

Jennifer Rubiello Gives Reason for Optimism in 2018

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When writing about the environment, it is not often that we are able to find optimism, but Jennifer Rubiello looks ahead and sees the potential for positive change. We happily acknowledge this and thanks to her good work and to others like her, it may happen.

On Jan.3, 2018, the [Orlando Sentinel](#) published the following fine op-ed by Jennifer Rubiello.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

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

With a new year comes new resolutions, and the potential for change.

Let's face it: 2017 was a rough year for Mother Nature. Events last year provided more evidence that we are changing our planet in dangerous ways. In September, top U.S. scientists confirmed that human activities, such as burning coal, oil and gas, are responsible for the global warming we are experiencing. The United States was 2.6°F warmer than normal this past year.

Supercharged by a warming climate, massive hurricanes devastated the Florida Keys, Puerto Rico and communities along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, while Western wildfires destroyed communities and millions of acres of forest.

Though [President Trump](#) announced the United States would withdraw from the [Paris Climate Agreement](#), much of America said, “Not so fast.” In many states, the political climate shifted as state and local governments stepped up action. In Florida, more than a dozen cities, including Orlando, joined 15 governors and 2,500 leaders of cities, counties, corporations and universities – representing more than half the U.S. economy and population – committed to the Paris Climate Agreement.

More than 50 cities, including Orlando and Atlanta, took even bolder action and committed to generating 100 percent of their energy from clean sources by 2050.



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States took concrete steps to keep fossil fuels in the ground, too. Maryland joined Vermont and New York as the third state in the U.S. to ban fracking, which contributes to global warming

pollution. The Delaware River Basin Commission issued draft rules prohibiting fracking in the Delaware River watershed, which provides drinking water to 15 million people in the Mid-Atlantic.

In Florida, 2017 marked the first legislative session with bipartisan support for a bill banning fracking, with nearly half the state Senate sponsoring the bill and 29 sponsors in the state House of Representatives.

Out West, California re-authorized its landmark climate protection law, with bipartisan support. By 2030, California will cut pollution equal to closing 40 coal-fired power plants.



Jennifer Rubiello on the infamous Ted Yoho Sabal Trail Walk

In the Northeast, five Republican and four Democratic governors finalized new rules to strengthen the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, making polluters pay and expanding the use of clean energy. After Virginia and New Jersey elected climate champions, both states are now poised to join their bipartisan neighbors in limiting dangerous pollution from power plants. Seven of these states, plus Washington, D.C., are creating a new program to

limit vehicle pollution, the biggest source of climate-changing pollution nationwide.

Corporations and universities also implemented bold plans in 2017. Google now powers its entire operation with 100 percent renewable energy, and more than 100 corporations have committed to the same goal. [Cornell University](#), Boston University and Colorado State all committed to transitioning entirely to clean energy.

In Florida, campuses like the University of Central Florida and the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, are taking steps to move to clean energy by installing rooftop solar panels on campus buildings.

The Trump administration is doing its best to pour gasoline on the fires of climate change by reversing the prior administration's actions. Yet with all of this explosive momentum in cities, universities and boardrooms in Florida and across the country, 2018 has the potential to be a game-changing year for our climate and our country's leadership.

2018 can be the year Florida bans fracking; it can be the year Florida's college campuses join cities in making visionary commitments to 100 percent renewable energy; and it can be the year where Floridians demand and elect local, state and federal leaders who are ready to "solve the climate crisis and make Florida "a" "world" "leader" "in" "the" "race" "toward" "a" cleaner," "healthier" "future".

But we've got our work cut out for us, and the clock is ticking. Despite the progress we've made, the United States still needs to step up the pace on climate action. As Floridians, we need to thank the leaders of the Sunshine State who have already acted, and call on those who haven't to get a move on.

Jennifer Rubiello is the director of Environment Florida, the

statewide environmental advocacy group working to protect Florida's air, water and open spaces.