

Sierra Club Florida’s 2022 legislative priorities focus on clean energy, land conservation, smart growth, water quality and quantity, democracy, state interference in local decision-making, and the budget. We support policies that recognize and preserve cultural and environmental community assets, and ensure that frontline communities do not suffer disproportionate negative impacts but do share in beneficial changes. We must address the existential threat of climate change and its impacts while considering equity, inclusion, and justice to create a healthier, more equitable future for all.

The Issue	The Concerns	What Florida Needs
Clean Energy	<p>Floridians’ risk from stronger storms and sea-level rise caused by climate change is a function of both past and future emissions. Every additional 0.5° C of global temperature will result in clearly discernible increases in the intensity and frequency of heat waves, heavy precipitation, and drought. Continuing “business as usual” emissions is untenable and irresponsible.</p> <p>Ignoring problems does not solve them; Florida must reduce its use of fossil fuels now.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transition to 100% renewable energy statewide before 2050 with 100% renewable energy used for all state and local funded operations by 2035</li> <li>● Update the Florida greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions baseline</li> <li>● Cut GHG emissions by 50% below 2005 levels by 2030 and ensure equitable climate adaptation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reducing energy use by increasing funding to low-income residential energy efficiency programs</li> <li>○ Establishing a Florida just transition accountability program within and supported by a state agency made up of frontline-representative Florida residents, issue experts, and key stakeholders to study the state of the energy industry and recommend social and economic growth strategies for the state to thrive through industry’s transition from fossil to renewable fuels</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Incentivize and expand the opportunities for solar energy and return solar siting decisions on agricultural land to local jurisdictions</li> <li>● Prevent the development of new fossil fuels and associated infrastructure in Florida, and ban all forms of well stimulation for fossil fuels (hydraulic fracking, acid fracturing, and matrix acidization)</li> <li>● Grow complete street development and electric mass transit, including within the <i>Florida Transportation Plan</i></li> <li>● Promote use of electric vehicles by adopting battery-electric fleet goals, incentivizing purchase of new/used electric vehicles, and expanding charging infrastructure around the state to eliminate range concerns. Oppose burdensome fees for electric vehicles that would disincentivize their purchase.</li> <li>● Promote and expand demand-side and supply-side efficiency and renewable energy storage</li> <li>● Protect and expand net metering</li> <li>● Divest all fossil fuel holdings including the Florida Employees’ Pension fund and any other portfolios that the State holds</li> </ul>

<p>Land Conservation</p>	<p>The health of Florida's economy and water resources and the quality of life will decline without mitigating/reversing climate change and protecting biodiversity through the maintenance, restoration, and conservation of essential ecosystems.</p> <p>Left in their natural state, our lands keep an immense amount of climate pollution out of the atmosphere. If we hope to meet the greenhouse gas reductions necessary to stop the climate crisis, we need to keep our remaining undeveloped lands intact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Preserve open spaces and wetlands, enhance regional wildlife corridors, and avoid fragmentation of habitat</li> <li>● Increase funding to invest in permanent conservation easements through the <i>Rural and Family Lands Protection Program</i> to protect ranch/agricultural lands</li> <li>● Acquire, through fee simple or less than fee mechanisms, sufficient conservation land to ensure future generations' ability to rely on sustainable ecosystem services, outdoor recreation lands, and wildlife/landscape/ecotourism resources</li> <li>● Acquire 100,000 acres of land in the <i>Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA)</i> to assist in improving water quality and the restoration of the River of Grass</li> <li>● Breach the Rodman Dam and restore the Oklawaha River</li> </ul>
<p>Smart Growth</p>	<p>Once a model for the nation, Florida's growth management laws, having been gutted since 2011, now prioritize developers over residents.</p> <p>Florida must become more resilient to the now unavoidable impacts of climate change. The legislature has an important role to play in updating infrastructure and helping communities cope with extreme weather, sea-level rise, and other climate impacts. Land use must adapt to new environmental parameters and policies must not force our most vulnerable communities to bear more than their share of the burden.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide state and regional oversight of growth management that promotes smart growth and prioritizes conserving natural lands</li> <li>● Repeal the statute awarding attorney fees and costs to the prevailing party in a development order consistency challenge. Rebalance the rights of communities for self-determination via adoption of a comprehensive plan versus the interests of individual members of the community</li> <li>● Identify the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on natural resources and public infrastructure and implement protective and preventive policies</li> <li>● Adopt resilience policies that mandate or incentivize climate resilience in insurance, transportation, and building codes</li> <li>● Include the availability of water and the impact of development on water and wetlands in determining land use policies and the issuance of permits</li> <li>● Adopt measures to protect wildlife reliant on night skies through the reduction of light pollution</li> <li>● Promote walkable communities, infill, and redevelopment, and encouraging transit-oriented development</li> <li>● Co-locate mass transit in existing transportation corridors</li> <li>● Expand broadband to take advantage of the growing trend of remote work, education, and healthcare and decrease transportation pressures</li> </ul>

<p>Water Quality and Quantity</p>	<p>Current water quality and quantity statutes are full of loopholes and empty promises of restoration in 35 years. Groundwater supplies 93%<sup>1</sup> of our population with drinking water, yet its over-allocation is causing springs and wells to dry up while business and new developments are granted Consumptive Use Permits.</p> <p>Quantity and quality are inextricably tied; toxic blue-green algae, red tide, and murky springs threaten public health, waterfront economies, and the state’s reputation as a tourist destination. The manatee die off is one of many indicators of the failure of the state’s water quality policies.</p>	<p>Protect and restore water quality and quantity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stopping pollution at its source</li> <li>● Preserving and restoring wetlands</li> <li>● Regulating fertilizer, septic tanks, stormwater, and sewage systems</li> <li>● Ensuring that land application of biosolids, including Class AA, is: sustainable and does not degrade soils or groundwater; that contamination, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and heavy metals, is removed from wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) influent; and that no more nutrients are applied than will be taken up by vegetation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To reduce biosolids toxicity, require industry to properly and safely deal with its own waste instead of simply discharging it into public sewers</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Setting clear mandatory standards for wastewater treatment system performance and upgrades, then funding and enforcing them</li> <li>● Developing a “water budget” based on available groundwater, monitoring use by permit holders, and limiting permits to withdrawals that will not harm natural systems</li> <li>● Establishing standards for reclaimed water that eliminate public health threats from nutrients, pharmaceuticals, endocrine disruptors, and other contaminants of emerging concern</li> <li>● Imposing fees for large water consumers including agriculture, utilities, and water bottling companies</li> <li>● Redesigning the <i>Everglades Agricultural Area</i> (EAA) Storage Reservoir to provide for sufficient water treatment</li> </ul>
<p>Democracy</p>	<p>Our democracy is under assault. The ability of citizens to vote, the process of direct democracy (citizen driven ballot initiatives), and fair redistricting have all suffered. We must protect and defend the most fundamental elements of our democracy for all Floridians. Our government should serve all the people, not just the wealthy or partisan special interests.</p>	<p>Support pro-democracy reforms that break down barriers to participation, ensuring that each of us has an equal voice and vote. Defend and advocate for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Voting rights</li> <li>● Fair redistricting</li> <li>● The right to assemble</li> <li>● Freedom of speech</li> <li>● Citizen initiatives</li> <li>● Public participation in government decision-making</li> <li>● A level procedural and legal playing field for citizens and communities in the courts and the Department of Administrative Hearings (DOAH)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> [https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2015/1156/ofr20151156\\_marella-water-use-2012.pdf](https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2015/1156/ofr20151156_marella-water-use-2012.pdf)

<p>State Interference in Local Decisions</p>	<p>Current statutes fail Floridians by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing citizens and local governments from addressing local issues by explicit and implied preemption of regulation of an activity to the State, which provides either weak or no regulation of that activity</li> <li>• Skewing the legal system to favor polluters and developers over citizens and local governments</li> <li>• Imposing the risk of insupportable financial costs on citizens exercising their rights and on local governments for performing their duties</li> <li>• Violating the democratic principles of majority rule and all votes being equal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let local governments lead. Allow localities to supplement state law with stricter regulations to protect their own resources and constituents.</li> <li>• Allow local governments to contribute to the amelioration of the causes and effects of climate change and take action to protect natural resources</li> <li>• Create statewide regulations limiting the use of or remove the preemption on local regulation of plastic bags, wrappings, and auxiliary containers</li> <li>• Remove the preemption on local regulation of urban fertilizer sales</li> <li>• Remove the preemption on local regulation of herbicides and pesticides</li> <li>• Repeal the state statute that prevents local governments' enforcement of tree ordinances, or amend its litigation-provoking overbroad language that treats trees as obstacles of no value to a community</li> </ul>
<p>Budget</p>	<p>If it isn't funded, it doesn't get accomplished. Florida has a huge backlog of needs, and prioritizing and funding them is required if we are to see improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget for essential long-term investments and eliminate infeasible state projects.</li> <li>• Allocating all funds remaining in the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF) after debt service to conservation land acquisition pursuant to the purposes and requirements of the 2014 Water and Land Conservation constitutional amendment in such a way as to eliminate the current inequitable distribution of LATF funds between North and South Florida</li> <li>• Fund the clean-up of toxic waste sites, brownfields, gypsum stacks and holding ponds (like the Piney Point site) and those landfills under threat from sea level rise all of which are significant threats to aquifers and water bodies in Florida</li> <li>• Transition to electric vehicles when State vehicles meet/exceed replacement criteria</li> <li>• Incentivize individual actions to move to clean energy</li> <li>• Equitably invest to address the impacts of sea level rise</li> <li>• Ensure adequate funding for enforcement activities protecting natural resources</li> <li>• Provide incentives for, and access to, financing infrastructure for public water supply and distribution, and wastewater collection and treatment</li> </ul>