

Rallies for Clean Water

December 18, 2015



WILL MR. GARDINER TAKE NOTICE?

[Sierra Club Florida News](#)



On December 9, at simultaneous press conferences, clean water activists representing Sierra Club and other Floridians' Clean Water Declaration campaign coalition partners, delivered a [letter](#) signed by 106 organizations and businesses to Florida Senate President Andy Gardiner and House Speaker Steve Crisafulli, calling for real protection of the state's imperiled waterways. The [letter](#) urges all of Florida's state legislators to amend the 2016 water bills, SB 552 and HB 7005. These bills do not satisfy the needs of our waters and neglect many opportunities to create water policies that serve the public's interest. Various regulated industries, agriculture, and their lobbyists are leading a retreat from protective policies and are instead relying on the same tools that have, for decades, failed Florida's citizens and our waters. The [letter](#) suggests twelve key areas of concern, which can be remedied by amendments.



"They are not done yet" said Maria Bolton-Joubert of the Central Florida Sierra Club, at the event in Orlando. "The legislature needs to roll up its sleeves and get to work fixing the problems in these bills."

The Orlando crowd delivered a poster-sized copy of the [letter](#), with all 106 signatures, to the senator's aide and asked that Senate President Gardiner not only consider the list of concerns but also act to remedy them.

In addition to the office visits, dozens of activists gathered in front of Glen Springs in Gainesville. "We're not being careful, we're not conserving, we're not being efficient in our use of water and our use of fertilizer," said Bob Knight, Director of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute.

"Some parts of this legislation work against, not toward, water conservation and protection of groundwater and surface water" said Frank Jackalone, Sierra Club Senior Organizing Manager. "If we don't act as citizens right now, we're going to have a bill that controls the fate of our water supply and water quality for decades to come."

Signatories to the [letter](#) are calling for legislation that ensures conservation; long-term protection of Florida's springs, rivers, estuaries and aquifers; and rapid restoration of imperiled waterways, because clean, plentiful water is the linchpin for Florida's public, environmental, and economic health.

Press coverage of the events and the [letter](#) included stories by [The Gainesville Sun](#), [Florida Today](#), and the [Palm Beach Post](#); TV news stations [Channel 20](#) (Gainesville) and [Channel 9](#) (Orlando); and post-event editorials in [The Gainesville Sun](#) and the [Ocala Star-Banner](#).

What can you do?

The Water Bills, SB 552 [Environmental Resources](#) by Sen. Dean and the companion bill, HB 7005 by Rep. Caldwell, are ready to go to the floor the first week of the legislative session that starts Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2016. Between now and then is our last chance to get these bills amended to do what they are supposed to do. Your State Representative and Senator will be in the home district from now until Friday, Jan. 8 and they need to hear from you via phone calls, emails and personal visits about how to improve the bills.

Familiarize your legislators and the members of [your county's legislative delegation](#) with [these amendments](#) that address the deficiencies cited in the attached letter signed by 106 organizations and businesses (including Sierra Club Florida). The amendments are drafted to SB 552 and are listed in the order in which they will appear in the bill.

Individual voters can take action to send the same message to their own legislators: Please consider submitting a letter-to-the-editor to your [local newspaper](#) urging your state [representative](#) and [senator](#) to give Florida the holiday gift it really needs – an amended water bill. Or urge legislators to make a New Year's resolution to amend the bill! Florida needs leadership on water issues and the choices our legislators make now will determine the future of our water resources – please add your voice to the call to get the water bills right!

Action Summary:

1. Call and email your state [representative](#) and [senator](#). (For contact info click on the words and type in address or zip code.)
2. Set up an appointment to meet them in the district now until Jan. 8 (Their address is on their contact page. See above.)
3. Tell them to support [these amendments](#) to the bills. Print them out.

4. Write a letter to your [local newspaper](#) asking for stronger water bills and urging your legislators to support the amendments. Read this [letter](#) for talking points. You can also talk about a local water body you care about that is threatened by pollution.

[Click here](#) for more photos and information on the [Floridians' Clean Water Declaration campaign](#).

– Cris Costello and Dave Cullen

This post rendered with LFS