

Sierra Club Florida's 2021 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 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 We Want
Clean Energy	Floridians are at risk from stronger storms and sea-level rise caused by climate change. Ignoring these problems does not solve them; Florida must reduce its use of fossil fuels now.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transition to 100% renewable energy statewide before 2050 with 100% renewable energy used for all state-funded operations by 2035 ● Update the Florida greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions baseline ● Cut GHG emissions by 25% by 2035 and ensure equitable climate adaptation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reducing energy use by increasing funding to low-income residential energy efficiency programs ○ Establishing a Florida just transition accountability program within and supported by a state agency made up of frontline-representative Florida residents and issue experts 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 ● Prevent the development of new fossil fuels in Florida, and ban all forms of well stimulation for fossil fuels (hydraulic fracking, acid fracturing, and matrix acidization) ● Grow complete street development and electric mass transit, including within the <i>Florida Transportation Plan</i> ● Promote use of electric vehicles by adopting battery-electric fleet goals and expanding charging infrastructure around the state ● Promote and expand demand-side and supply-side efficiency and renewable energy storage

Land Conservation	<p>The quality of life and Florida's economy will decline without mitigating/reversing climate change and protecting biodiversity through the maintenance, restoration, and conservation of essential ecosystems,</p> <p>The Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) will destroy large swaths of Florida's last remaining rural lands and agricultural production and threaten endangered wildlife, including the iconic Florida panther.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preserve open spaces and wetlands, enhance regional wildlife corridors, and avoid fragmenting habitat ● Increase funding to invest in permanent conservation easements through the <i>Rural and Family Lands Protection Program</i> to protect ranch/agricultural lands ● 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 ● 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 ● Repeal M-CORES
Smart Growth	<p>Once a model for the nation, Florida's growth management has been continuously gutted since 2011 and now prioritizes developers over communities. A 2070¹ study conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 1000 Friends of Florida, and the University of Florida GeoPlan Center projects that, at current rates and densities, development will take up almost twice as much land by 2070 than in the 2010 baseline, with croplands, livestock, and aquaculture losing about one quarter of their current acreage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reinststitute state and regional oversight of growth management to promote smart growth and a prioritization of conserving natural lands ● Repeal the statute awarding attorney fees and costs to the prevailing party in a consistency challenge of a development order ● Identify and address the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on natural resources and manmade infrastructure ● Include the availability of water and the impact of development on water and wetlands in determining land use policies and deciding on the issuance of permits ● Adopt measures to reduce light pollution and protect night skies ● Promote walkable communities, infill, and redevelopment, and discourage automobile dependent design by encouraging transit-oriented development ● Co-locate mass transit in existing transportation corridors ● Repeal M-CORES

¹ <http://1000friendsofflorida.org/florida2070/>

<p>Water Quality and Quantity</p>	<p>The water quality and quantity statutes are full of loopholes and offer empty promises of restoration in 35 years. Groundwater supplies 93%² of our population with drinking water, yet it is over-allocated 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. M-CORES will exacerbate Florida's water quality and supply crises.</p>	<p>Protect/restore water quality and quantity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stopping pollution at its source ● Preserving and restoring wetlands ● Regulating fertilizer, septic tanks, stormwater, and sewage systems ● Banning the land application of all classes of biosolids ● Setting clear mandatory standards for wastewater treatment system performance and upgrades, then funding and enforcing them ● Developing a "water budget" based on available groundwater, monitoring use by permit holders, and limiting permits to withdrawals that will not harm natural systems ● Establishing standards for reclaimed water used to augment surface or groundwater resources that eliminate public health threats from nutrients, pharmaceuticals, endocrine disruptors, and other contaminants of emerging concern ● Imposing fees for large water consumers including agriculture, utilities, and water bottling companies ● Redesigning the <i>Everglades Agricultural Area</i> (EAA) Storage Reservoir to provide for sufficient water treatment ● Repealing M-CORES
<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. We will defend and advocate for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A level procedural and legal playing field for citizens and communities in the courts and the Department of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) ● Voting rights ● Fair redistricting ● Peaceful assembly ● Freedom of speech ● Citizen initiatives ● Public participation in government decision-making

² https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2015/1156/ofr20151156_marella-water-use-2012.pdf

<p>State Interference in Local Decisions</p>	<p>Current statutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prevent 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 ● Skew the legal system to favor polluters and developers over citizens and local governments ● Impose the risk of insupportable financial costs on citizens exercising their rights and on local governments for performing their duties ● Violate the democratic principles of majority rule and all votes being equal 	<p>Let local governments lead. Allow localities to supplement state law with stricter regulations as they see fit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remove the preemption on local regulation of plastic bags, wrappings, and auxiliary containers ● Remove the preemption on local regulation of urban fertilizer sales ● Remove the preemption on local regulation of herbicides and pesticides ● Repeal the state statute that prevents a local governments' enforcement of tree ordinances if a certified arborist says a tree is a danger to persons or property. Alternatively, address the conflict of interest inherent in professional certification by making the false documentation of a tree as a "danger" a felony.
<p>Budget</p>	<p>The budget is the most important planning document; what isn't paid for doesn't happen. Florida has a huge backlog of needs and prioritizing and funding them must happen if we are to see improvement. M-CORES will cost tax and toll payers billions of dollars and is a perfect example of the type of spending that makes no sense, especially when COVID-19 has led to a significant decrease in state revenues.</p>	<p>Budget for essential long-term investments and eliminate infeasible state projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All funds remaining in the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF) after debt service and statutorily required distribution must be allocated to conservation land acquisition pursuant to the purposes and requirements of the 2014 Water and Land Conservation constitutional amendment and in such a way as to eliminate the current inequitable distribution of LATF funds between North and South Florida ● Invest in converting State vehicles to electric vehicles ● Ensure adequate funding for enforcement activities protecting natural resources ● Provide incentives for, and access to, financing infrastructure for public water supply and distribution, and wastewater collection and treatment ● Support at-risk Floridians during the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing funding to community agencies that administer Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding and for utility bill payment relief ● Repeal M-CORES