

# Clean Water Summit

The Guardians of Martin County's Science Advisor, Greg Braun was pleased to be a part of a statewide Clean Water Summit that was held on Saturday, November 16, 2013 in Orlando. Organized primarily by the Sierra Club, the full-day conference brought together more than 250 environmental leaders from over 100 Florida-based organizations who share a common interest in combatting the deteriorating water quality that is causing so much environmental and economic havoc throughout our state.



While the toxic waters discharges from Lake Okeechobee have made consistent headlines with the media in the Treasure Coast, we now know all too well that many of the problems we face are being shared by other Floridians. Conference attendees heard first-hand accounts about problems throughout the state. We learned about the collapse of the oyster aquaculture industry in Apalachicola; the die-offs of coral reefs in the Keys; dead pelicans, dead manatees, and dead dolphins in the Indian River Lagoon; red-tide and other harmful algae blooms on Florida's west coast; and deteriorating water quantity and water quality in many springs in central areas of the state.

Presentations were made by Riverkeepers, local governmental officials, engineers, ecologists, attorneys and numerous local conservation organizations, with the goal of uniting conference participants to work together to increase awareness about the ecological and economic effects that are being experienced throughout the state due to a combination of decreased water quality standards and reduced enforcement of existing water quality regulations.

We learned that what may have started as a movement by environmental activists has now evolved to include individuals and businesses that are suffering the following types of economic impacts:

- Reduced property values that result from waters being too polluted for recreation;
- Drinking water wells becoming fouled by salt water intrusion;
- Higher costs for potable water that needs to be more heavily treated to remove impurities;
- Loss of revenue due to decreased tourism; and
- Deaths of plants and animals that need clean water, including seagrasses, pelicans, manatees and dolphins.



Conference attendees agreed to a **Clean Water Declaration** (see below), and began planning for regional events to be held in 2014 that will generate more attention by the media and elected officials.

Clean water is not a partisan issue, and there was consensus that the only way to reverse the statewide trend is to elect officials who agree with the following:



## **FLORIDIANS' CLEAN WATER DECLARATION**

*In recognition that:*

Clean water is essential for healthy people and a healthy economy.

Florida water quality and quantity are inextricably tied.

Florida waters are held in public trust by the State of Florida for the benefit of citizens and the maintenance of natural ecosystems.

*We the undersigned hereby declare:*

**It is the *right* of the people of Florida to:**

1. Have clean drinking water whether that water is drawn from public sources or private wells.
2. Have lakes, streams, springs, rivers, canals and coastal waters that are safe for swimming and fishing.
3. Be protected from water pollution and its effects.
4. Know the sources of pollution that threaten water resources.
5. Have sufficient water for drinking, fishing and recreation.

**It is the *responsibility* of the people of Florida, the state government, and the industries that benefit from Florida's natural resources to:**

1. Stop pollution at its source rather than allowing it to enter our waters.
2. Protect the natural environment upon which Florida's iconic wildlife depends.
3. Protect water resources, as well as the people who depend on them, from overconsumption.
4. Protect the jobs that depend on an abundant supply of clean water.
5. Provide clean water for the use of future generations.

By signing this declaration, we ***agree to its principles*** and ***resolve to work together in good faith*** to ensure that the future of our waters will be driven by the concepts contained within this FLORIDIANS' CLEAN WATER DECLARATION.

Signed:





Sewall's Point Commissioner Jacquie Thurlow-Lippisch and Indian Riverkeeper Marty Baum address the crowd

