local Group executive committee, which submits the nomination to the state awards committee. Candidates are generally members, but several categories recognize political, business, and community supporters.

To find a list of award categories and a nomination form, go to sierraclub.org/florida/awards-recognitions.

Questions should be directed to awards@florida.sierraclub.org.

Deadline to nominate is Dec. 31; awards will be announced in Spring 2022.

Inspiring Connections Outdoors program. Bill Snow is currently the Outings Chair of the Northeast Florida Group.

Three Florida activists are receiving **Volunteer Service Awards** (Honors Sierra Club volunteers for strong and consistent commitment to the environment or the Club over an extended period of time).

Brian Paradise, Northeast Florida Group Brian has been a valuable administrative and conservation leader in the Northeast Florida Group since the late 1970s. Every aspect of the group, from the executive committee, to the outings program, to the legislative committee, to the political team, to the conservation effort, has benefited from his dedicated attention to the Sierra Club mission and its goals and his willingness to do the hard work of keeping a group thriving.

Michael Fitzpatrick, Loxahatchee Group Michael was honored for his nearly 50 years as an environmental activist, concentrating on saving urban pockets of ecological importance in Palm Beach County Florida. His campaigns through the years have resulted in preservation of seven pieces of land around the county. He has also served as a city commissioner and on several advisory boards through the years. He is a former group chair and

activities committee chair and remains today a member of the Forests and Public Lands Committee.

#### Max Goldstein, Broward Group

Max is being recognized for 20 years of dedicated support for his group in a variety of positions and his willingness to take on any job when he sees it needs doing. He has been the group treasurer, Florida Chapter's Political Action Committee treasurer during the last election cycle and for the past eight years he has also been an outings leader. Two years ago he stepped up to become newsletter editor. His most recent new undertaking was to become a member of the group's revamped political committee.

Kip Fisher, Broward Group, Communication Excellence Award (Honors the best use of communications (either print or electronic) by volunteer(s) in a Sierra Club group, chapter or other entity to further the Club's mission.)

Kip was recognized for his work leading, mentoring and encouraging his fellow leaders into using the Sierra Club's electronic tools to make internal and external communications more effective. With Kip's constant example and willingness to help, many others in the group have gained the confidence to learn the new methods of advancing the group's work.

# Sierra Florida Announces 2022 Legislative Priorities

The 2022 Legislative Session will begin on January 11 and runs until March 11. Six Interim Committee Weeks will be held in advance of the session, beginning the week of September 20. To prepare, the Sierra Club Florida lobby team has gathered input from lead volunteers and staff to create our 2022 Legislative Priorities, a document which lays out the issues and what is needed to remedy them.

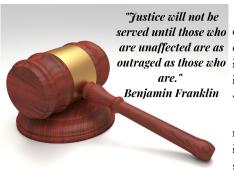
We need the help of all our members and supporters to call on their legislators to do what is right for Florida. Be sure you "opt in" to all our advocacy alerts and take action! Get involved with your Group Political Committee to advocate for Sierra Club positions with your legislators by reaching out to our Political Director Luigi Guadarrama

(luigi.guadarrama@sierraclub.org). It's all-hands-on-deck time. (Find your regional group at florida.sierraclub.org/groups.)

In brief, our 2022 priorities are:

Climate change: Floridians' risk from stronger storms and sea-level rise caused by climate change is a function of both past and future emissions. Florida must reduce its use of fossil fuels now by transitioning to 100% renewable energy statewide before 2050, with 100% renewable energy used for all state-funded operations by 2035.

Land conservation: Left in their natural state, our lands keep an immense amount of climate pollution out of the



yvonnechase.com

atmosphere and provide economic and quality-of-life benefits. We need to keep our remaining undeveloped lands intact by preserving open spaces and wetlands, enhancing regional wildlife corridors, and avoiding fragmentation of habitat.

Smart growth: Once a model for the nation, Florida's growth management laws, having been gutted since 2011, now prioritize developers over residents. We must reinstitute state and regional oversight of growth management to promote economically prosperous, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable communities.

Water quality and quantity: Current water quality and quantity statutes are full of loopholes and empty promises of restoration in 35 years. Florida must stop pollution at its source rather than cleaning it up after the fact, and limit permits to withdrawals that will not harm natural systems.

\*\*Tustice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are."

Benjamin Franklin

Democracy: We must protect and defend the most fundamental elements of our democracy for all Floridians by breaking down barriers to participation, ensuring that each of us has an equal voice and vote.

Environmentally appropriate home rule: Let local governments lead by allowing them to supplement state law with stricter restrictions to protect their own resources and constituents.

Sierra Club Florida plays an important role in the legislative process. We speak truth to power in the Capitol and in legislators' home districts. We state clearly and firmly what is needed to protect our environment, all who live here, and our communities. We fight policies that do harm and call out legislation touted as being environmentally friendly but just won't do the job. By doing so, we expand the conversation beyond what politicians claim is all that is "politically feasible" to achieve real solutions to the real problems Florida faces.

In recent years your lobby team has spent most of its time trying to make legislation "less bad," and this session is likely to be the same. Bills we like rarely get even a public hearing and are dead on arrival. Bring your legislators our priorities, and urge them to pass them into law.

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To sign up for Sierra Club Action Alerts, go to sierraclub.org/florida/optin

### Learn About Florida Chapter's Youngest Committee Nov. 3

Many Sierra Club members and supporters are likely familiar with our Conservation, Political, Outings, and Executive committees within the Florida Chapter. But do you know about the youngest committee, founded in 2018?

The Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Committee was founded to support the Sierra Club's mission of "enlisting humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment." How do we do that? Who is on the committee? What sort of tasks and projects do we work on? Join us at a short informational meet-and-greet on **November 3** to learn about this young committee!

Committee members and Chapter leadership will be on hand between 6 and 7pm virtually to give a short presentation, answer questions, and potentially recruit new committee members. Anyone and everyone who simply wants to learn and

grow with the organization is welcome, and there's no commitment to attend. This will be casual, so feel free to attend for part of the session.

Attend via videocall or phone call and make sure to register in advance by emailing justice@florida.sierraclub.org.
Your subject line should be: Meet and Greet.

We'll see you soon!

# Time is Now to Prepare for Challenges of 2022

### BY DAVID HARBEITNER Florida Chapter Political Chair

While important work needs to be completed in the Florida Legislature in 2022, we are not losing sight of the elections next fall. Much will be at stake in the 2022 elections in Florida. We will be voting on the entire state executive branch, one of our U.S. Senate seats, all of our Congressional Representatives (including one new congressional district) and all our state legislative districts.

It is worthwhile noting Sierra Club is first and foremost an advocacy organization working to protect our environment. To increase our chance at winning important policy decisions we need to elect pro-environment officials.

This is where our political work comes in. To get the endorsement of Sierra Club, candidates go through a comprehensive process that includes completing a questionnaire and participating in an interview while volunteer members do additional research on each candidate and, if appropriate, recommendations for endorsement must be approved by two different levels of committees within Sierra Club.

Our endorsement process is one that has been vetted over the past 60 years across all 50 states and continually evolves to reflect the new challenges that face the environment.

So why bring this up now when the elections are over 12 months away? In order to win elections, we need not only to identify and endorse those candidates whose values best align with Sierra, we also need to support them to help them win their elections. Providing support to our candidates takes resources, specifical-

ly money.

We can not expect to outraise or outspend our political/advocacy opponents, but with smart allocation of our resources and the engagement of our members and supporters, we can be very effective at helping our candidates win.

The governor and the Florida Legislature have been gutting environmental protections for years, favoring moneyed interests at the expense of natural Florida. Only through our collective efforts, partnering with like-minded organizations, and realizing our personal engagement is critical to our state's future, can we win the critical elections we need to win!!

Donate to the Sierra Club FL PAC to help our electoral work bit.ly/SierraClubFLPAC

### Call for Candidates: Are You Ready for a Leadership Role in Florida Chapter?

Feel like you could contribute more to the future of Florida's environment and conservation? Is the current political arena getting you down? Sierra Club Florida is seeking passionate members to join our Executive Committee (ExCom) to become leaders and decision makers. Candidate will work to make change and move our priorities into the coming election year.

There are four seats open for the 2022 term; deadline to submit your nomination is October 31.

Sierra Club Florida is made up of volunteer leaders representing over 32,000 members from all over the state. The statewide work of Sierra Club Florida is directed by an Executive Committee of seven members, who are elected for two-year terms. The Florida ExCom

meets four times a year, with conference and zoom meetings as needed to make decisions on issues of importance.

ExCom positions are "members at large" who serve on committees of their choice. If you are interested in serving, or know of someone who might be, please contact Mary-Slater Linn by Oct. 31: sierraclub01@yahoo.com or call/text 407-701-6475.

### Staff/Leader News

Florida organizer **Michael McGrath** has been appointed to the board of the Florida Springs Council (floridaspringscouncil.org). He will be serving as the Sierra Club representative on this Council, which has been on the forefront of protecting Florida Springs in North and Central Florida and also working to restore the Ocklawaha River.

Suncoast Sierra Club Executive Committee Vice-Chair **Erica Hall** has stepped up to co-lead the Florida Chap-

ter's Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (EIJ) Committee with Jessica Lewis. Erica has a multi-disciplinary background as a community economic development practitioner, community organizer, environmental justice advocate and senior legal professional with interests in the connection between sustainability, resiliency, food waste, climate change, and food insecurity. Erica is Board Chair/Executive Director of the Florida Food Policy Council and a member of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Food

Security Advisory Committee. She is a frequent guest speaker at regional, national, and global food conferences including the 3rd Annual Tampa Bay Urban Food Sovereignty Summit at University of South Florida on Oct. 14-16.

**Sara Hennenberger** has been hired as the new Florida Chapter Communications Director. Welcome, Sara!

Brooke Alexander has been promoted to organizing manager and will lead the Chapter's work on clean energy, including the Ready for 100 campaign and with Drive Electric Florida.

# 'Toxic Bus Tour' Highlights Energy Inequality

In late August, Tampa-based Sierra Club staff members Walter Smith and Gonzalo Valdes led a group of about 25 local residents on a "toxic bus tour" through Hillsborough County to highlight potential disaster zones, underserved areas, issues of energy inequality, and possible solutions.

Smith, an organizing representative, and Valdes, an organizing manager, are part of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, which seeks to close all coalburning plants in the U.S. and replace them with clean energy sources.

The tour's first stop was in Apollo Beach, home to the Tampa Electric (TECO) Big Bend Station, which is located in a flood zone on the eastern edge of Tampa Bay. The site also contains coal ash ponds, protected by 30-foot walls. With 42 feet of storm surge projected in a Category 5 hurricane scenario, the ponds are a toxic spill waiting to happen, threatening the safety of several local communities.

Environmental justice advocates such as Sierra Club want TECO to get rid of the ponds and switch to solar energy, but give credit to the utility for a "microgrid" pilot project, which was the second stop



on the tour. In the town of Wimauma, TECO has included some new houses in an experimental Block Energy System, which uses solar power and battery storage to make them energy independent.

Low-income families suffer disproportionately under the current energy landscape, and Sierra Club believes TECO should be providing new technology to underserved communities, such as Progress Village, the tour's last stop. Established in the 1960s for African Americans to purchase affordable suburban homes,

the community is prone to flooding. It stands in contrast to the newer, microgrid homes nearby.

"I want you to imagine that Category 5 storm has rolled through but you know you're not in a flood zone. You know that your electricity is going to be on. You know that you're prepared. You know that your neighbors are prepared. How do you feel?" Valdes asked the group.

"Secure," said one person.

Reporting/photo courtesy of Jessica Meszaros, WUSF Public Media

### Annual Outings Leader Retreat

All Sierra Club Outings leaders and chairs – and members who are interested in becoming Outings leaders – should mark their calendars

for the weekend of November 5-7 when the Annual Outings Leader Retreat will once again be held at Myakka River State Park in Sarasota County.

This social and learning weekend is also for anyone interested in leading children and teens on outings through our Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) program. After more than a year-long break, Sierra Club outings are considerately being re-introduced, but not without new safety measures and training protocols.



Come meet other outings leaders and learn what changes have been implemented and what it takes to become a certified Outings leader. Participants may attend one, two or all days. For more information, contact Rudy.Scheffer@sierraclub.org.

### Thank You!

We wish to thank our Florida Chapter members for your extra contributions to our work in response to the annual March fundraising appeal letter. We received this year a little more than double the financial contributions of last year from over 700 members — in addition to membership dues!

Some gave very generously; some gave modestly, but all are appreciated. Your continuing support helps empower our volunteers and staff to do more for our mission in favor of Florida's environment.

It's never too late to offer an extra donation to your Chapter. Go online to our Chapter website to donate by credit card or mail a check to Sierra Club Florida, P.O. Box 49024, Jacksonville Beach FL 32240. Sincere thanks!

- Tom Larson, Chapter Treasurer

Kudos to the **Big Bend Group** for encouraging the **City of Tallahassee** to adopt policies addressing single-use plastics and polystyrene of public property. The City has adopted a policy that prohibits their use on city property, including at city hall and events at city parks. For major events such as city festivals and sporting events, the new policy has the potential to greatly reduce plastic waste.

The city of **Orlando** passed an **Electric Vehicle Readiness Proposal** that will create nearly 1,000 EV charging stations across the city. The **Tampa City Council** passed a resolution to transition to 100% renewable energy by 2030.

The Chapter Conservation Committee submitted comments and recommendations to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) considering the **Diamondback Terrapin** draft rule. The Diamondback Terrapin is one of Florida's native freshwater turtles that live within coastal marshes, tidal creeks, mangroves, and other brackish and estuarine habitats. One of the recommendations was to prohibit private taking of Diamondback Terrapins and require that personal blue crab traps have a by-



Photo/George L. Heinrich

catch exclusion device. Many turtles get caught and perish in these traps. The FWC agreed with our recommendation and is in the process of incorporating it into the rule.

The Florida Chapter Conservation Committee is coordinating with the **Georgia Sierra Club** on protecting the **Okefenokee Swamp** from a proposed



titanium mine adjacent to the swamp. Twin Pines Minerals of Birmingham, AL, has spent the past two years seeking government permits to mine titanium dioxide on land 2.9 miles from the southeastern boundary of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The decision on whether the mine gets permit approval rests with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

The Florida Chapter submitted two resolutions to the national Sierra Club Council of Club Leaders for consideration at their September annual meeting. One of the resolutions was to adopt policies supporting the "rights of nature." This would be similar to the resolution that was passed in Orange County, FL, that resulted in an amendment to their charter to protect water quality. The other resolution was a request for the national Sierra Club to adopt a policy supporting prescribed burns in natural areas to assist in the restoration of natural fire dependent ecological communities. Both proposed resolutions were passed unanimously and forwarded to the National Sierra Club Board of Directors.

The Turtle Coast Group joined state Sierra Club leaders in sending a letter to NASA director and former Florida Senator Bill Nelson requesting additional efforts be made toward minimizing environmental impacts and putting the highest priority on protecting the Indian River Lagoon watershed in light of record manatee starvation deaths due to drastic seagrass loss.

on Sept. 25.

The **Loxahatchee Group** is working hard with a campaign to save the Palm Beach County Agricultural Reserve, some 20,900 acres of farming region west of Boynton Beach and Delray Beach. Since 2000, more than 9,400 homes and hundreds of acres of commercial development have been built in the reserve. Over the years, the preserved land has been chipped away by votes of county commissioners who are prioritizing development over agriculture and the natural environment. The Ag Reserve provides many critical benefits to the community, including agricultural production that drives local economy, flood prevention, recharging aquifers that residents depend on for their drinking water.

Sierra Club Florida 200 W. College Ave. #314 Tallahassee, FL 32301



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Email new address to address.changes@sierraclub.org and include your membership ID number located on the mailing label.

### Donate Your Vehicle to Sierra Club for Tax Benefit

If you have an extra car, truck,or boat, you can turn it into a tax-deductible gift. You have until December 31 at midnight to officially pledge your donation and count it as a 2021 charitable contribution. After Jan. 1, your donation will simply count for 2022. Best of all, your vehicle, if it qualifies, will be picked up for free!

Completing your donation is easy:

Call (855) 337-5377 or go online to sierraclubfoundation. careasy.org and submit an online form. Within 48 hours, a vehicle donor support representative will contact you to complete the donation. It is important that you indicate that you wish this donation to go to the Florida Chapter.

In most cases, you will receive an initial donation receipt from the tow driver at the time of your vehicle pick-up. Within 30 days of the sale, a thank-you letter on behalf of the Sierra Club Foundation will be mailed to you, serving as a tax receipt. If you have questions about the process, you can email donor-support@careasy.org. During the call, please have the title in hand to make the process even faster.



Call 1-855-337-5377

Individual tax situations vary. For specific tax-related questions, please consult your tax advisor or refer to IRS Publication 4303 to learn more about vehicle donations as tax-deductible gifts.