

# Hopeful Speculation

November 12, 2018

Until we have something concrete, let us continue to hope.

See this article here in [TC Palm](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

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## Here's what we could expect DeSantis to do for Florida's environment | Eve Samples

[Eve Samples](#), Treasure Coast Newspapers Published 6:00 a.m. ET  
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Red tide is a harmful algal bloom that can sicken or even kill local wildlife. It also causes respiratory issues in humans and other animals. Wochit



(Photo: XAVIER MASCAREÑAS/TCPALM)

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As a candidate, Ron DeSantis declared himself a “Teddy Roosevelt conservationist.”

“I am not a liberal environmentalist, and I’m never pretending to be,” [he said Sept. 11 during a](#) campaign stop when he toured a toxic algae-infested in Cape Coral.

Like Teddy Roosevelt, he said, he sees the environment as “way of life.” Liberals are more “ideological” about the environment, DeSantis said.

The next day, he debuted a 12-point environmental plan outlining what he would do to address Florida’s environmental crises if elected governor.

Tuesday’s election results – [now subject to a recount](#) because

DeSantis' margin of victory was less than 0.5 percentage points – demand a closer look at what DeSantis promised and the odds he will follow through.

We all know talking a good green game on the campaign trail is one thing. Delivering is another. The latter requires enough conviction to put what's right above what's politically expedient.

Teddy Roosevelt said this of conservation:

“It is the chief material question that confronts us, second only – and second always – to the great fundamental questions of morality.”

With that in mind, let's review what DeSantis pledged:

## **Fracking**

DeSantis' 12-point plan promised he would advocate for Florida lawmakers to pass legislation that bans fracking “on day one” of his job as governor.

What to expect: The new governor can advocate all he wants, but [bills to ban fracking died in 2016, 2017 and 2018](#) in the Florida Legislature. The key to changing that will be making incoming House Speaker Jose Oliva, R-Miami Lakes, receptive to such a ban. The state Senate has previously demonstrated some willingness.

## **Water quality regulation**

DeSantis' plan called for centralizing enforcement of water quality standards so all efforts fall under the state's Department of Environmental Protection. Now, some of that work falls to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer

Services.

What to expect: Curiously, this provision in DeSantis' plan has disappeared from the [environmental plan](#) outlined on his website. As of Thursday, only 11 points were listed there (one shy of the previous 12). Even if he pursued this measure, a reshuffling of administrative structure is unlikely to change Florida's enforcement efforts. Enhanced water pollution enforcement requires restoring staffing that Gov. Rick Scott cut at DEP – something DeSantis has not publicly committed to.

It will be important to watch whom DeSantis selects for DEP secretary, said Aliko Moncrief, executive director of Florida Conservation Voters, which [endorsed DeSantis' opponent](#), Democrat Andrew Gillum.

“Is he going to do anything to build that agency back?” Moncreif asked.

## Algae

The historic red tide and blue-green algae blooms this year forced all statewide candidates to address the crisis. For his part, DeSantis vowed to issue an executive order reestablishing a task force to research and report the causes and solutions.

What to expect: A task force is arguably necessary. The bigger hurdle will be ensuring it's fair and addressing its findings – including the role of human pollutants that trigger blue-green algae and exacerbate red tide blooms.

## Everglades reservoir

DeSantis threw darts at Florida's powerful sugar industry during his campaign, calling his primary opponent Adam Putnam an

“errand boy” for U.S. Sugar. He vowed to stand up to the industry to protect Florida’s environment and even suggested [in April](#) the state needs more land for the Everglades Agricultural Area reservoir to be effective. Who owns most the land around the planned reservoir? Sugar companies.

DeSantis also promised to leverage his tight relationship with President Donald Trump to get the federal government to appropriate \$200 million in matching dollars to build the Southern Reservoir in the Everglades Agricultural Area and complete the entire suite of Everglades restoration projects.

What do expect: Make no mistake: The federal government will need to contribute much more than \$200 million to pay its half of the \$1.6 billion reservoir and myriad other Everglades restoration projects. Also, while DeSantis suggested making the reservoir bigger was a good idea last spring, it’s not articulated in his environmental plan.

## **Springs**

According to DeSantis’ plan, he “will work with all stakeholders to implement a comprehensive springs restoration program to reduce all sources of nitrogen pollution.”

What to expect: Big question mark. Without a commitment for more aggressive pollution limits and enforcement, it’s difficult to know what exactly DeSantis is promising here, or how he would get stakeholders to measurably reduce nitrogen pollution that harms Florida’s freshwater springs.

## **Climate change**

Climate change is not mentioned once in DeSantis’ plan, though he does allude to rising sea levels and the risks imposed by

increased flooding and hurricanes. He promises work with local governments “to prioritize sustainable growth and flood mitigation.”

What to expect: Unless DeSantis intends to push Florida lawmakers to impose local restrictions on growth and coastal construction – which is the opposite of what the Republican-led Legislature has done in recent years – it’s unlikely he will have much impact here.

## **Bottom line**

If his victory holds up in the recount, DeSantis has a lot to deliver on.

What was remarkable about Teddy Roosevelt’s approach to conservation was how he framed it as a public, rather than private, duty. He saw it as a moral calling.

That’s not the course Florida’s outgoing governor, Rick Scott, charted.

The question is whether it would be the course of DeSantis.

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