



SIERRA  
CLUB  
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# Calusa Group

Fall 2017

*Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet*

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

## From the Chairs



It's hard to believe it's been almost 3 years since we attended our first Sierra Club Calusa Group meeting. Recruited as volunteers to help re-organize the group, we really didn't know what to expect. We were warmly welcomed and the adventure began! Wearing many hats along the way, we served as Group Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Conservation Chair, Webmaster, Membership Chair and Newsletter Editor. It has been a rewarding, enriching experience with fond memories.

Fighting the good fight as part of the largest environmental organization in the world, we've grown and learned so much about many environmental issues. One of the main reasons we became volunteer leaders in Sierra Club was because the organization matched our environmental values and passion.

During re-organization of Sierra Club Calusa Group into a normally functioning group, there were many accomplishments. Membership in early 2015 was around 1,400. Now it's over 2,100. Member engagement has steadily increased. Calusa Group was the driving force in passing the fracking ban ordinance in the City of Cape Coral and has been involved in the passing of several other fracking ban ordinances in Southwest Florida. Calusa Group helped pass a number of seismic airgun blasting resolutions. Our outings program is active again. Calusa Group hosted and co-hosted numerous movie screenings and other events. We had a presence at many tabling events and festivals. Along the way we met the most wonderful people we've ever met and had a lot of fun. To those who helped and supported our efforts, THANK YOU!

In 2016, John decided to run for State House Rep (District 79) and proudly received Sierra Club Florida / Calusa Group endorsements. It was a people-powered campaign focused on environmental values. Unfortunately, Big Sugar and other dark money poured into the race and we lost. Running for office while staying involved with Calusa Group proved to be a monumental task, but we did it. The time has come for us to lighten our load and step down from the Ex-Com and officer positions to focus on other things.

The Sierra Club Calusa Group Executive Committee, similar to a board of directors, will have three vacant positions and it is election time. You'll notice the Ex-Com election ballot with names of members who are ready to serve, or to continue to serve, in the Ex-Com. Please fill out your ballot and send it back ASAP so we can finish vote counting before the end of the year.

Business meetings are open to all Sierra Club members and held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the Fort Myers Regional Library. If you care about the challenges we face, please get involved! Florida is a state rife with political corruption and environmental challenges, but we have to keep fighting to make a difference.

Yours in service,

John and Ruth Scott

Sierra Club Calusa Group

# Seismic Airgun Blasting: The Damage Before the Drilling

Last January, President Obama denied all pending permits to conduct seismic airgun blasting in the Atlantic Ocean. But now, as a first step towards drilling for more oil and gas, the Trump administration is ready to reissue some of those permits. 135,000 square miles of ocean could be affected.

Seismic airgun blasting is the exploratory means used to assess fuel reserves beneath the ocean floor. Ships drag powerful air guns emitting blasts of 250 decibels every 10 seconds, 24 hours a day, for days, weeks, and months at a time, over broad areas of the ocean. For perspective's sake, the blast of an air gun is 1 million times louder than the call of a blue whale, one of the loudest creatures in the sea. These deafening blasts of compressed air shoot through the water, travel miles into the seabed, and reflect back information about buried oil and gas deposits. The blasts also travel upwards of 2,500 miles through the ocean's water, approximately the distance from New York to California. Consequently, a whale in Florida could hear a blast emitted off the coast of South Carolina.

The U. S. Department of the Interior itself estimates that as many as 138,000 marine mammals such as whales and dolphins could be killed or injured. The environmental group Oceana says the impacts include "temporary and permanent hearing loss, abandonment of habitat, disruption of mating and feeding, and even beach strandings and death. For whales and dolphins, which rely on their hearing to find food, communicate, and reproduce, being able to hear is a life or death matter. Air gun blasts also kill fish eggs and larvae and scare away fish from important habitats. Following seismic surveys, catch rates of cod and haddock declined by 40 to 80 percent for thousands of miles." The National Marine Fisheries Service estimates that whales and dolphins will be harassed by these blasts 350,000 times over the course of a year. Additionally, a recent study published in the journal *Nature, Ecology,*

*and Evolution* found that two to three times as many zooplankton were found dead in samples taken after airgun operations than samples collected beforehand. The concern of scientists is that "healthy populations of fish, top predators, and marine mammals are not possible without viable planktonic productivity."

How profoundly irresponsible to inflict such harm on marine life in order to conduct surveys for oil and gas that if ever extracted will only further contribute to climate change and all the environmental, social, and economic consequences it will bring!

Lastly, according the Center for Biological Diversity, and much like it is doing regarding climate change, the Trump administration is looking "to amend the guidance document that assesses seismic damage to wildlife, part of its effort to undermine science."

125 East Coast municipalities and more than 1200 elected officials have publicly stated their opposition to seismic airgun blasting. They are joined by commercial and recreational fishing interests and an alliance of more than 41,000 businesses and fishing families.

Local opposition is strong as well. Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel, Cape Coral, and Bonita Springs, among other municipalities, have signed resolutions opposing the use of seismic air gun blasting. But the Trump administration isn't responding to the public's great and legitimate concern.

What can you do? Learn more by watching *Sonic Sea*, available on YouTube and which offers a captivating and thorough treatment of the issue. And call your representatives. Tell them air gun blasting and more drilling for oil and gas may be what President Trump wants, but it is not what you want.

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Sierra Club Calusa Group meets on the 2nd Wednesday of every month in Meeting Room CD of the Fort Myers Regional Library (downtown Fort Myers) 1651 Lee St. Fort Myers, FL 33901

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## *From the Ashes: The Past, Present, and Future of Coal*

It was a packed house of approximately 90 people on Friday evening, June 9<sup>th</sup> at the Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium in Fort Myers for a showing of *From the Ashes*, a National Geographic and Bloomberg Philanthropies film about coal in America: its role in our past, its human and environmental impact, and its inevitable demise.

From the beginning, the film took pains to put a human face on the issue. “We knew it was coming,” says the tearful wife of a coal miner about her husband’s loss of job due to a mine closing. “We just didn’t know how hard it was going to be. We’re losing everything.” Images of empty store fronts in dead coal towns said the same.

But the personal stories of children and adults made sick, and the fact that about 7,500 deaths per year can be attributed to coal, argued the other side of the story, as did images of polluted waterways and stripped-mined mountain tops.

Coal causes asthma, lung disease, cancer, and it is the greatest contributor to climate change as well as the biggest source of toxic water pollution. But it is not for these reasons alone that coal is already seeing its decline and inevitable demise. The Sierra Club has been effective in helping to close down over 250 coal plants in the name of healthy people and a healthy planet, but the market itself will spell the end of big coal.

Dale Ross, Mayor of Georgetown, Texas, proudly points out in the film that “We are one of the reddest cit-



ies, in the one of the reddest counties, in one of the reddest states, but we put this silly-ass politics aside to do what’s best for the people we were elected to serve.” They invested in wind and solar energies and within a year will be the largest city in America operating on 100% renewable energy. This was primarily an economic decision. Numbers don’t lie: over time, renewable energies are cheaper. Other numbers? Coal employs 160,000 jobs throughout the U.S. Clean energy industries are already employing 425,000 people. Coal’s inevitable end is readily apparent.

Since the showing of this film, the Trump Administration has done its best to revive an economically wounded coal industry by repealing the Clean Power Plan, President Obama’s most important effort to curtail greenhouse gas emissions and meet the goals of the Paris Climate Accord. Perhaps President Trump is maintaining the support of his political base, but most others aren’t buying it.

“A coal revival requires more than a Clean Power Plan repeal,” reports the Los Angeles Times. “It requires an outright bailout, an even less politically popular option, that the administration is also pushing. The Energy Department’s plan to force regional electricity grids to purchase large amounts of coal, unveiled days before the Clean Power Plan repeal was made public, is getting a hostile reception. Oil and gas companies are joining solar and wind advocates in working aggressively against it.”

“The entire energy economics and energy law community thinks it is a crazy proposal,” Michael Wara, professor of energy law at Stanford University,” said of the subsidy plan. “I have not met anyone who does not have serious problems with it.”

*From the Ashes* is available for viewing on Netflix and Amazon.Prime.

## Deep Water Injection Wells: Not the Answer to Water Woes

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) wants to dispose of hundreds of billions of gallons of untreated freshwater permanently by pumping it deep into the earth.

During periods of heavy rain, deep injection wells could be employed “relatively quickly to reduce the severity of the damaging discharges that caused emergency conditions in the estuaries,” said Jim Moran, vice chair of the SFWMD governing board. “The wells offer another option for reducing excess storm water during these high water events, when no amount of storage could completely prevent harmful releases to the estuaries.” The district believes 50 wells, at a cost of \$330 million, will reduce discharges to St. Lucie by 67% and to the Caloosahatchee by 77%.

This plan, however, not only puts the SFWMD at odds with many environmental groups, it puts them at odds with the US Army Corps of Engineers which recognized the risk of limited hydrogeologic data. Instead, the Corps recommended a comprehensive study to evaluate potential system-wide impacts to the Everglades ecosystem.

Deep injection wells are used in many areas of Florida and involve digging down about 3,000 feet into what is often called the boulder zone — an area of rock, silt and brackish water that does not ordinarily mix with the drinking water in our aquifers. But this layer could be prone to vertical cracks that might allow untreated surface water to migrate back up into drinking water sources.

In times of drought, the SFWMD has said it was “operating the system to save as much water as possible.” If we are constantly prone to droughts, and perhaps will be even more so due to climate change, there seems little wisdom in sending water where it will take centuries to reach the sea and surface again. It will not be available in our lifetime, or even in our children’s lifetime, to recharge our aquifers, our rivers, and our wetlands.

## Sabal Pipeline: Sierra Club Scores a Legal Victory

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, after much opposition from environmental and community groups, after the arrests of 28 protesters, and while a Sierra Club law suit was still pending, fracked gas began flowing through 482 miles of the Sabal Trail Pipeline. It flowed from Central Alabama to Osceola County here in Florida, on its way to Florida Power and Light which generates 70% of its energy from natural gas.

But on August 22, the Sierra Club won a huge victory when a Washington, D.C. appellate court panel said the federal agency that reviewed the project had made a significant mistake. Regarding the narrow 2-1 decision, U.S. Circuit Judge Thomas B. Griffith wrote that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) did not take into consideration the impact of the pipeline’s added greenhouse gas emissions, and, as argued by the Sierra Club, it should have.



What this means for the future of the pipeline is unclear. Gas is still flowing and normal operations will continue. Another environmental impact study will most likely be conducted, although there may as well be an appeal filed. Nevertheless, many see this ruling as a major victory.

Sierra Club organizer, Merrille Malwitz-Jipson, said “the ruling sets a precedent for the protection of the environment” and “Just because [the pipeline] is on, we know it’s not over until we pull that thing out of the ground.”

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## Consumption: The Inescapable Reality

Conservation is every environmentalist's creed. Consumption, of course, is the opposite of conservation, and it is the current rate of consumption (in conjunction with population growth) that is imperiling the planet. Since 1960, consumption per person has almost tripled with Americans leading the way. We consume without connecting the dots between what we buy and the welfare of the planet.

The cotton for the extra pair of jeans you just bought consumed over 2,860 gallons of water to grow and process into denim and will use another 1,500 gallons in laundering. The farming, production, and transportation involved also consumed fossil fuels, emitting 72 pounds of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. That's for *one* pair of jeans.

Every 16-ounce disposable plastic water bottle requires 32 ounces of water and 4 ounces of oil to make and transport. Yes: twice the amount of water to put into your hand the amount you drink, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  as much in oil. Americans buy enough water bottles to circle the earth  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times *every week*.

A  $\frac{1}{4}$  pound hamburger—as quintessentially American as jeans—consumes 660 gallons of water to produce, the equivalent of 2 months of daily showering, and has a carbon footprint of 6.5 pounds of greenhouse gasses. The average American, told to eat lower on the food chain, still eats 3 burgers a week: that's 102,960 gallons of water and 1,014 pounds of greenhouse gasses per person per year just in burgers. Nationally, we eat 50 *billion* burgers annually.

A trans-Atlantic flight contributes a whopping 1.8 tons of carbon into the atmosphere!

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*Every purchase one makes is an ecological act, not simply an economic one.*

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The inescapable fact is that everything one buys comes at a cost of consumed resources and environmental impact, and we buy a lot more than our need demands. We buy houses that on average are twice the size of houses Americans purchased in the 50's, even though our families are now half what they were back then. That's more lumber, more metal, more concrete, and more resources in general consumed for everything in these houses, and, of course, more energy for heating and cooling and for electrifying all our myriad appliances.

Overall, the average American generates a carbon footprint of 19 tons, the average European only 10. Our water footprint per person is more than twice the global average, and although we comprise only 5% of the world's population, we produce *half* of the world's solid waste! Considering all we consume and discard, it is no wonder National Geographic says that the U.S. ranks dead last of 17 industrialized countries surveyed in regard to sustainable behavior.

We consume so much because we are products of a culture that leads us to attempt to find meaning, contentment, and acceptance through what we consume even though this has little to do with the fundamentals of human well-being, which religion, science, and we ourselves all know are to be found in close relationships, meaningful work, economic security, and health.

Yes, the government and the corporate world have to do their very significant parts, but conservation starts at home. Every purchase one makes is an ecological act, not simply an economic one. *(See page 6 for what faith-traditions say about consumption and climate change.)*  
*(adapted from an article in the News-Press)*



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## Florida Panther News



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that it will review whether Florida panthers are still an endangered species. The review, which is required every 5 years under the Endangered Species Act, comes amid growing calls from

hunters and ranchers to take the big cats off the endangered species list in response to population growth. Though the population has increased from perilously low numbers due to the protections provided by the Endangered Species Act, its numbers and distribution are still far too limited to secure the Florida panther from extinction.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has increased its estimate of the Florida panther population to as many as 230 adults, most of them in Southwest Florida.

Sierra Club Florida and other state wildlife protection organizations have long worked to protect the Florida panther's population through land conservation and its listing as an endangered species. "If Donald Trump's US Fish and Wildlife Service removes endangered species status for the panther, it would open the door to the intentional slaughter of Florida's big cats. We won't let this happen!" said Sierra Club Florida Director Frank Jackalone.

The current federal recovery plan for Florida panthers requires at least two breeding populations of 240 panthers each before the panther can be listed as threatened instead of endangered; three such populations are required before the panther can be taken off the list altogether. In March, FWC downgraded the status of the manatee from endangered to threatened.

Despite its seeming "comeback," the relatively small population of panthers continues to be decimated by cars. In 2015, a record 30 panthers were hit by cars and killed. In 2016, 32 were killed by cars, and the total number of panther deaths combined was 42 (road kills and other causes).

(reprinted from *Sierra Club Florida News*)

## Faith-Traditions on Climate Change

The worlds' faith-traditions address consumption and climate change in no uncertain terms.

"The mere amassing of things and pleasures is not enough to give meaning and joy to the human heart," writes Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, his encyclical on the environment. Driven as it is by our dissatisfactions, "the pace of consumption, waste, and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes." Consequently, we need to learn and live "an ancient lesson ...that 'less is more'."

In "The Time to Act is Now, A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change," the writers state that "Global warming is intimately related to the gargantuan quantities of energy that our industries devour to provide the levels of consumption that many of us have learned to expect. From a Buddhist perspective, a sane and sustainable economy would be governed by the principle of sufficiency: the key to happiness is contentment rather than an ever-increasing abundance of goods." The first person to sign the declaration was the Dalai Lama.

The Canadian Interfaith Committee writes that "excessive self-interest, destructive competition, and greed have given rise to unsustainable patterns of production and consumption...Our faith traditions and sacred texts call upon us all...to transform cultures of consumerism and waste into cultures of sustainability."

In "Hindu Declaration on Climate Change," Hindu spiritual leaders noted that "If alive today, he [Mahatma Gandhi] would call upon Hindus to set the example to change our lifestyle, to simplify our needs and restrain our desires."

Additionally, Muslim, Jewish, Eastern Orthodox and other traditions have made similar statements constituting a global consensus: we must consume less for our own good and for that of the earth. Among other things, it will be much easier for wind and solar to meet future energy demands—and curtail climate change—if those demands aren't higher than they need to be.

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## Executive Committee Nominees

**Bonnie Clancy**, from Fort Myers, member since: 2014 is a Retired Occupational Therapist. She is currently a Master Gardener, has completed 2 modules of the Florida Master Naturalist Program, as well as Sierra Club Outings training (OLT-101) and in the process of being trained as a docent for ECHO. She conducts tours for the Lee County 20/20 Preserve Program and is a member of the Overall Extension Advisory Board to the Lee County Commission. Bonnie has a lifetime interest in the environment, nature and sustainability and is Outings Chair of Calusa Group.

**Rhonda Roff** is an environmental chemist who has worked in private industry, nonprofit organizations, and government. She moved to Florida in 1996 to work on water related issues for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Since 2006 she has focused on safe and sustainable energy policy advocacy from her solar powered home in Hendry County where she lives with her husband and two children. She is certified as a Florida master naturalist and climate reality presenter. Rhonda is currently Calusa Group Energy Chair

**Solemi Hernandez** came from Venezuela in 2002 looking for a better quality of life for her family. She was a 2012 volunteer for the Obama campaign in Immokalee and became involved with the Sierra Club in 2013, speaking on behalf of renewable energy at a public hearing in Tallahassee. She has also been involved with the Stone Crab Alliance, SWFL Clean Water and Bullsugar Movements, has participated in STOP ROGG and Sabal Trail Pipeline actions and protests. Additionally, she has been involved with the Florida immigration and farm workers coalitions, has actively informed citizens about Amendments 1 and 4, and has been active in local elections to get the right people into office. Currently, she works with a contractor for FEMA that helps supervise storm clean-up, and is a solar energy advisor with CREW solar.

**Clifford Mitchem** is a professional energy advisor for solar power installations, and as a Sierra Club member since 2017 has been integrally involved with energy issues. In his time before and since becoming a club member he has lead protests and a rally against the crippling solar amendment, conducted lobbying efforts against fracking in the Florida, and has spoken at local government forums against fracking and water pollution. His commitment has been and continues to be educating the public on the expansion of solar power and helping Florida truly become the Sunshine State.

**EX COM Ballot: Your member # is on your mailing label. Please clip and mail by December 14, to Sierra Club Calusa Group 6150 Bowling Rd, N Ft Myers, FL 33917**



| Please check 4 boxes to select candidates | Member #1 | Member #2 |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Bonnie Clancy                             |           |           |
| Rhonda Roff                               |           |           |
| Solemi Hernandez                          |           |           |
| Clifford Mitchem                          |           |           |



**Sierra Club Calusa Group**  
**6150 Bowling Road**  
**N. Fort Myers, 33917**

Fall 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

**NEXT GENERAL MEETING**

**Dec. 13, 2017**

**TIME:** 6:00 pm

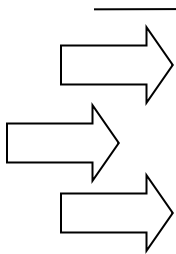
**WHERE:** Meeting Room CD,  
Fort Myers Regional Library,  
1651 Lee St. Fort Myers, FL 33901

**All members invited to attend!**

**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](http://florida.sierraclub.org/outings_browse.asp)



Web

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

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<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>