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<https://www.meetup.com/Broward-County-Sierra-Club-Group/>

## Everglades Restoration

Ina Topper, *Broward Sierra Club Chair*

The Broward Sierra group has been holding virtual Zoom general meetings for several months now (and counting...) due to the Covid-19 situation. We're pleased to mention however, that we've had great participation from quite a number of Broward Sierrans, and many more who carry a warm heart towards environmental issues. Also, another bit of good news, we've seen an increase in our membership numbers. (In this regard, a yearly membership comes at a very nominal price, for many categories such as Students, Seniors, modest income earners, and the less than \$20/year includes the National Sierra magazine.)

One recent Zoom meeting was a presentation by Dr. Nicholas Aumen, Regional Science Advisor - U.S. Geological Survey. Those of you who were able to attend will be familiar with some of the information we're writing about on these pages. But we do know that the Sierra-public at large in Broward County does like to get updated from time to time as well, when it comes to our many local environmental issues.

When it comes to the Everglades, Dr. Aumen greatly enlightened us regarding this unique stretch of wetlands in our own backyard (the world's largest swamps!), even more than what we thought we knew already. A brief history of the Everglades is in order, and might be best presented in the form of some facts & figures, and a prior history:

- The Everglades, as we know it now, have been around for millennia, and one can safely say that at one time a greater portion of Florida was considered wetlands or, as it's also called, sawgrass prairies.
- Historic/scientific literature tells us that this larger area came about during the so-called Pleistocene epoch (a geological time frame), some 17,000 years ago.
- By the numbers, the wetland areas comprise of some 1.5 million acres, or 4,000 square miles.
- Some 5000 years ago, due to an era of wetter climates, the southern portion of the Everglades became the marshier swamps they are today.
- There is overwhelming evidence of human habitation throughout the Everglades, going back as far as 15,000 years ago. Both existing tribes for most of these centuries, the Calusa and Tequesta (names most Floridians are quite familiar with) have since disappeared - this part of Everglades' native American history being an entirely different subject.
- The uniqueness of the Everglades was first recognized in the mid 1930's, but it wasn't until after WW2 in 1947, that the Everglades National Park was officially established.
- In the mid 1970's, UNESCO officially dedicated the Everglades as one of the world's unique Biospheres, shortly thereafter also naming it an official World Heritage site.





# Broward Sierra News



Everglades Restoration: Since the mid 1800's, we've come a long way from what can be called a brutal page in its history when, initially, settlers in recent times called the vast expanse of marshes nothing but 'nasty wetlands'. It was already known that Florida was mostly swamps, as Spanish 'conquistadors' or discoverers, had actually compiled a crude cartography of the area after landing in 'La Florida'.

However, it was modern day mankind to come up with the idea of simply paving over the Everglades, turning it into a huge construction site. Even as recent as 1969 a solid plan was on the drafting board for construction of a huge airport reaching into the Big Cypress Preserve, and in the early 70's a start was made to build what is now Miami International Airport but, believe it or not, was MEANT to become the Biggest Airport of the World.

Subsequently, it would be naive, to say the least, to reconvert our beloved Everglades into what it once was, or to turn the clock back from when all of it was still a natural, 60 mile wide slowly moving flow of water or, as Marjorie Stoneman Douglas characterized it in a true sense, a 'River of Grass'. What has happened since the day developers started eyeing the area for financial and real estate gains is a drastic change ('swamp-remodeling' as I'd like to call it) from what it could have been, at the onset, with careful environmental planning.

The US Army Corps of Engineers, in order to make the southern part of Florida, quote: 'more inhabitable', already implemented changes in the Everglades in the late 1800's. Thereafter, the drastic implementations of flood controls, drainage systems, levees, completely altered the so-called 'hydro-patterns', making water flow in other directions, creating its own pattern. Thereafter the race of new developments and the real estate boom of the previous turn of the century demanded adequate drinking water for the rapid influx of many new Florida residents, also making sure that flooding in many newly built residential areas would be prevented. In addition, the agricultural areas South of Lake Okeechobee were another major factor to be taken into account. To this end, the US Army Corps of Engineers finalized construction of the Herbert Hoover dike in the 30's, almost completely encircling Lake Okeechobee to prevent flooding south of the lake. Additional drainage systems and pumping stations, put in during the 70's for agriculture have created their own problems, resulting in major damaging effects.

Many of these waterflow-related issues we're still confronting today. To name but a few (and we won't go into biological or scientific details here) invasion of non-native plant species, i.e., the melaleuca, Brazilian pepper, and Australian pine - no longer allowed to be planted. In this regard, we were not thrilled to hear from Dr. Aumen about the increase of dead mangroves. And the weed-like cattail is already crowding out all other native species in many areas. Dr. Aumen mentioned the quality of Florida's drinking water now becoming a serious issue as well, and to this end restoring or maintaining a fresh-water flow is a vital factor. In other words, if the Everglades are doing well, we ALL do well.

What we didn't know, and Dr. Aumen enlightened us to this fact, was that some of the many lawsuits to restore the Everglades go back decades! Indeed, going into the annals of Everglades litigation, one finds that, over time, at least some 30 lawsuits have been instigated, with quite a few going back to the 1980's, and still going on as we speak. Between what's needed for the future of the Everglades and what the US Government can deliver is apparently an ongoing tug of war for, who knows, (still) how long.

What we learned from Dr. Aumen's very educational and fascinating presentation: the road to (hopefully) full Restoration and Preservation of the Everglades goes by way of **Litigation and Legislation**.

Hopefully, we will see the day when we can call the Everglades in Florida's native American language, once again, a pristine 'Pahokee' or 'Grassy Water'.

A Zoom recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).



# Broward Sierra News



Dead-More

Congratulations to Kim Schnitzius who won a blanket adorned with a picture taken by our excellent Outings photographer Stas Milov.

**Broward Sierra Club September 3 General Meeting**  
Time: Sep 3, 2020 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89634478589>

Meeting ID: 896 3447 8589

Our speaker for August is Deborah Foote. Ms. Foote is the Government Affairs & Political Director for the Florida Sierra Club.

She will discuss how elections impact the environment in that it is our elected officials who ultimately pass legislation that can help or harm our environment. She will also discuss how the work of the Sierra Political Committee impacts elections by endorsing environmentally-friendly candidates and also campaigning for them.

<https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=7013q0000020WQ5AAM&mapLinkHref=>

Broward Sierra is always looking for volunteers. Which of these committees would be of interest to you?

- ◆ ExCom - Broward Sierra's Board. For more information, e-mail [irtopper2000@cs.com](mailto:irtopper2000@cs.com), [kip.fisher@icloud.com](mailto:kip.fisher@icloud.com), and/or [susancaruso.sierra@gmail.com](mailto:susancaruso.sierra@gmail.com)
- ◆ Membership - New Member Welcome and Youth Alliance. For more information, e-mail [susancaruso.sierra@gmail.com](mailto:susancaruso.sierra@gmail.com)
- ◆ Conservation - Community Garden, Fern Forest Beautification, and Development. For more information, e-mail [susancaruso.sierra@gmail.com](mailto:susancaruso.sierra@gmail.com)
- ◆ Political - Candidate Endorsement and Legislation tracking. For more information, e-mail [susan0725@icloud.com](mailto:susan0725@icloud.com)
- ◆ Communications - Social Media and Newsletter. For more information, e-mail [kip.fisher@icloud.com](mailto:kip.fisher@icloud.com).



# Broward Sierra News



## Let the Sunshine in and let it Pay your Electric Bill!

We have great news! Broward Sierra has teamed up with Broward County and Solar United Neighbors to bring you the Broward Solar Co-op.

By joining, you'll learn how solar works and what it takes to go solar. Then, you'll have the opportunity to go solar at the group rate, alongside your neighbors!

The co-op is free to join! Learn more and sign up at [SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Broward](http://SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Broward)

# Want to Go Solar?

JOIN THE  
SOLAR UNITED  
NEIGHBORS  
BROWARD CO-OP

JOIN US FOR AN INFORMATION  
SESSION ONLINE

Tuesday, August 4 at 12:00 pm  
Tuesday, August 11 at 6:00 pm  
Wednesday, August 26 at 6:00 pm  
Thursday, September 17 at 6:00 pm  
Tuesday, October 6 at 6pm

REGISTER & MORE INFO  
[SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Broward/Events](http://SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Broward/Events)

JOIN THE CO-OP  
[SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Broward](http://SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Broward)

SAVE MONEY ON THE  
COST OF GOING SOLAR

GET UNBIASED, EXPERT  
HELP THROUGHOUT THE  
PROCESS

WE'RE A NON-PROFIT THAT  
HELPS THOUSANDS OF  
PEOPLE GO SOLAR EACH  
YEAR



[SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Broward](http://SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/Broward) | QUESTIONS? email: [fiteam@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:fiteam@solarunitedneighbors.org)