



WATERKEEPERS®  
FLORIDA

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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## A MESSAGE FROM WATERKEEPERS FLORIDA

Florida's water resources are unique and priceless. From rivers to lakes, from cypress swamps to mangrove forests, from lagoons to springs -- these resources define our state's identity. 2020 marked another year of challenges and opportunities for Florida's watersheds and Waterkeepers Florida remained a powerful advocate for these important places.

The 14 member organizations of Waterkeepers Florida collectively protect and restore water resources across 45,000 square miles of watershed, serving more than 15 million Floridians. Our scope of work is diverse, focusing on protecting and restoring water quality and quantity, flora and fauna that depend on our water, and ensuring that the aesthetic, recreational, and economic benefits of our water resources are safeguarded.

This mission was deeply challenged in 2020 when our water resources were threatened and compromised by harmful rule changes and rollbacks, intended to fast track development and support industry interests. New lackluster law emerged from the state legislature that claimed to be the solution to Florida's water woes, but functionally fell short. Meanwhile, recreational waters across the state remained impaired for heavy metals, bacteria, and harmful contaminants; other waters were persistently plagued by algae blooms and fish kill events. All the while, a deadly pandemic swept the globe and attention was diverted to this public health crisis.

Waterkeepers Florida, however, remained vigilant. We banded together and took a stand for our water resources. We showed up and gave public testimony. We monitored development permits. We opposed harmful mining projects. We continued our scientific monitoring. We notified and mobilized the public in a grassroots response to attacks on our water resources. And, we demanded action on important issues like blue-green algae blooms, sea level rise, dredging, dams, spring protection, mining projects, wetlands permitting, and more.

On behalf of our respective organizations, our hundreds of members, and more than 45,000 square miles of watershed, thank you for joining us in taking a stand to protect Florida's waters.

Together, Waterkeepers Florida remains committed to speaking out in support of Florida's water and advocating for the long-term sustainability of these resources. We look forward to a better and brighter 2021.

Yours in clean water,

Waterkeepers Florida





Lisa Rinaman  
St. Johns Riverkeeper

The St. Johns River is the longest river in Florida, flowing 310 miles north from its Headwaters at Blue Cypress Lake in Indian River County to its mouth where it empties in to the Atlantic Ocean east of Jacksonville. Dropping only approximately 1 inch per mile, a mere 27 feet, over the course of 310 miles, the St. Johns is one of the “laziest” rivers in the world. Nearly 16% of the state, the St. Johns River Watershed Basin covers an area of nearly 9,000 square miles, features more than 100 freshwater springs, includes a 100-mile-long estuary and is home to 5 million people.

Our founders were a group of committed visionaries of different backgrounds and viewpoints, who came together in the late 1990’s with the single purpose of protecting one of our state’s most valuable, natural assets. Twenty-one years later, we continue to stand up for the St. Johns and provide the river with a powerful voice.

Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman serves as the St. Johns third chief advocate and protector. Since 2012, Lisa has leveraged her 10 years of local government experience to secure scientifically-backed solutions for more protective policy and the restoration of the river and its tributaries.

Since our inception, one the most vexing problems facing the St. Johns River has consistently been excessive nutrients – nitrogen and phosphorous – fueling toxic blue green algae. Thanks to the success with two major legal victories that forced the state to reduce nutrient loading into the St. Johns., significant reductions in nitrogen loading have occurred.

In 2019, phosphorous took center stage as a major source of pollution undermining the river’s health.

Phosphorous-laden runoff from South Florida’s sewage sludge applied to farm and ranch lands

in the headwaters of the St. Johns is now having a devastating impact to water quality and undermining the investment made by downstream communities.

Along with our Headwaters Advisory Council, we continue to be one of the most vocal critics and persistent advocates fighting for tougher regulations to prevent runoff from the land disposal of sewage sludge. A more protective rule will be adopted soon, but more must be done to put an end to this harmful practice.

In addition to stopping pollution at its source, we must restore the river to be more resilient. Rising sea levels, climate change, dredging, overuse of our aquifer and wetlands destruction is making our river more vulnerable to saltwater intrusion, toxic algae outbreaks and flooding. Efforts through our River Rising Campaign and Free the Ocklawaha River Coalition are designed to protect and restore wetlands and freshwater flows to offset impacts. Ongoing legal efforts also play a critical role to increase resiliency including our joint petition to stop EPA from delegating Clean Water Act 404 permitting authority allowing the state to fast-track wetlands permitting for construction projects and the long-standing challenge to hold the legislature accountable to conserve land to protect our water as intended by voters who approved the 2014 conservation constitutional amendment.

The difficulties of 2020 have reminded us all of the importance of nature and the St. Johns to our own health and well-being. Our team and volunteers have responded to the pandemic by developing and implementing creative new ways to engage the public, raise awareness, educate youth, and advocate for a clean and healthy St. Johns River.

Together, we are for the river!

# Featured Waterkeeper

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER is a privately-funded, independent and trusted voice for the St. Johns River and the public to whom it belongs. We are a 501(c)(3) organization and rely on the support of our members, donors and volunteers to accomplish our mission - **to defend the St. Johns River and advocate for its protection.**





# PROJECTS

**APALACHICOLA RIVERKEEPER**

Apalachicola Riverkeeper’s Slough Restoration Project, funded in 2020 by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, will restore the connection of three slough systems in the Apalachicola River watershed during times of low flow by removing sediment plugs and reestablishing hydrologic connectivity. The excess sediment is the result of past dredging practices by the Army Corps of Engineers. The multi-year project area includes Douglas Slough, Spiders Cut, and East River. Apalachicola Bay depends on the river and its flooded floodplain and floodplain sloughs because they support the bay ecosystem with freshwater, nutrients and detritus.

**CALUSA WATERKEEPER**

One of several projects Calusa Waterkeeper conducted in 2020 was the development of a restoration plan for Billy’s Creek in Ft. Myers. The Creek has a rich history in Ft. Myers as it was named for Chief Billy Bowlegs, a leader of the Seminoles in Florida during the Second and Third Seminole Wars against the United States. The Creek runs about five miles through an urbanized basin of Fort Myers and is significantly contaminated by elevated levels of fecal bacteria for at least two decades. The Southwest Florida Community Foundation provided the funding to develop the restoration plan which was completed by Calusa Waterkeeper in December. Implementation of the plan will begin in 2021 by incorporating community stakeholders including citizen organizations and local governments.

**COLLIER COUNTY WATERKEEPER**

The Collier County Waterkeeper spent 2020 continuing to grow its waters sampling program for Swim Guide, participating and organizing beach clean ups and finishing up a NOAA grant application to study the effects of HABs (Harmful Algal Blooms) off the coast of Collier County by studying conditions at different depths at the artificial reef and natural ledge reef systems from 5 miles to 35 miles off the coast of Collier. HABs caused by runoff from Lake Okeechobee and Marco Island have been having generational effects on the local fish and migratory bird populations. CCWK hopes to understand and educate the public in our watershed on how HABs move off of the Collier County Coast.

**EMERALD COASTKEEPER**

In coordination with the State of Florida’s RESTORE grant and the County of Escambia, Division of Natural Resources; Emerald Coastkeeper was selected to be one of the stakeholders in the restoration of Carpenter’s Creek, an impaired waterbody in Pensacola, Florida. As a stakeholder, Emerald Coastkeeper assisted with the identification of pollutant sources, recreational opportunities and recommendations to reduce future negative environmental impacts. At this time, Emerald Coastkeeper’s volunteers have removed over 15 tons of garbage from the creek. Opportunities for stormwater mitigation and public recreation have also been identified and are now in the public participation phase of the grant program.

**INDIAN RIVERKEEPER**

Indian Riverkeeper is advocating for installation of trash receptacles, new signage regarding littering, pedestrian right-of-way, “no cast-netting” language, and enforcement of existing littering laws along the Jensen Beach Causeway. After Martin County anglers noticed new “no-fishing” signs along the causeway, Indian Riverkeeper began coordinating with the Florida Department of Transportation to resolve resource use issues in the area. Indian Riverkeeper will continue to work to bring citizens on board in its mission to protect and preserve the Indian River Lagoon and fight to preserve public access to our waterways.

**KISSIMMEE WATERKEEPER**

With climate change fundamentally altering local and global temperatures, rainfall patterns, and sea levels, no longer can water issues be treated as separate from the climate crisis. Our ability to address water challenges over the long term is now fully dependent on our success in addressing climate change. Given this reality, Kissimmee Waterkeeper is working to bring the annual U.N. climate conference to Florida and other U.S. communities through virtual technologies. Kissimmee Waterkeeper is also engaged in legislative advocacy to promote carbon sequestration in our watersheds. By capturing carbon as organic matter in soils, wetlands and forests we can also reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus pollution that degrades Florida waters.

**LAKE WORTH WATERKEEPER**

“Learning with LaGoonies” is one of Lake Worth Waterkeeper’s proudest programs: an 8-week outdoor experiential education program designed to cultivate tomorrow’s environmental stewards. Young students get to explore a different part of the Lake Worth Lagoon watershed each week. They learn about its role in the Greater Everglades ecosystem while experiencing different habitats and their associated wildlife. Students learn about different science skills and learn about the different careers that work on our environment, everything from anthropology to zoology. The LaGoonies always practice Leave No Trace principles, and by the end of the program they embrace a green lifestyle.

**MATANZAS RIVERKEEPER**

Throughout 2020, Matanzas Riverkeeper led a successful campaign to restart St. Johns County’s conservation land acquisition program which had been defunct since 2008. St. Johns County is one of the fastest growing counties in Florida and increasing urbanization is putting a strain on the area’s natural resources. The Land Acquisition and Management Program (LAMP) will be funded with \$500,000 to acquire and preserve environmentally sensitive land in St. Johns County and will entail a citizen advisory board to create a strategy for county-wide land conservation and make recommendations to the County Commission regarding specific parcels to acquire for conservation.







*Kissimmee Waterkeeper*

### MIAMI WATERKEEPER

Last year marked Miami Waterkeeper's 10th anniversary! To commemorate this event, Miami Waterkeeper produced Waves of Change: a 3-episode docuseries highlighting the past, present, and future of South Florida's spectacular and unique watershed. This series showcased diverse voices, from indigenous tribes to local artists, who have a stake in continuing the fight for clean water. Such a collective voice is critical to addressing South Florida's next decade of water resource challenges and opportunities. Waves of Change shows how decades of advocacy against pollution, including Miami Waterkeeper's own 10 years of water wins, is shaping the path forward to a more sustainable future for our region.

### ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER

St. Johns Riverkeeper is leading the charge to ensure the river is resilient to rising waters and the threats of climate change. The River Rising Campaign led to the creation of Jacksonville's first Chief Resiliency Officer and the formation of Jacksonville's Special Committee on Resiliency. As a founding member of the Free the Ocklawaha River Coalition, St. Johns Riverkeeper rallied more than 50 organizations to restore the Ocklawaha as part of The Great Florida Riverway. Reuniting the natural connection of Silver Springs, the Ocklawaha, and the St. Johns Rivers is one of the most significant steps towards a more resilient, healthy St. Johns.

### ST. MARYS RIVERKEEPER

Among St. Marys Riverkeeper's most important tasks are to advocate for sustainable development in rapidly developing communities, to ensure community resilience, and to safeguard the natural capital of vast wetlands. In areas that have lost that natural capital, St. Marys Riverkeeper performs restoration in order to improve resilience. In 2019, St. Marys Riverkeeper installed a living oyster reef shoreline on the waterfront of historic Old Town Fernandina in Amelia Island. The shoreline, constructed of derelict crab traps collected on the gulf coast of Florida, serves as a wave break along a high traffic area of the intercoastal waterway. The wave break aims to

provide oyster habitat, halt erosion, and restore lost marsh vegetation. St. Marys Riverkeeper was unable to install phase two of the shoreline in 2020, but will resume work on the project in the spring of 2021.

### SUNCOAST WATERKEEPER

Suncoast Waterkeeper continues to celebrate successes in enforcing the Clean Water Act in Federal Court against municipalities with failed sewage systems that pollute waterways and fail to serve the public's interest in maintaining clean, healthy waters. In 2020, Suncoast Waterkeeper increased sampling and monitoring of the bay waters for recreational water quality, regularly reporting our results to the public and regulatory bodies and periodically investigating suspected areas subject to pollution.

### SUWANNEE RIVERKEEPER

Suwannee Riverkeeper has been instrumental in communicating with state agencies on behalf of its parent organization WWALS Watershed Coalition about water quality testing. Over the past year, SRK has successfully advocated for the publication of real-time bacterial results in order to increase public access to water quality data. SRK has also helped to advocate for chemical tracer and DNA marker tests of water samples. This new evidence reveals that most of the periodic contamination in the Withlacoochee River is not from human sources, but from ruminants. SRK will continue to advocate for Florida to test our rivers from the state line all the way to the Gulf.

### TAMPA BAY WATERKEEPER

2020 saw renewal and growth for Tampa Bay Waterkeeper, with a reconstructed board and the initiation of several Clean Water Act enforcement cases to complement Tampa Bay Waterkeeper's ongoing recreational water quality monitoring program. Tampa Bay Waterkeeper will continue to research issues and work collaboratively with citizens, local organizations and governments to achieve Tampa Bay Waterkeeper's clean water mission. Tampa Bay Waterkeeper is poised for growth and success in 2021.



*Emerald Coastkeeper*



*Suwannee Riverkeeper*



*St. Marys Riverkeeper*





# ADVOCACY

## Senate Bill 712: Clean Waterways Act

In 2020, Governor DeSantis signed into law SB 712 - the self-proclaimed “Clean Waterways Act” - an ambitious misnomer for a bill that claimed to be the solution to Florida’s mounting water quality issues, but in fact, but lacked the specificity and enforceability to actually solve any of the problems.

Namely, the provisions of the law are not capable of achieving the Total Maximum Daily Load water quality goals for the vast majority of Florida’s impaired waters. SB 712 also failed to address the fatal flaw in Basin Management Action Plans - the fact that they are not regularly updated to incorporate projected changes in demographics, land use, and hydrology. The law also relies on ineffective Best Management Practices to address one of the largest sources of nutrient pollution: agriculture.

Throughout the 2020 legislative session, Waterkeepers Florida, in collaboration with Sierra Club Florida and

the Florida Springs Council, ardently advocated for improvements to SB 712 that would result in an effective piece of legislation that would actually address some of the leading causes of water pollution across the state. Waterkeepers Florida and the other groups also called for 18 amendments to the bill prior to it being signed into law in a letter sent to the bill’s sponsor, Senator Mayfield, and other state legislators. Additionally, our coalition sent a letter to the state of Florida’s Chief Science officer detailing the multiple failures of the bill to meaningfully address Florida’s water pollution crisis.

Waterkeepers Florida will continue advocacy efforts in 2021 to ensure that water quality legislation is based on the best available science and will make substantial progress towards improving water quality.

## Waterkeepers Florida Weighs in on Stormwater Rules

Waterkeepers Florida, along with a strong coalition of Florida environmental organizations, banded together to provide extensive support for updating Florida’s stormwater regulations during the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (FDEP) most recent Stormwater Rulemaking process. Stormwater pollution from runoff is

a major contributor of nonpoint source water pollution that affects Florida’s waterways, wetlands, and aquifers. This runoff can contain chemical and nutrient pollution that makes its way through already strained stormwater management systems and into adjacent water bodies. Stormwater has been regulated in Florida since the early

1980s, initially in an effort to minimize flooding, and later to also prevent degradation of water quality. The rules for stormwater management set a target to achieve at least an 80% reduction of the average annual load of pollutants that cause or contribute to violations of State Water Quality Standards for most surface waters, and a 95% reduction when the stormwater system discharges to an Outstanding Florida Water (OFW). Unfortunately, studies have shown that in reality most systems are not coming anywhere close to achieving these load reductions. In 2007, an effort was initiated to update the stormwater regulations, but unfortunately, after years of workshopping and drafting proposed

amendments, the rule was never adopted. Now a decade later, Waterkeepers Florida has urged the FDEP to build upon those rules by taking into consideration our growing population, climate change, and the detrimental effects of nutrient pollution on our waterways.

Waterkeepers Florida will continue to advocate for environmentally responsible changes to current practices, such as the formation of a Technical Advisory Committee,, amendments to address the over 76,000 existing failing stormwater treatment systems, and a monitoring system to ensure that pollution reduction goals are actually being met.

## Clean Water Act: Section 404 Assumption

Florida’s wetlands are uniquely connected and are critical to our public health, our economy, and our environment. In light of our rapidly growing population and increasing development pressure, it is essential that these ecosystems are afforded the utmost oversight and protection. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires permits for the discharge of dredge and fill material into Waters of the United States, including wetlands. Florida has particularly fragile and critical areas that are regulated by Section 404 dredge and fill permits, and which require the highest level of review and scrutiny.

In the summer of 2020, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection made a grab for that authority. FDEP made the assertion that Federal oversight slows down projects, is duplicative, and creates red tape for entities seeking to destroy wetlands. Waterkeepers Florida’s position is that Federal oversight is absolutely necessary for critical ecosystems like wetlands. We believe FDEP’s attempt to assume authority for section 404 of the Clean Water Act is improper and does not adequately protect our wetlands and waterways. Waterkeepers Florida testified at public hearings and workshops and sent numerous letters to





both FDEP and the EPA opposing the state’s attempt at assumption, including a letter in November that was co-signed by 23 other conservation groups across the state. However, in December of 2020, the EPA granted FDEP’s request and delegated authority to oversee

Twin Pines Mineral Mine

Twin Pines Minerals of Birmingham, Alabama, is a company that seeks to begin titanium strip mining less than three miles from the Okefenokee Swamp and National Wildlife Refuge. This area serves as the headwaters of the Suwannee and St. Marys Rivers in Southern Georgia -- rivers of great significance to northern Florida watersheds. The Suwannee River, the subject of Florida’s State Song, flows from Georgia, through Florida, and to the Gulf of Mexico. The St. Marys River forms the southeastern border between Georgia and Florida. Despite the significance of these areas, Twin Pines moved forward with its permit application in 2020.

A review of the mining company’s application revealed inadequate consideration of environmental impacts including, but not limited to, unproven ground and surface water modeling, inappropriately quantified impacts to listed species and critical habitat, improper discussion of impacts to wetlands and water quality, and little consideration of impacts to recreational users. Also absent in the application is modeling of soil composition compared to other titanium mine sites. This is especially important because mining byproducts, or “slimes,” found in soils can suffocate fish and cause other adverse environmental impacts. Additionally, the

dredge and fill permitting to the state of Florida. Waterkeepers Florida will continue efforts in 2021 to ensure that our wetlands are afforded the highest level of protection.

mining company has failed to illustrate that the mining operation would not adversely affect the groundwater, the underlying Floridan Aquifer, surface streams, or the Okefenokee Swamp itself.

Since 2019, Waterkeepers Florida has been a part of a broad coalition in opposition to this titanium strip mining operation. In 2020, our advocacy continued as Waterkeepers Florida sent multiple letters to both the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers demanding further review of environmental impacts and increased opportunity for public participation in the decision-making process related to the authorization of this mining operation. Waterkeepers Florida also wrote a letter to the Governor of Georgia requesting that the Georgia Environmental Protection Division reject, or, at a minimum, thoroughly examine the five permits Twin Pines has applied for through a public process. In 2021, Waterkeepers Florida will continue advocacy in opposition to this mining operation calling for Army Corps of Engineers oversight to be returned to this project, calling for further environmental review, monitoring, and remediation, and calling for proper disposal of mining waste in the interest of protecting our water resources.



Collier County Waterkeeper



Lake Worth Waterkeeper

Action on Toxic Blue-Green Algae

In both 2016 and 2018, Florida waters were plagued by recurring blue-green algae blooms resulting in state of emergency declarations. In 2019, Governor DeSantis appointed a panel of experts to a Blue-green Algae Task Force charged with expediting progress towards reducing the adverse impacts of blue-green algae blooms. The Task Force directed the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) and FDEP to work collaboratively to develop defensible health advisories and water quality criteria for blue-green algae. Advising the public of the health risk of blue-green algae exposure should be a simple task, but a Waterkeepers Florida investigation revealed otherwise.

Between May 15 and June 30, 2020, four Florida Waterkeeper organizations conducted a survey of public water-access points along the Caloosahatchee River, Lake Okeechobee, and the St. Johns River. The purpose of the survey was to determine if FDOH

warning signs had been consistently posted in these areas which had recently experienced, or were actively experiencing, blooms of blue-green algae with toxin concentrations documented by FDEP. The results of the survey showed that 22 (71%) of the 31 access points had no FDOH warning signage of any kind, even during active blooms with documented toxins. Only 9 locations (29%), had an FDOH sign with some reference to blue-green algae--typically a FDOH Caution or Alert sign.

As a result, Waterkeepers Florida sent a letter to Florida’s Blue Green Algae Task Force Chief Science Officer Dr. Thomas Frazer and Task Force members highlighting the lack of uniformity in FDOH public health signage. The letter also requested that the Task Force develop and recommend specific criteria and requirements for notifying the public of risk from recreational exposure to blue-green algae.





## ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

### Waterkeepers Florida Convene for Annual Meeting

Waterkeepers Florida convened for an in-person meeting at the University of Florida Levin College of Law's 26th annual Public Interest Environmental Conference from February 6-8, 2020. Waterkeeper organizations in attendance included Calusa Waterkeeper, Matanzas Riverkeeper, St. Marys Riverkeeper, St Johns Riverkeeper, Apalachicola Riverkeeper, Miami Waterkeeper, Collier County Waterkeeper, Lake Worth Waterkeeper, Suwanee Riverkeeper, Kissimmee Waterkeeper, and Suncoast Waterkeeper.

Waterkeeper representatives presented on numerous panels at the conference. John Cassani, Calusa Waterkeeper, spoke on a panel titled "From Shoreline to Stateline: The Marine and Estuarine Policy Scene." Kelly

Cox, General Counsel at Miami Waterkeeper, spoke on a panel titled "Un-Natural Disasters: We've Been Slimed." A full panel discussion was dedicated to the work of Florida's Waterkeepers in a session titled "It's a Great State, If We can KEEP It: Florida's Waterkeepers Speak." This panel was moderated by Matanzas Riverkeeper, Jen Lomberg, and featured the work of John Capece at Kissimmee Waterkeeper, Lisa Rinaman at St. Johns Riverkeeper, and Georgia Ackerman at Apalachicola Riverkeeper.

While in Gainesville, Waterkeepers Florida members filmed a new video feature of the organization, highlighting the mission, goals, and projects of all member organizations. View the full video at [www.waterkeepersflorida.org](http://www.waterkeepersflorida.org).

### Toast to Clean Water: Earth Day's 50th Anniversary

Waterkeepers Florida celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day with a virtual "Toast to Clean Water." Waterkeepers from across the state tuned in virtually to give their salute to their unique watersheds, highlighting victories and challenges. "Today, we celebrate 50 years since the first Earth Day" said St. Johns Riverkeeper & Waterkeepers Florida Board Chair, Lisa Rinaman. The first Earth Day "laid the foundation for the Clean Water Act that provides us as citizens the opportunity to protect our

waters for today and for future generations." The "Toast to Clean Water" concluded with a special performance by members of the Flathead Stringband, supporters of Apalachicola Riverkeeper. "On April 22, 1970 millions of people took to the streets to call for greater protections for our planet," said Jen Lomberg - Matanzas Riverkeeper and Waterkeepers Florida Vice Chair, "this Earth Day, even though we can't literally take to the streets, we can still unite [...] to work together for a healthier planet."

## 2021 PRIORITIES

*Clean water is central not only to Florida's environment, but also to our economy, public health, and quality of life. While broad policy goals supporting clean water are a step in the right direction, it is critical that these policies are supported by strong, enforceable, science-based regulations that protect our waters from the growing threats of existing pollution sources, rapid growth, and impacts from climate change.*

### 1 STOP POLLUTION AT ITS SOURCE

The old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is especially true when it comes to protecting our waterways. It makes so much more sense to keep pollution out of our waterways than spending the time, energy, and money to try to clean it up after it has become polluted. This legislative session, we are calling for policies that keep pollution OUT of our waterways, rather than attempting to clean it up after the fact including comprehensive sewage management reform, a clean waterways bill to strengthen regulatory tools, stormwater rule enhancements, and regulations aimed at reducing plastic pollution.

### 2 PROTECT ALL FLORIDA WATERS

Too often we see priority given to water resources in specific geographic or socioeconomic regions of the state while others are neglected. In Florida, all of our waterways are connected. To pollute one is to pollute them all. We urge comprehensive protections for ALL of our state's waters including sea level rise resiliency, adequate funding for restoration projects, and mechanisms to solve water quality issues rather than just move problems from one place to another.

### 3 PROTECT OUR LAND TO PROTECT OUR WATER

One of the best ways to protect our waterways is to protect the land around it. Conservation land provides a variety of ecosystem services including water purification, resiliency, and habitat protection. Land that is conserved in its natural state supports vegetation that is extremely effective at removing nutrients and other pollutants from stormwater and keeping them out of our waterways.





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*Calusa Waterkeeper / Cat Chase*