

# The Pelican

Sierra Club

# Florida

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SIERRA CLUB

INSIDE: EVERGLADES COALITION CONFERENCE JAN. 2018



Fall 2017

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# SIERRA CLUB



## Hurricane Relief A Sierra Priority

In the wake of two devastating hurricanes that affected Florida and Puerto Rico, the Sierra Club is working with community partners to support immediate relief and long-term recovery efforts.

Through generous donations of members and supporters across the country, and a strategic hurricane task force of Sierra leaders from the national offices, to Florida Chapter and Puerto Rico, the Club was able to respond quickly to communities affected by both hurricanes, some still waiting for assistance by the Trump administration.

Despite no electricity, many Puerto Rican residents can see a little bit better. Sierra Club has shipped thousands of solar lanterns to partner organization Casa Pueblo in Puerto Rico to bring light to the hardest-hit communities on the island. This and other community-led efforts are

**More than 19,000 Donors  
Contributed \$1.3 Million+  
For Hurricane Maria Aid**

being funded by resources from the more than \$1.3 million contributed by over 19,000 Sierra Club members and supporters (as of mid-October). These contributions broke the online one-day fundraising record for the Sierra Club!

After Hurricane Irma swept through the US Virgin Islands on its way to the Keys and South Florida, national Sierra Club quickly jumped in with all hands on deck. Two weeks later Hurricane Maria destroyed much of Puerto Rico. From his office in St. Petersburg, Florida Chapter Director Frank Jackalone is chairing both the

*(Continued on page 7)*

# Everglades Conference Set for January 11-18

**WHAT:** 33rd Annual Everglades Coalition Conference

**WHEN:** January 11-18, 2018

**WHERE:** Marriott Beach Resort, Hutchinson Island, FL

**INFO:** [evergladescoalition.org/conference](http://evergladescoalition.org/conference)

The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of more than 60 local, state and national conservation and environmental organizations dedicated to full restoration of the



Greater Everglades Ecosystem, from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes into Lake Okeechobee, through the River of Grass, out to Florida Bay and the Keys.

The Coalition's 33rd Annual Conference seeks to raise critical, timely issues for in-depth debates

in an open, accessible forum. Sierra Club Florida will present expert speakers on Everglades issues, including staffers Cris Costello, Jon Ullman, Patrick Ferguson and Diana Umpierre. We will join community leaders and political figures who will discuss their positions, pledge their support and offer challenges to the community.



The conference is attended by decision-makers from federal, state, local and tribal governments, agency representatives, stakeholders and a vast array of public and private interests including scientists, educators, contractors, conservationists, the media, students and the general public. The conference is the largest annual forum to advance Everglades conservation and restoration.

Scholarships are available for students 18 and older. Conference speakers and agenda will be posted online soon. Go to [evergladescoalition.org/conference](http://evergladescoalition.org/conference) to learn more.

## Get Active with Florida Sierra Club

Are you one of the majority of Sierra Club members who cares passionately about the environment, conserving land and wildlife, fracking, phosphate mining, clean energy, growth and development or social injustice BUT have not stepped forward to help make a change? Don't feel guilty — it's time to do something!

Please check with your local group and ask how you can help to work on issues. No matter how much time you have or what your skills — from phone calls to rally-building — we need your help more than ever to fight bad bills and amendments that threaten our state.

To find your local Sierra Club group, go to [florida.sierraclub.org/groups](http://florida.sierraclub.org/groups) Click on the link to your group to find their web page and locate your group political chair or group chair. Look for e-mails from your group and check us out on social media.

Attend a local program or workshop, go on an outing, join us for a clean-up or planting, meet your Sierra Club leaders and neighbors, and join us as we work together to protect Florida's natural resources, its citizens and our future!

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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

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Protestors gather in opposition to a proposed phosphate mine that would cover over 10,700 acres of land and threaten water resources including the aquifer. /Photos by Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson

# Phosphate Mining Threatens Watershed

A proposed phosphate mine on more than 10,700 acres in Bradford and Union counties has rallied residents and environmentalists from across the state. The proposed mine straddles the New River, a tributary of the Santa Fe River. "This mine would irreversibly alter the Santa Fe River Basin, destroy wildlife habitat and threaten the health of people in the area," says Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson, Sierra Club organizer and a local resident.

In August in Bradford County, more than 130 North Florida residents descended on the rural county, coming from as far as Manatee, Polk and Hamilton counties to share their first-hand experiences with phosphate mining. More than 50 people spoke against the project, many telling personal testimonies including damage to the water supply, health impacts and habitat destruction in their communities.

Sierra Club Suwannee-St. Johns Group Chair Whitey Markle told the commissioners, "You're the first line of defense of your constituents' health and welfare."

On September 18, about 150 people crowded into Union County High School

**At 10,700 acres, a proposed phosphate mine would cause immeasurable damage to the Santa Fe River Watershed**

auditorium in Lake Butler to participate in a hearing regarding amendments to the county's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations. The Union County Board of County Commissioners had imposed a one-year moratorium over a year ago on mining. This workshop was called to revisit their Comp Plan and Land Development Regulations regarding mining.

Before making a final decision, the Union County BOCC voted to hold more workshops in the upcoming months to have more discussions on improving the regulations to protect its residents and water systems.

Facing dogged opposition, Bradford County Commissioners made the decision to hire an outside expert to review the effects the proposed phosphate mine would have on the groundwater, rivers and springs in the region.

Alachua County and five cities within

Bradford and Union counties have passed resolutions against the mine. In an interesting twist, the property owner has filed a lawsuit against Union County for denial of rights. Stay tuned!

Phosphate mining in Florida is a destructive process that can pollute land and water resources, alter watersheds and leave behind mountains of radioactive waste. It puts people, wildlife and our Floridan aquifer at risk. More than 300,000 acres of Florida have already been destroyed by phosphate mining. Polk County is ground zero for phosphate mining, with Mosaic Corp. one of the world's largest suppliers.

A coalition of groups including Suwannee-St Johns (SSJ) Sierra Club, Our Santa Fe River, Citizens Against Phosphate Mining in North Florida (CAPMNF), Florida Defenders of the Environment and hundreds of residents have united in opposition to the mine.

Residents of Union/Bradford counties should work with SSJ Sierra Club ([www.ssjsierra.org](http://www.ssjsierra.org)). Contact Chair Whitey Markle at [whmarkle@gmail.com](mailto:whmarkle@gmail.com) for more information.

# 2018 A Critical Year for Florida

## Sierra Club Florida Gearing Up for Legislative Session to Begin January 9

As a Sierra Club member or supporter we understand the importance of protecting our environment. With that in mind, the political reality we live in is as challenging as it has ever been. Environmental advancements and protections made over past decades are under attack. Scientific knowledge, which has supported improvements to society overall and the environment specifically, is suddenly of suspect value.

One is tempted to feel powerless, since it seems all the things we value are irrelevant to those in power. But that is not an effective response. The only way we can reverse this trend is to **increase our engagement**.

Does this seem daunting? In our society, the engagement of individuals around common causes is the only way meaningful protections and rights of a just and equitable society and a healthy environment have been enacted. The power of your presence can truly make a difference, from speaking at a workshop or council meeting to attending a rally, calling or e-mailing legislators or meeting with elected officials. Sierra Club has shown this to be true thanks to our thousands of members and supporters taking action over many decades, over many issues, over many states.

And, in 2018, the stakes are as high as they have ever been for Florida's environment! As we gear up for the coming legislative session, the time is critical for all of us to take some action – be it small or large – to stop the egregious attacks aimed at loosening regulations on our state's air and water pollution, to increase mining and fracking, and to drill off our coasts.

Interim Committee meetings are already underway in Tallahassee. Your help is needed as we prepare to face these issues in 2018:

- Ban Fracking in Florida - In the Florida Legislature State Sen. Dana Young and State Rep. Kathleen Peters announced that they are filing bills ([SB 462](#) and [HB 237](#)) that would ban fracking in Florida. Last year, a fracking ban bill advanced through its initial committee in the Senate, but never passed. Sierra Club will be actively advocating to pass this bill.
- Sen. Rodriguez filed a bill (SB 292) which would allow property owners who produce renewable energy on their property to distribute it to users on their property. This would allow, for example, owners of apartment complexes who produce solar power to sell their power to their tenants.
- So far, a total of four bills have been filed which would dedicate funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF) that were set aside by 2014's Water and Land Conservation Amendment.

### Get Informed

Contact your local Sierra Club group to learn how you can become active in your district. Go to [florida.sierraclub.org/groups](http://florida.sierraclub.org/groups) to find your group.

Florida Chapter lobbyist David Cullen maintains the Florida Report, a listserv with updates on bills of environmental concern and Action Alerts on upcoming votes.

To subscribe to the Florida Report:

1. Go to [lists.sierraclub.org](http://lists.sierraclub.org) and click on [CON-FL] to get to the right part of the alphabet
2. Scroll down and click on [FL-FLORIDA-REPORT](#). Click on Subscribe or Unsubscribe. Enter your name and e-mail and click on Subscribe (FL-FLORIDA-REPORT)
4. Check your email for a confirmation message and follow the instructions to complete the process.

- Sen. Rodriguez has filed SB348 which would allow local governments to ban use of disposable plastic bags during pilot programs.

Other bills already filed address black bear hunting, rural development and coastal issues. We must let our legislators know that they are representing the people of Florida, not the lobbyists and utilities and corporate donors!

Critical elections are coming up in 2018. It is imperative that we elect people who care about and support our environment. Senator Bill Nelson, one of the national leaders in environmental protection and following sound science, is up for re-election. We have watched Gov. Rick Scott dismantle the legacy of bi-partisan support protecting natural Florida by underfunding the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, turning the Water Management Districts and the Public Service Commission into industry-supporting agencies, and underfunding land and water conservation.

Sierra Club Florida has a Political Committee with hundreds of members actively working to ensure the political powers act in a way that is consistent with our core values. You know what is more powerful than hundreds of us engaged in this way? Thousands of us!! Your engagement in this area can help improve our chances of success locally, across Florida and even in Washington D.C.

# Moving Forward With Ready for 100

By Kris Cunningham

The Volusia/Flagler Sierra Club group has had an amazing few months of signing our mayors up for the Ready for 100 campaign. After sending out our introduction letter to all the mayors in our two counties, we followed up with appointments to give our presentation, which led to city council presentations. As of October 4, eight mayors have signed on and seven more appointments for mayoral and city council presentations are on our calendar!

Our goal in engaging our local leadership is to bring unity and focus to our counties to make the transition to 100% renewable energy. By getting as many mayors as possible to sign in our counties, we can build the transition as a team.

With almost 600,000 people in Volusia/Flagler counties, nearly one-third are over the age of 60, and our counties have low wages. By bringing the Ready for 100 campaign to our area, we can address the issues of electric costs that are disproportionate to income, poor energy efficiency in our homes and other buildings,



and social equity challenges.

This program can help all communities by generating local jobs, creating new businesses, and supporting the transition to energy efficient homes. In addition, instead of relying on dirty coal and gas power plants, we can bring our electric grid to the local level with clean power.

We thank our dedicated volunteers, who have been vital to our success, and also the National and Florida Ready for 100 teams for their support and guidance.

Support your local Ready for 100 team - they are making a difference!

## Mayors, Cities Are 'Ready'

Sierra Club's Ready for 100 Campaign is urging mayors and cities across the country to commit to a goal of 100% clean and renewable energy for all people. As of October 2017, 160 mayors across the United States, including **28 mayors in Florida** have signed on to the Mayors for 100 Percent Clean Energy campaign. We congratulate St. Petersburg, Orlando and Sarasota as cities which have passed resolutions with target dates to attain a goal of 100% renewable energy.

In addition, we have initiated clean energy conversations with 16 cities or municipalities in Broward County, five in Miami-Dade, three in Sarasota County, seven in Pinellas County, three in Palm Beach County, Alachua, Gainesville, Tampa, Kissimmee, Altamonte Springs and Brevard County.

If you would like to work on these initiatives or with your local elected officials on joining the clean energy revolution, contact Phil Compton at [phil.compton@sierraclub.org](mailto:phil.compton@sierraclub.org)

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## UPDATE: SABAL TRAIL PIPELINE

In late September, the Sierra Club filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) a challenge to a request for fast-track authorization to extend the fracked gas Sabal Trail Pipeline, in what is called the Okeechobee lateral project. The Sierra Club contends that the D.C. Circuit's previous decision in the Sabal Trail case effectively bars the use of FERC's fast-tracking procedures. The project would supply a massive new gas-burning power plant that Florida Power & Light Company wants to put into service in 2019.

Also in late September, the FERC presented a draft supplemental environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Sabal Trail Pipeline and two related pipeline expansions, addressing an Aug. 22 appeals court opinion that vacated and remanded its certificate for the projects. FERC still could challenge the ruling, and the 515-mile pipeline from Alabama to Central Florida is open and continuing to flow. The Aug. 22 ruling, issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, found that FERC had failed to adequately analyze downstream greenhouse gas emissions that would result from the pipeline project.

## UPDATE: OPPOSITION MOUNTS TO DIW PLAN

Florida Sierra Club was instrumental in getting more than 70 environmental, conservation and marine-related groups statewide to sign onto a letter in October to Gov. Rick

Scott objecting to a plan by SWFMD to use deep-injection wells (DIW) for disposal of freshwater from Lake Okeechobee.

The groups claim the wells do not fit with the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

The operation of DIWs will be energy-intensive, requiring pumps that run on fossil fuels to pump millions of gallons of water per

day, per well, for an unpredictable number of days to months per year. This operation would increase the release of carbon into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels. The cost to the public could be over \$1 billion.

The best solution to significantly reduce and ultimately eliminate harmful discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the northern estuaries during extreme weather events is to speed up the long term restoration of the Everglades ecosystem, the letter states.

To see the entire letter, go to [sierraclubfloridanews.org](http://sierraclubfloridanews.org)



# Around the State



Sierra Club's Diana Umpierre, center, explains how climate change will affect the Everglades eco-system.

## Zinke Visit Draws Attention to Climate Change

Sierra Club members and supporters gathered October 7 outside the Visitors Center at Everglades National Park to send a message to President Trump's Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke about the urgent need to act on climate. The Secretary, who denies climate change and has consistently supported fossil fuel development on public lands and elsewhere, was visiting the Everglades and viewing damage from Hurricane Irma.



Tampa Bay Group Chair Kent Bailey, center, speaks at the launch press conference of the Hillsborough and North Pinellas counties solar co-ops September 25 at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

## Cedar Key Nov 10-11

Sierra Club Florida is hosting the Cedar Key Climate Change Conference / Tribute to Sierra Club Founder John Muir November 10-11. Both days will be filled with expert speakers, fascinating topics and social activities. Come to one or both! For an agenda of speakers and topics, go to [www.florida.sierraclub.org](http://www.florida.sierraclub.org) Fees are nominal; lodging is not included. For more information, contact [paul.thibault@florida.sierraclub.org](mailto:paul.thibault@florida.sierraclub.org)



## Clean Air News

Congratulations to five Florida transit agencies which won \$5 million in federal grants (\$1 million per agency) to buy and/or support zero-emission electric buses. On Sept. 15, U.S. Department of Transportation awards were announced for Gainesville, Tallahassee, Broward County, Jacksonville and Pinellas County transit agencies.

## Solar Co-ops on the Rise

Sierra Club supports the move to clean, renewable energy! Many counties are forming solar co-ops, a great idea for homeowners. By going solar together as a group, the co-op gets a discount through its bulk purchasing power, saving an average of 20 percent compared to the cost of an individual installation. The group uses a competitive bidding process and selects a single company chosen by the co-op to install systems on members' homes. If you own a home in one of these counties, or would like to start one in your area, check out [www.solarunitedneighbors.org/florida](http://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/florida) (formerly FLSUN.org)

### COUNTIES WITH CO-OPS

- ST JOHNS
- HILLSBOROUGH
- NORTH PINELLAS
- VOLUSIA
- MIAMI-DADE
- SARASOTA
- EAST / WEST BROWARD
- ALACHUA
- SEMINOLE

## You Can Still Contribute!

To make a donation to Sierra Club's hurricane relief funds, go to [sierraclub.org](http://sierraclub.org) and click on the link to donate to Irma or Maria fund. 100% of your contribution will go directly to community-led recovery efforts in the areas impacted.

**Sierra Outings Leader Rudy Scheffer, far left, discusses the ecology of the Puerto Rican rainforest during a 2015 outing. Sierra Club outing trips to the island have been suspended./Photo from Rudy Scheffer**



## Hurricane Relief

*(Continued from page 1)*

Irma and Maria relief efforts and is managing staff in Puerto Rico.

### Irma Relief in Florida

On a national level, Sierra Club received more than \$100,000 in Irma donations with nearly a dozen groups receiving funding. Priority is to give funds and supplies in an equitable way to low-income communities impacted by the hurricane, says Jackalone. "We have learned that when power is out for an extended period of time, it hits the poor, the children and the elderly the hardest," he says. "After Irma, we were able to distribute \$31,000 in aide to four recipients, all of which the Florida Chapter works with in some capacity."

They included:

Farmworker Association of Florida – Many farm workers are not eligible for FEMA and live in the poorest conditions. "Farm workers were hit the hardest ... our funding will go to provide food, shelter, counseling and cover other needs of everyday living."

Lotus House in Miami - Lotus House provides shelter for homeless women and children; the shelter was damaged during the storm and will receive funding. "Our ICO program has been working for years with the kids from Lotus House."

Newtown Success Zone - This low-

income community in Jacksonville was hit hard with flooding. Some 100 families are receiving \$50 gift cards to purchase food, school supplies and other necessities. Donations include toiletries and cleaning supplies.

Kina Phillips – Community leader in Belle Glade will distribute funding to hard-hit needy families and church charities in the sugar farming area near Lake Okeechobee.

### Maria Relief in Puerto Rico

The ravaged US Territory continues to suffer, with 80 percent still without power. Access to clean water, medical supplies, transportation, communication and food is lacking; thousands are still in shelters and homeless. It took several weeks, but Sierra Club's Puerto Rico Chapter has now gained some communication and momentum and is helping to distribute food, water and solar lanterns.

"We are committed to supporting a recovery in Puerto Rico that is just, equitable and comprehensive," Executive Director Michael Brune said in a press release.

Spending the million-plus Maria fund will be carefully planned and executed. "This funding will not just be for immediate relief, but for long-term recovery which is the bigger issue," says Jackalone. "Hundreds of thousands of people in Puerto Rico have been affected. The utility that ran the electricity has completely fallen apart. The whole power grid

needs to be rebuilt. We are talking with the government of Puerto Rico about creating micro-grids throughout the island based on renewable energy. We have connections to solar companies and Puerto Rico has an abundance of sunshine."

Sierra Club has formed a working group that will focus on establishing a new electric infrastructure in Puerto Rico, says Jackalone. Working in tandem with Sierra Club leaders in Puerto Rico, the environmental community, private businesses and political leaders, the group is working on a plan to rebuild the power structure completely using renewable energy. Even billionaire Tesla CEO and clean energy supporter Elon Musk has expressed interest in working on the project.

"We are starting to plan our Sierra Club campaign to make this happen," says Jackalone. "We are looking at the scope and how to do it, but we are excited because out of all the bad things that have happened, this is the one ray of hope that something good can come out of Hurricane Maria."

"We know these storms aren't going away. Maria-type storms are likely to cross Puerto Rico again. The current situation there is unsustainable; the grid must be rebuilt quickly and sustainably or the whole economy will collapse."

*Editor's note: This story was written in mid-October. Numbers may have changed.*

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**Moving?**

Email new address to  
[address.changes@sierraclub.org](mailto:address.changes@sierraclub.org)  
and include your membership ID  
number located on the mailing label.



**SIERRA  
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Is there a broken down car, RV or boat in your yard that needs removing? Perhaps you are purchasing a new car and need to get rid of your old one.

Consider donating your vehicle to the Sierra Club Foundation CARS Donation Program and it will be towed away for free ... and you will receive a receipt for your tax-deductible gift! The CARS Donation Program offers an easy way to get rid of unused vehicles while providing funding that will go directly to the Florida Chapter.

CARS will pick up most cars, trucks, trailers, boats, RVs, motorcycles, off-road vehicles, and heavy equipment .

**DONATE NOW – IT'S EASY!**

Simply go to [scfch.careasy.org](http://scfch.careasy.org) Many questions can be answered by clicking on the FAQ tab. Fill out the form. Under **Select a Chapter** be sure to scroll down to **FLORIDA CHAPTER**. You will receive a phone call from a program rep to make arrangements for towing. Or call 844-674-3772.

Some restrictions apply. Most vehicles need to be intact and in towable condition. Act before January 1 and you may be able to receive a tax deduction for 2017!

The advertisement features a blue background with a sunburst pattern. At the top, the text "Time is Running Out!" is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. Below this, in a smaller white font, it says "Donate your vehicle before January 1st, and you may qualify for a 2017 tax deduction." In the center is a front-facing view of a silver sedan. At the bottom, an orange rectangular box contains the text "Learn more about how you can receive a Tax Deduction" in white.

**CALL 844-674-3772 / [scfch.careasy.org](http://scfch.careasy.org)**