

This week's conservation newsletter could be titled "Mostly Manatees" or "Awesome Ocklawaha." The future of the animal and the river are connected. [Here's how.](#)

LINK: https://www.freetheocklawaha.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Tampa-Bay-Times-Manatees-LR.pdf?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=sjrwm-d-survey-results-show-strong-support-for-ocklawaha-river-restoration_47

This recent letter to the editor from the St. John's Riverkeeper to the *Florida Times-Union* further explains the limitless benefits to removing Rodman Dam and [restoring the Ocklawaha.](#)

<https://www.jacksonville.com/story/opinion/columns/guest/2022/01/16/guest-column-time-now-remove-rodman-dam-restore-ocklawaha/8975520002/>

Did you know the St. Johns Riverkeeper works with three boat captains who will take you out for [an up-close and personal experience on the Ocklawaha!](#)

LINK: https://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/up-close-and-personal-tour-the-ocklawaha/?fbclid=IwAR3_dt3euRAVoNZCzFd42fICXr181lVyoEQow2HDWoiD0tVVTi-FYV-1DR4

When a state legislator recently couldn't explain why her disastrous "sea grass mitigation" bill benefiting developers at the peril of manatees and other aquatic life couldn't answer pointed questions about the bill, [she had a lobbyist for developers answer the questions](#) for her. Jacksonville-area rep Aaron Bean is a supporter of this bill. If he represents you, let him know you disapprove.

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2022/01/20/bills-would-help-consultants-make-a-killing-off-of-killing-off-floridas-seagrass/>

Call Bean's office at: (904) 757-5039

Email Bean at: bean.aaron.web@flsenate.gov

With agricultural, industrial and residential pollution killing the seagrass beds which manatee eat to survive – a problem which would be greatly exacerbated by this bill – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officials recently launched a program to feed manatee lettuce to augment their diet. FWC announced late this week that manatees had begun eating the lettuce.

<https://twitter.com/craigtimes/status/1484579832667287553>

In case you missed it, an episode of my "Welcome to Florida" podcast this past summer was [devoted to the Florida manatee.](#)

LINK: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/episode-61-the-florida-manatee/id1519841529?i=1000532261636>

GOOD NEWS!

Everglades Restoration projects will be receiving a massive [\\$1.1 BILLION this year in federal money](#) to support a variety of ongoing initiatives. That's wonderful and demonstrates both the degree to which the Everglades ecosystem has been wrecked and the costs associated with fixing it.

LINK: <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/biden-administration-announces-1-1b-in-funding-for-everglades-restoration-projects/2664178/>

Congratulations to New Jersey which last week enacted a bipartisan bill banning common uses of neonicotinoid insecticides. N.J. joins Maine in taking strong action to restrict non-agricultural outdoor uses of neonics, reducing contamination from these insecticides to protect pollinators and other beneficial species.

A 2020 report by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection found at least one neonic in over half of the surface and groundwater samples tested and cataloged that certified applicators applied nearly 30,000 pounds of neonics to New Jersey lawns in 2016.

Residential and agricultural use of neonic insecticides are a huge contributing factor to the global collapse of pollinator populations.

California officials voted to ban the sale of new gas-powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers starting in 2024 and portable generators by 2028. Small gas-powered engines [create a stunning amount of smog-forming pollution](#) — as much as all light-duty passenger cars.

Dare to dream this could happen in Florida one day.

<https://click.email.latimes.com/?qs=faf7cbf07f84e8fdf033dd13c661deedda2828ef6b754b64cbdfa11dc e4991dc3b9056b894d52efebc1c2034882227f4a9c723599534faa>

While manatee populations are suffering, dolphins around the state are faring much better. This [recent episode of my “Welcome to Florida” podcast](#) took a deep dive on dolphin — so to speak.

LINK: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/episode-79-dolphins/id1519841529?i=1000546322962>