

Wrapping up “phase one” of the legislative session which has come to a close.

Ryan Smart, longtime environmental activist and organizer in Florida, particularly around the springs, considers the session gone by the best environmental and anti-sprawl session he's experienced since starting his work.

Smart co-hosts a Florida conservation and politics podcast called [“As Bad As It Is.”](#) The most recent episode goes deep on the past session and how the sausage was made, and wasn't. Good details on how no drilling around Apalachicola River legislation was passed and how the legislation protecting single use plastics was defeated.

LINK: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/big-wins-for-florida-state-parks-coastal-areas-and/id1788800886?i=1000706252191>

Sadly, the legislation promoting [flamingos and scrub jays as Florida's official bird and song bird](#) never gained traction. The mockingbird remains Florida's state bird.

This isn't a huge deal, but developers have always liked the idea of the mockingbird as Florida's state bird because it can live in subdivisions and highly developed areas. Conservationists want a more delicate, Florida-specific bird chosen to raise awareness for the protection of the species and its habitat. It would be easier to rile up the public to oppose a convenience store if the store were going to kill the state bird.

LINK: [https://www.orlandosentinel.com/2025/05/01/cant-kill-a-mockingbird-florida-state-bird-keeps-perch-as-bills-favoring-others-dont-fly/?utm\\_email=D433B512746134193427B5942B&lctg=D433B512746134193427B5942B&active=yesP&utm\\_source=listrak&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=https%3a%2f%2fwww.orlandosentinel.com%2f2025%2f05%2f01%2fcant-kill-a-mockingbird-florida-state-bird-keeps-perch-as-bills-favoring-others-dont-fly%2f&utm\\_campaign=trib-orlando\\_sentinel-breaking\\_news-nl&utm\\_content=alert](https://www.orlandosentinel.com/2025/05/01/cant-kill-a-mockingbird-florida-state-bird-keeps-perch-as-bills-favoring-others-dont-fly/?utm_email=D433B512746134193427B5942B&lctg=D433B512746134193427B5942B&active=yesP&utm_source=listrak&utm_medium=email&utm_term=https%3a%2f%2fwww.orlandosentinel.com%2f2025%2f05%2f01%2fcant-kill-a-mockingbird-florida-state-bird-keeps-perch-as-bills-favoring-others-dont-fly%2f&utm_campaign=trib-orlando_sentinel-breaking_news-nl&utm_content=alert)

Another bummer, a bill that would have incentivized coastal resilience utilizing nature-based solutions stalled. The legislation would have facilitated the broader adoption of nature-based methods for improving coastal resilience in the face of sea level rise and storm surge. Green infrastructure, like coral reefs, oyster beds, seagrass beds, dunes, wetlands, coastal hammocks, mangroves, etc., provides a range of environmental, social, and economic benefits—unlike seawalls and grey infrastructure.

The House and Senate still need to approve a state budget, and this will be another major battleground for conservationists as the two chambers have VASTLY different initial proposals surrounding funding for Florida Forever, conservation land acquisition, and Everglades restoration. VAST differences.

The Florida Springs Council will be hosting a live session recap on May 13 at 6:30 PM. You can watch it for free live or recorded on FSC's YouTube channel:

<https://floridaspringscouncil.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=a40f6624cd6bed9c6ec93beae&id=d8e91e5859&e=4a4314895e>

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OnePlanet Solar Recycling will begin work in 2026 on a \$90 million solar panel recycling facility, its second in Green Cove Springs. It is expected to be in operation by 2027 and join the company's prototype facility opened in 2024.

One Planet Solar Recycling, founded in 2023, is headquartered in Jacksonville.

LINK: <https://www.jaxdailyrecord.com/news/2025/apr/22/oneplanet-solar-recycling-plans-90-million-expansion-in-green-cove-springs/>

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North Florida Land Trust has acquired a conservation easement that is more than 83 acres in Clay County on the southeast side of Camp Blanding, within the military installation's Army Compatible Use Buffer zone. It is also within the ecologically important Ocala to Osceola Wildlife Corridor.

The conservation easement on the property owned by the Hughes family was purchased for \$540,000 with funding from the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program.

The Department of Defense has numerous programs and billions of dollars to spend on buying up land around its bases nationwide to prevent development from encroaching on its facilities, with the conservation benefit being that these areas remain largely natural.

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Mandarin residents, a community-led effort is underway to stop a proposed sidewalk construction project along Mandarin Road—from Red Cypress Drive to Walter Jones Historical Park.

The stretch is home to a well-established canopy of live oak trees. The proposed project risks disturbing root systems and permanently altering the natural and visual landscape of the area. Mature native trees like this are irreplaceable once destroyed and provide shade, habitat, air and water purification, and beautification to the area.

The group has filed public records requests for the specific engineering survey for the Red Cypress to Walter Jones Park corridor (which remain unanswered by JTA, in violation of Florida Statute 119), launched a petition, and shared our concerns publicly—including through a televised News4Jax segment on April 30, 2025.

They are asking neighbors to attend a public meeting addressing the community's concerns on Tuesday, May 14, 2025 at 6:00 PM, Mandarin Community Club – 12447 Mandarin Road.

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Drinking water in north Florida comes from the Floridan Aquifer. Drinking water in South Florida comes from the Everglades.

This article explains [how the hydrology of South Florida works](#) and how saltwater intrusion is an increasing threat to the area's water supply.

LINK: <https://www.theinvadingsea.com/2025/04/16/florida-everglades-drinking-water-saltwater-intrusion-restoration-phosphorus-harmful-algal-blooms/>

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FWC is monitoring a possible crocodile nest on Sanibel Island.

In 1998, Sanibel [officially became an American crocodile \(\*Crocodylus acutus\*\) refuge](#) that endorses a breeding population. Yet, no nests have successfully hatched — or possibly even contained fertilized eggs—on the island since then.

LINK: <https://sccf.org/blog/2025/04/25/courting-crocs-fwc-monitoring-crocodile-nest-on-sanibel/>

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Construction began on [Florida's first wildlife overpass](#) across I-4 in Polk County. Wildlife overpasses (or underpasses) allow for animals to safely cross busy roads – like I-4 – and have proven tremendously successful elsewhere in the country.

LINK: <https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/region-polk/construction-begins-on-floridas-first-wildlife-overpass-across-i-4-in-polk-county>

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A group of American Beach residents filed a lawsuit contending Nassau County is violating the Endangered Species Act by allowing vehicles to drive on the beach, [jeopardizing nesting sea turtles](#).

Driving on the beach in the City of Fernandina Beach, on Amelia Island, is outlawed, however, driving on the beach on Amelia Island in areas outside of the city limits, areas overseen by the County, is allowed in places.

American Beach on Amelia Island was the only beach and resort in Florida welcoming African Americans during Jim Crow segregation, and one of the few in the South.

LINK: <https://raiderswire.usatoday.com/story/news/local/2025/04/30/american-beach-florida-homeowners-file-lawsuit-to-ban-driving/82793302007/>

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[Florida is home to 114 threatened or endangered species](#), including the Florida panther, manatees, ghost orchids and several species of sea turtles. As mentioned in the Conservation Newsletter last week, the war on nature has the Endangered Species Act in its sights, hoping to weaken protections.

All of those Florida threatened and endangered species would be jeopardized by this proposed measure.

LINK: <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/2025/04/24/florida-endangered-species-at-risk-from-trump-rule-change-say-environmentalists/>

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