

## Fighting for Florida's endangered sea cows

### Could pollution be part of record manatee deaths?

This spring, Florida's endangered manatees died in record numbers from a toxic red algae bloom that appears every year of the state's West Coast. The annual algae bloom is particularly severe this year, and pollution may be part of the reason.

The tide has killed 241 of Florida's roughly 5,000 manatees, according to the state Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, and the toll appears certain to rise.

The state's annual red tide affects a wide range of aquatic animals and can cause problems even in people. The algae contain a nerve poison that is not only found underwater but is also blown through the air when waves break open the algae's outer casing.

#### Wildlife threatened by poison

Manatees, birds, dolphins and other animals can be killed by consuming the poison, either by accidentally eating the algae or by ingesting small organisms clinging to sea grass that have soaked up the poison while filtering seawater. Experts are uncertain why this year's algae bloom was so lengthy and toxic. Phosphorus runoff from fertilized farms and lawns may have contributed, because algae thrive on a phosphorus diet.

"Pollution threatening one of Florida's most iconic animals isn't acceptable," said Elizabeth Ouzts, regional program director for Environment Florida. "We need to do all we can to protect our treasured manatee."



Photo: U.S. FWS

▲ Manatees at Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge

Excess phosphorous pollution also threatens the Everglades, one of the world's most diverse ecosystems.

#### Pollution limits could save wildlife

To help protect the manatee, the Everglades, and all of Florida's waters, Environment Florida is urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to set new standards for pollution from development and to ensure that all the state's waters are protected under the Clean Water Act. We

will also urge state lawmakers and other state officials to set strict limits on phosphorous and nitrogen pollution for all of the state's lakes and streams. Our staff has been knocking on doors across the state for the last several years to build support for strong clean water rules for Florida.

"Our waterways and wildlife make Florida special," said Ouzts. "We know Floridians support reforms that will protect these treasures for future generations."



Photo: Paul Brennan/Bigstock

#### more online

For more information on our work to ensure Florida's waterways stay safe and healthy, visit [www.EnvironmentFlorida.org](http://www.EnvironmentFlorida.org) or follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/EnvironmentFlorida](https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentFlorida)

◀ great white egret in the Everglades



## To our members

During summer in Florida, most days are scorchers, and you have to know where the best places are to cool off—whether wading in the Green Swamp, kayaking at Ginnie Springs, swimming anywhere along the miles and miles of our beautiful coastline or simply floating in a river, lake or pond close to home.

I know we are both particularly grateful for these places during those 90 plus degree-days and all throughout the year, we've done a lot to make sure they are protected for us to enjoy. And there has been some great progress made.

The Senate has nominated a new Secretary of the Interior, who is expected to protect many treasured landscapes. And President Obama's 2014 budget looks like it is going to be a good one for protecting our parks and repowering with clean energy. We look forward to seeing these big movements make a splash here in Florida.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ouzts  
Regional Program Director

## Recent action

### Applause for new Secretary of the Interior

On April 10, the Senate voted to confirm Sally Jewell, President Obama's nominee to head the Department of the Interior.

"Environment America applauds our new Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell," said Mary Rafferty, conservation program coordinator. "Given her passion for the great outdoors and the values that have driven her work as a volunteer and a philanthropist, she is a great choice to oversee America's parks and treasured landscapes."

Environment Florida hopes to work with Jewell and President Obama to permanently protect some of Florida's most iconic places, like the Everglades.

"We also can't wait for the new Secretary to move forward with swiftly and responsibly harnessing pollution-free wind power off our coasts," said Rafferty. "We applaud the Senate for swiftly confirming Sally Jewell's nomination, as there is no time to waste in protecting our treasured landscapes. We look forward to continuing our work with the Department of the Interior under Jewell's leadership."

### Budget protects open space, cuts clean water programs

This spring, President Obama released his budget proposal for the fiscal year 2014, and it is looking like it could help protect the Kissimmee River Valley, Apalachicola National Forest, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, and other treasured spots across Florida.

The president's budget recommends \$600 million in fiscal year 20 14 for the nation's premier land conservation program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It also proposes an increase to the National Park Service's operation budget of more than \$50 million. Unfortunately, the budget also cuts funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's clean water programs.



## Toward a greener future

Environment Florida and Environment Florida Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: [PlannedGiving@EnvironmentFlorida.org](mailto:PlannedGiving@EnvironmentFlorida.org).

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Photo: William Silver/Bigstock

▲ Big Cypress National Preserve

# Report shows Florida in the path of the storm

After another year in which Florida and many parts of the country were hit by scorching heat, devastating wildfires, crippling drought, record floods and severe storms like Hurricane Sandy, a new Environment Florida Research & Policy Center report released in April finds that weather-related disasters are affecting many Floridians and Americans across the country. The report also documents how global warming could lead to certain extreme weather events becoming even more common or more severe in our state's future.

According to the report, "In the Path of the Storm," almost 80 percent of Americans live in counties hit by at least one weather-related disaster in the last six years. Hurricane Sandy, which led to the loss of 72 lives, was cited as just one of the most recent examples in the report that tore through Florida on its way up the coast to the Northeast.

## Hurricanes, cyclones, flooding and fire

Other examples of extreme weather that dramatically impacted Florida and the southeast included Hurricane Issac in August of 2012, tropical cyclones, numerous severe flooding events and wildfires.

The report details the latest science on the projected influence of global warming on heavy rain and snow; heat, drought and wildfires; and hurricanes and coastal storms. Finally, the report explores how the damage from even non-extreme weather events could increase, due to other impacts of global warming, like sea level rise.

"Here in Florida, we especially have to prepare for both the extreme and non-extreme impacts of global warming," said Elizabeth Ouzts, regional program director. "We are extremely vulnerable to numerous dramatic effects of global warming, and we need to take action now."

## Five extreme weather events

According to the report, Gulf County had one of the highest tallies of extreme

weather events over the six-year span from 2006 to 2012. The county has been impacted by three severe storms and two hurricanes.

Every weather event is now a product of a climate system where global warming "loads the dice" for extreme weather, though in different ways for different types of extreme weather. While the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently concluded that it is "virtually certain" that hot days will become hotter and "likely" that extreme precipitation events will continue to increase worldwide, there is less scientific consensus about the impact of global warming on events such as tornadoes.

"Extreme weather is happening. It is causing very serious problems, and global warming increases the likelihood that we'll see even more extreme weather in the future," said Nathan Willcox, federal global warming director. "Carbon pollution from our power plants, cars and trucks is fueling global warming, and so tackling the problem demands that we cut emissions of carbon pollution from these sources."



Photo: Patsy Lynch, FEMA

research



To read the full report, visit [www.EnvironmentFloridaCenter.org](http://www.EnvironmentFloridaCenter.org)



Photo: White House

## Gina McCarthy for EPA Head

As the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held its confirmation hearing for Gina McCarthy, President Obama's nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, Anna Aurilio, director of Environment Florida's D.C., office, issued the following statement in response:

"Gina McCarthy's stellar record of winning real results for our environment and public health—under both Republican and Democratic administrations—makes her an excellent pick to be the next head of the EPA. Because when it comes to protecting our health and environment, it isn't about who you work for or what party you represent. It's about whether you can get the job done, and Gina McCarthy has proven she can get the job done.

"There's still a lot of work to do. We're counting on the EPA to move ahead with carbon limits for new and existing power plants, the largest sources of global warming pollution. We also look forward to working with the EPA to secure protections for all our waterways from the pollution currently endangering drinking water for more than 117 million Americans.

"I urge our senators to support Gina McCarthy's nomination so that we can get back to work tackling our most urgent environmental and public health challenges."

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# Environment Florida

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## Summer Report

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Photo: Tono Balaguer/Bigstock

## Environment Florida

### Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Florida. We focus exclusively on protecting Florida's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

## Keeping up with the nation on solar

In March, the Solar Energy Industries Association released their annual year-in-review of market trends from 2012. The report found that installations grew 76 percent in 2012. The United States accounted for 11 percent of all global photovoltaic installations in 2012. California led the way with the most photovoltaic installations, followed by Arizona, New Jersey, Nevada and North Carolina.

While Florida has more solar roofs than any other state in the nation, we are working hard to see the number continue to grow. A program once eased the upfront cost of solar systems and made it easier for Floridians to harness the sun's energy. But legislators have allowed this program to run out of funding.

"We have enormous solar potential, and we've been urging our state and local government leaders to show a strong commitment to expanding solar and getting more panels on homes and businesses throughout our sunshine state," said Elizabeth Ouzts, regional program director for Environment Florida. "We are working to ensure that we keep up with the rest of the nation when it comes to growing solar."



Photo: Steven C. Spencer

### more inside

*Extreme weather hits home in Florida; Keeping wildlife and waterways free of dangerous pollution; Proposed budget expected to protect open space, and more.*

◀ [Solar home in New Smyrna Beach](#)