



# The Pelican Sierra Club Florida

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SIERRA CLUB

Fall 2015

[florida.sierraclub.org](http://florida.sierraclub.org)

Get all the latest news on our blog:

[sierraclubfloridanews.org](http://sierraclubfloridanews.org)



Find us on Facebook

[facebook.com/sierraclubfl](https://facebook.com/sierraclubfl)



# SIERRA CLUB

## Bear Hunt Rallies Sierrans

Opposition to the first black bear hunt in 21 years sparks protests across the state.

Despite a highly organized legal battle, statewide protests, and condemnation by editorial boards and community leaders, the first sanctioned Florida Black Bear hunt in 21 years ended after two days with the deaths of 298 reported bears. The number of unreported killings is unknown.

After months of hearings and debate, the one-week hunt was approved by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in an attempt to cull what the FWC considered an overpopulation of the black bear in certain areas of the state. A legal filing by Speak Up Wekiva which was supported by Sierra Club Florida aimed to stop the hunt but failed.

The Florida black bear was removed from the threatened species list in 2012. An increase in reports of “nuisance” bears and an unscientific guesstimate of current population (around



In St. Petersburg, TV crews covered a rally that included Sierrans outside the offices of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

*The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated.*

— Mahatma Gandhi

3,000) led the FWC to call for a hunt. The state sold 3,778 bear hunting permits, more than one hunter per bear in the state.

Sierra activism began earlier this year when the FWC held public workshops in Tallahassee, Sarasota and Fort Lauderdale. Members and supporters packed the

hearings to voice stern opposition to the scientific need for a hunt, instead urging the commission to address the human behaviors (waste management) that are leading bears to trash cans and backyards.

Days prior to the hunt, Sierra Club groups unified with other supporters in a dozen rallies across the state to protest the hunt. Members joined forces in Jacksonville, West Palm Beach, Sarasota, Gainesville, Orlando, Miami, Tampa and St.

Continued on Page 8



In September, Bud Long and I represented the Florida Chapter at the Council of Club Leader's (CCL) annual meeting in San Francisco. Bud is on the Florida Executive Committee and serves a very important role as our Political Committee Compliance Chair.

This meeting is packed with information and is also an avenue for chapter leaders to meet with national Sierra Club staff to share, network, and discuss issues.

We had a wonderful opening welcome from Aaron Mair, our Sierra Club President, as he spoke on the State of the Club. Michael Brune, Sierra Club Director, spoke to us about the great work that is going on at the National level, including his work in the Arctic this summer

Many other national staffers spoke to us about things like conservation issues, fundraising and digital strategies. By the way, Ad-dup.org is a great success so far, I encourage you to check it out. It is an interactive website that offers a look at various environmental and social justice campaigns and allows you to take action, find supporters or add your own campaign.

The final night was the Award Banquet at the lovely Marine Memorial Hotel in San Francisco. From the Florida Chapter, we were so proud of Kay Gates of the Loxahatchee group for re-

ceiving the Environmental Alliance Award. (See Page 6) Congratulations Kay!

Bud and I were able to meet a lot of delegates from our neighboring states and learned that we share many issues - pipelines, fracking, dirty fuels and dirty power plants, solar initiatives, bad legislators, etc. I left the conference with renewed hope, feeling one step closer to the greener planet we want to pass along to future generations.

\*\*\*

As the year draws to a close and my term as Chapter Chair comes to an end, I want to give my heartfelt thanks to all Sierra leaders, staff, committee members, administrative support, and volunteers who have supported me for the last four years. You all inspire me with your dedication and knowledge of Florida's environmental issues. It has been a pleasure to serve with all of you. I have enjoyed the relationships that have been built and I look forward to continuing to serve the club and helping the chapter and club grow stronger.

A new chair will be elected soon. Now is the time to step up and serve on Chapter committees as they navigate through an early legislative session, a presidential election, and many pressing conservation issues. Join me in this team effort, together we can make a difference!

# Sierra Club and Allies Sue to Restore Amendment 1

Sierra Club, the Florida Wildlife Federation, St. Johns Riverkeeper and the Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida represented by Earthjustice filed suit August 29 asking the courts to force the Florida Legislature to transfer \$237 million from the state's general revenue surplus to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. The amount is part of the \$740 million Amendment 1 funds the lawsuit claims was misused for purposes other than those intended.

Amendment 1, approved by nearly 75 percent of voters last November, requires the state to set aside a pot of money for land acquisition and conservation. Only about \$50 million was actually set aside for new land.

The groups contend funds were diverted by the

Legislature to accounts that had nothing to do with the original intent of the amendment— buying conservation and recreation lands, and for the restoration of such areas already owned by the state. Among other things, the funds were used to pay state executive salaries, for agricultural pollution subsidies and insurance premiums.

"We are asking for Florida's courts to uphold the constitution as amended by the voters," said Sierra Club Florida Conservation Chair Tom Larson. "The legislature needs to be held accountable for ignoring the will of the people."

The Florida Legislature fired back by asking the judge to dismiss the lawsuit. A hearing in the case is scheduled for December 3.

## The Pelican, Vol. 48 No.3

Marcia Biggs, Editor

The Pelican is published by Sierra Club Florida and mailed to Sierra Club Florida members. Annual membership dues include \$1 for the Pelican newsletter. Address all inquiries to Sierra Club Florida, 1990 Central Avenue, St. Petersburg, Florida 33712 or e-mail [marcia.biggs@florida.sierraclub.org](mailto:marcia.biggs@florida.sierraclub.org)

### Sierra Florida Executive Committee

Debbie Matthews, Miami Group  
Kent Bailey, Tampa Bay Group  
Bud Long, Turtle Coast Group  
Mark Walters, Miami Group  
Rocky Milburn, Tampa Bay Group  
Darryl Rutz, Broward Group  
Deborah Longman-Marien, Turtle Coast Group

[www.florida.sierraclub.org](http://www.florida.sierraclub.org)

# Drive Electric Events Bring Attention to EVs

Sierra Club is the leading environmental organization in Florida placing a priority on electric vehicles (EVs) as an important tool to fight smog and climate change.

During National Drive Electric Week September 12-19, Sierra groups around the state organized or participated in a number of public events aimed at promoting the advantages of electric vehicles.

At the Miami Drive Electric Celebration in Pinecrest, hundreds came to check out more than 35 electric cars. Test drives were offered with local auto dealers, and more than two dozen area residents brought their own vehicles to display. At a press conference, county commissioners along with mayors Cindy Lerner (Pinecrest) and Phillip Stoddard (South Miami) encouraged the public and local governments to switch to electric vehicles.

In St. Petersburg, dealers provided test drives while nearly two dozen exhibitors accompanied an EV rally which brought residents and car clubs out to show off their vehicles.

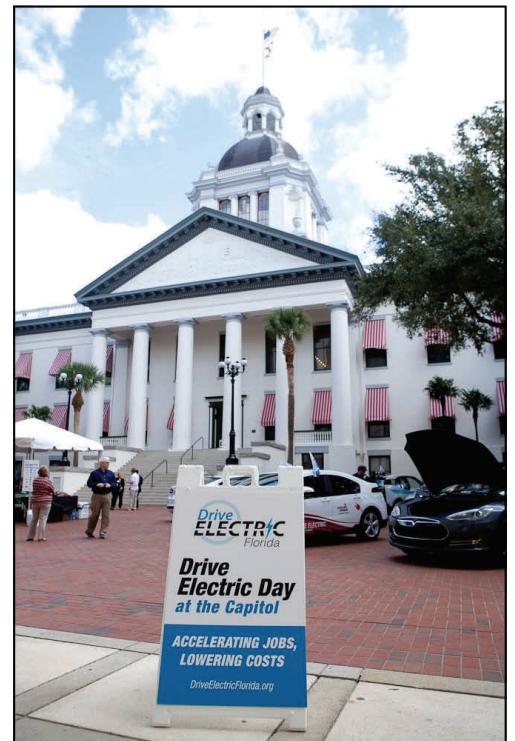
This fall, the Drive Electric Florida coalition will lobby the state legislature on key priorities: improving EV charging infrastructure, eliminating barriers to home charging at multi-unit dwellings (apartment, condos, etc.) and making EV ownership affordable for more Floridians with sales tax relief on purchases.



## National Drive Electric Week™



Above, Miami Group members Danny Garcia (seated) and Elizabeth Bonnell man the Sierra Club table in Pinecrest. Electric buses showed up at numerous events, including the State Capitol. Below, an EV Rally brought out residents who showed off their electric vehicles in downtown St. Petersburg.



# Nature Coast Acts to Fight Invasives

By Forrest Bennett

While the Sierra Club and others are actively working to protect our natural areas, there's another force at work that's degrading these habitats. Invasive species both plant and animal are a very real threat to Florida's environment.

Depending on the part of the state, melaleuca, Brazilian pepper, Australian pine, air potato, cogon grass, water hyacinth, kudzu, tropical soda apple, Burmese python, lion fish, Nile monitor lizard and many others have grown into a huge problem. Once these invasive species get a foothold, they can overwhelm an ecosystem in a relatively short period of time, often taking over native species.

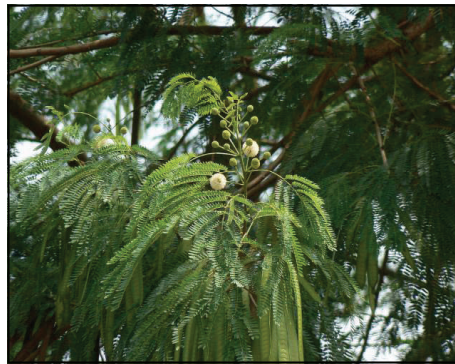
Over \$100 million a year is spent in the U.S. combating invasive plants in wetlands alone, and even more is spent repairing habitat destruction and economic impact on property values, farming, tourism and others.

The most effective long-term solution is to create local legislation that makes it mandatory to remove an invasive species from all lands, public and private. This is important because birds, animals, water and wind can transport the seeds far and wide, infesting other areas.

Sanibel Island was one of the pioneers in fighting invasive Brazilian pepper through legislation and a real success story. A drive from the unregulated and highly degraded wild areas in coastal Lee County across the bridge to Sanibel is a perfect study in contrasts.

Every county in the state has invasive species and the longer they are able to spread, the more difficult and expensive they are to remove. Sierra Club members can fight this menace by forming grassroots groups to educate and lobby their local officials as was recently done in Hernando County.

Here along the Nature Coast, Brazilian pepper was on the verge of be-



**The invasive lead tree has fern-like leaves and produces white globe-shaped clusters and long slender brown seed pods./ Photo by Dinesh Valke**

coming unstoppable before residents convinced the previous County Commission to pass the ordinance in 2001 requiring removal. This literally saved our increasingly rare coastal forests and wetlands. Another invasive, the lead tree, was not previously a problem but has reached epidemic proportions in the Hernando Beach area over the last dozen years.

Sierra Club member Forrest Bennett of Hernando Beach and other residents lobbied the County Commission to extend the Brazilian pepper ordinance to include mandatory lead tree eradication. He invited the Commissioners to join him at his home for an overview on the lead tree problem followed by a tour of the area's infestations. Commission Chair Nick Nicholson took the tour as did Commissioner Jim Adkins the following



**Hernando County Commissioners are taking serious action in the eradication of invasive species.**

week. Following the briefing, both pledged their support.

On June 23, the Hernando County Board of County Commissioners unanimously passed the historic Lead Tree Eradication Ordinance proposed by Commissioner Wayne Dukes. Thanks to them are in order for this visionary action. Passage of this ordinance and renewed enforcement of the existing Brazilian Pepper Eradication Ordinance may be this Commission's greatest environmental legacy.

The County has budgeted nearly \$300,000 to begin eradication efforts on county roads, parks and other property. They will follow with an educational outreach to residents and provide assistance in the initial eradication of lead tree and Brazilian pepper on private lands.

If we could get this passed here, Sierrans in other counties could certainly do the same to fight invasive species in their natural areas. Eradication of these aggressive weeds will take money, time and effort by the County and the public. But this will pay huge dividends in the form of habitat protection, property values, community pride, and other economic benefits. This is a historic event for Hernando County and an effort worth pursuing by Sierrans in other areas of the state.

*Forrest Bennett is founder and president of Nature Coast Action Team, Inc.*

Editor's Note: In August, the Hernando BOCC voted 5:0 in favor of reinstating the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Committee.

\*\*\*\*\*

A new conservation group serving Hernando County has been formed — the Sierra Adventure Coast Conservation Committee with Diane Oriza as Chair. If you live in Hernando County and would like to get involved to protect the local environment, please email [info@suncoastsierra.org](mailto:info@suncoastsierra.org)

# Proposed Everglades Bike Trail a Bad Idea

By John Scott  
Chair, Sierra Club Calusa Group

The River Of Grass Greenway (ROGG) sounds eco-friendly but the proposed hard surface bike path is anything BUT green. Supporters of this project have waged an all-out campaign to “greenwash” the reality of it and mislead the public.

After exhaustive evaluation of the feasibility study and master plan, it’s clear this project has many problems on many levels. I fail to understand how anything that would destroy wetlands, disrupt watersheds, disturb view sheds, fragment critical wildlife habitat, encroach on indigenous lands, desecrate burial grounds, disturb historic battlefields, undermine Everglades restoration and result in commercial development of the Big Cypress National Preserve and Greater Everglades could ever get this far.

Supporters claim it’s still merely an idea and that we’re drawing conclusions or distorting facts if we oppose it. Over a million taxpayer dollars have been



spent to produce a glossy, professionally bound 11x17 full color version of this “idea,” which offers little benefit to anyone but a small group of cyclists and whoever would build and operate it. It seems there’s a lot of money to be made destroying the Everglades.

Over 800 miles of paved and unpaved paths already exist in the Everglades, most notably Shark Valley and Loop Road. The public can already get unobtrusively up close and personal with the Everglades’ nature and has been able

## COMMENTARY

to do so for quite some time. The notion that access doesn’t already exist is blatantly false.

Tribal sovereignty and sacred lands, including burial grounds and historic battlefields, would be violated if this project is built. There has been a lack of consideration for tribal issues throughout the process. The Miccosukee tribe has released their public comments in strong opposition to this project (<http://bit.ly/miccosukeerpc>)

It’s outrageous that taxpayers would be forced to pay \$211 million to construct this unnecessary project and an astounding \$3.62 million annually for operating and maintenance costs, three million of which is for shuttles and transit. How is that sustainable? Construction and operation of the ROGG will certainly produce large amounts of carbon emissions. The most sustainable solution would be not to build it.

Moving clean, fresh water south into

**Continued on Page 6**

## Big Sugar Summit a Success

More than 250 concerned citizens from across the state packed the West Palm Beach Embassy Suites ballroom for Sierra Club’s Big Sugar Summit on June 20. The sold-out event, organized by Sierra organizer Cris Costello, featured 14 speakers on diverse topics from the future of everglades restoration to fighting the proposed Sugar Hill City development, the case against pre-harvest burning of sugarcane fields, and the money and politics of Big Sugar.



**Chairman Colley Billie**

about his deep conviction that water quality in the Everglades must be the top priority, and that we must work together to achieve a high standard of water quality. Last, but certainly not least, was the open microphone at the end of the program



**Attendees came from across the state to learn about the impacts Big Sugar.**

where attendees had the opportunity to share ideas, pose questions, and propose next steps.

Postings of various talks, videos and presentations can be found at [www.sierraclub.org/florida/big-sugar-summit](http://www.sierraclub.org/florida/big-sugar-summit) follow.

# Sierra Club Briefs

The results are in for three open seats on the 2016 Florida Executive Committee:

**Kent Bailey** (Tampa Bay) and **Bud Long** (Turtle Coast) have been re-elected to second terms. **Kristine Cunningham**, who comes to Florida from the Nevada Chapter, will fill the third seat. Joining them on the executive committee will be **Mark Walters** (Miami), **Rocky Milburn** (Tampa Bay), **Darryl Rutz** (Broward) and **Deborah Longman-Marien** (Turtle Coast).

\*\*\*

The “good” solar amendment – **Floridians for Solar Choice** – has received initial Florida Supreme Court approval for ballot language. The petition needs more than 480,000 signatures by December 20 to get on the ballot for November 2016. The amendment would expand solar choice by removing barriers that limit solar ownership models. A rival amendment initiative which is backed by large utility companies has not received ballot language approval. Sierra Florida officially supports the Floridians for Solar Choice amendment; to find copies of the petition and help collect signatures, go to [www.flsolarchoice.org](http://www.flsolarchoice.org)

\*\*\*

Florida Sierra Conservation Chair **Tom Larson** was one of numerous Sierra members selected to attend the Climate Reality Leadership Corp training September 28-30 in Miami. Founded by former vice-president Al Gore, the **Cli-**



Kay Gates’ work in strengthening the Loxahatchee Group’s ties with other environmental organizations has earned her the Sierra Club’s 2015 Environmental Alliance Award. The award honors members who have helped further environmental goals through collaboration with other, non-Sierra Club constituencies. Sierra Club President Aaron Mair (right) and Executive Director Michael Brune presented the award to Kay in ceremonies Sept. 13 in San Francisco.

**mate Reality Project** brought together 1,200 people from 87 countries to listen to experts on the science behind the climate crisis and to set goals to find solutions and engage audiences. To learn more about Larson’s experience, check out his post at [sierraclubfloridanews.org](http://sierraclubfloridanews.org)

\*\*\*

**Jon Ullman**, Florida Sierra Issue Chair, is the curator of the exhibit “Trailblazers: The Perilous Story of the Tamiami Trail” running through May 22 at the Coral Cables Museum. Ullman compiled a multimedia interactive exhibit detailing the Tamiami Trail’s history, culture, and its devastating impact on the Everglades. The exhibit features images, artifacts, historic documents and film clips. Jon Ullman has worked on campaigns to

restore the Everglades for the Sierra Club for 17 years. Congratulations, Jon!

\*\*\*

Despite a recommended order by the administrative law judge for denial of a permit to destroy mangroves in coastal wetlands on Anna Maria Sound to build four luxury homes, the SWFWMD Governing Board approved a final order to issue the permit. The **Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Group**, with other environmental groups, filed an appeal to stop, yet excavation on the site began without the Army Corps permit. A new suit challenging the city of Bradenton’s development permit for the Harbor Sound development has been filed by Suncoast Waterkeepers.

## Bike Trail

Continued from Page 5

the Everglades in large quantities (which isn’t currently happening) helps stave off the effects of sea level rise and saltwater intrusion. Building a hard surface bike path (a road) near Tamiami Trail creates yet

one more barrier, undermining current restoration efforts.

The 76 mile path would have a footprint of over 140 acres, at least 100 of which would be undisturbed and sensitive habitat that would be destroyed as it’s paved over. New bridges would have to be built as existing road bridges cannot be used, destroying

more pristine habitat, both aquatic and land based. The Big Cypress National Preserve and the Everglades are World Heritage Sites and designated Outstanding Florida Waters. If you love the Everglades, you should oppose this project. You can sign a Change.org petition (Stop ROGG) at

(<http://bit.ly/roggpetition>)

The Sierra Club supports bike paths but not this one. It’s a destructive attack on the Everglades ecosystem, tribal residents and precious wildlife. We must restore the Everglades, not bring them further harm. We do not need to build the River Of Grass Greenway.

# Tricounty Group a United Front for Regional Issues

Having tried to organize a subgroup, the Marion County Task Force, several years ago, Whitey Markle, Conservation Chair for the Suwannee/St. Johns (SSJ) Group, with Jon Brainard, the Environmental Education Chair, and Gary Green, Publicity Chair, began to organize a Tricounty Working Group in Citrus, Levy, and Marion Counties in February of this year. Their efforts, with the help of several other members, have really paid off.

Several years back, the Nature Coast Group was dissolved and divided among three groups. Citrus County, being contiguous with Marion and Levy, was annexed into the SSJ group, making the Suwannee/St. John Group the largest group geographically in Florida. Needless to say, service to the members in the outlying counties is cumbersome and Citrus County is a hotbed of population growth and environmental issues.

With the help of social media, the Tricounty Working Group was able to solicit great attendance at the very first meeting. Some of the leaders of the



**Members of the Tricounty Working Group**

Citrus and Levy County area came, as well as several from Marion and Levy. In subsequent meetings, the Working Group has evolved into a body of friends and activists who are literally churning out results. A critical parcel of Florida Forever land was saved by the Working Group (with the help of the local Audubon chapter) in Marion County this year and in the past several months the Working Group, under the guidance of Gary Green and Kathryn Taubert, have nearly completed the first of several motivational presentations for the public called “Water Works: Stand Up and Act Now.”

Although still in its formative stage, this presentation will be a very effective tool for environmental education in the Tricounty area. As the project has developed, the interest and participation in the development process has multiplied. The Working Group is up to around 30 activists and growing.

In addition to presentations, the Working Group is in the process of designing supplemental literature in the form of pamphlets, brochures, and information cards that will accompany them. Future presentations will likely be: Energy, Growth Management, Activism, and Conservation Economics.

*Whitey Markle*

---

## Members Urged to Stay Diligent on Fracking Legislation

As this issue of the Pelican goes to print, an action alert was posted by Florida Sierra’s legislative lobbyist Dave Cullen. A vote on HB 191—Regulation of Oil and Gas by Rep. Ray Rodrigues was to be heard in committee on November 3. The bad bill would allow permitting of fracking, completely preempting local governments’ ability to protect their communities. HB 191 lets well operators claim the chemicals they use are “trade secrets” which means residents, first responders, and medical personnel cannot find out what they are dealing with.

Fracking imposes unnecessary and

unacceptable risks on the residents of Florida. Oil and gas service companies use hydraulic fracturing products containing 29 chemicals that are (1) known or possible human carcinogens, (2) regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act for their risks to human health, or (3) listed as hazardous air pollutants under the Clean Air Act. The tremendous use of water that is forever lost due to contamination, the risk of contaminating our aquifers, and the continuing contribution of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere posed by fracking and burning natural gas is unconscionable when energy efficiency and renewable energy

offer a clean and safe alternative.

There are currently six fracking bills filed for 2016. Two of them aim to ban fracking by statute (SB 0166 and HB 0019). There are also two good Joint Resolutions to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot to ban fracking in the state (SJR 0358 and HJR 0453). But two pro-fracking bad bills need to be defeated (HB 191 and SB 0318).

Can you help in the fight to ban this disastrous practice in Florida? Join the Sierra Florida legislative listserv to get regular updates from Dave Cullen by sending your email to [cullenasea@aol.com](mailto:cullenasea@aol.com)

Sierra Club Florida  
The Pelican  
1990 Central Avenue  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33712

### Moving?

Send current mailing label and new address to:

Sierra Club  
PO Box 421041  
Palm Coast FL 32142-6417  
Allow 4-6 weeks for processing or send  
changes to [address.changes@sierraclub.org](mailto:address.changes@sierraclub.org)  
and include your membership number.



NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
TALLAHASSEE FL  
Modern Mailers Permit 236

## Bear Hunt Sparks Outrage

### Continued from Page 1

Petersburg, among other cities.

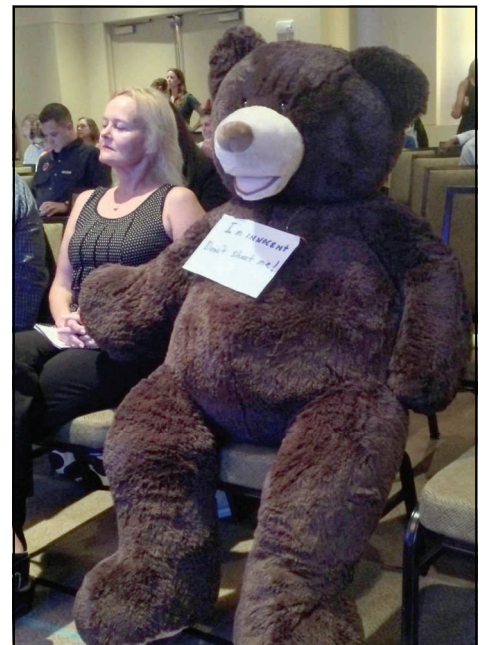
The FWC says it plans to hold the hunt annually.

Frank Jackalone, Staff Director of Florida Sierra Club, expressed outrage in several media stories on behalf of the club and millions of bear hunt opponents. “We are doubling our efforts to get this bear hunt canceled permanently,” he told the Tampa Tribune. “We will go to the courts. We will go back to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. We will go back to the governor and we will go to the people of Florida.”

In a guest column in the Tampa Bay Times, conservation photojournalist Carlton Ward Jr., a leader in the Florida Wildlife Corridor Project, expressed concern for the long-term survival of the Florida black bear if unrelenting development continues. He calls for the immediate use of \$500 million in Amendment 1 funds to go toward land conservation, targeting wildlife corridors for bear subpopulations and easements for working farms and ranches.

“I hope that the bears that died ... will capture our attention and send us down a path to connect a statewide network of conservation lands for the future of their species and ours,” he said in his commentary.

A petition to FWC Executive Director Nick Wiley to Stop Killing the Black Bear can be found at [www.change.org/p/nick-wiley-executive-director-fwc-stop-killing-black-bears](http://www.change.org/p/nick-wiley-executive-director-fwc-stop-killing-black-bears)



**The Florida black bear made a silent statement while appearing at a public hearing held by FWC prior to voting on the hunt.**