

Unlike most weeks, I do have some good news to share. Let's start there.

[Nearly 30,000 Floridians have installed solar power this year](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> most in the nation behind Texas, bringing the number of installations to over 253,000 according to a new report.

The price of solar power has gone down by 43% over the past decade.

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2024/12/06/florida-has-installed-the-second-most-solar-power-capacity-in-the-country-in-2024/>

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It seems like bad news, but it's actually good news. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is taking a step toward protecting monarchs: The agency proposed [listing monarch butterflies as threatened](#) under the Endangered Species Act on Tuesday, which would extend federal protection to the species. The proposal will be subject to a 90-day public comment period before potentially taking effect.

Unfortunately, that takes the decision into the Trump Administration where protections for wildlife and wild places are expected to be non-existent.

LINK: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/monarch-butterflies-might-soon-be-listed-as-threatened-under-the-endangered-species-act/ar-AA1vGXY2>

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Joe Biden signed the [Coastal Habitat Conservation Act](#) into law on Friday. The Act codifies the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program and provides funding to protect, enhance, and restore priority habitats along the nation's coasts.

Established in 1985, Coastal Program is a voluntary effort that sees the service collaborate with local partners, such as state and Tribal governments, conservation organizations, communities, and federal partners, to protect and improve the health of coastal ecosystems. Since its inception in the Chesapeake Bay, the program has spread to 23 priority coastal areas, collaborated with 8,200 partners, protected 2.3 million acres of habitat, and restored 600,000 acres of habitat.

LINK: <https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/biden-signs-coastal-habitat-conservation-act>

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[In a victory for food and environmental safety](#), a federal district court ruled this week that genetically engineered organisms must be regulated. The Court's ruling overturns the 2020 rule overhaul by the first Trump administration that had eliminated most government oversight over GE crops, trees, and grasses.

LINK: <https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/press-releases/6975/victory-federal-court-strikes-down-lax-gmo-rules-halts-ge-crop-introductions-without-usda-oversight>

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Georgia Senator Jon Ossoff is backing a proposed expansion of the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge.

This week, Sen. Ossoff voiced his support during the public comment period with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), which is considering a proposal that would expand the boundary of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, adding approximately 22,000 acres adjacent to the existing Refuge.

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This first North Atlantic Right Whale [calf of the season](#) was spotted recently off the US coast of South Carolina.

LINK: <https://www.deeperblue.com/first-north-atlantic-right-whale-calf-of-the-season-spotted/#:~:text=The%20mother%20and%20calf%20were,North%20Atlantic%20right%20whale%20population.>

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A new Duval County Ordinance has been forwarded to protect and balance new development in Districts 2 and 8. The ordinance was submitted by Councilman Mike Gay in October and is also supported by Councilman Gaffney Jr.

Please find the ordinance here for your review: [Ordinance 2024-851](#)

Here is a summary of the ordinance

1. Establish a mechanism for a specialized review program that would evaluate applications for land use and zoning changes in the northeast area of Jacksonville (District 2 and District 8)
2. Takes in the needs of existing property owners to share their voice about the proposed application and
3. To balance historical development patterns and property uses with the need to recognize new growth opportunities

The Duval Audubon Society supports this ordinance and encourages citizen engagement.

1. **Public Comments:** The ordinance is targeted for public comments at the next Land Use/Zoning meeting at **City Hall Downtown Jacksonville, Jan 6th tentative 5:00 pm.**
  2. **Email Support:** Please find the link to the City Councilperson page. [COJ City Council Team](#). If you would consider emailing the city council team that would be great.
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Now for the bad news...

A preliminary map for Hurricane Helene indicates that 222 nonnative species “had the potential to spread due to storm-related flooding, of which 90 species are considered invasive and likely to spread via flood waters.”

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/briefs/hurricanes-potentially-spread-more-than-a-hundred-invasive-species-to-florida/>

Speaking of invasives, here’s a good, concise look at [the Burmese python infestation of the Everglades](#).

LINK: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/dec/13/the-burmese-python-problem-how-20ft-predators-are-wreaking-havoc-on-the-everglades>

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The Florida Department of Environmental Protection/Prostitution is considering [drilling for oil alongside the Apalachicola River](#), a resource Florida has spent decades and millions of state tax dollars fighting to protect and restore.

LINK: <https://www.theinvadingsea.com/2024/12/06/apalachicola-river-oil-drilling-florida-department-of-environmental-protection-riverkeeper/>

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A recent study revealed that 40% of Americans report higher stress levels during the holiday season. According to the survey, 26% of Florida respondents cite holiday debt as their biggest worry.

Circling back to last week's conservation newsletter about consumerism, STOP BUYING SO MUCH STUFF! If consumerism is not only destroying the environment, but putting you personally into debt and causing added stress, STOP!

Not everyone will understand, but if you tell people you're no longer buying gifts... particularly those way down the gift-buying food chain like co-workers, neighbors, distant relatives, etc. and explain why, and ask not to receive gifts in return, they'll get over it, or they won't, but you'll be relieved, enriched, and the planet will thank you for it.