

# 'Green governor' losing his hue—

May 16, 2020

The author's well-taken point here is the vacancy for the resiliency officer, but we would mention that there are several other more serious reasons for the fading of the green.

DeSantis' first and perhaps only great move for the environment came when he fired the South Florida Water Management District and made some good replacements. Since then he has left other districts with less than a full board of directors, causing a lack of quorum in one instance at Suwannee River Water Management District. This resulted in confusion and unneeded additional expense. He has remained unresponsive and uncommunicative regarding nominations to fill spots on the board with true environmentalists. His office gives no recognition of receiving communications, which in our opinion is poor protocol.

DeSantis has approved the toll roads which is a boon for developers. He has approved a worse-than-nothing "Clean Water Bill" which takes us backward and does more harm than good.

He has supported in this bill the theft of home rule for local governing agencies, opening the way for developers and intimidating any protest. He has done nothing to stop fracking in spite of campaign promises.

In other words he may not be a Rick Scott but he is not a friend of the environment.

The Tampa Bay Times has not provided a link to this article.

*Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.  
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– A river is like a life: once taken,  
it cannot be brought back © Jim Tatum*

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May 14, 2020

## **‘Green governor’ losing his hue**

With the election of Ron DeSantis as governor in 2018, there was hope among voters across the political spectrum that he could be the “green governor” that Florida desperately needs. But when it comes to the urgent climate crisis unfolding before our eyes, he’s been all talk and no action, and his allies in the Florida Legislature aren’t helping either.

DeSantis made headlines across the country when he announced the new chief resilience officer position in his administration. The term “resiliency” is often used when talking about climate change, but resiliency alone does not address the cause of the crisis. Resilience is our ability to prepare for and respond to hazardous events. It is a reaction to climate change, not a cure. Resiliency doesn’t stop hazardous events – such as sunny day floods, rising temperatures, and increasingly catastrophic storms – it merely helps humans adapt to them. Let me be clear: Resiliency measures do not prevent or lessen the extent of climate change.

In August 2019, the governor hired Julia Nesheiwat to fill the new chief resilience officer job. Seven months later, she was gone, off to work in the Trump administration. And the governor has yet to find her replacement.



Julia  
Neshneiwa  
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Her one public appearance during the legislative session was short on details, and there was clearly no direction or urgency to her work – a recurring theme seen in her single deliverable, the 2019 Annual Report, made public late last month after a records request from the Tampa Bay Times.

Shockingly, Nesheiwat's report fails to use the word "carbon" or "greenhouse gases" a single time, even though it's the leading cause of climate change. There is little in the report by way of policy recommendations, goals or action agendas, leaving many environmentalists worried that the governor's office is still clueless when it comes to the climate crisis. You'd think a plan to reduce Florida's reliance on dirty fossil fuels would be included. Yet, by leaving out statelevel carbon reduction solutions, the report only serves the purpose of greenwashing the governor's inaction, instead of providing real solutions to this critically urgent crisis.

What else is missing from the 2019 Report? Leadership.

The governor's lack of interest in climate change played out during the 2020 legislative session. Sen. Tom Lee, R-Thonotosassa, and Rep. Cyndi Stevenson, R-St. Augustine, offered a bill to codify the governor's new Office of Resiliency and provide funding for a task force to study sea level rise. The bill was far from perfect or comprehensive as a response to the climate crisis, but it was a starting point nonetheless. Despite passing the Senate, the bill was delayed in the House and

ultimately died waiting for a hearing in the State Affairs Committee chaired by Rep. Blaise Ingoglia, R-Spring Hill.

In a moment of refreshing candor, Sen. Lee told the Times, "Somebody with some influence put their thumb on the scale, and we never could figure out how to un-stick that piece of legislation."

A governor who was genuinely committed to addressing the climate crisis would have found a way to "unstick" that legislation.

Responding to climate impacts is essential and should be at the top of mind for governments at every level in Florida. In creating what appears to be a largely figurehead position and failing to provide necessary leadership within his own party in the Legislature, DeSantis is making false promises to Florida families and jeopardizing the future livability of our state...