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| **Florida Beacon** | |
| **From the President’s Desk**  **Ryan Goldman**  **Hello FAEP Members,** | **Florida Association of Environmental Professionals**  **Summer 2021**  **faep_logo.jpg** |
| As the summer wains, hurricane activity increases, and the Back-to-School tax holiday is in effect; we know that fall is quickly approaching. For FAEP, the Fall is a time for a flurry of activity and excitement as the Annual Conference comes around. Over the past few years, Fall has been the typical time for the FAEP Annual Conference. This year the FAEP conference is a virtual conference with some local chapter offerings and in-person networking opportunities depending on your location. I would not call it a hybrid conference, as the presentations are virtual, but the ability to meet and interact with your environmental peers has been worked into the schedule around the state. This virtual and in-person format provides the most opportunities and limits some exposure as we continue to stay safe.  The 2021 FAEP virtual conference, September 22-24, is going to be like something you have never seen before. We have incorporated a new conference platform that is not your typical video chat. With this new platform, we are entering a new phase of 3D exhibit halls, interactive tables, and billboards and banners for sponsors that are new to the industry. This format will be refreshing, engaging, and retain the attention of the registrants over the two partial days of conference. Besides the format, we have a great Program lineup focusing on Emerging Technologies, Natural Resources, Remediation/Assessment, and Resiliency. The response from the industry has been strong and the program is filled with excellent presentations that we hope you will enjoy. As usual, there are discounted registrations for current FAEP members, government employees, and students. Registration is open and please consider attending the 2021 FAEP virtual conference.  A special thank you goes out to the Treasure Coast Chapter of FAEP. Their chapter is hosting the conference and doing the majority of the heavy lifting regarding conference planning and execution. As a volunteer organization, it is commendable to have such a response of willing participants and planners taking the lead in ensuring this annual conference is a booming success. It is a testament to the professionalism and strength of the board and membership that this conference is already such a success. Thank you TCC, you are making our organization shine.  As we discuss conferences, I would be remiss if I did not mention the next in line, the rescheduled and revamped, returning for its third iteration, the National Association of Environmental Professionals 47th Annual Conference & Training Symposium, May 16-19, 2022 in Fort Lauderdale. After pivoting from organizing the in person to virtual NAEP conference in 2020, FAEP has the honor of hosting the national conference in person in 2022. The website and information are starting to coalesce for that conference which is going to be the highlight of 2022 for FAEP. The conference facility is the Westin Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort right on the beautiful Fort Lauderdale Beach. This is going to be the first in-person conference offered by NAEP since 2019 and it is going to be fantastic. Make sure to save the date on your calendars because you will not want to miss this event.  Thank you all for continuing your support of this organization and I look forward to seeing you at the FAEP Annual Conference on September 22.  Regards,  Ryan Goldman | **FAEP Board of Directors** |
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**2021 FAEP ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

***LIVING ON THE EDGE***

**September 22-24, 2021 Virtual**

Sponsorship opportunities are available for companies and organizations interested in supporting the 2021 FAEP Annual Conference – Living on the Edge - being held virtually September 22nd through September 24th, co-hosted by the FAEP and the Treasure Coast Chapter. We appreciate your generosity and support of this non-profit organization and your interest in engaging with the attendees.

**Benefits of Sponsorship:**

* Cultivate and strengthen a diversity of industry relationships
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**Exclusive Sponsorships are available**

If you want to be the exclusive sponsor for the Annual Conference or for a particular track, session or event, please contact Marissa Hodapp ([FAEPConference2021@gmail.com](mailto:mhodapp@sfwmd.gov)) to discuss options and pricing.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please complete the [Sponsorship Commitment Information](http://app.certain.com/profile/form/index.cfm?PKformID=0x1869943317e) below.

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**Graphics Requirements for Sponsor Recognition**  
In order to properly recognize your contribution and showcase your company or organization to the 2021 FAEP Annual Conference on the FAEP website and the Conference website, we ask that you email Marissa Hodapp ([FAEPConference2021@gmail.com](mailto:FAEPConference2021@gmail.com)) a high resolution version of your organization’s logo. We accept JPEG, TIF, and EPS formats and recommend a minimum resolution of 300-600 dpi for the best representation of your organization.

**A Few Words of Thanks to Our Sponsors**  
On behalf of the FAEP 2021 Annual Conference Planning Committee and the Treasure Coast Chapter, we wish to thank all of the organizations that take the extra step to partner with us by being a sponsor. Your support is needed to make this event a success and is greatly appreciated!

Sponsorship opportunities are available for companies and organizations interested in supporting the 2021 FAEP Annual Conference – Living on the Edge - being held virtually September 22nd through September 24th, co-hosted by the FAEP and the Treasure Coast Chapter. We appreciate your generosity and support of this non-profit organization and your interest in engaging with the attendees.



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| **STATE ASSUMPTION OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT**  **SECTION 404 PERMITTING PROGRAM** |
| **By Susan Roeder Martin**  Nason Yeager Gerson Harris and Fumero |
| Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) requires a permit for activities which will discharge dredge and fill materials into waters of the United States. Until December 2020, this permit was obtained from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). Additionally, in Florida, works and activities which alter the surface of land must have an environmental resource permit (ERP) from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) or one of the state’s five water management districts (WMDs) under Part IV of Chapter 373, Florida Statutes (Fla. Stat.) and Chapter 62-330 of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).  DEP estimated the federal and state permits overlap eighty-five percent of the time, meaning many applicants processed two permits for the same activity, incurring additional costs and potential delays. Because of this, in 2018, Florida applied for assumption of the 404-permitting program. In December 2020, Florida was the third state in the nation to be granted assumption. Also, DEP’s new 404 permitting rule in chapter 62-331, F.A.C. and the State 404 Program Applicant’s Handbook (404 Handbook) became effective.  The goal of state assumption was to provide a streamlined permitting procedure addressing both federal and state requirements, while maintaining at least the same level of environmental protection as the federal program. However, in the short run, streamlining has not occurred.  **Federal and State Agency Coordination**  Assumption included memorandums of agreement (MOA) with EPA, the Corps, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The DEP/Corps MOA includes authority retained, review of state programmatic permits, and mitigation banking coordination. The USFWS/Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) MOA sets forth a coordination framework wherein DEP or FWC may engage with the USFWS for threatened and endangered species coordination reviews in the State 404 Permit Program. If EPA objects or provides a permit condition and DEP does not satisfy EPA’s objection or address the permit condition, then the Corps shall process the application.  There is also an Operating Agreement between the Division of Historical Resources – State Historic Preservation Officer and DEP, setting forth a consultation process, called the “historic properties review,” for assessing the potential effects on historic properties and for avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating adverse effects on historic properties. The Operating Agreement is intended to mirror the Section 106 process from the National Historic Preservation Act and complement established procedures and timelines for permit processing and public notice.  **What Waters Are Retained by the Corps?**  The DEP/Corps MOA provides that mitigation banking and in-lieu fee instruments shall be processed by the Corps in accordance with 33 C.F.R. Part 332. DEP may approve the use of credits from a Corps-approved mitigation bank or in-lieu fee program to provide compensatory mitigation for permits issued under the State 404 Program. Also, under Section 14 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, the Corps must review requests for modification of federal projects by non-federal interests prior to project commencement. Certain projects which would require a permit under the federal Rivers and Harbors Act are also retained by the Corps.  **Two Permits Continue to Be Required**  Applicants now use a joint application form to apply for an ERP and a Section 404 permit. Though applicants will use one application form, two permits are still required in most cases—an ERP from DEP or a WMD and a State 404 Permit from DEP. WMDs and DEP continue to share permitting authority under Part IV of Chapter 373 as established by individual operating agreements. Therefore, in most cases, applicants will continue to get permits from two agencies.  At some point, authority may be delegated to the WMDs to issue State 404 Permits. The Legislature included this option in the enabling statutory language, and provisions in the 404 Handbook speak to potential delegation. Section 1.0, State 404 Program Applicant’s Handbook states that “In the event (DEP) seeks and receives approval from EPA pursuant to 40 C.F.R § 233.16 to modify the program to delegate implementation of the State 404 Program to Florida’s five (WMDs), the Districts may then implement the program with (DEP) oversight.”  **The New State 404 Permit Rule**  Chapter 62-331, F.A.C. sets forth the requirements of federal law not addressed in the Chapter 62-330, F.A.C. Chapter 62-331 references existing ERP Chapter 62-330, F.A.C. whenever possible. The new rule sets forth the review sequence and public notice procedures for the State Program. DEP also adopted the 404 Handbook.  Elements of the federal and state program differ. For example, under the ERP rules, the applicant must demonstrate that it has reduced or eliminated impacts to wetlands and other surface waters. ERP rules do not provide authority to consider alternative sites. By contrast, federal rules require applicants demonstrate avoidance and minimization of impacts, including consideration of alternative sites. 404 Handbook Appendix C provides guidance for conducting an alternatives analysis and is nearly identical to the Corps Jacksonville District’s “Information for Preparing an Alternatives Analysis under Section 404,” minus two rebuttable presumptions. Federal rules contain a mitigation hierarchy and preference for mitigation banks, while ERP rules do not. The federal review includes aesthetics and economics, but ERP rules do not.  ERP exemptions do not apply to the state 404 program. However, there are other exemptions from federal law that are set forth in Appendix B of the 404 Handbook. Chapter 62-331, F.A.C. has thirty-eight general permits modeled after the existing Corps’ Nationwide Permits.  Permitting timelines in Chapters 120 and 373, Fla. Stat. do not apply to the State 404 Permit Program and there are no default permits if the agencies fail to act within statutory timeframes. DEP encourages applicants to voluntarily waive ERP timeframes to ensure consistency between ERP and State 404 Permits. This prevents later potential modifications to the ERP to be consistent with a later issued State 404 Permit.  **Streamlining Has Not Been Accomplished**  There are many reasons why assumption has not resulted in streamlining and in the short run has made the process harder. When the regulated community first expressed a desire for assumption, it hoped that permits would be processed by one agency. However, two permits continue to be required in most cases, with review by two agencies. At some point, DEP may seek authority to allow the water management districts to process 404 permits. While the statute and rules provide for this, there is not a current timetable.  When DEP assumed the 404 program, the Corps transferred 591 existing applications to DEP, many of which involve jurisdiction determinations. Since, these permits have to be reviewed under the new state 404 rules, DEP must review each application from the beginning. This means that applications which were close to Corps issuance, start at the beginning of the permit process with DEP. This includes new public noticing. This was a tremendous influx of work upon DEP. DEP has staffing challenges, including a requirement for individuals with the certifications required under the assumption. DEP and the water management districts are making their best efforts to work collaboratively, but the new process presents challenges. Therefore, many applicants are waiving their ERP time clocks to facilitate concurrent permitting. In the long run, the hope is that the process will result in streamlining. However, in the short run, the process requires patience. |

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| **ABCEP** |
| The Academy of Board Certified Professionals (ABCEP) is the certifying body for NAEP and the lead organization certifying environmental professionals; maintaining exemplary standards of ethics and technical practice; and supporting individuals, our profession, and the public relying upon our services. It is a board-certified recognition.  Beyond the acknowledgement by your peers, earning and maintaining the Certified Environmental Professional (CEP) designation is beneficial as a key differentiator when bidding on projects. It also opens new doors personally and professionally.  ABCEP would like to enhance the CEP (and CEP-IT) by growing our numbers and raising the awareness and value of the credential. If interested, you can find more details about the CEP and the application process on our website [https://www.abcep.org](https://www.abcep.org/). If you email the office (office@abcep.org), our Administrator will follow up to see if you have additional questions about the application process and offer to assign a mentor to help guide you through it.  The initial CEP application fee is typically $200. ABCEP is offering a 10% discount through the end of 2020 reducing the initial CEP application fee to $180. This is a great time to submit your application! We also have a CEP-IT application for those that don’t quite meet the CEP requirements.  Making the decision to pursue a certification can feel like a daunting task, but in this climate, having the designation after your name can prove that crucial differentiator. Please share this with anyone in your office that might be interested. |
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| **Fertilizing Effectively in Sandy Florida Soils** |
| By Tina McIntyre, Florida-Friendly Landscaping Agent at the UF/IFAS Extension in Seminole County |
| We all live in a watershed, an area including homes, streets, farms, and businesses that drain into our lakes, rivers, or streams. When it rains, the water runs over the watershed and picks up trash, grass clippings, dog poo, excess lawn fertilizers, and other things from the landscape. The rain with these other materials is referred to as Non-Point Source (NPS) pollution or stormwater. Excess nutrients from stormwater runoff enter our waterbodies and fuel the growth of aquatic weeds and algae. The vegetation and algae can, in turn, reduce the water clarity, decrease oxygen, and spur fish kills. When we have fish kills, the waterbodies suffer a loss of recreation and surrounding properties can see a decrease in property values.  However, having a healthy yard and healthy waterbodies is attainable. We all can implement Best Management Practices (BMP’s) in our yards to encourage healthy plant growth and protect our waterways. Some simple ways to implement BMP’s into your yard management include:   1. **Get a soil test:**     * Before you elect to fertilize your landscape, getting a soil test can help you better understand what nutrients your soil might lack. If your test reflects you have high levels of some nutrients, for example phosphorous (P), you would want to avoid purchasing that nutrient. Soil tests also indicate the level of pH, which can indicate the capacity for your plants/turf to absorb the nutrients you put down. Each plant likes a certain pH range, so a soil test will indicate if you would need to alter the pH or if your plants are suitable for that soil pH. 2. **Mow your grass species to the proper height:**    * Certain species like to be mowed to a particular height. If they are mowed shorter than that height, they will be stressed. Set your mower deck to the proper height:      + St. Augustine: 3.5 -4 inches      + Zoysia: 1.5 – 2.5 inches      + Bahiagrass: 3-4 inches 3. **Use irrigation as a supplement to the rain and if needed, irrigate ½ to ¾ of an inch.** Overwatering can lead to weeds, fungus, increased thatch and a decrease in drought tolerance. Watch this video to learn more about calibrating your irrigation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8es5lxhQdXw&list=PLAON1AaPLtM-R3LranYOuSUrQ-0-cdHNf&index=23&t=0s>   Once you have taken the necessary steps to have healthy soils, turf and a well calibrated irrigation system, you will know if you need to fertilize. Plants might show signs of yellowing or a lack of vigor, indicating they might need some supplementation. If they do, follow these steps:   1. **Read the bag label:**    * All fertilizer bags have three numbers, which indicate the percent nitrogen (N- first number), phosphorous (P- second number) and potassium (K- third number). 2. **Select a Slow-Release Nitrogen (SRN) product**:    * Granular SRN products last throughout the growing season. When applied in April or May they will assist your plants during the summer. The bag will indicate the percent SRN; in this case the higher the percent, the better! Additionally, they are usually compliant with local ordinances, but check this website to better understand your local laws: <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/fertilizer/>. 3. **Watch the phosphorous:**    * If your soil test indicated you have high levels of phosphorous in your soils, you’ll want your bag to have a “0” as the second number on the bag. Most Florida soils are naturally high in phosphorous, so skipping it could save you money and help our waterways. 4. **Measure your yard:**    * Calculate the amount of fertilizer you will need by measuring the square footage of your yard and using the Fertilizer Calculator, found here: [www.FertilizeFlorida.com](http://www.FertilizeFlorida.com). This calculator helps you to know the exact amount of fertilizer to apply to your yard!   By implementing these BMP’s into your yard, you can have a healthy landscape while protecting our local waterways! To learn more about Florida-Friendly Landscaping, visit [www.SeminoleCountyFL.gov/ffl](http://www.SeminoleCountyFL.gov/ffl) |
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| **Army Corps: Kissimmee restoration will help curb**  **harmful flows, pollution to Caloosahatchee** | |
| Federal water managers celebrated the Everglades restoration work completed north of Lake Okeechobee that will help curb harmful releases to the Caloosahatchee River and its estuary.  Restoring natural flows in the Kissimmee River is one of the top restoration priorities in South Florida as it will help hold back flows to Okeechobee while also improving water quality.  The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers held a ceremony near the river to celebrate restoration work in the Kissimmee River basin that will allow the agency to hold more water north of Lake Okeechobee, which will in turn help the entire Everglades system.  What was once a straight-shot, channelized canal has been restored to historic, winding oxbows.  Storing more water north of the lake will help reduce the need for harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee River, which is vitally important when the lake is suffering from a toxic blue-green algae bloom.  "People are used to Okeechobee getting too deep and then they start dumping water on the Caloosahatchee, and part of the reason is because the Kissimmee was so heavily drained," said Paul Gray, a scientist for Audubon. "At any time this can hold about 100,000-acre feet of water, or about 3 inches off the lake."  Slowing flows to Lake Okeechobee will help with lake management, but it will also improve water quality by cutting down on the amount of pollution flowing from the north and into Okeechobee.  The lake functions as a headwaters for the Caloosahatchee River, so the cleaner the water is in the lake, the better it is for the Caloosahatchee and its delicate estuary.  The river is sometimes plagued with harmful discharges from the lake, a process that can blast freshwater 15 miles into the Gulf of Mexico.  Attenuating those types of flows is a top goal for many environmental groups.  "Restoring the meandering river is important for improving water quality, and I think one of the overarching themes is to keep water on the landscape longer so we're not impacting the receiving water so abruptly," said Calusa Waterkeeper John Cassani. "We're doing better with restoration but we need to better understand the net effect in order to plan for the future."  Capt. Holden Fisher tries his luck on a restored portion of the Kissimmee River on November 2, 2020. The U.S. Army Corps pf Engineers celebrated the completion of restoration work in the river and its basin at the end of July, 2021.  Gene McAvoy with the University of Florida's agriculture extension in LaBelle said the project will help cleanse pollution from the northern part of the historic Everglades before that water gets to Okeechobee and, eventually, the Caloosahatchee.  "I don't know if it will help farmers but it will improve water quality because a lot of what they're doing is restoring the meandering Kissimmee River," McAvoy said. "That will help clean the water before it reaches the lake. The water will spread out during high water times in the flood plane and that will help clean up the pollutants that might be in the water."  SFWMD helped acquire the land and will operate the control structures north of Lake Okeechobee, of which the Army Corps controls.  Chauncey Goss is the chair of the water district's governing board and said the Kissimmee River restoration is just one project to celebrate.   “Under the leadership of Gov. Ron DeSantis, we continue to see historic environmental achievements,” Goss said in a statement to The News-Press. “In addition, our partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is integral to the success of many critical Everglades restoration projects such as the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir Project and the C-44 Reservoir and Stormwater Treatment Area. Completing these projects is vital to SFWMD’s mission of protecting South Florida’s communities from flooding while safeguarding and restoring local water resources and ecosystems.”  Army Corps Col. Andrew Kelly said that the Kissimmee project is a significant part of the overall Everglades restoration, which stretches across 16 counties and spans from just south of Orlando to the Florida Keys.  "Any chance you get to bring the water distribution to where it was historically, it will be significant," Kelly said. "We dug a channel (decades ago) and opening up (the Kissimmee) flood plain will help."  Kelly said the restoration has also been good for wildlife north of the lake.  "There's really significant improvements in the ecology and it's really impressive and exciting to see," Kelly said. "It shows that we can actually do this, but it just takes time."  Gray said more storage is needed north of Lake Okeechobee to help the entire system.  "We want to be able to store one million acre-feet north of the lake, and this is a pretty good chunk," Gray said. "This project was done for ecological restoration reasons but the water management side is really going to help restoration and it gets back to the idea that mother nature works, if we just let her."  From the Fort Myers News-Press | |
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|  | [Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A.](https://www.llw-law.com/) President and Shareholder [**Michelle Diffenderfer**](https://www.llw-law.com/attorneys/michelle-diffenderfer/) was recently elected Chair of the [American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/environment_energy_resources/) (ABA SEER).  She will serve a one-year term, through August 2022.  “I am excited and honored to be named Chair of the Section. I grew up as an environmental lawyer in SEER and am thrilled to be able to give back to the Section that provided me with mentoring, leadership experience and so many friends through the years,” said Diffenderfer. “My priorities include bringing us back together again in person at conferences to exchange information and ideas about environment, energy, and natural resources laws. I am also excited to continue the Section’s work on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity for all our members and helping our Section implement ABA’s Environmental Justice Resolution.”  An active member of the Section for over 25 years, Michelle’s leadership within ABA SEER began as a Committee Vice Chair in 2002. Since then, Michelle has held various leadership positions within the organization including Education Officer, Budget Officer, Secretary and most recently in her path to Chair as Vice Chair and Chair-Elect.  “Congratulations to Michelle on becoming Chair of the Section. Her extensive experience in the Section will serve our members very well this coming year,” said Howard Kenison, Immediate Past Chair of the Section.  With over 7,500 members, ABA SEER fosters the success of a diverse community of environmental, energy and resources lawyers, advisors and decision-makers and provides a premier forum for the exchange of ideas and information.  The Section provides opportunities to enhance professional skills, stay on top of current developments, and dialogue in environmental, energy, and natural resources law.  For more information about ABA SEER, [click here](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/environment_energy_resources/).  Michelle assists landowners, businesses and governments with local, state and federal environmental, natural resource and land development legal requirements.  Michelle helps clients navigate these laws and regulations in the permitting of their land development and infrastructure projects.  She can be reached at [mdiffenderfer@llw-law.com](javascript:void(0);) or at (561) 640-0820. |
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| **NAEP** | |
| **C:\Users\tperry\Desktop\Desktop Folders\FAEP Board\Calendars\naep_logo.png CALL FOR ARTICLES FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICE BULLETIN**  The NAEP Environmental Practice Bulletin is published four times a year and emailed to all NAEP members. The newsletter is published in mid-February, May, August and November. Deadline for submissions is the end of the month prior to publication. NAEP is always looking for articles for this great practitioner-based publication. Consider providing NAEP’s nationwide audience a bit of your professional experience and insight. For more information about publishing in the Environmental Practice Bulletin visit: <https://www.naep.org/publications>. | |
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| **NAEP 2021 President’s Service Award** | |
| **2020 NAEP Conference Planning Committee** | |
| In recognition of innovation, teamwork, & perseverance  in the successful pivot to hosting the first Virtual NAEP Annual Conference.  **John Abbott**  **Courtney Arena**  **Nicolas Frederick**  **Ryan Goldman**  **Amy Guilfoyle**  **Bruce Hasbrouck**  **Eric Neugaard**  **Tim Perry** | |
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| **Science Shorts ~NPR Short Wave~ The Science Behind the Headlines** | |
| [Three (Hopeful!) Takeaways From the UN’s Climate Change Report](https://www.npr.org/2021/08/13/1027457702/three-hopeful-takeaways-from-the-uns-climate-change-report) | The second week of August, the U.N. published a landmark report – detailing the current state of global climate change. One thing’s for sure, humans are causing a lot of this extreme weather by emitting greenhouse gasses. NPR’s Climate correspondent Rebecca Hersher gives Emily three key takeaways from the report that might surprisingly help everyone feel a little more hopeful. |
| [Gravitational Waves: Unlocking the Secrets of the Universe](https://www.npr.org/2021/08/05/1025184271/gravitational-waves-unlocking-the-secrets-of-the-universe) | Science correspondent Neil Greenfieldboyce gives us the latest in gravitational waves and shares what scientists have learned (and heard) from these tiny ripples in spacetime. |
| [Whales Vital Role in Our Ocean](https://www.npr.org/2021/07/23/1019916714/whales-vital-role-in-our-oceans) | Whales are more than just beautiful creatures – they play a vital role in the ocean’s ecosystem. Asha de Vos, marine biologist and pioneer of long-term blue whale research with the Northern Indian Ocean, explains why protecting whales is crucial for protecting the entire sea in this excerpt of *TED Radio Hour.* |

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| **Florida Wildlife Corridor** |
| **The Florida Wildlife Corridor Coalition Applauds Governor DeSantis**  **and the Florida Legislature for Signing the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act into Law** |
| TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – June 30, 2021—Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, which creates “incentives for conservation and sustainable development while sustaining and conserving the green infrastructure that is the foundation of Florida’s economy and quality of life.”  The legislation will also secure access to habitats for wide-ranging wildlife, including the endangered Florida panther, prevent fragmentation of critical lands, protect the headwaters of major watersheds such as the Everglades and St. Johns, help to sustain working farms, ranches, and forests, and preserve lands and waters to protect coastal estuaries.  “We are grateful that Governor DeSantis, as well as every single member of the Florida House and Senate, supported the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act,” said Jason Lauritsen, executive director, Florida Wildlife Corridor Coalition. “Floridians support a balance between the growth of the economy and preservation of natural resources. This is a moment to celebrate, but also the beginning of a new journey. Florida is finding innovative solutions for conservation to ensure wild Florida exists for future generations.”  The state budget also includes significant funding for land conservation within the Florida Wildlife Corridor through the Florida Forever program, which will help protect critical lands for the Florida panther and other species native to Florida.  “Though often hidden in plain sight, the Florida Wildlife Corridor is a foundation for nearly every facet of Florida life – from the endangered Florida panther which needs connected habitats to survive, to farmers and ranchers who cultivate the land to feed our country, to 22 million residents and 130 million annual visitors who rely on the services the Corridor provides,” said Carlton Ward, Jr., National Geographic Photographer and founder of the Path of the Panther project.  “The Florida Wildlife Corridor embraces the natural lands and working lands that make Florida unique, valuable, and the state the world loves to visit. The Corridor is critical to protect the headwaters of major watersheds which helps supply our drinking water, to save our precious wildlife, and so much more,” said Hilary Swain, executive director, Archbold Biological Station. “In the course of time, the Corridor will be viewed as the vision that helped change the future and save the state for generations to come.”  “The Florida Wildlife Corridor Act is the culmination of decades of work,” said Mallory Dimmit, board member, Florida Wildlife Corridor Coalition. “Florida’s long term economic prosperity and quality of life depends on a healthy and sustainable green infrastructure, and the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act will help make this possible.”  **ABOUT THE FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR COALITION**  The Florida Wildlife Corridor Coalition champions a collaborative campaign to permanently connect, protect, and restore the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The Coalition seeks to elevate the tremendous work of our many conservation partners, combining conservation science with compelling imagery and rich storytelling to inspire the protection of our treasured landscape to support sustainable ecosystems and economies. Established in 2010, founding partners include Archbold Biological Station, Audubon Florida, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, The Nature Conservancy, and more. To learn more, visit [floridawildlifecorridor.org](https://floridawildlifecorridor.org/), like on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FloridaWildlifeCorridor) (FloridaWildlifeCorridor), and follow on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/fl_wildcorridor/) (fl\_wildcorridor). |

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