

There's nothing more dangerous to wildlife and natural places in Florida than when the state legislature gets together. Along with anti-solar energy and anti-seagrass bills working their way through the statehouse, representatives are working on behalf of developers to make it easier [and cheaper to transplant gopher tortoises](#).

This bill would further remove the already lax environmental barriers to develop open land in Florida, disincentivize private landowners to accept gopher tortoises displaced by development, and put transplanted gopher tortoises on public land where their populations are healthy, forcing them to compete for limited resources with their numbers dwindling as a result.

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2022/02/10/for-helping-desperate-developers-florida-legislators-deserve-the-nobel-prize/>

Learn more about the gopher tortoise transplant marketplace here:

<https://www.news4jax.com/news/florida/2022/01/29/florida-lawmakers-look-at-more-sites-for-gopher-tortoises/>

That's not even the worst of it. Out of nowhere, a bill turning back the clock decades on Everglades restoration and imperiling its funding and completion was recently introduced. Here's how [Friends of the Everglades](#) describes it: "In an egregious display of disregard for our state's waterways, the Florida Senate Appropriations Committee voted in favor of Senate Bill 2805 today in Tallahassee. It's a toxic stew of bad proposals that undermine Florida's environmental protections and protect powerful industries — most notably Big Sugar."

This bill is so bad even Ron DeSantis opposes it.

Friends of the Everglades opposition: <https://www.everglades.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Gil-Comments.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=679f69db-11a2-4136-8911-f0c761d185ab>

More information: <https://www.everglades.org/bad-bill-alert-proposed-senate-bill-2508-poses-multiple-environmental-threats/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=8fcc9069-7c53-491a-a015-e84d04c0832d>

From Florida Audubon: "SB 2508 aims to tie the South Florida Water Management District's funding – and their ability to implement Everglades restoration – to a state certification process requiring the District to affirm that their actions would cause no harm to "legal users." In other words, the bill would hamstring the District's spending power unless they can demonstrate no harm from agency actions to agricultural interests (*BIG SUGAR – my inclusion*). This financial mechanism would limit the District's ability to advance restoration in a timely manner and would place agricultural interests (*BIG SUGAR – my inclusion*) above all others for project implementation.

The bill would also require the District to reevaluate its position in the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) process in the interest of the same "legal users." The Army Corps of Engineers has just completed a rigorous, three-year public process to develop the next operations plan for Lake Okeechobee: LOSOM. It was developed with more than 120,000 models run and a year of extensive stakeholder involvement to arrive at a lake management schedule that will move water south to the Everglades where it is needed and provide some relief to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries from harmful discharges.

BIG SUGAR owns tens of thousands of acres of land just south of Lake Okeechobee which act as a cork preventing water from Lake O from reaching the Everglades. Despite hundreds of millions of dollars in federal subsidies to support the production of this toxic food additive which directly results in the death of thousands of Americans each year, BIG SUGAR continues buying off legislators to do its bidding in direct opposition to public health and environmental protection.

State Senator Aaron Bean who represents all of Nassau and parts of Duval County voted in favor of this disastrous bill which puts BIG SUGAR profits above clean water, wildlife and Everglades restoration.

You can take action by [urging the federal government](#) to continue its funding support for Everglades restoration:

<https://evergladetrust.salsalabs.org/EmailPresidentBidenToday/index.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=69b3fd49-a9cd-489d-8f30-0bf049ea3818>

Tell your state reps to [protect seagrass beds](#) from developers:

[https://takeaction.oceanconservancy.org/page/98836/action/1?ea.tracking.id=22LPBCRDXX&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=engagingnetworks&utm\\_campaign=202202\\_FLSeagrassAlert&utm\\_content=20220208-FLSeagrassAlert-Prospects-Email1B-22LPBCRDXX&ea.url.id=5748705&forwarded=true](https://takeaction.oceanconservancy.org/page/98836/action/1?ea.tracking.id=22LPBCRDXX&utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=202202_FLSeagrassAlert&utm_content=20220208-FLSeagrassAlert-Prospects-Email1B-22LPBCRDXX&ea.url.id=5748705&forwarded=true)

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Bravo to Orange County which has voted to enact [stricter fertilizer ordinances](#), preventing the use of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers in summer months to improve water quality. These are the “nutrients” which produce blue green algae, fish kills and have resulted in the downstream effect of destroying the Indian River Lagoon seagrass beds causing the great manatee die off in the last year.

LINK: <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2022/02/09/orange-county-approves-stricter-fertilizer-rules-to-curb-water-pollution/>

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Don't miss this! Duval Audubon Society, Northeast Florida Sierra Club, the Ixia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, and the Garden Club of Jacksonville are partnering for [a special program](#) with Doug Tallamy of the Homegrown National Park project, an effort to create 20 million acres of native plantings in yards and communities across the United States.

Dr. Tallamy will give a presentation by Zoom on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 which will be followed by an in-person introduction to easy to grow native plants with representatives from Duval Audubon, Ixia Chapter of FNPS, and Northeast Florida Sierra Club.

Register: <https://gardenclubjax.networkforgood.com/events/38022-horticulture-corner-grow-your-own-park>