

The Pelican

The Official Newsletter of Sierra Club Florida



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From the Director

by Brooke Alexander, Acting Chapter Director, Sierra Club Florida

Hello, Sierra Club Florida! I am delighted to be serving as Acting Director during this time of growth and change, both for our Chapter and Sierra Club as a whole. As you may know, our former Chapter Director, Emily Gorman, was promoted to the position of Regional Field Director for the South region, and Gonzalo Valdez, previously Organizing Representative for the Beyond Coal campaign, was elevated to the role of Deputy Regional Field Director. We congratulate Emily and Gonzalo on these well-deserved advancements, and are looking forward to welcoming our new Chapter Director later this year to help lead us into 2024!

We are in a moment where we must come together to create a better future for all Floridians - and this is reflected in everything we do at Sierra Club Florida. In a few weeks, we'll be holding our last quarterly leadership meeting of the year on December 2 in West Palm Beach. A huge shout out to our Operations & Legislative Coordinator, Javier Estevez, for ensuring we're able to spend time together each quarter to discuss our successes and plan for our future.

Throughout 2023, our team has never wavered in its dedication and commitment to Florida's environment, with our organizers and managers on the ground continuing to campaign tirelessly for change in our state's most vulnerable and impacted communities. On the legislative side, our political team is gearing up for the upcoming legislative session and electoral cycle, and building crucial relationships with policy makers that are aligned with our goals.

Of course, none of our work would be possible without you, our amazing members, as well as our dedicated volunteers around the state who are the driving force of our success. With your support, we will continue to rise to the challenges at hand, and power Florida's environmental movement to new heights in 2024 and beyond!

The Dirty Truth: Sierra Club Grades Florida's Utility Companies

by Susannah Randolph, Senior Field Organizer, Sierra Club

The Sierra Club's annual Dirty Truth Report analyzes the plans of 77 utilities owned by 50 parent companies and grades them based on three criteria: plans to retire polluting coal plants, whether they plan to build new gas power plants, and the scale of their investment in clean energy through 2030. On an interactive website, users can see their utility's score and what progress—if any—the utility has made toward transitioning to cleaner, more affordable energy.

Though clean energy is less expensive than 99 percent of existing coal and new gas generation, only 20 of the 77 utilities have plans to be entirely coal-free by 2030. Combined, these 77 utilities are planning to build 53 gigawatts of new gas plants through 2030, nearly 40 percent more than was planned last year.

In Florida, B grades went to Florida Power & Light (FPL) and Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC) for no new fossil fuels and increased investments in renewable energy. The rest of the graded utilities received F's: JEA, Duke Energy Florida, Tampa Electric Company (TECO), and Seminole Electric Cooperative.

Read the report and find your utility at coal.sierraclub.org/the-problem/dirty-truth-greenwashing-utilities.



"Let Them Thrive" Rally Rocks Miami!

by Steven Leidner, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club Miami Group

On November 4, Sierra Club's Miami Group, in collaboration with ReWild Miami, rallied outside Zoo Miami in opposition to development of the so-called "Miami Wilds", a proposed water park on environmentally sensitive land.

Close to 400 attendees converged at the Let Them Thrive rally to chant, wave signs, paint faces, produce art, and march to save the critically endangered species put at risk by the proposed development, including the Florida Bonneted Bat, the Miami Tiger Beetle, the Florida Leafwing Butterfly, and the Rim Rock Crowned Snake.

But the fight doesn't end there. On December 12, the Miami-Dade Commission is set to take a vote on the construction of the park. Join us as we call on them to put an end to the development threat, and help preserve the most biodiverse fragment of globally critically imperiled Pine Rocklands outside of Everglades National Park!

For more information and updates, go to www.rewild.miami.



Florida Environmental Leaders Honored at Sierra Awards 2023

By Leslie Pearsall, Communications Director, Sierra Club Florida

Four Florida environmental leaders were honored for their outstanding contributions to their communities at the 2023 Sierra Club Volunteer Awards. Every year, these prestigious awards recognize the dedicated volunteers, leaders, organizers, and community members who have driven our progress forward to protect and explore our environment and advance climate justice and equity. The Florida honorees were among more than 30 environmental champions from around the world recognized at this year's award ceremony, which was held on September 9 in Chicago:



Logan Cross

Northeast Florida Group
Jacksonville, FL



Nancy Stevens

Tampa Bay Group
Tampa, FL



Richard Grosso

Broward Group
Plantation, FL



Melissa P. Dunn

City Commissioner
Lauderhill, FL

Congratulations to Logan, Nancy, Richard, Commissioner Dunn, and all of this year's winners!



City of Tallahassee Goes Green

by Grant Gelhardt, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club Florida

On August 23, Tallahassee city commissioners unanimously voted to pass a clean energy plan to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2050, marking a momentous milestone in the city's journey to go green.

Since helping to pass the city's clean energy resolution in 2019, Sierra Club Florida and its Tally 100% Together Coalition partners have continued to work closely with city officials to provide guidance and recommendations on next steps. Outlining nearly 90 potential actions spanning renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, and transportation, the City of Tallahassee Clean Energy Plan (CEP) is the result of years of technical and operational analysis, community input, and industry tracking. It provides a comprehensive roadmap to guide the city's clean energy efforts over the next 5-7 years, with the goal of improving air quality, creating green jobs, and promoting healthier communities.

A special thanks to Michael Ohlsen, City of Tallahassee staff, our clean energy partners, and everyone in the community who have helped get us to this point. To read the full Tallahassee CEP, go to

www.talgov.com/page/cep.

Activists Confront the Dept. of Health With the Burning Truth

By Patrick Ferguson, Senior Organizing Representative,
Sierra Club Florida

A resonating distress signal was sent by the Stop the Burn Go Green campaign to the Palm Beach County (PBC) Department of Health (DOH) during rush hour on November 1 when a crowd of over 50 concerned Palm Beach Co. residents protested outside of DOH headquarters.



DOH has always completely ignored the life-threatening health impacts from pre-harvest sugarcane field burning. After receiving no response to a formal meeting request in September, campaign leaders and other local residents decided to take their questions and complaints directly to the agency headquarters.

"WHY DOES DOH CAUTION RESIDENTS ABOUT TOXIC ALGAE, BUT IS MUTE WHEN IT COMES TO THE DANGERS OF BURN SEASON?"

PASTOR STEVE MESSAM
BELLE GLADE, FL

"WE GOT WARNINGS ABOUT THE RECENT CANADIAN HAZE, BUT NEVER ABOUT THE WEEKS OF ASH AND SMOKE FROM SUGAR FIELD BURNING."

LUZ TORRES
PAHOKEE, FL

"PEOPLE ARE DYING, THE FIX IS EASY, AND THE DOH KNOWS IT."

JODY YOUNG
WELLINGTON, FL

"THIS ISN'T OVER—WE'LL BE BACK! WE WON'T JUST SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR DOH TO ACT."

CHRISTINE LOUIS-JEUNE
BELLE GLADE, FL



Victory for Seabirds at Skyway Fishing Pier

by Emily Roden and Grant Gelhardt,
Conservation Committee, Sierra Club Florida

Thanks to the collective efforts of Sierra Club Florida, the Center for Biological Diversity, and other environmental organizations, more protections have been secured for Tampa Bay's brown pelicans and other seabirds at the Skyway Fishing Pier. For far too long, these birds have faced a persistent threat of entanglement in fishing gear and other hazards on the pier, resulting in nearly 2,000 injuries annually. Despite the alarming numbers, the issue has gone unaddressed due to insufficient regulations.

Sierra Club Florida's Conservation Committee, in collaboration with its conservation partners, sent a letter to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) urging the adoption of meaningful standards to mitigate seabird entanglement and create a safer environment for our avian friends. At a subsequent FWC meeting, environmental advocates also passionately emphasized the necessity for substantial regulations, while some fishermen in attendance argued the opposite. In a close vote, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission ultimately chose to embrace stronger seabird protections, marking a monumental victory for Florida wildlife conservation.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our partners, volunteers, and everyone who contributed to this triumph. Together, we will continue fighting for a better, healthier future for Tampa Bay's diverse ecosystems!

Webinar



January 18, 2024
7:00 PM EST, Zoom

This webinar is sponsored by the Sierra Zero Waste Grass Roots Network. To register, [click here](#).

Waste-to-Energy: False Solutions for Waste Disposal

by Janet Stanko, Plastics Committee Chair, Sierra Club Florida

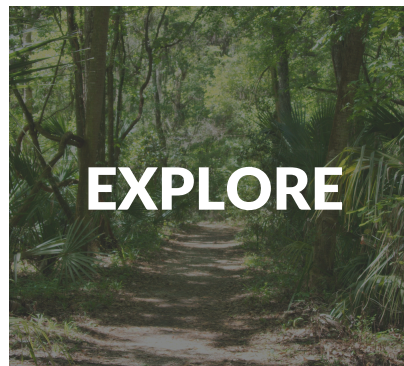
Are you curious about the real price tag behind "free" energy generated from municipal solid waste? As cities and counties grapple with the limitations of landfill space and the shortcomings of recycling, alternative waste disposal methods like waste-to-energy (WTE), or incineration, are gaining traction as potential solutions. However, beneath the promises of "free" energy lie toxic impacts, exorbitant expenses, and a potential undermining of more sustainable waste management practices.

Join us as we delve into the deceptions of WTE with an eye-opening webinar that explores these key questions:

- What are the drawbacks of relying on 'free' energy?
- Why is WTE the most expensive and toxic disposal method?
- What are the health impacts of WTE on low-income communities, especially those of color?
- What are the similarities of various false waste solutions?
- What is the Sierra Club's stance on these processes?
- How can adopting a zero-waste approach reduce our dependence on destructive disposal methods?

Get Involved!

Sierra Club Florida is working tirelessly to protect wildlife and wild places, ensure clean air and water for all, and fight for environmental justice here in Florida. Whether supporting our campaigns, participating in an outing, or volunteering with your local group, there are so many ways to get involved and support our mission!



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SIERRA CLUB

FLORIDA CHAPTER

415 1st Avenue N
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
sierraclub.org/florida
[@sierraclubfl](https://twitter.com/sierraclubfl)