ENVIRO PHI NMENTAL UPDATES – By Barbara Ruge, Vice-Chair Broward Sierra Club

Please call and write your State legislators and the Governor. The only missing piece for the scientifically approved Everglades restoration project, is for the State of Florida to purchase 46,800 acres of land south of Lake Okeechobee at the low option price (which expires October 12th). The state has the money from Amendment 1 funds. The State House just has to put it on the budget. The Federal government has already allocated specific funds to build the reservoir and Lake Okeechobee water treatment plant. These will cost the State nothing. US Sugar wants to renege on the purchase option. They want to sell the land at a higher price to developers for a residential community called Sugar Hill. The developers have submitted permits twice, but were denied due to the purchase option we have in effect. If this land purchase does not happen, we will definitely have a fresh water shortage in South Florida. And consequently, more new development will be using up what we do have. Right now, I understand that Everglades National Park should have standing water at 18 to 24 inches. As of this weekend, the level is barely 5 inches. Likewise in the northern part of the state. The state has subsidized energy companies, Big Sugar and other agricultural interests with no limit to the water they can pump from our beautiful springs. Silver Springs used to be a world wonder. These companies and the legislators they bought have no pride. Last I heard, the springs cannot recover. They are drying up. (An aside: Our wildlife habitats are shrinking. You know about the number of Florida panthers that get killed by cars, but in case you missed this issue, in September it will be open season for hunting our iconic Florida black bear.) Oil drilling, gas fracking, phosphate mining, agricultural corporations, have been allowed to destroy our natural resources and pollute without limits.

And if that’s not enough, follow up on All Aboard Florida coming to the FEC railroad tracks. Not everyone is all aboard with this railway system. Read up here: https://www.facebook.com/floridanotallaboard?fref=ts. Towns up and down the coast are up in arms! This rail system does not serve the citizens of Florida. Without stops, it provides no service or economic benefits to coastal communities. It disturbs the peace, increases expense for maintenance of crossings, and intensifies the risk of environmental catastrophe. The Florida Dept of Transportation is boasting the projected increase in cargo freight by truck and rail system from our “expanded” seaports and airports, prompting a media frenzy of exuberance for success, revenue and jobs. This freight movement is all on the eastside, high populated areas, towns with tourism, boating, fishing and beaches. I saw the power point presentation last month in attendance at the Broward MPO-CIR. You too can view it at http://tinyurl.com/cargo2040. Oh, the millions of dollars are astounding, but NOWHERE in this presentation does it address environmental studies, pollution or the potential increased risk of calamity OR ANY increased preparation for disaster response! If people don’t think we have an air and water problem in Florida, they live

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with blinders on and don’t care about the future of Florida, its economy, its beauty or the health of our people. They only want to know what it will personally cost them. So selfish, so short-sighted, so anti-social to the nth degree.

We would like to invite you to come on one of our fun and educational outings! If you have any questions about an outing, please check with the certified Sierra Outing Leader listed for the outing. Some of the outings need no experience; others require some level of proficiency. All participants are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the Liability Waiver before you choose to participate in an outing, contact the leader of the outing or go to <http://vault.sierraclub.org/outings/national/participantforms/forms/individual_waiver.pdf>.

For sign-up, payment and further information, please contact the outing leader.

**LOOK FOR UPDATED INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE:** [www.sierraclub.org/florida/broward](http://www.sierraclub.org/florida/broward)

**ALL PROCEEDS FROM OUTINGS GO TO:** BFAT, Sierra Club Broward Branch, 1101 W. Las Olas Blvd., Suite 1700, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312

Stay alert Sierra Club members. Join the protests. Sign the petitions. Get your friends to the voting polls. Vote for environmental champions. Sierra Club strives to keep you informed.

**ATTEND the Big Sugar Summit Saturday June 20th.**

Sign up for tickets here. ($10 registration fee includes lunch!) [http://tinyurl.com/bigsugarsummit](http://tinyurl.com/bigsugarsummit)

The Big Sugar Summit will pull the curtain back on the sugar industry. We’ll dig as deep into the muck as we can, in one day, to uncover just how profoundly Big Sugar affects us all. You’ll get the facts regarding the sugar industry’s influence and impact on Florida and its citizens. Our speakers will represent a wide spectrum of the political, academic, scientific and advocacy realms.

The following topics will be covered:

- History of Big Sugar in the EAA
- Sugar’s impact on the Everglades
- Sugar burning practice and impacts
- Health impacts
- State-level political influence
- Federal-level political influence
- U.S. Sugar Program
- Local economy in the EAA
- Sugar Hill Sector Plan

Note: There will be a social hour immediately after the program.