

A few follow ups to recent conservation newsletter items:

HB 741, Net Metering, filed by Rep. Lawrence McClure (R-Dover) and its companion SB 1024 filed by Sen Bradley (R-Orange Park) have passed all their committees of reference and are making their way through the House and Senate floors.

These bills, even in their current amended form, will have a chilling effect on Florida's growing rooftop solar industry, a key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving climate resiliency in the Sunshine State. Under current law, solar panel owners who create excess energy can sell that energy back to the utilities at the retail rate that the utility charges other customers, a process known as net metering. The original legislation, if passed, would change net metering, forcing homeowners to sell their excess electricity at the wholesale rate; i.e. what the utility company pays to procure the electricity from its usual sources.

Furthermore, The Florida House has refused to add clean-energy solutions to its plan to defend the state against climate-induced sea-level rise and flooding. Billions will be spent for "resilience," [but not a penny for dropping fossil fuels.](#)

Last week, the USFWS made an extraordinary proposal to remove Florida Panther FP260 from the wild, justifying the decision on the basis of concern for human safety. While this individual has been the subject of much frustration from ranchers whose calves it has depredated in recent months, the USFWS was not clear on what threat to humans the cat actually posed, causing concern that the decision was motivated by risk to property rather than human safety.

The USFWS' own criteria for removal of this panther have not been met, including those from the Interagency Florida Panther Response Plan (adopted in 2008).

Further, FP260 does not represent a threat to humans and USFWS and FWC panther biologists familiar with this individual have deemed its behavior normal. In fact, no attacks on humans by a Florida panther have ever been recorded. By removing this panther without justified reasoning, USFWS undermines its own policy, contributing to a lack of transparency with the public and poor precedent for wildlife removal in the future.

After objections raised by the conservation community, USFWS staff announced this week that they are pausing their plans to remove FP260.

Speaking of panthers, [an eighth already in 2022](#) has been killed in a vehicle crash. Every premature panther death recorded this year – as is always the case – are the result of car strikes. What can be done to help panthers survive, [here are some ideas.](#)

A bill which would have allowed developers to destroy more seagrass beds [appears stalled.](#)

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission finalized a controversial rule allowing limited fishing of goliath grouper, which has been off-limits since 1990 when it nearly went extinct. The reckless rule allows for 200 fish to be caught per year, hook & line only, only juveniles between 24" & 36". The first season will open March 2023.

The Biden Administration won't appeal a judge's [ruling revoking Gulf of Mexico oil drilling leases.](#) The ruling annulled 1.7 million acres of drilling leases, citing climate change.