

The Pelican

Sierra Club

Florida

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SIERRA CLUB

INSIDE: FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE REVIEW



SUMMER 2020

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SIERRA CLUB

FLORIDA CHAPTER

The Future is Now: 30x30 Save Lands, Water, Climate by 2030

After the coronavirus crisis, we must work toward a future where our health, communities, and natural world are the priority. Protecting at least 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030 can fight the climate crisis, protect clean air and water, and provide endless ecological and job benefits.

BY TIMOTHY MARTIN
Florida Chapter Conservation Chair

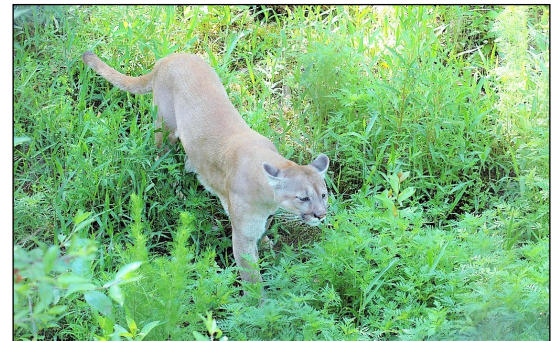
The disappearance of natural habitat is the primary cause of biological diversity loss at every level—ecosystems, species and genes, all of them. Only by the preservation of much more natural habitat than previously envisioned can extinction be brought close to a sustainable level. — E.O. Wilson

These foreboding words from one of the country's foremost biologists should be a warning: If we don't take immediate action to conserve and protect our land and water on a large scale, we face not only the rapid onset of climate change but the eventual extinction of the entire ecosystem.

The current administration has taken drastic and at times unthinkable measures that take us down this very road by weakening regulations for water quality and air pollution, approving mining and pipelines in natural areas, and supporting increased sprawl and development.

These changes we've experienced in recent years should cause us all to recognize a dramatic new urgency to the work we do.

No longer can we simply feel disappointed when we lose a few thousand acres of forest to new development. No longer can we shrug off another temperature record breaking month. Instead we need to recognize that our lives depend on radically adjusting this behavior. It is time to



Photo/Florida Fish & Wildlife

act.

That's why our Florida Chapter Conservation Committee has aligned with the national Sierra Club and adopted the **goal of conserving 30 percent more land and aquatic resources by 2030**. This campaign, nicknamed "30 x 30," stresses that we are facing a climate crisis. We are on the verge of losing 1 million species to extinction. We don't have time to wait.

We hope every Sierra Club group across Florida will join us in this effort. Everything we do in conservation can be seen through the "30 x 30" lens, whether it's acquiring new areas for protection or holding and improving existing areas. This new campaign gives us clear messaging to convey to our allies, our leaders, and the public.

(Continued on page 2)

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

ALYSSA CADWALADER



Over the last two months, we find ourselves in strange and different times. Whatever this means for you and your family, I hope you have found ways to cope and build a “new normal.” Much like every family and business across the country and the world, Sierra Club has found itself having to cope with a new normal, as well.

COVID-19 has not stopped our fight to protect the environment, though many of us have found ourselves fighting from our couches with our computers and cell phones, while doing a little less exploring and enjoying than we would like. I find myself both horrified by the quiet rollbacks of environmental regulations during a worldwide pandemic, and hopeful that the world will recognize the positive environmental changes we’ve seen in the short time Mother Earth has been given a chance to breathe.

While we remain hopeful for the future, we also have to fight for that future. One of our most important battles is the upcoming 2020 election. Our political committee, staff, and teams have been hard at work (virtually, of course) increasing our political power, strategizing how to win elections and flip seats, and raising money for the Sierra Club Florida Political Action Fund.

Florida has been identified as a key battleground state by the national Sierra Club Political Team and is receiving additional support to help get Trump and his environmentally unfriendly cronies out and secure a better future for our people and our environment. Please consider getting involved in the 2020 election campaign through your local Sierra Club group or another organization working on the election.

Together we can do more and elect a better future for ourselves, our families, and all Americans!

COVID-19 UPDATE

As many of you know, Sierra Club outings, meetings and events have been put on hold during the past few months. Out of an abundance of caution for the safety of all our members and the public, Sierra Club is extending the moratorium through June 14. These events may be cancelled, shifted to virtual or rescheduled for a later date. This date is subject to change at any time. Members are encouraged to watch their e-mail, social media, and mail and check their group web sites to keep abreast of any new developments.

(Continued from page 1)

This is the work Sierra Club was meant for. We will work with frontline communities and use this new sense of urgency to provide organizer training and build out our grassroots network. We will renew efforts to fully fund the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (aka Florida Forever). We will work with county governments to press for local conservation gains. We will demand better growth management. We will stop the toll roads. And we will hopefully celebrate more wins like the recently approved Nature Coast Aquatic Preserve off the central Gulf coast.

Will you join us?

Conserving 30 percent more by 2030 is an ambitious goal. We can’t achieve it by maintaining the status quo and need more leaders to step up. Part of this work requires building new synergy between state Chapter and local groups. Soon, we’ll start scheduling quarterly Conservation meetings where group Conservation committee members can meet online with Chapter leaders to exchange updates, strategy, and tactics. Hopefully, it’s just the beginning.

To become involved in the Sierra Club Florida “30 x 30” campaign, contact your local group or Timothy Martin at tim.martin@florida.sierraclub.org



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Marcia Biggs, Editor

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Sierra Continues Its Work Through Pandemic Crisis

By MICHAEL BRUNE

Excerpts from the Sierra Club Executive Director's blog:

These are extraordinarily challenging times. Many of us are grieving losses large and small, and are filled with anxiety about the future. But the Sierra Club continues to work for a future that includes everything we need to flourish -- a stable climate, clean air and water, clean energy, and thriving wildlife and public lands -- and we're achieving important victories.

Banks are getting the message: Fossil fuels are bad business.

In April, Morgan Stanley and Citigroup pledged not to finance new drilling in the Arctic, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Every major US bank except Bank of America has now agreed to not support the destruction of the Arctic Refuge.

These pledges are the result of years of meetings between bank executives, Sierra Club campaign representatives, and, most importantly, leaders from the Gwich'in Nation, the tribe that's lived alongside the Arctic Refuge for millennia -- plus the public pressure campaign waged by activists from the Sierra Club and elsewhere.

Even during a pandemic, we're still moving beyond coal.

As of March 14, New York State is officially coal-free. After eight years of hard work from Beyond Coal activists, New York will likely never again burn coal. And it's taking major steps to replace dirty fuels with offshore wind power and large-scale renewable power projects.

It's not just blue states that are moving away from dirty fuels. In Georgia, 12 years of advocacy from the Sierra Club, the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy and other groups shut down plans for what is believed to be the country's last proposed new coal plant.

A Victory for 100 Million People

Recently, we passed a major milestone for clean energy in the United States. More than 100 million people now live in places committed to 100 percent clean energy. That's almost one in three people in this country, representing 163 cities, 13 counties, eight states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

This milestone is a victory for everyone who has been forced to breathe polluted air or drink unclean water because they lived near a dirty power plant. It's also an important victory in our quest for a stable climate: These clean energy commitments are the equivalent of eliminating the emissions from 66 million cars or retiring 79 coal plants.

It's all the more impressive for having been achieved in spite of an administration that does everything in its power to prop up dirty fuels and undermine clean energy. That really shows the



Wikimedia photo

“ This is a moment for our Sierra Club community to be in solidarity with movements working for economic, racial, and health justice. To defeat the powerful interests that seek to put profits before people, we need a truly big-tent movement. The only way to build a movement like that is by working with our partners, and that's especially true at a time like this.— ” *Michael Brune*

power of local, grassroots organizing even, or especially, when things are tough at the federal level. When we organize with our friends, neighbors, coworkers, and other people we know, we can win the things our communities need to flourish.

The Keystone XL pipeline lost a key permit -- and that has implications for pipelines across the country.

The Sierra Club and many others -- including, most importantly, the Cheyenne River Sioux, the Rosebud Sioux, and the Fort Belknap Sioux -- have been working to stop the Keystone XL pipeline for more than 10 years. Back in 2013, I and other Sierra Club representatives broke our 120-year embargo on civil disobedience to try stop this pipeline from ever being built.

In mid-April, our movement scored an important victory. A Montana district court judge revoked the permit that allowed Keystone XL to cross the 700 streams and waterways on its route -- preventing construction from advancing in most of its segments.

This ruling is already causing courts to reassess the permits for pipelines slated to be built across the country. It's another important tool in our arsenal as we fight the projects that threaten our homes and our futures.

Get Engaged, Vote to Create Change

By DAVID HARBEITNER
Florida Chapter Political Chair

Do you ever feel our environment is constantly under attack? Common sense environmental regulations are rolled back? Preferences of the vast majority of citizens are ignored?

If you do feel this way, count yourself among the majority of Floridians. But if the majority of us feel this way, why do these things keep happening? Simple, our elected officials. Whether we like it or not, our elected officials set the policies that impact our lives.

If you want to see a change in how society at large and the environment specifically are treated, there are two major ways to help:

- 1) Get engaged in electing the best candidate.
- 2) Meet with your elected officials.

Given we are in a presidential electoral cycle, we are going to focus on the former of these two actions. Sierra Club members and our supporters have a high propensity to vote, so this article is focusing on what we can do to impact elections positively given our limited amount of time. Here are some ways you can help make a difference in the 2020 electoral cycle:

Have no time to be involved?

Vote. It only takes a few minutes to **find out who the Club has endorsed.** If concerned with going to the polls, request a mail-in ballot by requesting one from your county Supervisor of Elections. You can find them by simply searching online. Go to your local group's web site to find local information or contact them directly. For state and federal endorsements, check out the Florida Chapter Political Endorsements page on our web site at www.sierraclub.org/florida/florida-sierra-club-political-endorsements. **Share these endorsements** on your



2020 LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

To see how your legislators voted in the last session, look for our Thumbs Up and Thumbs Down report in the 2020 Legislative Scorecard on the Sierra Club Florida website at www.sierraclub.org/florida/legislative-lobbying

Subscribe to the Florida Report which features detailed legislative reports and alerts from our lobbyist Dave Cullen and the Sierra Club Florida Government Affairs & Political Director Deborah Foote. E-mail cullenasea@aol.com to be added to the listserve.



social media and with your friends. Most people want to know who the better environmental candidate is and the Club is one of the few environmental organizations which makes endorsements in elections and we do it across all levels of government.

You can quickly **donate to the Sierra Club Florida PAC.** Supporting our endorsed candidates with public outreach requires money from our PAC. This is just a fact of Florida and US election law. Our PAC is not a Super PAC, everything is done in a fully transparent fashion. Every dollar we receive is used to support our candidates and positions. Donate by going to www.bit.ly/SierraClubFLPAC

If you have a few hours a month:

Become a member of your **group's Political Committee.** The strength of our organization is in our volunteer members. At our best, we have a number of individuals working together, each being engaged equally to allow a lot of work to be accomplished by dividing and conquering the many tasks it takes to both elect and influence our elected officials.

If your time is limited, you can still **join our Battleground Volunteer Program.** The Sierra Club realizes the stakes have never been higher and is investing more time and resources than ever before to return the country to

environmental leadership. You can join the text, call and/or letter writing teams as we work to change the trajectory of our environmental stewardship. Learn more at www.sierraclubindependentaction.org/

If you have 10+ hours a month:

If you have between 10-20 hours a month, **get involved in the endorsement work with your group.** Developing questionnaires, participating in interviews and engaging in endorsement decisions, this work only occurs occasionally, but is a more time intense process when we are in electoral season. And it won't be surprising to learn that candidates are even more likely to be open to discussion on topics, even more so than elected officials.

As a youth in the '60s and '70s, I witnessed the positive impact of environmental protection. As a resident of Florida over the last decade, I have seen the damage a handful of elected politicians have brought to the quality of Florida's environment and the health of its citizens.

Through our collective efforts, by voting, communicating with our networks and donating a little of our time, skills and money, we can improve the environmental outlook in our communities and across the nation. Don't despair, take action and help put our communities back on track.

2020 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

BY DEBORAH FOOTE

Florida Chapter Government Affairs and Political Director

Overall, the 2020 legislative session continued to disappoint those of us who care about the environment. This highlights the importance of the upcoming elections and sending candidates who share our priorities to Tallahassee. We encourage all our members and supporters to get involved.

What happened in 2020 was an extension of what happened in 2019:

- Local governments continue to lose their ability to regulate in ways that reflect their community values.
- Growth management protections are so diminished that communities will be

hard pressed to prevent land from development.

- Our waters will continue to be polluted by fertilizer and biosolids.
- Citizen democracy continues to suffer at the hands of corporate interests.

There were a few positive legislative outcomes:

- The establishment of the Nature Coast Aquatic Preserve (House Bill 1061);
- The requirement of sea level impact studies for taxpayer funded construction projects in coastal building zones (Senate Bill 178);
- Increased penalties for illegal taking/possession of bears (House Bill 327);
- New protections for heirs property

co-tenants (Senate Bill 580); and

- Shifting environmental impact monitoring of explosives used in limestone mining from the mining company contractors to the State Fire Marshal's Office.

The legislature passed a budget that includes \$100 million for land acquisition, an improvement over last session allocation of \$30 million, but far below our call for full funding. Everglades restoration funding remains strong at \$625 million while funding for springs restoration only received \$50 million.

It should be noted that this budget was passed prior to the pandemic, and it is likely the legislature will convene for a special session to address a very different revenue scenario than was anticipated.

Environmental bills for which Sierra Club Florida dedicated considerable time and resources:

Senate Bill 172 *Florida Drug & Cosmetic Act*: preempts regulation of over-the-counter drugs and cosmetics to the state; specifically aimed at ending Key West's ban on the sale of sunscreens containing octinoxate or oxybenzone as they are harmful to coral reefs.

VETO REQUESTED

Senate Bill 410 *Growth Management*: continues the assault on growth management by requiring that each local comprehensive plan include a new private property rights element which adds no additional property rights protection for individuals and could cost as much as \$100,000 depending on the size of the community. It subjects more municipalities to development orders superseding comprehensive plans and further limits the authority of county governments to manage growth within

their borders and could clear the way for high-density development in designated rural areas.

VETO REQUESTED

Senate Bill 712 *Clean Waterways Act*: heavily weakened over the session to appease industry, this bill (1) fails to fix the broken BMAP program, (2) doesn't require agriculture to meet water quality laws, (3) does nothing to protect our springs from water bottlers, (4) fatally weakens rules regarding application of biosolids, (5) makes reclaimed sewage water a source for public water systems without adequate safeguards, and (6) bans local Rights of Nature laws.

VETO REQUESTED

Senate Bill 1794 *Constitutional Amendments*: makes it harder for citizens to put initiatives to amend the State Constitution on the ballot. Includes (1) increasing the required number of signatures before the Supreme Court looks at the language of the peti-

tion, (2) requiring that signatures would have to come from 1/2, instead of 1/4, of the state's congressional districts, (3) invalidating an elector's signature if a petition gatherer's paperwork is not in order, (4) reducing the "shelf life" of signed petitions to a single year, (5) charging the petition sponsor for all printing and signature verifying costs, and (6) allowing any citizen to challenge a petition gatherer's credentials.

SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

Senate Bill 7018 *Essential State Infrastructure*: requires DOT to create a master plan for EV charging stations along State Highway System. Was amended to require local governments to notify utilities that their applications are complete within 14 days or approved automatically. Also makes it easier for utilities to be able to use conservation easements on agricultural properties for linear facilities (which could include oil/gas pipelines).

SENT TO THE GOVERNOR

Toll roads M-CORE project threatens Florida

In 2019, the Florida state legislature passed a bill to authorize the design and construction of three new toll roads through the heart of rural Florida. If built, these new toll roads will destroy large swaths of Florida's last remaining rural lands and communities, pollute waterways, and threaten endangered wildlife; this threat includes the extinction of the iconic Florida panther.

This toll road plan includes the Suncoast Connector extending north from Citrus County to the Georgia border, the Northern Turnpike Connector extending from the Suncoast Connector to the Florida Turnpike, and the Southwest-Central Connector extending from Collier County to Polk County.

According to 1000 Friends of Florida's analysis, Florida is scheduled to spend \$135 million on M-CORES by July 1, 2021 and more than \$1.1 billion over the next 10 years. Most of that \$1.1 billion will be spent on just designing the toll roads. Based on similar projects completed in the past, the total cost of the M-CORES toll roads could be more than \$21 billion. These funds are and will be needed elsewhere, if they are available at all.

Sales tax accounts for nearly 80 percent of state general revenue, and about one-fifth of sales tax comes directly from the hospitality and tourism industries. By the time self-isolation ceases to impact commerce, Florida will likely lose billions of dollars in tax revenue while needing to do more than ever to care for Florida's large elderly population, address the critical needs of the unemployed, and keep small businesses afloat; in other words, take care of the state's critical needs. The last thing Florida needs is to be spending precious state tax dollars on new tollways that are not needed or wanted.

And yet, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has continued to push forward the M-CORES plan in the clear absence of any inherent urgency to lead them to take this action.

In-person task force meetings for each of the three corridors have been replaced by task force webinars. With the situ-



ation in April and May and even still, with so many people worried about protecting their lives from the COVID-19 threat, it was and remains absurd to expect a normal public response to any agency action. What's the rush? What do developers want more than anything? They want a faster and less thorough vetting, and continuing the M-CORES process without true public engagement will get the applicants exactly what they wish. Webinars may be helpful when paired with public hearings, providing access for those unable to travel who have the capability and access to use the technology, but they are not equivalent or interchangeable.

A new web site — noroadstoruin.org — by the No Roads to Ruin Coalition will give you nearly everything you need to join the fight. Please visit the website as often as possible! You can also keep track of the campaign by liking and following our Facebook page: facebook.com/NoRoadsToRuin/

Bag it with reusable bags and your own spray disinfectant

Sierra Club encourages everyone to use reusable bags for shopping. Reducing plastic bags at the checkout is only a start to addressing the larger single-use plastics issues. Since Publix is one of the largest grocery chains in Florida, we have initiated a campaign called Stop Using Plastic Bags, Publix.

You can sign our petition asking Publix to reduce plastic bag distribution by going to:

[addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/stop-](http://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/stop-using-plastic-bags-publix)

using-plastic-bags-publix

If you are worried about the spread of the coronavirus, exercise due diligence by washing your grocery bags frequently in hot water, then air dry. You can also wipe them down with disinfectant wipes. If you don't have wipes on hand, make a homemade disinfecting solution with 4 teaspoons of unscented bleach for every 4 cups of water. Mix it in a spray bottle, spray on your reusable bag and wipe with a towel. The leftover mixture can also be

used to wipe down household surfaces.

In cases where bleach isn't available, hydrogen peroxide is another option. According to the CDC, hydrogen peroxide is a stable and effective disinfectant against a wide variety of microorganisms, including bacteria and viruses, when used on non-porous surfaces. Typically sold in 3% solutions, hydrogen peroxide can be used as-is, directly from the bottle. Simply pour into a spray bottle for use as disinfectant.

Around the State

Welcome the Adventure Coast Group

The Florida Chapter is excited to announce we have a new Group - the Adventure Coast Group is now official and hard at work in Citrus/Hernando/North Pasco counties. However, this Group is not new. It started as a Working Committee of the Suncoast and Tampa Bay Groups. It met in restaurants and local offices. It watched a swell of interested individuals come and then dwindle. Throughout the past three years, several stalwarts stood steadfast and group leaders have emerged. When Gwen Bassick stepped down as chair, Bob Howell was elected. Along with DeeVon Quirolo, Eugene Kelly, Tom St. Clair, and Bob Kiem, they form the group's current executive committee.

"We have been busy with all things Sierra," says Chair Bob Howell. "Like solar energy for schools, and EV's. We are fighting the Roads to Ruin (tollroads), fighting the destruction caused by county comprehensive plans, fighting the siting of natural gas terminals, and working hard to find and support local candidates in the upcoming elections."

Sierra members in this region can follow updates on the group's Facebook page (facebook.com/groups/sierradventurecoast) as the new website is being built. To receive monthly e-newsletters, be sure you have opted in to receive e-mail by sending your name and e-mail to sierradventurecoastcc@gmail.com or call (352) 277-3330.



South Florida organizer Diana Umpierre, center, was awarded the Everglades Coalition's 2020 Grassroots Activism Award at their conference in January. She is joined by (l-r) Cris Costello (Sierra), Mark Perry and Marisa Carozzo (Everglades Coalition). Congratulations, Diana!

Seeking West Panhandle Leaders

Florida Sierra is looking for members living in the West Panhandle who are interested in becoming active in forming a group. Contact John Swingle at john.swingle@florida.sierraclub.org

Owners should take responsibility for septic systems

By EDWARD TEDTMANN
Loxahatchee Group

Every day, nearly 300 million gallons of wastewater is dumped from a half dozen sewage outfalls just from Miami/Dade to Broward counties. When Hurricane Irma hit Southwest Florida in 2017, hundreds of millions of gallons of sewage were dumped. Flooded residential areas hemorrhaged septic tank affluent into coastal waters creating a public health nightmare.

In 2019, sewage and disposal bills that would have required inspections at least every five years were gutted by amendments in the Florida legislative session. The bill failed. A 2016 Report by the American Society of Civil Engineers estimated that Florida was running an \$18.4 billion deficit in needed wastewater infrastructure projects, which does not account for Florida's future population

that expands by 1,000 new residents every day, or the impacts of climate change induced rainfall events, flooding and sea level rise that will increase in the coming decades.

Are you one of 2.6 million residents of Florida with a septic tank? It seems unfathomable that the only required inspections of septic tank systems in Florida are FHA financed homes, and only at the time of ownership transfer, or for new system installation.

Removal of nitrates and phosphorus is essential to preventing blue-green algae, which the system does if working properly. But what if the system is old and leaking into the ground? The most common problem with septic tank systems is that they are not inspected every three years, and pumped of biosolids every three to five years, to prevent system failure. Another problem is root intrusion from nearby trees, entering the tanks and drain-

fields. A preventative bio-barrier can be installed in the perimeter of the drain field, if there are trees in proximity.

The cost of owning and maintaining a septic system can be considerable. The inspection cost is \$350-\$400 and pumping cost to the home owner \$245-\$285, let alone the repairs required: A drainfield can cost \$5,000-\$10,000, a pump replacement \$400, and incidental plumbing repairs are not affordable to some.

If you use a septic tank system, you have a responsibility to maintain it even if there are no inspection laws. Septic tank pollution is a known factor in causing harmful algal blooms, polluting Florida waters and killing marine life. The Florida Onsite Wastewater Association provides input for septic regulations to the state. If you would like to learn more about your septic system, go to fowaonsite.com or call (321) 363-1590. You can also check out floridadep.gov/water.

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Moving?

Email new address to
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number located on the mailing label.



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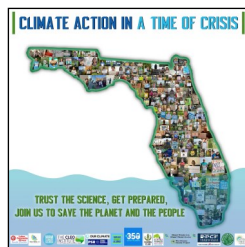
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We can still celebrate 50 years of Earth Day

Although in the midst of a global pandemic when most of the world was staying home, millions came together online in a massive show of concern during a three-day EarthDayLive2020 livestream April 22-24. Inspirational activists, celebrities, musicians, youth and religious leaders broadcast messages to the world to raise awareness and hope for the future.

Florida Sierra staff participated in the weekend celebration.

Organizer Diana Umpierre organized and moderated a video webinar called “Inspiring Florida Voices Rising to the Challenges.” She gathered a panel of speakers representing frontline communities disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus crisis and vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis.



We heard stories of struggle, but also of hope, from activists and leaders rising to overcome these challenges and the environmental and social injustices they expose, including food insecurity and migrant farmworkers. We explored how these issues are interconnected and what the pandemic crisis is teaching about our vulnerabilities and system changes needed.

Panelists included Jeannie Economos, Farmworker Association of Florida; Oscar Otzoy, Coalition of Immokalee Workers; Valencia Gunder, The Smile Trust; Mayra Cruz, Catalyst Miami; Robin Haines Merrill, farm produce delivery program; Dr. Jennifer Taylor, FAMU's Small Farm Programs and Florida's 2019 Woman of the Year in Agriculture.

“The 50th anniversary of Earth Day

should be a turning point, when we stop business as usual and together rebuild an economy that protects people, wildlife and the planet from pandemics and the climate emergency,” said Umpierre.

To watch the video, go to www.sierraclubfloridanews.org/2020/05/earth-day-inspiring-fl-voices.html

In Tampa Bay, Florida organizer Phil Compton organized Earth Day Tampa Bay Live, a livestream with a panel of noted environmental and social justice advocates.

A roundtable of diverse topics of interest to the region included panelists from Organize Florida, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Alliance for Climate Education, USF College of Marine Science, League of United Latin American Citizens, Tampa Bay Climate Alliance, Friends of the Hillsborough River.