



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Jan / Feb 2018

"If you want to fight for families, you have to get into politics. The merch is not very interesting, the snacks are never vegan, and a lot of the other people involved are obnoxious and never shut up. But that's civic life—forever in need of a new paint job, forever in need of someone in charge of marketing who actually knows what they're doing—and its demographic is everyone."

Kathryn Jezer-Morton
Canadian Journalist



League's Mission:

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Message from the President

In November I ruminated on the effects of the recent hurricanes in Puerto Rico, Texas and Florida. So, I'm devoting the first Voter of 2018 to pressing environmental issues. Much of Florida's livelihood depends on our natural resources, which are under continuing threats from climate change and development.

I've included quite a few links so you can fact-check me, but I'd like to include one final note for any climate

Deep Water Horizon redux?

In 2010, negligence coupled with a series of engineering failures resulted in the catastrophic Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. That explosion killed 11 workers; fouled our coast with the largest marine oil spill ever; seriously damaged the Gulf's fishing and tourism industries; and killed thousands of marine mammals and rare sea turtles and contaminated their habitats. BP was subsequently ordered to pay extensive reparations, and new safety and environmental regulations were implemented to prevent a recurrence, even while its long-term environmental impact continues to be felt.

The new rules focused on ensuring the safety of drilling equipment, because several pieces—including a supposedly fail-safe blowout preventer intended to stop explosions in undersea oil and gas wells—failed during the Deepwater Horizon spill. The 2016 rules shut off certain portions of the American coastline from drilling; tightened controls on blowout preventers;

deniers out there: cacao plants may be extinct by 2050, which means *no more chocolate* (<https://tinyurl.com/ydc3mxrq>, <https://tinyurl.com/y7vjegnp>), a disaster directly attributable to global warming.

We can no longer ignore our responsibility to our children, grandchildren and the rest of the world. Earth is the only planet we have. Let's work together to preserve it (*and chocolate*).

Mary Blackwell

and required rig operators to have third parties certify that the safety devices worked under extreme conditions.

Last spring the White House declared its new "Energy Independence Policy" as well as its intent to undo both drilling restrictions and safety regulations for offshore drilling. Specifically, Executive Order 13795 called for reconsideration of tightened controls on blowout preventers, despite opposition from the bipartisan National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling Commission, among many others.

Since then, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and 77 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico have been opened to oil/gas leases, and the Department of the Interior has published proposed revisions to Oil and Gas Production Safety Systems that would eliminate third party certification requirements for safety devices.

Is it "déjà vu all over again"?

Don't take my word for it: Sources/Resources

- New Oceana Report Highlights Long-Term Impacts of Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster, 4/14/16 (<https://tinyurl.com/mtbo29u>)
- Executive Order 13783 on Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth, 3/28/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/ycrebob4>)
- Executive Order 13795 on Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy, 4/28/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/yvcvxdeh8>).
- Trump's Risky Offshore Oil Strategy, 7/5/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/y973sy9e>)
- To repeal or not to repeal: Reviewing the US Well Control Rule 9/14/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/yb3v8s6g>)
- Trump administration to auction off 77 million acres of the Gulf of Mexico to oil companies, 10/24/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/yxcvwwtv>)
- Trump Administration Makes History with Largest-Ever Lease Proposal for Offshore Drilling, 10/25/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/yazlqoqa>)
- Trump Administration Proposes Rolling Back Oil-Spill Rules 12/26/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/y9kb7rzb>)

Environmental protections we lost in 2017

- **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge opened to oil/gas drilling.** Native Alaskans and environmental groups had successfully protected the Refuge from drilling for decades—but not any more.
- **Rescission of the 2015 Clean Water Rule proposed.** Particularly important in the arid West—this rule protects tributaries that connect to navigable waterways and adjoining wetlands, even if they flow only part of the year.
- **Fossil Fuels Royalties Rule repealed.** Designed to ensure that taxpayers get a fair return on oil, gas, and coal, the rule would have increased the royalties that fossil fuel industries pay to mine and drill federal lands by about \$80M/year.
- **Methane rules suspended.** BLM's 2016 rule—suspended until 2019—was intended to reduce emissions that contribute to climate change, smog and health problems, as well as to increase royalties. EPA's 2016 rule—suspended for 2 years—was designed to limit methane emissions, but from new and modified oil and gas wells, compressor stations, pneumatic pumps, and similar equipment.
- **National Environmental Policy Act reviews "streamlined."** Agencies now have only 1 year to complete environmental impact statements, and their final reports are limited to 150 pages or 300 pages "for unusually complex projects." Environmental groups fear the restrictions will hinder public engagement in public land decisions.
- **Federal coal moratorium and review canceled.** Implemented to ensure the federal coal mining program better reflects its costs to taxpayers and the planet, the moratorium affected only new coal leases on federal land, which currently produces about 40% of the coal burned in the US for electricity.
- **National Parks management policy revised.** A new decision-making policy that accounted for climate change impacts was scrapped, as was a 6-year-old policy allowing parks to ban the sale of disposable water bottles to decrease waste and

greenhouse gas pollution.

- **Clean Power Plan essentially scuttled.** This regulation was intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 32% from 2005 levels over the next 12 years. SCOTUS stayed the rule pending lower court review, which has now been suspended completely.
- **Pipeline construction approved.** Native Americans and environmentalists long objected to the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines due to fear of oil spills and the onerous carbon footprint of tar sands oil. The Dakota Access pipeline has already logged 3 spills in 2017. Meanwhile, the company behind Keystone XL hasn't yet determined if demand warrants actual construction.
- **Cleaner car rules endangered.** Plans to boost fuel efficiency for cars and light trucks to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025—thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions—are in peril, despite protests and lawsuits from California and 14 other states.
- **Offshore drilling restrictions lifted.** Large sections of the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans have been re-opened for annual drilling leases, despite threats to marine life in those areas. Additionally, 77 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico will be opened to federal oil and gas leases in 2018.
- **Blowout prevention rule slated for revocation.** The 2016 rule designed to prevent a repeat of the catastrophic 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster has been "reconsidered" at the behest of the oil and gas industry.
- **Flooding/infrastructure protections rescinded.** Just days before Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, a 2015 executive order mandating federal government consideration of sea level rise and storm surge when designing infrastructure and building in flood-prone areas was revoked. Many engineers, insurance companies and environmentalists objected, insisting the standard protected people and property and reduced expenses to the federal government associated with rebuilding after flooding.

Deepwater Horizon Redux Sources/Resources (cont'd)

- Trump Administration Is Ending Safety Regulations Enacted After Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, 12/29/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/y9xlbsw2>)
- Department of the Interior Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations on the Outer Continental Shelf—Oil and Gas Production Safety Systems, Revisions, 12/29/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/y9qhfwpb>)
- Sixteen environmental protections that the Trump administration dismantled in 2017, 12/29/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/yb8uaph2>)
- Trump Wants to Open the Gulf to Oil Companies Weeks After a 16,000 Barrel Spill, 10/25/17 (<https://tinyurl.com/yc46w3a4>)

Calendar

Okaloosa Community Alliance Meeting

8 Jan: 2:00 pm
United Way offices, 112 Tupelo Ave SE, FWB
Find out how you can help support the most vulnerable members of our community.

Earth Ethics Events Meeting

9 Jan: 9:00 am
Maas Coffee 150 Miracle Strip Parkway, FWB
We'll discuss Choctawhatchee Bay Area Solar Energy Committee, Earth Day & Hands across the Sands.

2018 MLK Day Events

Oratorical & poster contest

6 Jan: 10:00 am
Striving for Perfection Ministry, 24 Bass Ave SW, FWB Elementary—high school students will speak and display art based on the theme "Do you understand the dream?"

Dr. MLK Memorial Program

14 Jan: 5:30 pm
Beulah First Baptist Church, 109 McGriff St, FWB

Parade/March

15 Jan: 10:00 am
Line-up at 8:00 at FWB Civic Auditorium, 107 US Hwy 98, FWB

Rally/After-Rally Activities

15 Jan: Noon
Chester Pruitt Park, 15 Carson Dr SE, FWB

- Transportation from FWBHS to the Civic Auditorium for the Parade will be available from 7:45—9:30 am.
- Transportation will also be available for a short period of time after the parade for those who will need to return to the Civic auditorium.

Crestview Bypass

Jan 2018: Date/Time TBD
We've been talking about it for years. A west bypass is finally in the works, but traffic continues to worsen. What about an east bypass? Learn about the options and what **you** can do to make it a reality.