



## **COVID-19 UP-DATE:**

### **Sierra Club Cancels General Meetings, Programs and Outings Through June 14!**

In the interests of public health and safety, all Sierra Club in-person meetings, activities and outings have been canceled through June 14. We urge our members to observe precautions from the Center for Disease Control (CDC): Avoid going out in public when possible, otherwise please wear a cloth mask over your mouth and nose. Stay “Safe at Home” whenever possible and observe a minimum 6 foot “social distance” when in public, including periods of outdoor exercise.

Observing these simple precautions will save lives and hasten a return to normalcy. Together we will overcome the challenge of novel coronavirus or covid-19. Treatment options are expanding. Increased testing and contact tracing are coming online. And the development of a vaccine is moving at an historically rapid pace. In the meantime it is up to us to use common sense and follow the simple CDC guidelines.

We owe a great debt to the courageous first responders and medical personnel who are literally serving on the front lines in the fight against this virus. Thank You! They are risking their lives for us. We should stay at home for them. For more information contact Kent Bailey at [kent.bailey@florida.sierraclub.org](mailto:kent.bailey@florida.sierraclub.org)

## **Hillsborough River’s Recovery: Good improvements, Still a Work in Progress**

By Sid Flannery and Phil Compton

Twenty years ago, the Lower Hillsborough River was sadly impaired, abused and neglected for 35 years, written off as dead, no longer the fertile tidal estuary where Tampa Bay’s life begins. When no one else would or could, Sierra Club members and others formed Friends of the River to challenge a Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) rule that would have only provided for the diversion of brackish water from Sulphur Springs to the base of the dam with no freshwater gain for the lower river. Friends and Sierra won; with a policy based on data, the River’s been in recovery the past 13 years with a daily minimum flow of freshwater. Today it’s healthier than it’s been in decades, but have we done enough for fish & wildlife to flourish?

Based on a review of SWFWMD’s recent 5-year assessment of the minimum flows, Friends and Tampa Bay Sierra Club concluded that significant improvements are needed in the minimum flow recovery strategy. Along with diversions from Sulphur Springs, more consistent and slightly greater fresh water flows should be released from the reservoir to create the low salinity waters and improved dissolved oxygen concentrations that fish and invertebrates need. Today, 25% of the water added to the reservoir from the Tampa Bypass Canal for minimum flows is held back based on a false assumption that has long been disproven. Providing this additional flow would have significant benefits for the ecology of the lower river. Also, the projected use of Morris Bridge Sink to provide minimum flows is unnecessary and should not be initiated, so natural systems in and near the sink can remain undisturbed. Friends and Sierra will soon participate in stakeholder meetings with SWFWMD and other government agencies to review how minimum flows are applied.

***Sid Flannery, retired Chief Environmental Scientist at SWFWMD, advisor for Friends of the River and Sierra Club.***

***Phil Compton, Sierra Club staff and founding member of Friends of the River***



## 2020 Executive Committee

**Group Chairperson: Kent Bailey**  
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**Transportation Chair: Christopher Gleason**

**Membership Chair: Gary Gibbons**  
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**Energy Chair: Bob Howell**  
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### Other Officers & Assignments

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**Recycling Chair: Barbara Heineken**  
**Stadium Recycling Initiative: Dave Varrieur** (813) 503-6970  
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**ICO Webmaster: Bob Rice**  
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**Social Media Coordinator: Rob Jordan.**

**Sierra Florida Office: 727 824-8813**

## Transportation Committee Report:

*“Sometimes leadership is forged in the crucible of crisis, at Wednesday’s meeting of the Hillsborough County Board of Commissioners leadership fizzled.”*



As the one cent surtax for transportation sits in limbo at the Florida Supreme Court, the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) refused to keep an option open for a replacement tax to be put on the ballot in 2020. The 4-3 vote on April 15th killed it for this year’s ballot and potentially a lot longer.

The only commissioners to stand with the people & our future transportation infrastructure were Pat Kemp, Mariella Smith, and Kimberly Overman. **(All Endorsed by the Sierra Club!)**

Les Miller, Sandra Murman, Ken Hagan, and Stacy White all voted against keeping an option open for 2020. They all let down the residents of this county, who in 2018 passed the surtax with 57% of the vote. Most glaring among them is Les Miller, whose past advocacy for maintaining the tax as voted on is well documented. In the future, we have to hold them all accountable for taking away this option from us all.

This vote will leave the county, its residents, and the BOCC completely flat-footed and unprepared if the Florida Supreme Court throws out our transportation tax. Now we wait for the judgment from the court, paralyzed to do anything locally.

**Transportation Chair: Christopher Gleason**

**POSTPONED** EcoFest 2020 is a community event organized by Learning Gate Community School, the City of Tampa and USF Health to celebrate the many businesses, organizations, and individuals in the Tampa Bay area dedicated to the Principles of Sustainability, Ecology, Equity and Economy. For information on EcoFest 2020, please email [ecofest@learninggate.org](mailto:ecofest@learninggate.org)



**TAMPA BAY** Join our **Meetup Page** online where all outings are posted. Go to [www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Groups-of-the-Greater-Tampa-Bay-Florida-Area](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Groups-of-the-Greater-Tampa-Bay-Florida-Area)



and click on Join Us! Receive notices when new outings are added.

**Florida Seller of Travel Reference No. ST37115**

To participate in the Sierra Club’s Outings, you need to sign a liability waiver, call (415) 977-5630 or

[www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/](http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/)

Please **RSVP** and check details on this outing as well as others at <https://www.sierraclub.org/florida/tampa-bay/outings>

**Conservation Committee Report:** The Conservation Committee and Transportation and Water Sub-Committees meet on **Mondays, June 8 and July 13 2020**, at 6:30 PM at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 5103 North Central Ave. Tampa. We meet in the Snyder Building, directly behind the church.

**The 2020 Tampa Bay Sierra Club Planning meeting resulted in 5 conservation goals and leaders.**

- 1 - **Ready for 100 Tampa – Linda Hugues**
  - 2 - **Transportation – HART Electric Buses – Christopher Gleason**
  - 3 - **Land Use – Hold the Line on the Urban Service Area -Karen Michalski**
  - 4 - **Increase public awareness of Sea Level Rise – Kent Bailey**
  - 5 - **Secure Conservation Easements. This fits in with the Sierra Florida Chapter conservation goal: Increase Protected Lands by 30% by 2030 and 50% by 2050 – Nancy Stevens**
- Also a Tree Committee will be formed at the Florida Chapter Level.**

**Volunteers are needed for all the above initiatives, no experience needed.**

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As advocates in the Conservation Committee, we expend a lot of energy throughout the year protecting our natural environment. With the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a pause in our advocacy and now is the time to renew and deepen our connections with nature. This is a time to let nature energize us for the fights that will be ahead.

Have weeks of staying safe at home made you reflect on what the important things in life are? What is it that you miss the most? As Sierra Club members, we all share in the love of nature, so now, more than ever, take time to enjoy nature, either in person, if you can do so following social distancing recommendations, or on-line.

It is always wonderful to be able to take in the view of a calming natural vista or see wildlife. When you are able, get out into our city, county and state parks. If that is not possible, Explore.org has a variety of live cams that allow you to observe nature.

Even walking around your neighborhood, nature provides a soothing constancy, unaware of human concerns. Outside, you can hear the joyous sound of a bird's song, feel a cool breeze, smell the fresh salt air of the sea or aroma of newly cut grass. So - get outside and enjoy!

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**Hillsborough River Health:** The Tampa Bay Group of the Sierra Club and Friends of the River jointly submitted recommendations for minimum flow to maintain river health. Thanks to Sid Flannery who dedicated many hours to provide the expert analysis, including additional data, and recommendations.

Keep safe everyone and looking forward to seeing everyone again soon!

If you would like to keep up to date on these and other Conservation Committee topics via email, please contact: **Nancy Stevens, Chair, Conservation Committee Tampa Bay Sierra Club, [Nancy.Stevens@Florida.SierraClub.org](mailto:Nancy.Stevens@Florida.SierraClub.org)**



**Tampa Summer Fertilizer Ban Kicks in June 1-September 30!** The summer rainy season is here and the heavy rain doesn't water fertilizer in, it washes it away, right into the Tampa Bay, lagoons, rivers, lakes and the Gulf that are the source of our fun. And fertilizer pollution can cause algae blooms and kill fish. That's why so many communities throughout Florida have restricted the use of lawn and landscape fertilizers from June-September. For more information on the fertilizer ban go to [www.BeFloridian.com](http://www.BeFloridian.com)



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# Sierra Club Tampa Bay Group

May / June 2020



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Include your membership number located on the mailing label.

**Tampa Bay Group**  
P.O. Box 1596  
Thonotosassa, Florida 33592

**Web:**  
[florida.sierraclub.org/tampabay](http://florida.sierraclub.org/tampabay)



**Membership:** Join today for just \$15.00 and receive a FREE Sierra Club 1892 style Rucksack at [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)



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**Task force meetings for the Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance, or M-CORES, have been postponed until May 2020.**



In May 2019 the legislature passed a bill to fast-track 330 miles of new toll roads. Task forces for each of the three sections have met several times since August 2019 in counties in the proposed corridor path. Local Sierra Club members have attended meetings and given public comments in Tampa, Bartow, Madison, and Fanning Springs.

Sierra Club declined an invitation to join the task forces, instead helping to form a "**No Roads to Ruin!**" coalition. Sierra believes that the roads will destroy wetlands, springs, and aquifer recharge areas, as well as wildlife habitat and valuable agricultural land. They also note that the roads were not in the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) five-year plan until the bill was signed by the governor.

To learn about M-CORES visit FDOT's website. For a more comprehensive explanation of Florida's transportation planning process, visit 1000 Friends of Florida. Their website gives an accurate overview, explains the planning process in detail, and tells how M-CORES subverts that. Another website to visit is FDOT's Heartland Parkway 2007 study which lists financial and environmental reasons to not build a toll road.

To take action email your comments to [FDOT.Listens@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:FDOT.Listens@dot.state.fl.us).

Google "No Roads to Ruin" for national, state, and local media coverage. Join or like Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/NoRoadsToRuin/>

