



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet

Calusa Group

Spring 2017

<http://sierraclub.org/florida/calusa>

People's Climate Movement Marches April 29th

Marches matter. Principled, peaceful, but impassioned protest makes a statement in a way that the printed word cannot. The great civil rights and anti-war marches of the past, for example, helped to alter public consciousness and change the political landscapes of their times.

Women recently marched in historic numbers on January 19th. Scientists will be marching on Earth Day in the name of open and sound scientific research currently under attack in a time of White House gag orders and “alternative” facts.

April 29th is our day to march. Hundreds of thousands will march on Washington and at sister locations nationwide. **Locally, we will march in Fort Myers starting at Centennial Park at 2:00 PM and march until 5:00 PM.**

We must march because Donald Trump willfully ignores the consensus of the scientific community, 97% of whom say human-caused climate change is real.



Huffington Post

He has revived the Keystone and Dakota Access pipelines and has appointed former ExxonMobil chairman Rex Tillerson Secretary of State and climate change denier Ken Pruitt to head the EPA. He has removed climate change information from government websites and has proposed cuts of 25% to government agencies conducting climate change research.

He is rolling back President Obama's executive orders regarding clean air and coal factory and auto emissions, and is gutting this nation's commitment to the Paris Climate Accord, the first significant global effort to mitigate the potentially catastrophic effects of climate change. (See page 2)

He does this in spite of the fact that the leaders of over 300 American companies including the likes of Danon, DuPont, General Mills, Hewlett Packard, Intel, Kellogg, Levi Strauss, Monsanto, Nike, Patagonia, Staples, and Starbucks believe the science behind climate change and called upon Mr. Trump in a public letter to support a low-carbon economy through low-carbon policies, and for this country's continued participation in the Climate Accord. He does this even though the US military believes the science and considers climate change a national security issue and one which will further endanger our service men and women. He does this in disregard of polls that show the majority of Americans now believe human caused climate change is real.



We must march because anti-environment voices in Congress want to eliminate the EPA altogether and to repeal the Endangered Species Act although scientists say we are causing the 6th great mass extinction in the history of the earth, a loss of biodiversity unequalled since the extinction of the dinosaurs.

This is ecocide, to a large extent the result of our consumption of fossil fuels, and therefore we want to keep oil and coal in the ground and pursue clean, renewable energies. But Donald Trump and the Republican Congress are encouraging fossil fuel production with abandon, no matter the harm caused to planet and people.

Marches matter and this march, especially, matters a great deal, and on April 29th the People's Climate Movement will march on Washington and at satellite locations in numbers too large to be dismissed by any -one inside or outside of government. Join us. Find more info at PeoplesClimate.org.

Climate March, Centennial Park, Fort Myers, 2pm-5pm

Patriotism, the name we give to the love of one's country, must be redefined to include those things that contribute to the real health, beauty, and ecological stability of our home places and to exclude those that do not. Patriotism as biophilia [an innate love of nature] requires that we decide to rejoin the idea of love of one's country to how and how well one uses the country. To destroy forests, soils, natural beauty, and wildlife in order to swell the gross national product, or to provide short-term and often spurious jobs, is not patriotism but greed.

Real patriotism requires that we weave the competent, patient, and disciplined love of our land into our political life and our political institutions. The laws of ecology and those of thermodynamics, which mostly have to do with limits, must become the foundation for a new politics.

Prof. David Orr, Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment and the Human Prospect

Letter from the Chair by Ruth Scott

Needless to say, the first months of the Trump administration have been frightening to the Sierra Club and its members. It has declared war on the environment, creating outrage and an unprecedented increase in membership and fundraising for many environmental and grassroots groups and organizations. Its reprehensible policies and executive actions have given us leverage to fight for the environment and its inhabitants. Just a quick recap of Trump's executive orders thus far: Remove the Clean Water rule (overruled by the Supreme Court), permit fracking and coal mining on Federal lands, repeal the EPA's Clean Power Plan, rollback regulations on domestic energy production (i.e. fossil fuel production), and rollback climate change policy from the Obama administration.

He wants to resume offshore drilling off both the Gulf and Atlantic coasts of Florida. He even appointed Scott Pruitt to head the EPA, the most anti-EPA person he could find. Trump is also trying to block efforts to increase domestic clean energy production while benefitting Big Oil and the coal mining industry.

In March, there was a rally held in Tallahassee called "Reclaiming Florida's Future" sponsored by several environmental groups including Sierra Club of Florida. There were four members of Sierra Club Calusa Group, including myself, who went to lobby Florida legislators on important legislation of the 2017 session. We were seeking support on fracking ban legislation (SB442 and HB451,) and for the first time in Florida history fracking ban legislation made it to the floor for a vote!

We urged support for SB1700 (Clean Water legislation), Clean Energy Bills SB90/HB 1411 (implementing legislation for solar energy Amendment 4) and to amend HB 1351. We also opposed legislation that would be detrimental to Florida's environment and future: SB1238/HB1043, which would increase our dependency on Natural Gas, and SB 1158, SB 1378, HB 751 and HB 17, which pre-empts local environmental regulations.

On a positive note, since Trump took office, Sierra Club Calusa Group membership that spans Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee Counties has increased to 2,065. That being said, we need more of our members to be ACTIVELY ENGAGED! There are not nearly enough members who regularly attend monthly meetings, tabling events, BOCC meetings and address local concerns. So if you're tired of being an armchair activist and want to get involved and fight for this paradise we live in, **please attend our monthly meetings held at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium on the second Wednesday of every month at the Iona House from 6pm – 8pm.** We post upcoming events and meeting times on our Sierra Club Calusa Group Facebook page as well. We will have our work cut out for us over the next four years with this relentless attack on our environment, and we sure could use some help.

Clean Water: Sierra Club Supports Senate Bill 10

Perhaps no environmental issue garners more attention in central and southern Florida than the health and flow of water from Lake Okeechobee. Here are the basics on the issue and on the latest version of Senate Bill 10.

History: Beginning in the 19th century when the ecological value of swamp land south of Lake Okeechobee wasn't appreciated, settlers and engineers began the colossal task of turning this land into farmland. They did that through ever more sophisticated means by building what is today a massive earthen berm that surrounds the lake, the Herbert Hoover Dike, and redirecting the flow of lake water. What once flowed directly south feeding the Everglades was channeled east and west into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers. Where hundreds of thousands of acres of wetlands once existed, vegetable farms, sugar cane farms, and communities now exist. (See *Clean Water*, next page)

Clean Water (continued)

The Problem: Lake Okeechobee, the second largest freshwater lake in the country, well-spring of the Everglades, source of drinking water for communities, and irrigation water for a \$1.5 billion agricultural industry, is fouled by phosphorous levels 3 to 5 times the level of 140 tons per year established by the state in 2000.

According to a 2015 study by the South Florida Water Management District, 37% of that phosphorous comes from the manure and fertilizers associated with vegetable and dairy farms, cattle ranches, citrus orchards, and suburban neighborhoods north of the lake. Farmers and ranchers are supposed to follow best management practices regarding their use of phosphorous, but there are no laws enforcing BMP compliance. Similarly, little regulation exists to curtail the phosphorus from suburban areas.

The same study said less than 10% of the phosphorous comes from the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) south of the lake, 80% of which are sugar cane fields. But different sources claim varying percentages coming from both north and south of the lake. Historically, southern farmers were allowed to irrigate their fields with lake water and then pump phosphorous-laden water back into the lake.

What is certain is that the high phosphorous content causes vast algae blooms, which besides causing health problems to humans, decreases the available oxygen in the water and suffocates aquatic animals such as manatees. The blooms also reduce the salinity of coastal estuaries, killing oyster beds and driving off fish. In January 2016, when the Army Corp of Engineers feared the integrity of the Herbert Hoover Dike was threatened by high water levels in the lake caused by excessive rainfall, it opened the floodgates and sent billions of gallons of polluted water into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers giving birth to vast algae blooms downstream. Internationally reported, photos of the unsightly blooms and dead wildlife hammered tourism, the state's leading industry, and angered communities on both coasts. Governor Scott declared a state of emergency that lasted 242 days.

Senate Bill 10: SB 10 is Senate President Joe Negrón's effort to provide a partial fix to the problem. The latest rendition of the bill calls for a water retention reservoir to be sited in 14,000 acres south of the lake in the EAA, acres currently leased by the state to sugar giant Florida Crystals. The reservoir would hold 100 to 120 billion gallons in an effort to clean the water before sending it south in what once was the natural flow of lake water and restore in part the original river of grass character to those lands. If it is necessary to process more water, the state may also seek the purchase of additional acres from willing sellers, as well as pursue land swaps and the utilization of other state lands. Overall, the plan is very much like one proposed in the early 2000s, but only partially pursued and then later abandoned.

The bill comes with a price tag of \$1.5 billion, half paid for by the state, half by the federal government, and involves provisions to help farming communities impacted by the project, such as giving local residents employment priority in the construction of the reservoir as well as providing retraining programs.

The new bill has the support of the Sierra Club Florida, which says it will "rehydrate the Everglades, recharge the aquifer, bring fresh water to Florida Bay, and reduce discharges east and west." (For more info see <http://www.sierraclubfloridanews.org/2017/04/sb-10-major-improvements-merit-support.html>.)

SB 10 has so far won senate approval. Now it will need approval from the House, Gov. Rick Scott, Congress, and President Trump.

The reservoir at the heart of SB 10 is but one component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP). There are plans for reservoirs north of Lake Okeechobee as well. Negrón sees the projects moving forward concurrently.

Collier County Ends River of Grass Greenway

Sometimes common sense prevails and people and planet benefit.

This is what happened when Collier County Commissioners voted unanimously on February 10th to rescind a motion to pursue the River of Grass Greenway (ROGG), a 76-mile asphalt bike path through the Everglades alongside Route 41 between Naples and Miami.

According to Sierra Club Calusa Group Vice Chair John Scott, the proposed bike path would have “destroyed wetlands, disrupted watersheds, disturbed view sheds, fragmented critical wildlife habitat, encroached on indigenous lands, desecrated burial grounds, disturbed historic battlefields, undermined Everglades restoration and resulted in commercial development of the Big Cypress National Preserve and Greater Everglades.”

In deciding the fate of the pathway, the 5-commissioner MPO board was confronted with many of these concerns as well as the prudence of spending \$140 million dollars on a bike path.

Approximately seventy people had registered to voice their opinions to the board about the ROGG, the vast majority of them in opposition. Most never had need to speak after the board heard from county officials and tribe members and their representative.

“Our tribe, our people, go to the ends of the earth to be good stewards to the land,” Betty Osceola stated. “When we are protecting the land, we aren’t protecting it only for the Miccosukee people, but for everyone that has to exist on this land. We all benefit from clean water. The plants and the animals all benefit.”

Legal counsel to the tribe, speaking on their behalf, said, “We ask for the tribe’s considered opinion, the tribe’s beliefs, the tribe’s culture, the tribe’s way of life be respected.”

Anne McLaughlin, Executive Director of the MPO



The Sierra Club has been fighting for the health and restoration of the Everglades for more than 30 years. Today, threats of destruction continue to come from pushing urban development west, and from polluting or re-routing water that is needed by the Everglades and all its unique plants and wildlife.

had, in fact, advised the board to rescind the motion to pursue the pathway in part because of the improper manner in which the Miccosukee Tribe was consulted during the bike path’s planning process. The Miccosukee are regarded by the federal government as an independent nation, but they were never consulted through appropriate government channels.

David Wilkinson, head of the Collier County Growth Management Department as well urged the MPO to not proceed with any further project development and environment studies as there were “more pressing unfunded priorities.”

The commissioners made known their opposition to the pathway, but listened to all supporters of the ROGG who wished to address the issue. Several did, noting the benefits to cyclist safety and tourism that the pathway would provide. Although willing to hear from the many citizens who had registered to speak in opposition to the project, the board said more statements weren’t necessary, and then adopted the motion to rescind approval of the ROGG.

That decision effectively put to rest attempts to build a bike path east across the Everglades.

Biophilia and Fighting the Good Fight

“Bio,” means “life.” “Philia” means “love.” “Biophilia” literally means “love of life.”

As defined by eminent Harvard professor and entomologist E.O. Wilson, who coined the term in his 1984 book of the same name, biophilia is the “innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms.” Simply put, Wilson hypothesizes that love of nature is natural to humans. It’s in our DNA.

He believes that because humans evolved outdoors in nature, our brains are hardwired for a close connection to the natural world. Three million years of watching sunrises and sunsets, listening to the wind, smelling sea air, feeling soft earth beneath our feet, watching animals running, swimming, and flying have left an indelible imprint upon our collective human psyche. Not surprising then is the relationship between biophilia and our physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Biophilia helps explain why people take a walk outside to clear their minds. “The experience of nature in a neurological sense can help strengthen the activities of the right hemisphere of the brain, and restore harmony to the functions of the brain as a whole,” Australia’s Deakin University notes in a report, “Healthy Parks, Healthy People.”

Studies show that after a simple nature walk people report lower levels of depression, anger, tension, fatigue and confusion. Similar outdoor activities such as hiking and climbing engender peace of mind and enhanced creativity. No wonder in Japan there are 48 official Forest Therapy trails, designated for *shinrin-yoku*—forest bathing—considered “standard preventive medicine” to the Japanese, and why in the Netherlands hundreds of health farms are integrated into the national health service.

Research has demonstrated that hospital patients with window views recover more quickly from medical procedures, experience less minor post-surgical complications, and need less painkilling medication, and that employees with windows that offer a view of nature are more productive than those employees lacking such a view. Consequently, hospitals and workplaces are now incorporating biophilic design principles into their buildings, such as providing indoor gardens and more natural light and ventilation.

Biophilia explains the well-documented efficacy of companion animals, and why some colleges and universities bring dogs and cats to their campuses to help students de-stress during finals weeks, and why more people in the United States and Canada attend zoos than attend all major professional sports combined.

It explains why waterfront homes and those on savanna-like properties—open hilltops offering commanding views—are deemed more desirable and hence more expensive. For the better part of our time on this planet, humans valued proximity to water and the security that high ground and unimpeded vision provided.

And biophilia goes a long way in explaining why 90% of the books designed to help children learn to read and count contain animal characters. Some scientists believe that the presence of animals is inextricably linked to the development of speech and thought and human intelligence in general.

Of course, writers and poets and spiritual masters have long provided ample testimony to what science is now beginning to prove empirically. “We need the tonic of wildness,” Thoreau famously said.

But we now live in a culture that undermines biophilia. In a culture in which the average American spends 93% of his or her time inside his home, workplace, and car divorced from nature, when words like “acorn,” “otter,” and “willow” are being removed from children’s dictionaries to make room for “blog,” “broadband,” and “cut and paste,” it is important to know how integral biophilia is to one’s overall well-being: that enjoying a close connection to nature is part of what it means to be human. (See next page.)

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle with Freecycle.org

You recycle—great!—but good stuff such as furniture, household items, toys, garden tools, and exercise equipment that isn't recyclable gets put out for trash pick-up every week to needlessly end up in incinerators and landfills.

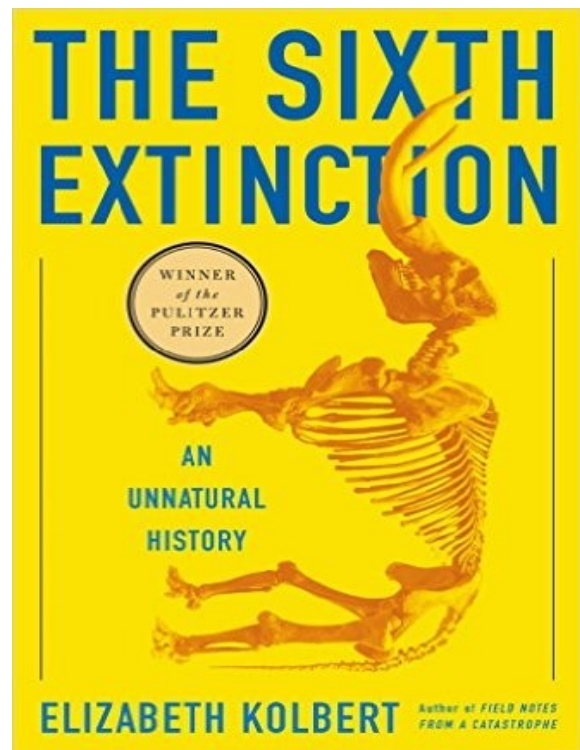
Americans comprise 5% of the world's population, but account for half of the world's solid waste. We rank 18th out of 18 surveyed industrialized countries in environmentally sustainable behaviors. We can do better. One way to do better is through Freecycle.org.

Freecycle is an international non-profit organization that works at the community level to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills and incinerators. Run by volunteers, it is an on-line registry of things that some people want to give away and of things other people need, and therefore is a mix of generosity and need, facilitated through technology. Globally, it saves over 1,000 tons of good stuff from the waste stream per day.

User-friendly, one just creates an on-line Freecycle account and posts the item or items to be given away as an "Offer." Interested parties will contact you to arrange for pick-up. Similarly, a person can post a "Wanted" request such as was recently done on the Cape Coral group's site. A Freecycle member was looking for children's goods for two young foster children, and they needed most everything. To help here serves the soul as well as the planet.

In giving and getting through Freecycle we help one another while also benefiting the earth, simply and effectively, by living according to the healthy values of wiser generations who knew the virtue of frugality and the foolishness of waste, values that governed American culture before it became a throwaway society.

There are 134 Freecycle groups in Florida, among them are groups in Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Naples, and Bonita Springs. Join at Freecycle.org.



"The documented rate of biodiversity loss occurring now is, in some ways, unprecedented in earth's history. For the first time, the activities of a single species—humans—is leading to such dramatic declines in species, that some have proposed naming the current epoch of time the Anthropocene.

Elizabeth Kolbert captured the staggering significance of global biodiversity loss in her Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Sixth Extinction*: "Right now in the amazing moment that to us counts as the present, we are deciding, without quite meaning to, which evolutionary pathways will remain open and which will forever be closed. No other creature has ever managed this, and it will, unfortunately, be our enduring legacy." (From *Conserving Biodiversity: Challenges for Florida in the Anthropocene*, FGCU, March 7-9.)

Biophilia (cont.)

The late professor and social ecologist Stephen Kellert of Yale University wrote that biophilia "suggests that human identity and personal fulfillment somehow depend on our relationship to nature. The human need for nature is linked not just to the material exploitation of the environment, but also to the influence of the natural world on our emotional, cognitive, aesthetic, and even spiritual development."

Biophilia: it's why we fight the good fight.



Calusa Group
3450 Ortiz Ave
Ft Myers, FL 33905

Spring 2017

Calusa Group

Executive Committee

Chair: Ruth Scott

Vice Chair: John Scott

Conservation: Ruth Scott

Treasurer: John Scott

Secretary: Connie Langmann

Publicity/Events/Programs: CHAIR
NEEDED

Webmaster: John Scott

Outings: Bonnie Clancy

Newsletter: Joseph Bonasia

Membership: CHAIR NEEDED

Energy: Rhonda Roff

To contact regional staff of the Sierra
Club at **SIERRA FLORIDA OFFICE:**
(727) 824-8813

Climate March
April 29th
Centennial Park
Fort Myers
2:00 PM-5:00 PM

Outings Leaders Needed: If you enjoy hiking, biking, camping or paddling
and would like to learn more about leading a Sierra Club outing, please contact
Bonnie Clancy, our outings chair, through our website.

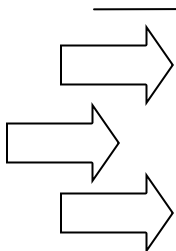
The Florida Chapter of Sierra Club now has a Chapter Outings database!
To locate outings visit http://florida.sierraclub.org/outings_browse.asp

NEXT GENERAL MEETING
May 10, 2017

TIME: 6:00 pm

WHERE: Iona House at Calusa
Nature Center - 3450 Ortiz Ave.
Fort Myers, FL 33905

All members invited to attend!



Web

<http://www.sierraclub.org/florida/calusa>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubCalusaGroup>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/SCCalusaGroup>

Meetup

<http://www.meetup.com/sccgevents/>

Leg. Updates

<https://lists.sierraclub.org/SCRIPTS/WA.EXE?A0=FL-FLORIDA-REPORT>