

# The Pelican Sierra Club Florida

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SIERRA CLUB

**INSIDE: More Sierra Club Endorsements**



Fall 2016

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## Hillary Clinton: The Right Choice for Our Environment

Hillary Clinton is running on the strongest environmental platform of any presidential nominee in history, and the Sierra Club is passionately committed to ensuring she is elected in November. This year, the planet is truly on the ballot, and the stakes could not be higher.

Clinton has a proven record as a champion for clean air, clean water, and climate action. From making history by putting environmental justice in the spotlight by holding the first-ever Senate hearing on the issue, to her work as Secretary of State to push climate action as a key international priority, to her strong advocacy for clean energy and climate action as a presidential candidate, Clinton is a proven environmental champion who listens to environmental advocates time and time again.

On the campaign trail, Hillary Clinton has laid out a bold and ambitious agenda to tackle the climate crisis and invest in the clean energy economy. She has demonstrated that she is listening to the activists across the country who are calling for keeping dirty fossil fuels in the ground and a transition to an economy powered by 100 percent clean energy.

- Dramatically increase America's share of clean, renewable energy like



**Hillary Clinton has a proven track record as a champion for clean air, clean water and climate action. / Wikimedia photo by Gage Skidmore**

solar and wind to make us the world's clean energy "superpower" and power every home in America

- Create a national clean energy challenge to drive progress at the state and local level
- Invest major resources in energy efficiency to cut energy waste by a third

Clinton has also made clear that she opposes disastrous policies and projects like the Keystone XL pipeline, the toxic Trans-Pacific Partnership, and drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. At this critical time for our planet, we need Hillary Clinton in the White House.

*(Continued on page 4)*

The Florida chapter is the third largest of the Sierra Club and, in terms of political influence, Florida is a key battleground state in national elections. The state has been pivotal in deciding our presidency and still lives in infamy for “Bush vs Gore.”

The Florida legislature currently has not been friendly to the environment. Gov. Rick Scott’s administration has made good on his promise to make Florida “open for business” and his push to develop vast tracks of the state that is home to some of our critical wildlife such as the Florida panther, Florida black bear and gopher tortoise, among others.

Yet, in spite of a challenging political climate, our groups across the state persevere and continue to do great work, tackling environmental challenges that pit them against large government-backed utilities, deep-pocketed development interests, multi-national sugar corporations and politicians beholden to their big-money backers.

From the Panhandle to Florida Bay, the Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico, Sierra Club volunteers tirelessly advocate for our environment against monumental odds.

Phosphate mining and its harm to people, wildlife and the environment, does not get the attention that it should – until recently. The contamination last month of the Floridan aquifer by the actions of the Mosaic company is a disaster that was waiting to happen. State and



## Volunteers serve as watchdogs, champions of Florida’s environment

federal officials were warned of potential harm to the Aquifer by Sierra Club’s Phosphate Committee, which is comprised of volunteers from the Manatee-Sarasota, Tampa Bay, Suncoast and Suwannee-St. Johns groups.

The committee, among others, has been educating citizens about the harms from phosphate mining and challenging phosphate mining interests and Mosaic, the world’s largest phosphate mining company, to do better in their practices. Our volunteers do the research, provide the facts and bring scrutiny to a practice that we are committed to stopping in the state. The disaster in Mulberry has made that clear.

Likewise, the Miami group is working to keep areas of Biscayne National Park from over-fishing while holding FPL accountable for radioactive contamination of the bay from a nuclear reactor that sits between Everglades National and Biscayne National Parks. The Turtle Coast group is joining forces with other local activists as part of the Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition to push for cleanup of the Lagoon even while beating back the forces that want to bring oil and gas fracking to our state. The

fracking fight is one in which the Calusa group in Southwest Florida and the Central Florida group along with several others are engaged.

So, too, are many of our groups focused on urban sprawl. Northeast, Central Florida and Calusa groups among others are working locally for smart growth practices and legislation to limit development. Greater Charlotte Harbor, Calusa and Loxahatchee groups are facing the challenge of blue-green algae creeping along their coasts, while Tampa Bay and Miami are urging local leaders to embrace more sus-

tainable public transit, address climate change and embrace clean energy.

And it is most evident in the way ALL of our groups are united in opposition to the dishonest and misleading effort by public utilities to “privatize the sun” with Amendment 1 on the November ballot. We will vote a resounding NO in NOVember on Amendment 1.

These and other challenges our volunteers are tackling to do what is best for our natural areas and our way of life.

I encourage all Sierra Club members to contact your local group and become involved in an issue that speaks to you. There is much to be accomplished.

*Mark Walters is the Chair of the Executive Committee of the Florida Sierra Club. He can be reached at [mark.walters@sierraclub.org](mailto:mark.walters@sierraclub.org)*

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- Kent Bailey, Tampa Bay Group
- Bud Long, Turtle Coast Group
- Kristine Cunningham, Volusia-Flagler
- Rocky Milburn, Tampa Bay Group
- Darryl Rutz, Broward Group
- Deborah Longman-Marien, Turtle Coast Group

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# Big Sugar Summit 2: Searching for Solutions

By Patrick Ferguson

A day filled with concern, calls for action and a renewed sense of hope took place August 20 when more than 250 people packed a hotel ballroom in West Palm Beach at the Florida Sierra Club's Big Sugar Summit 2. The follow-up to last year's highly successful Big Sugar Summit brought an even greater sense of urgency to the day-long conference which addressed the negative impacts of the sugar industry on the environment, residents, businesses, marine life and the economy of South Florida.

In all, 36 speakers spoke on topics ranging from the politics of Big Sugar to the economics of the Everglades Agricultural Area, giving insight into one of the most influential and polluting industries in America. New voices and perspectives shared at this year's summit sent an undeniable message to Big Sugar, and all those in attendance, that the grassroots movement against Big Sugar's corruption has broadened and strengthened.

The theme of environmental justice was brought to the forefront when local community activist Kina Phillips spoke about the negative effects sugar cane field burning has on the health and quality of life for citizens within the Glades communities. She pointed out the injustice of how current burning restrictions only prevent burning when the wind blows from the west towards wealthy residents in eastern Palm Beach County, but no protection at all is in place when winds blow smoke and ash upon the poorer Glades communities in the western part.

Kina said her community will no longer remain silent to such injustice and called for the sugar industry to adopt green harvesting, a smoke-free harvest method that would protect nearby residents. Green harvesting is used widely in other nations.

Her speech ended to the backdrop of thunderous applause as she encouraged attendees to "have a voice and a choice" and sign the newly released Western



**Community activist Kina Phillips describes the destructive effects of sugar cane field burning to Summit participants./Photo by Diana Umpierre**

Palm Beach County Stop Sugar Field Burning Petition.

After touring the Glades district the previous day, Leslie Fields, director of the Sierra Club's National Environmental Justice Program, expressed shock to learn that sugar cane burning took place right up to the fences of elementary schools and people's backyards with no notification. She tied in similarities of the Stop Sugar Field Burning Campaign to her environmental justice work done elsewhere in the nation with poor minority communities such as in New Orleans.

She emphasized the importance of incorporating just transition work into environmental campaigns to ensure economic support for displaced workers coincides with campaign goals. Just transition, as Leslie described, is about solidarity and ensuring no single community bears all the burdens or reaps all the benefits.

Captain Mike Connor of Bull-sugar.org laid out the devastating economic toll the blue-green algae blooms have had on the fishing and tourism industries on the coasts in the past few years culminating in guacamole-thick algae and destroying the world-class fisheries of the St. Lucie Estuary and Florida Bay. He said business owners like himself, who have relied on the wa-

terways for their livelihoods, are now being forced to either move or shut down while Big Sugar continues to pollute, profit and block long-term solutions to the continuous discharges.

Micosukee Tribe Water Quality Director Gene Duncan said the tribe used its sovereign authority to become the first region in the country to set water quality standards for phosphorous, long before similar standards were adopted by Florida. He called for action to reduce nutrients throughout the Everglades watershed.

Mary Barley, chairwoman of the Everglades Trust, touted the success of the Now or Neverglades declaration which has urged politicians to act in favor of Floridians and not Big Sugar interests. She lauded Senator Negron's recent EAA land purchase proposal as a positive example of grassroots efforts fueling bipartisan political will.

Sierra Club's Frank Jackalone closed the Summit by reflecting upon how much stronger the movement against Big Sugar has grown since last year's summit. With the launching of new teams, new petitions, and the inclusion of new perspectives into the movement, the summit ended in an atmosphere of optimism for the future.

To join our sugar campaign, send an email to [cris.costello@sierraclub.org](mailto:cris.costello@sierraclub.org)

# Chapter Announces 2016 Award Recipients

Congratulations to the following individuals who are being recognized with Chapter awards:

**Cypress Award, Chris and Deanna Mericle, Suwannee St. Johns Group** The couple is being honored for their diligent work to expose the faulty documentation of the Sabal Trail Pipeline LLC. Through their efforts, much information on the dangerous pipeline was brought to the attention of elected officials and the public.

**Cypress Award, George Sibley, Volusia-Flagler Group** The veteran filmmaker and producer is being recognized for his work on the Plum Creek podcast series. "Plum Pudding" is a six-part audio podcast that tells the story of citizen activists in Alachua County as they fight against the biggest landowner in the nation in its quest to develop some 60,000 acres of rural land.

(<http://ssjsierra.org/conservation/plumpudding>)

**Barred Owl Award, Karina Veaudry, Central Florida Group** The award honors a business that has consistently made environmental concerns a major part of its practice. Veaudry is the founder of Native Florida Consulting in Orlando with over 26 years of experience designing and constructing Florida-friendly and native landscapes. The company consistently promotes conservation of natural resources, biodiversity, native habitat creation, and reduction of fertilizer and insecticides.

**Panther Award, Leslie Maloney, Turtle Coast** Maloney is being honored for her long-term dedication to protect the Indian River La-



goon. She is a founding member of the Brevard Indian River Lagoon Coalition.

**Manatee Award, Maureen Rupe, Turtle Coast**

**Group** Rupe is recognized for her conservation leadership. Over decades, she led the fight to prove emissions by the FPL and Reliant power plants in Port St. John were causing air pollution. After almost 20 years, she was rewarded by the closing of the Reliant plant and the replacement of the FPL plant with a new facility that burns cleaner natural gas almost exclusively.

**Panther, Kathryn Taubert, Suwannee St. Johns Group** Taubert is recognized for outstanding leadership. Her PowerPoint presenta-

tion "Water Works: Stand Up and Act Now" has been used to educate many hundreds in North Florida. She also spearheaded a coordinated campaign to oppose the Sabal Trail Pipeline in Marion County.

**Pine Tree Award, Grant Gelhardt, Big Bend** Gelhardt is receiving the award for leadership, thoughtfulness and commitment to the group. He has stepped up for Outings training and the Outings Committee, local conservation, tabling, and outreach.

**Pine Tree, Valerie Robbin, Miami Group** A member of the Miami Group executive committee, Robbin is recognized for outstanding service to the group. She is active on the Political Committee, Inspiring Connections Outdoors, heads the outreach program and serves as volunteer coordinator.

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## Clinton for President

*(Continued from page 1)*

Donald Trump is a climate denier who has vowed to "cancel" the Paris climate agreement and eliminate the Environmental Protection Agency. His policies threaten clean air, clean water and our climate. Simply put, Trump & his climate-denying running mate Mike Pence are a one-way ticket to environmental and climate disaster.

When combined with his dangerous and divisive policies and comments about women, immigrants, Muslims, and so many other Americans, Trump's extremism is out of sync with America's values and has no place in the White House.



## Patrick Murphy for Senate

Sierra Club has officially endorsed Rep. Patrick Murphy for US Senate.

From fighting to protect the Everglades, to blocking efforts to drill off Florida's coastlines, to calling for both national and global action to tackle the climate crisis, Murphy is an environmental champion. His opponent, Marco Rubio, does not support policies to combat sea-level rise and other effects of climate change. He does not believe that humans are driving climate change.

Sierra Club urges you to vote for Patrick Murphy for US Senate.

## Sierra Club 2016 Endorsements

Sierra Club Florida endorses the following candidates in the November 2016 elections. Due to newsletter deadlines, some endorsements are not listed. Check with your local group for updated information.

### President of the United States

Hillary Clinton

### US Senate – Florida

Patrick Murphy

### US House of Representatives

District 9 – Darren Soto

District 10 – Val Demmings

District 13 – Charlie Crist

District 14 – Kathy Castor

District 20 – Alcee Hastings

District 21 – Lois Frankel

District 22 – Ted Deutch

District 23 – Debbie Wasserman  
Schultz

District 24 – Frederica Wilson

District 26 – Joe Garcia

### Florida House of Representatives

District 41 – Bob Doyle

District 66 – Lorena Grizzle

District 68 – Ben Diamond

District 69 – Jennifer Webb

District 72 – Edward James III

District 79 – John Scott District

### Florida Senate

District 23—Frank Alcock

District 37 –

Jose Javier Rodriguez

### Local Races

Alachua County Commission District  
1 – Mike Byerly

Alachua County Commission District  
3 – Robert “Hutch” Hutchison

Hernando County Commission

District 3 – Diane Rowden

Pinellas County Commission

District 3 – Charlie Justice

Hillsborough County Commission

District 6 – Pat Kemp

Manatee County Commission District

3 – Matt Bower

### Ballot Measures

Florida Amendment 1 – Solar

Amendment – Vote NO

Alachua County – Wild Spaces and  
Public Places Referendum – Vote  
YES

Brevard County – Indian River La-  
goon Restoration ½ cent Sale Tax  
Referendum – Vote YES

Paid for and approved by the Sierra Club Florida PAC, 1990 Central Ave, St Petersburg, FL 33712, independent of any candidate

## Let's Be Watchdogs, Volunteers for Our State Parks

Many Sierrans love to enjoy and explore our excellent Florida State Parks. We hike, camp, picnic and paddle at 174 of them. But we must also do our part as watchdogs to protect these natural areas, which can often be threatened by such actions as drilling, pollution or commercial interests.

If you are concerned about the future of your area state parks, you can scrutinize the management plans online. Each park has its own plan which is compiled by a relatively democratic process involving parks management personnel and you, the citizen. All drafts and approved plans are published online.

Each park plan must be reviewed



and updated every 10 years. The Florida DEP Office of Park Planning in the Division of Recreation and Parks offers a wealth of park information on their web site including outdoor recreation plans, land acquisition, leases, easements, and management plans including land use and resource man-

agement.

Sierra Club encourages members to monitor their state parks and keep abreast of these issues. Ask park rangers for information. Public planning workshops were held across the state this summer, but you can still find draft management plans online at <http://dep.state.fl.us/parks/planning/>

The state park system was established for your enjoyment, but they are short-staffed and in need of volunteers. Help out by volunteering to show your support. There are many tasks available from office work to trail building and invasive plant removal. Call your local state park and ask how you help.

## Sierra Helps Launch Solar Co-ops

The Suncoast Group of Sierra Club has joined with the Florida League of Women Voters to support a solar cooperative in the Tampa Bay area to make going solar easier, while building a network of solar supporters.

FL SUN, organized and supported by D.C.-based Community Power Network, is the platform for the St. Pete Solar Co-op. Two public informational meetings proved overwhelming interest by local residents with more than 80 residents in attendance at each. According to Emily Gorman, coordinator for the Suncoast Group's Ready for 100% St. Pete campaign, more than 200 people have registered for the co-op and some 150 of those have been approved for solar energy systems. The coalition hopes to install solar on 200 homes before 2017.

"Working with the group helps members learn about the technology together so they feel confident in their decision to go solar," said Emily Gorman. "This is an important



part of our local Sierra Club's commitment to transition St. Pete to 100% clean, renewable energy."

Once a group is large enough, FL SUN helps the co-op solicit competitive bids from area solar installers. Co-op members select a single company from those bids to complete all of the installations. They then have the option to purchase panels individually based on the installer's group rate. The St. Pete Solar Co-op completed their bid process early in September 2016 and are now beginning installations.

By going solar as a group and choosing a single installer, each participant generally saves around 20% off the cost of their system, says Gorman. This "bulk purchasing" model has been successful in six other states in the U.S. and is now growing in Florida. FLSun is developing co-op programs in Orange County, the Space Coast and Sarasota County.

For more information, go to [www.flsun.org](http://www.flsun.org)



## National Award Kudos

The Loxahatchee group has been awarded the Denny and Ida Wilcher Award by national Sierra Club. The award is given for fundraising or membership development and comes with a \$3,000 prize. Accepting the award in Oakland, CA, on September 10 was group chair **Ricardo Zambrano** and treasurer **Alyssa Cadwalader**, pictured above with Sierra Club president Aaron Mair, far left, and executive director Mike Brune, far right. The group's ongoing fundraising work has resulted in \$48,000 being used to provide outdoor experiences for hundreds of youth through the Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) program in the past 14 years.

**Sheila Calderon** (above right) of the Loxahatchee group is this year's recipient of the Madelyn Pyeatt Award, which honors Sierra Club volunteers who have made outstanding contributions through work with youth. Sheila started the Loxahatchee Group's ICO group 14 years ago and has been the spark plug for it ever since.

**David Guest**, longtime supporter of Sierra Club through his work as the managing attorney of EarthJustice in Florida, was awarded the prestigious William O. Douglas Award. The award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding use of the legal/judicial process to achieve environmental goals. Guest is retiring this year after a 26-year run. He has represented Sierra Club Florida and its groups and other environmental allies in many cases throughout the state.

## Outings Leader Retreat

Outings leaders and those interested in starting or re-charging their outings programs are invited to participate in a weekend retreat with National Sierra Club outings staff October 28-30 in Wimauma, FL at Masonic Lodge Campground, 39 miles south of Tampa. Participants may choose lodging in cabins or camping.

Both new and experienced outings leaders are encouraged to attend. Join outings leaders from across the Southeast who will inspire you to start or grow your outings program. Participants will share successes, inventive ideas, challenges and lessons learned. Short workshops will be presented on topics such as Outing Leader Training and Basic First Aid. Cost is \$35 (Saturday only, including

food); \$50 (all weekend, food and lodging included). To register, please mail a check for either \$35 (Saturday only) or \$50 (weekend), made out to Sierra Club Florida to: Sierra Club, PO Box 1692, Maitland, FL 32751

For more information, contact Rudy Scheffer at [rudy.scheffer@sierraclub.org](mailto:rudy.scheffer@sierraclub.org) or (727) 542-6403.

# Fight Gains Momentum to Stop Sabal Pipeline

Sierra Club Florida and National Organizer Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson have been working hard in a campaign to stop the destructive Sabal Trail Pipeline. This 515-mile pipeline would transport fracked natural gas across 644 water bodies, lakes, rivers, and streams, harming wetland systems in three states: Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. The pipeline would cross directly through the Floridan Aquifer, which provides more than 60 % of Florida's drinking water.

"The Sabal Trail pipeline is a serious threat to the rivers, springs and our drinking water found in the Floridan Aquifer," says Malwitz-Jipson. "It also increases Florida's reliance on fracked natural gas and the harmful emissions that come with its extraction, transportation, and storage."

In addition to the environmental impacts, the pipeline is clearly becoming an issue of environmental justice by impacting the poor and minority communities that live along the pipeline route.

Sierra joins a coalition of other groups including Gulf Restoration Network, Spectrabusters, WWALS Watershed Coalition, Our Santa Fe River and others in taking action against the pipeline.

In August, groups filed a lawsuit in the U.S. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for its issuance of three permits that would allow construction of the Sabal Trail pipeline. The suit was quickly denied without explanation.

In addition, the coalition held a public workshop in Gainesville covering topics such as advocacy, investigation, negotiation and Eminent Domain law. Elected officials were invited on a site visit to the Suwannee River State Park, where sinkholes already exist and



**Sabal Trail Pipeline carries fracked natural gas through three states to big utility companies in Florida.**



**Coalition members invited public officials on a guided tour showing the proposed path for the pipeline in Suwannee State Park.**

would be exacerbated should there be construction of the pipeline.

On September 13, protests were held on the Santa Fe River and at Suwannee River State Park, where the pipeline would be buried under the riverbed through an area of fragile limestone karst. Protests were also held in downtown Gainesville and Tallahassee; the rallies also served to stand in solidarity with the Dakota Access Pipeline protestors.

On September 22, the Sierra Club, Flint Riverkeeper and Chattahoochee

Riverkeeper filed a lawsuit in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia challenging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) approval of the massive 685-mile Southeast Market Pipeline project, which includes the Sabal Trail pipeline. The groups contend the FERC failed to analyze the climate impacts of the project and the power plants it would serve and also failed to adequately analyze alternate routes that would have less impacts on the environment and communities of color.

The suit contends that FERC failed to consider the undeniable climate change impacts of burning 1.1 billion cubic feet of natural gas each day that will be transported by this pipeline project in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Sabal Trail will supply natural gas for future plants proposed in Florida, including the Duke Energy Citrus Combined-Cycle Plant and the Florida Power & Light Martin Energy Center. Pipeline construction alone poses a threat to local water resources as the process threatens to release hazardous materials and drilling mud into the aquifer, polluting the drinking water, and resulting in rapid transmission of drilling mud over great distances. Methane, released when extracting and transmitting gas, is 87 times as potent as carbon dioxide over 20 years.

"Florida does not need more fracked gas infrastructure or gas plants," said Frank Jackalone, director of Sierra Club Florida. "It's time to solve that problem by capturing the tremendous economic and environmental benefits of clean energy including energy efficiency, solar, wind, and battery storage."

*For more information on the Sabal Trail Pipeline, contact Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson, [merrilee.malwitz-jipson@sierraclub.org](mailto:merrilee.malwitz-jipson@sierraclub.org)*

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## Solar Amendment 1 Aims to Mislead Florida Voters

The proverbial wolf masquerading in sheep's clothing is the best way to describe the misleading Amendment 1 wording on November's ballot. Don't be fooled! This is a utility-bankrolled deception campaign that aims to mislead voters with confusing language and false promises.

**Amendment 1 misleads Florida voters by promising rights and protections that Florida citizens already have.** Amendment 1 is funded by Florida's big utilities to protect their monopoly markets and limit customer-owned solar. Floridians already have the right to purchase or lease solar equipment and are already fully



protected under Florida's existing consumer protection laws.

**Amendment 1 paves the way for barriers that would penalize solar customers.** It would add to the State Constitution the false assumption that solar customers

are "subsidized" by non-solar customers and that non-solar customers are in need of additional protections. This false claim would lead to unfair fees and discriminatory penalties for solar customers.

**Clean solar energy makes sense for the environment and the consumer.** With the effects of climate change already affecting Florida, the need to reduce dirty fossil fuel energy is more urgent than ever. The cost of solar has fallen more than 80 percent in the past 10 years. Florida is ranked 3rd nationally in solar energy potential but 17th in solar power generated. Restrictions and unfair fees would make solar

more expensive, limit the expansion of solar, and hurt consumers by denying a cost effective way to lower power bills.

With the successful passage of Amendment 4 to reduce taxes on property and renewable energy equipment, the next step is to vote NO on Amendment 1. The monopoly power companies have spent more than \$21.5 million dollars to persuade Florida residents to vote YES. The amendment will only serve to penalize solar customers, not protect them, for generating their own power. Sierra Club Florida urges a strong NO vote on Amendment 1.