

This week's conservation newsletter highlights the connections between environmental policy and politics. Protecting Mother Nature begins at the ballot box.

Monday is Earth Day and [its roots are in Florida](#)... with the Nixon Administration, proving the right wing of America's political spectrum hasn't always been antagonistic to the environment.

LINK: <https://floridaphoenix.com/2024/04/18/florida-fueled-the-first-earth-day-now-we-need-another-one/>

Former Florida governor and longtime U.S. Senator from Florida Bob Graham died last week. Graham was [a champion for the environment](#), particularly water policy, and along with Jimmy Buffett [helped start the Save the Manatee Club in 1981](#).

LINK: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/bob-graham-s-everglades-vision-hasn-t-fully-come-true-but-south-florida-is-better-off-opinion/ar-BB1lO9jN>

LINK: <https://www.southernliving.com/jimmy-buffett-manatee-conservation-7975243>

Meanwhile, Florida's current governor has state [Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officials patrolling for immigrants](#).

LINK: <https://www.instagram.com/p/C5je4XpuMf0/?igsh=MW5iZndhZDA3NHRqdw%3D%3D>

On its website FWC lists as its mission, "Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people."

More political theater at the expense of Florida's environment.

LINK: <https://myfwc.com/about/overview/>

Imagine, instead, Florida's governor working with the legislature to provide homeowners money to [replace their lawns with pollinator friendly native plants and wildflowers](#) like Minnesota. This program is a couple years old, but I just came across it.

Imagine.

LINK: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/minnesota-will-pay-residents-grow-bee-friendly-lawns-180972430/>

LINK: <https://www.startribune.com/thousands-of-homeowners-apply-for-minnesota-funding-to-turn-lawns-into-bee-friendly-habitats/568642712/?refresh=true>

Saturday was the anniversary of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill catastrophe which released 134 million gallons of crude into the Gulf of Mexico. Not surprisingly, [BP's settlement to compensate cleanup workers](#) for their medical bills has fallen short of expectations.

Remember, spills have always been a part of oil drilling and will always be a part of oil drilling.

LINK: <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/2024/04/18/once-praised-settlement-to-help-sickened-bp-oil-spill-workers-leaves-most-with-nearly-nothing/>

Speaking of oil, the biggest environmental news from the week comes at the federal level where the administration banned fossil fuel drilling on [more than 13 million acres](#), including polar bear and caribou habitat, in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

Just like that.

But remember, if one administration can do it, another can undo it.

LINK: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/biden-administration-bans-drilling-in-nearly-half-of-alaska-petroleum-reserve-in-sweeping-win-for-climate-advocates/ar-AA1ni2Bw>

More good news on the federal level, The Bureau of Land Management has finalized a sweeping [new public lands rule](#) that places conservation and restoration of public lands on equal footing with energy development and mining. That's right, until now, resource extraction has taken higher priority on 245 million acres of federal land owned by you and me and managed by the BLM than has supporting wildlife, combating climate change, or using the environment to ensuring clean air and water.

LINK: <https://www.eenews.net/articles/biden-boosts-conservation-in-blm-public-lands-rule/>

This November, there will be a ballot measure in Florida proposing [a constitutional amendment guaranteeing a right to hunting and fishing](#) in the state. The amendment declares, "Fishing, hunting, and the taking of fish and wildlife, including by the use of traditional methods, shall be preserved forever as a public right and preferred means of responsibly managing and controlling fish and wildlife."

Interesting language, "preferred means of responsibly managing and controlling fish and wildlife."

Opponents worry making hunting and fishing the "preferred means" of wildlife population control, rather than more humane or less-lethal approaches such as birth control, could lead to overkill hunting and fishing. Including "traditional methods," they add, could eventually allow nets that entangle fish by the gills and other currently banned fishing and hunting tactics.

LINK: <https://news.yahoo.com/florida-amendment-2-ensure-fishing-090347629.html>

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A podcast by the University of Florida/IFAS Center for Aquatics and Invasive Plants looks at a new "green menace" in the St. Johns River: [Giant Salvinia](#).

LINK: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/working-in-the-weeds/id1604459734?i=1000652717618>