

Damage from cruise ships to the harbor in Key West often [exceeds that caused by powerful hurricanes](#).

“There’re 32 events that exceed those turbidity standards over the past year. So, it's like having 32 hurricanes,” a researcher told Key West city council members in November.

Cruising isn’t the most environmentally damaging way to travel, that would be by private jet or private yacht, but when it comes to mass travel, yes, cruising is the most destructive way to travel. Keep that in mind.

LINK: <https://www.wlrn.org/environment/2024-11-19/key-west-cruise-ships-water-quality>

Scientists in the Everglades are moving on to an action of last resort, [initiating a captive breeding program](#) for the endangered Cape Sable seaside sparrow. Species populations have sunk to all-time lows, and water management efforts in their habitat jeopardize them further.

Interestingly, the captive breeding program will be overseen by the increasingly low-profile White Oak Conservation facility in Yulee. Or will it? White Oak officials have thus far withheld their support because they view [the state’s recovery plan as half baked](#).

LINK: <https://www.wlrn.org/environment/2024-12-12/breeding-cape-sable-sparrow-everglades>

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2025/01/09/florida-agency-wants-to-try-captive-breeding-of-endangered-sparrow/>

Speaking of birds, [a bill has been filed in the Florida legislature](#) to make the American flamingo the official state bird, and the Florida scrub jay the official state songbird. Presently, and since the 1920s, the state bird has been the mockingbird. This seemingly innocuous if uninspired choice has a nefarious background.

Conservation-minded residents have long sought replacing the mockingbird as the state bird with one more identifiable to Florida. The osprey, the pelican, roseate spoonbill, wood stork, scrub jay, etc. Blocking their efforts have been powerful and monied forces aligned with development, forces like former National Rifle Association lobbyist Marion Hammer, a true Florida villain.

Developers don’t want the state bird changed to a species more imperiled by development in fear of residents complaining about projects endangering a state symbol. If the state bird is the scrub jay, and a developer wants to put a shopping mall in scrub jay habitat, and residents get word of that, there could be a backlash against the development. Mockingbirds are common across the state and can exist perfectly fine in developed areas, making them the preferred choice of developers for a state bird.

LINK: <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/local/state/2025/01/03/florida-lawmaker-files-bill-to-make-flamingo-scrub-jay-new-state-birds/77431613007/>

A flurry of major federal activity related to conservation last week as an outgoing administration committed to half-measures aimed at protecting the environment prepares to give way to an incoming administration promising again to [wage all-out war on nature](#).

LINK: <https://defenders.org/blog/2020/02/top-10-reasons-why-trump-administration-worst-ever-wildlife>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced its final decision to [expand the acquisition boundary of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge](#) by roughly 22,000 acres. At over 400,000-acres, the Okefenokee is the largest refuge east of the Mississippi.

This doesn't automatically make the Refuge larger, it provides the USFWS the opportunity to enter into negotiations with adjacent landowners to potentially acquire more land. Among the prized targets opened up by the decision are areas southeast of the existing Refuge boundary being targeted for mining.

LINK: <https://defenders.org/newsroom/defenders-celebrates-22k-acre-expansion-of-okefenokee-acquisition-boundary>

The Biden Administration enacted [a sweeping ban on new offshore oil and gas drilling](#) along most of the U.S. coastline. That's the good news. The bad news, the ban does not include the western Gulf of Mexico – Texas and Louisiana – where most offshore oil drilling in the U.S. occurs. Classic half-measure.

The ban does include Florida, but not even oil-loving, nature-hating Donald Trump, and Florida's U.S. Senators who have the same world view, would dare propose oil drilling off Florida and risk being blamed for gooey oil covering Florida's beaches and destroying our tourism and nature-based economy.

LINK: https://grist.org/oceans/biden-ban-offshore-drilling-fails-protect-western-gulf-mexico/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily

The Administration also created two new National Monuments [totaling 800,000 acres in California](#), protecting the areas from drilling and development. Great news, and hard fought for by local tribes.

LINK: <https://www.wbalv.com/article/biden-california-national-monuments/63353657>

The Administration, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, also upheld [endangered species protections for grizzly bears](#), although the determination could have gone much further in protecting the species.

LINK: <https://wildearthguardians.org/press-releases/statement-on-fish-wildlife-services-grizzly-bear-proposal/>

In anticipation of the Trump Administration taking office, six huge U.S. banks, probably one you use, have [backed out of the global banking industry's net zero target-setting group](#).

“A few years ago, when climate change was at the front of the political agenda, the banks were keen to boast of their commitments to act on climate,” Paddy McCully, a senior analyst at the campaign group Reclaim Finance, said. “Now that the political pendulum has swung in the other direction, suddenly acting on climate does not seem so important for the Wall Street lenders.”

Wall Street and bankers of course never cared anything about the environment or climate emissions, their actions were window dressing to go with the flow of public opinion at the time. Greenwashing.

The Trump Administration's position on the environment and energy gives businesses like these cover to resume acting without conscious when it comes to conservation. Elections have consequences.

LINK: https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jan/08/us-banks-quit-net-zero-alliance-before-trump-inauguration?utm_term=677fbb7ba9024e1aaba6fc3e7a79c539&utm_campaign=DownToEarth&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=greenlight_email

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act stands as the largest piece of legislation addressing climate change in United States history. Turns out, spending the \$370 billion the IRA provided for in efficient appliances, the construction of new battery plants, subsidies for renewable energy, construction and manufacturing for solar panels, etc., etc. is proving more difficult than imagined.

As the federal government prepares for a transition to the climate-denying Trump administration, it is [trying to rush as much of the IRA money out the door](#) as possible before the new guys come in and shut the tap (and progress) off.

A fascinating look at how difficult it can be to spend federal dollars:

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2024/12/biden-pulled-off-a-370-billion-miracle-for-the-climate-where-did-the-money-go/>

Enjoy this “[Florida Spectacular](#)” [podcast episode](#) about kayaking the St. Johns River.

LINK: <https://floridaspectacular.buzzsprout.com/1527562/episodes/16301698-episode-184-marineland-gators-and-top-three-places-to-kayak-near-st-johns>