

2021 IMPACT REPORT



FLORIDA CONSERVATION VOTERS



DEAR CONSERVATION VOTER,

Nearly 20 months after the initial spread of COVID-19 in the United States, life seems to be slowly returning to normal here in Florida. Despite the immense challenges of living and working in a pandemic, I am delighted to report that the Conservation Voter Movement continues to grow and strengthen. Thanks to donors and supporters like you across the state, FCV and FCV Education Fund have grown by leaps and bounds over the past year. Together, we've been able to hire staff in Miami, Kissimmee, Orlando, and Tampa Bay to add to our Tallahassee-based team.



This rapid growth couldn't come soon enough, considering the immense challenges we face as residents of this beautiful state. From combating climate change to protecting our land and water to defending our democratic freedoms, we are honored to do this vital work.

I invite you to review our 2021 Impact Report. Inside, you will learn more about our newest staff and programs. You can also learn more on our websites, fcvoters.org and fcvef.org, which we updated at the beginning of the year. There you'll find inspiring stories about overcoming challenges and building community power. I'm especially proud of our Chispa and Democracy For All teams. You can read about them on pages 3 and 4.

Thank you for your continued support. It's going to be a big year, and thanks to you, we've laid a strong foundation for the work ahead.

Executive Director, aliki@fcvoters.org



FCV BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lester Abberger
Pegeen Hanrahan
Rich Templin
Richard Grosso
Sean Shaw
Will Abberger



FCV EDUCATION FUND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Erin Deady
Georgiana Holmes
Pam Harting
Pegeen Hanrahan

ADVOCACY BY THE NUMBERS

6,718

PEOPLE WHO
TOOK ACTION
to contact our elected officials

127,559

TEXTS SENT TO
OUR MEMBERS
about important issues

10,077

CONNECTIONS
made to legislators by email,
phone, and Twitter

4,604

TEXTS SENT
by volunteers to our
members

121

COMMUNITY EVENTS
centered around clean energy
and civic engagement

665

CALLS MADE
by volunteers to our
members



LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

It is not an exaggeration to say that the 2021 Legislative Session was unlike any other in Florida's history. Safety protocols in response to the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited public participation at the Capitol. In fact, the Florida Senate was physically closed to the public entirely. Under this veil of secrecy and emboldened by the lack of transparency and public access, legislative leaders fast-tracked numerous pieces of controversial legislation, including attacks on voting rights, local government authority, and clean energy.

Nevertheless, Conservation Voters like you kept up the pressure on our lawmakers to do the right thing, and we have a lot to be pleased with from the 2021 Legislative Session.

FCV was proud to be part of the coalition to stop the disastrous M-CORES toll roads program, which would have destroyed thousands of acres of wildlife habitat and cost taxpayers billions of dollars. Repealing this bill was a clear, bright spot in an otherwise difficult year. And while the possibility of future roads remains,

it is undeniable that the people of Florida made a positive impact by delivering thousands of messages in opposition to these "roads to ruin." Thank you to everyone who signed up to speak at a hearing, made their voice heard virtually, or sent emails to the Florida Department of Transportation. **You made the difference and proved, once again, that grassroots organizing and advocacy work.**

In another stand-out moment, the federal stimulus package passed by President Joe Biden and the United States Congress provided billions of dollars in relief funds to help state governments balance their budgets and spur local economies. The White House issued general guidance on how those funds should be spent, and fortunately, Congress and the President strongly prioritized conservation funding. Florida's legislative leaders wasted no time appropriating that money across the entirety of state government with notable investments in sea-level rise adaptation, wastewater infrastructure, and a whopping \$300 million to fund projects within the Florida Wildlife Corridor. This

funding would not have been possible if not for the thousands of phone calls, emails, and tweets from Florida residents about water and land conservation over the past decade.

If the 2021 Legislative Session taught us anything, it is that you can't stop advocating on behalf of Florida's environment and the health of our communities for a minute, and that organizing and advocacy work. With committee meetings for the 2022 Legislative Session already underway, you can be sure your FCV Advocacy Team, led by **Deputy Director Jonathan Webber**, is hard at work turning your conservation values into real-world policies that benefit our communities.



ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FOR FLORIDA'S FUTURE

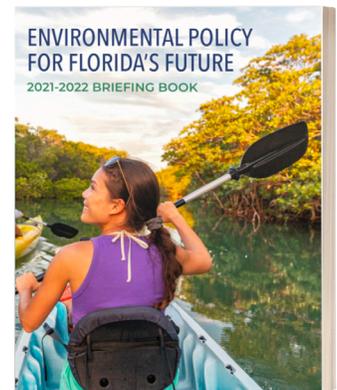
FCV Education Fund partnered with 24 organizations across Florida to develop the 2021-2022 Environmental Policy Briefing Book. This Briefing Book is a collaborative effort that gives lawmakers a concise understanding of Florida's most critical environmental and social justice issues, and how they are inextricably linked.

By bringing together a diverse group of partners to create these policy briefs, our goal is to communicate our shared environmental justice values to policymakers and present a united front when advocating for

more public lands, clean water, a just transition to clean energy, and increased access to the ballot box.

Thanks to Conservation Voters like you, every legislator in Florida has received either a physical or digital copy of this book. Educating elected officials on the issues we care about is a core part of the Cycle of Accountability: holding public officials accountable to the people they represent through education, organizing, advocacy, and civic engagement. We understand that Florida's environment is a complex issue. It's our job to make it easier

to understand and give lawmakers the resources they need to make the right decisions to protect our environment and ensure healthy communities for everyone.



CHISPA FLORIDA

In February, we were thrilled to launch a new community organizing program called Chispa Florida. Led by **Program Director Maria Revelles** and driven by an inspiring team of five organizers, our team collaborates with Florida's Immigrant, Latinx, and Black communities to protect community rights to clean air and water, healthy neighborhoods, and a safe climate for generations to come.

Since the launch, the Chispa Florida team has been working to build relationships with community members by participating in events, partnering with local artists, and conducting an important community survey to learn more about what issues matter most to Florida's Latinx communities. Through phone banking, events, and digital outreach, we reached more than 1,000 individuals, conducted 11 focus-group-styled community listening sessions, and learned that most participants place a high value on expanding access to clean energy solutions like solar and energy efficiency. Addressing the climate crisis and air pollution ranks in the top five most important social issues of those surveyed.

These are issues that FCV has long prioritized, particularly by urging state lawmakers, including Florida's governors, to transition our school buses from dirty diesel engines to

clean electric buses. This investment will protect our children's health, especially in low-income, Latinx, and Black communities harmed by air pollution. With our Clean Buses for Healthy Niños initiative, the FCV Advocacy team successfully urged the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to allocate funding for electric buses. Now, our Chispa team is enriching this campaign with community allies, active school board members, teachers, and parents. We moved from digital advocacy to working with people in their communities to push this issue forward. We continue to advocate at the local level, providing school board members and staff information on the benefits of school bus electrification programs available from state and federal sources. Our efforts have led to an unprecedented number of applications for FDEP's clean bus grant program and commitments by multiple local school boards to electrify their fleets.

To support Chispa's growing network of environmental advocates, the team has spent months hosting workshops on civic engagement and its importance to achieving environmental policies that protect the right to clean air, clean water, and a safe climate. In September, our team graduated 40 promotores, who will now be

working with Chispa staff organizers to move environmental justice to the forefront of our lawmakers' priorities and create infrastructure in Florida's Latinx communities for long-term, transformational organizing and community participation.

In addition to a full calendar of community events, our Chispa team also launched Banco de Mujeres to build connections with girls and women by introducing environmentally friendly options for feminine care products and diapers. This effort shows the intersection of the environmental impacts, health issues, and women's access to information and resources they need to meet their own and their families' basic needs. With the environment and public health both ranking among the top five issues of concern for Latinx families in Florida, we're meeting people where they are in order to build healthier communities for everyone. FCV's Chispa Florida program has already made a dramatic impact in communities across Central Florida. We can't wait to see where this vital work takes us in 2022!



BY THE NUMBERS

3,000

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

109,722

TEXTS SENT ABOUT
COMMUNITY ISSUES

1,053

COMMUNITY SURVEY TAKERS

40

PROMOTORES GRADUATED



DEMOCRACY FOR ALL FLORIDA

In May, we could not have been more thrilled to welcome our newest program, called Democracy For All Florida (DFA), led by our new **Civic Engagement Director Jalisa Giles**, and an amazing team of organizers in Miami. Through Democracy For Youth (DeFY), the team collaborated with local youth groups and students on a series of workshops designed to train future decision-makers, leaders, and voters. Starting with the essentials of our democratic freedoms and civic engagement, the program culminates in projects designed by the students to serve the civic and environmental needs of their communities. DeFY currently

focuses on educating and building power with Immigrant, Black, Brown, and LGBTQ+ young people in South Florida who have historically been marginalized by mainstream society. Through our in-person and virtual programming, we give youth the tools they need to navigate and, when needed, change the political and civic system to build and maintain healthy communities

This year was also a year of preparation for the community districting process (frequently referred to as “redistricting”) that will fully unfold in 2022. Using U.S. Census data, state lawmakers come together every decade to draw new

district lines that give each of our votes equal weight and equitable resources. Ensuring that elected leaders draw political maps fairly has been an ongoing challenge since the early days of this country and this state. **To protect our environment, we need a strong democracy where voters’ voices and votes are valued.** Partisan gerrymandering harms our ability to advance issues that we care about—from climate change, affordable healthcare, and gun violence prevention. It is harder to make progress on issues that so many Floridians support when our elected officials do not reflect the diverse communities of our state. Working together, our Democracy For All Florida and FCV Advocacy teams have been steadily organizing in communities and digitally across the state to urge our lawmakers to follow the Fair Districts provisions in the Florida Constitution.



BY THE NUMBERS

85

STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED OUR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

16

DeFY WORKSHOPS

4

REDISTRICTING WORKSHOPS

100

REDISTRICTING ATTENDEES

1,742

FAIR DISTRICT PLEDGE SIGNERS

KEEPING OUR WATER CLEAN

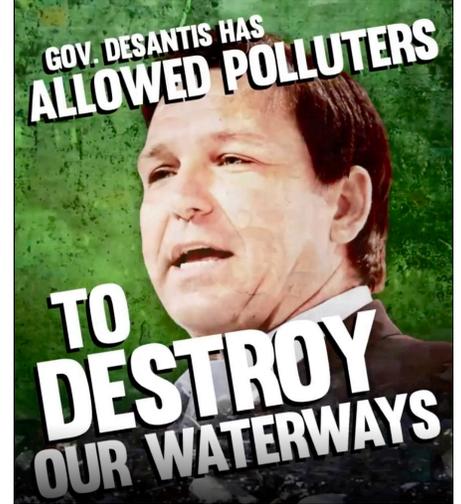
Water is the lifeblood of our state. Unfortunately, rampant pollution has degraded waters across Florida, leading to serious ecological and public health concerns. Pollution in South Florida led to massive die-offs of seagrass beds in the Indian River Lagoon and, in turn, record numbers of manatee deaths (963 as of October 2021), largely due to starvation. Blue-green algae, which can be harmful to people, pets, and wildlife, again blanketed our coastlines in 2021. On the Gulf Coast, the spill of more than 200 million gallons of polluted waste water from the Piney Point phosphogypsum site made an already massive red tide bloom worse, wreaking havoc on wildlife and communities. As a result of our water crisis, thousands of tons of dead marine life washed into canals and onto beaches, people experienced respiratory distress, and local businesses suffered. With

continued pollution from dirty runoff, industry, and wastewater, the bloom persisted in severe conditions through the fall months along many coastal communities.

It's clear that we need to prevent pollution at the source and hold polluters and lawmakers accountable. In 2021 Conservation Voters took action, demanding clean water and to make polluters pay. FCV led a clean water campaign to hold our lawmakers, particularly Governor Ron DeSantis, accountable and demand stronger pollution controls. FCV's **Water and Land Policy Director Lindsay Cross** spoke at water quality forums, including Blue-green Algae Task Force meetings and a Piney Point phosphogypsum public open house. FCV has demanded a full and complete closure of the Piney Point facility and treatment of the toxic, polluted wastewater. More than

500 Conservation Voters took rapid action to voice their concerns about this troubled facility.

Now, as we head into the 2022 session, FCV is working with legislators to craft proactive water quality bills to prevent pollution from entering our waters and ensure healthy ecosystems for wildlife and people.



COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

To secure a future for Florida's landscapes, wildlife, and residents, we must limit greenhouse gas pollution and adapt to the harmful impacts of human-caused climate change. FCV and FCV Education Fund are committed to achieving a just transition to clean and renewable energy, centered on the needs of nature and people.

In early 2020, when the energy implications of the emergent COVID-19 pandemic first became apparent, FCV staff quickly pivoted our clean energy work to focus on the energy security of vulnerable Floridians. Together with allies we've convened and collaborated with for years as the Clean Energy for All Table, we launched the "Connected in Crisis" coalition to demand a statewide moratorium against disconnecting vulnerable families from their electricity. While

other states saw their Public Service Commissions and state legislatures take bold action ensure their constituents' lights would stay on, Governor DeSantis and legislative leaders refused to take action in 2021. We brought attention to this failure in both the state and national press. We are proud of and thankful to Representative Carlos Guillermo Smith (D-Orlando) and Senator Shevrin Jones (D-Miami Gardens), who introduced legislation to prevent disconnections and provide debt forgiveness to Floridians struggling to keep up with their utility bills during the pandemic.

Our campaign to alleviate the high cost of energy endured by low-income families fed directly into our efforts over the summer to combat a series of electric utility rate increases proposed by Florida's monopoly utilities. Earlier this

year, FPL and the Tampa Electric Company formally requested some of the most significant rate hikes in state history to fund massive expansions of gas infrastructure, even though Florida already relies too heavily on imported gas, which powers more than 60% of Florida's electricity sector today. In response, FCV's **Climate and Clean Energy Advocate Zac Cosner** developed and implemented a large-scale public education campaign, including telephone town halls and media campaigns. Unfortunately, the Florida PSC approved the rate increases, but not without dozens of advocates who responded to our call to action and testified publicly in opposition. Together with these new advocates, our work to increase efficiency, reduce bills, and promote a just transition to clean energy will continue in the 2022 Legislative Session and beyond.

PROTECTING OUR PUBLIC LANDS

2021 was a record year for conservation funding, with \$400 million appropriated from state and federal sources combined. State lawmakers allocated \$100 million from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to acquiring and protecting conservation lands on the Florida Forever priority list. However, Florida Communities Trust, a matching grant program that helps municipalities create community parks, and the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, a conservation easement program to support working landscapes like timber and cattle ranching, received no funding. Lawmakers directed \$300 million in funding from President Biden and the U.S. Congress to protect properties within the Florida Wildlife Corridor, an 18 million-acre land and water corridor that supports wildlife and people.

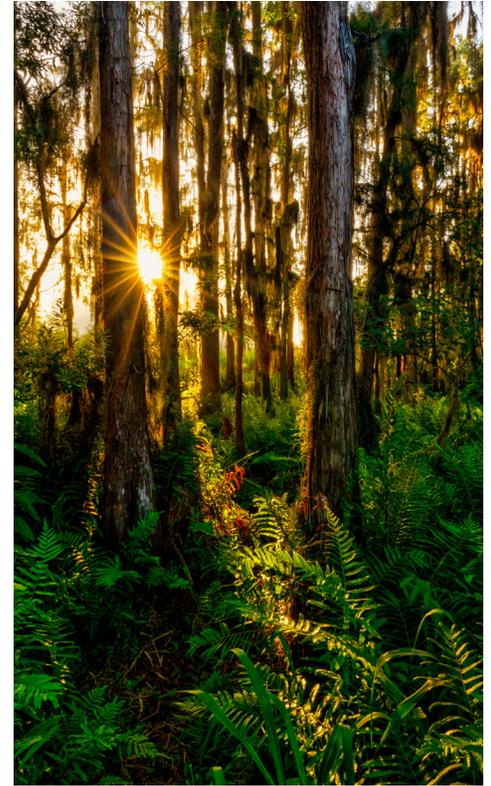
During fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22, Florida is projected to protect 73,501 acres of land and

water with an investment of just under \$164 million. Some recent standout projects include: Devil's Garden, a large wetland slough in Hendry and Collier counties (\$43.2 million); Dickerson Bay/Bald Point, a coastal and upland area in Franklin and Wakulla counties (\$43 million); and Myakka Ranchlands, a working cattle ranch in DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties (\$23.5 million).

These purchases help support the 30x30 conservation goal, which seeks to protect 30% of our land, water, and oceans by 2030. As a vital component of the Biden/Harris America the Beautiful Plan, 30x30 recognizes the role of natural habitats in climate resiliency and the importance of creating more parks near where people live, especially in under-resourced Black and Latinx communities.

With Florida continuing to grow at a rapid pace, FCV will continue our advocacy in support of full funding

(\$300 million or more) of the suite of conservation programs, including the Florida Forever priority list, Florida Communities Trust, and the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.



PRESIDENT BIDEN AND THE U.S. CONGRESS DELIVER FOR FLORIDA

With a new administration at the helm at the federal level, this year brought major changes and striking opportunities for Florida. Early on, federal lawmakers passed a major stimulus package to spur a recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19 and have spent the ensuing months deliberating over an even more far-reaching federal stimulus program. FCV's **Federal Climate Campaign Manager Carol Davey** coordinates our teams and staff in working to ensure these federal funds are allocated for purposes that advance clean energy infrastructure, protections for our water supply, and environmental justice.

Upon the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), FCV produced an early advisory to encourage local governments to invest in climate and clean energy. We distributed this advisory to local elected officials across the state and worked with numerous partners to ensure widespread delivery. By educating and building relationships early around ARPA, we laid a foundation for continued advocacy work in support of the Build Back Better plan.

The Build Back Better plan and the federal infrastructure funding included within it will help put the U.S. on track to cut

our climate pollution in half by 2030 by investing in clean energy research and development, grid modernization, climate resiliency, funding for electric school buses, and more. We've hosted events with U.S. Congresswoman Kathy Castor, U.S. Congressman Darren Soto, State Senator Lori Berman, State Representative Anna Eskamani, and others to shed light on how federal legislation will benefit Floridians in advancing clean energy, energy efficiency, and climate resilience, as well as other critical infrastructure.

EXPANDING OUR REACH

Public education is vital to the Cycle of Accountability. That's why shaping news articles and influencing reporting is a significant part of FCV's work. But with the seemingly infinite number of ways people absorb news content, communicating with the public is not easy. From traditional newspapers, radio, and television reporting, to newer modes of delivery like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, meeting people where they are already receiving information is the key to a successful communications strategy.

With the launch of our Chispa Florida and Democracy For All Florida programs in early 2021, we have invested significant resources towards becoming a multilingual, multi-channel organization. As a result, we have expanded our reach and depth of communications in communities across Central and South Florida, and importantly, have established strong relationships with Spanish-language media.

We quickly learned that many Spanish-language media outlets do not report on environmental issues as much as English-language media outlets. This is, of course, not because of a lack of interest, but due to a lack of Spanish-speaking outreach from traditional environmental organizations. This is a void that FCV and our Chispa Florida team intend to fill. We have also started translating many of our digital communications efforts into Haitian Creole, which is the third-most-spoken language in Florida. Although our Chispa and Democracy For All work with Florida's Haitian communities is just beginning, we are excited for increased engagement in the coming year.

Looking back on 2021, we hosted more than 30 Facebook Live events, reaching an average of 1,500 people each and gaining an average of 550 views per video. FCV has also been featured in well over 150 news articles in multiple languages, and we authored or helped draft

dozens of op-eds. Our social media presence has never been greater, with thousands of Conservation Voters sharing and engaging with our work on a regular basis.

In one particularly proud moment from 2021, Congressman Sean Casten from Illinois read part of an op-ed co-authored by FCV's **Executive Director Alik Moncrief** and the AFL-CIO's Florida Political Director Rich Templin on the floor of the United States Congress. Rep. Casten was imploring members to unite around funding for climate change issues and used the strong relationship between environmental groups like FCV and labor groups like the AFL-CIO as an example for the country.

FCV would like to thank the many reporters and news staff for prioritizing environmental and climate change reporting in 2021. Your work matters, and the truth still counts for something here at FCV.



OUR STAFF

EARNED COVERAGE IN EVERY FLORIDA MEDIA MARKET

CONTRIBUTED OR WERE QUOTED IN 150+ UNIQUE ARTICLES AND STORIES

REACHED AUDIENCES VIA PRINT, DIGITAL, RADIO, AND TV OUTLETS IN BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH