

Ron Cunningham: Vote for clean water in this year's election

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you that they are
environmentalists.**

They are lying.

Their records betray them.

Read the original article here in [the Gainesville Sun](#).\

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

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

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I'm not crazy about single-issue voters. But if there was ever a time to be one, it's now.

This election isn't about a blue wave.

This is about a wave that is mottled green. With a nauseating smell. That is killing living things and destroying the Florida good life.

That is making us sicker and poorer. And that should make us angrier.

Where to start?

Visit any Florida spring and you will see that everything beneath the surface is coated with brown algae.

God didn't do that, we did. With our fertilizers and pesticides and septic tanks and poorly treated sewerage and stormwater runoff.

Florida is unique in America in that we get nearly all of our drinking water from deep beneath our feet. Our springs are, literally, aquifer health checks.

And we are what we drink.

But never mind the springs. Have you seen the Indian River Lagoon? It has for millennia been an amazing ecosystem, a natural wonder.

Now it's killing turtles and dolphins and fish and sea grasses and more.

But never mind the lagoon. Do you know that Apalachicola Bay was one of the most productive estuaries in the world?

Now its oysters are vanishing, along with the people who made a good living pulling them from the bottom of the bay.

But never mind that. Why do we treat the St. Johns River like an open sewer, the recipient of millions of gallons of effluvia every day?

But never mind that. Consider that the nutrient-laden water of Lake Okeechobee is poisoning Florida rivers east and west.

And never mind that. You can't have watched TV or read a newspaper these past months and missed the photos of masses of dead fish washing up onto the white Gulf shore beaches.

Where have all the tourists gone, Florida?

But never mind that. Now red tide is making its way up the Atlantic side. That's unprecedented.

Google "closed Florida beaches" and prepare to be depressed. And maybe a little scared.

Bacteria, not sharks, are the new Jaws. Some of the flesh-eating species.

Florida, we are drowning in, we are drinking and we are eating the consequences of an environmental catastrophe that has been deliberate and calculating in the making.

It's time for a reckoning.

And here's a hard truth. For two decades one party has been responsible for the decisions and policies that have brought us here.

The Republican Party.

For a generation we have not given Florida Democrats a seat at the decision-making table. Don't blame them.

Water is Florida's best and ultimate asset. It's been debased and there must be consequences.

If we reward Rick Scott with a U.S. Senate seat after his abysmal eight-year record of environmental contempt then we deserve to stew in our own putrid liquid wastes.

If we replace Scott with a Gov. Ron DeSantis then we might as well toast his victory with a glass of algae infused groundwater.

If we reelect Chuck Clemons or Keith Perry or Ted Yoho or any of the other Republican lawmakers who have faithfully voted the Pollution Party line, then we are treating ourselves to a double helping of the red snapper that washes up with all of the rest of the dead fish.

Those incumbents are telling you that they are environmentalists.

They are lying.

Their records betray them.

Do not reward them with your vote. Do not forgive them their trespasses. Do not say, "yeah, but guns and abortion and liberals ..."

I hate single-issue elections. But this year I vote the clean water slate.

If not now, when?

Ron Cunningham is former editorial page editor of The Sun.