



Good News, Bad News



First the good. We WILL have events in January, February, March and April. Paddle Florida has partnered with Clay County and will be staging a new event, the Black Creek Paddling Festival, to be held January 29 - 31, 2021, near the confluence of the St. Johns River and Black Creek in Green Cove Springs. Our featured presentation on Friday night will be given by St. Johns Riverkeeper, Lisa Rinaman. We will paddle on Saturday and Sunday, with a benefit concert on Saturday night. Adding to the festival on Saturday, several environmental nonprofits will be available to provide information about the threats we face in the region and what we can do to help. They will include the Florida Springs Council, the St. Johns River Water Management District, Alachua Conservation Trust, and Florida Defenders of the Environment.

We'll stage the Wild, Wonderful Withlacoochee trip in February, Springtime on the Chipola in March and end the season at Suwannee River State Park with the Suwannee River Paddling Festival. Please join us for one of these unique experiences paddling in Florida's beautiful natural environments.

On the negative side, COVID-19 has claimed the third event of our season, as we have had to cancel the Great Calusa Blueway trip, which was slated to be staged from January 15th - 21st. We regret losing the opportunity to provide this great experience in and around Ft. Myers.

Paddle Florida COVID-19 Trip Protocols

- Temperature checks;
- Social distancing of 6 feet;
- Participants will be required to wear masks at campsite and bufs on the water when closer than 6 feet;
- COVID-19 safe rescue practices;
- Paddlers to distance a paddle length from each other;
- Hand sanitizer;
- Food will be served so participants will not touch utensils; and
- Disposable eco-friendly plates will be provided.

Send It South Challenge by Florida Bay Forever makes clear message about water needs

By Ed Killer, Treasure Coast Newspapers

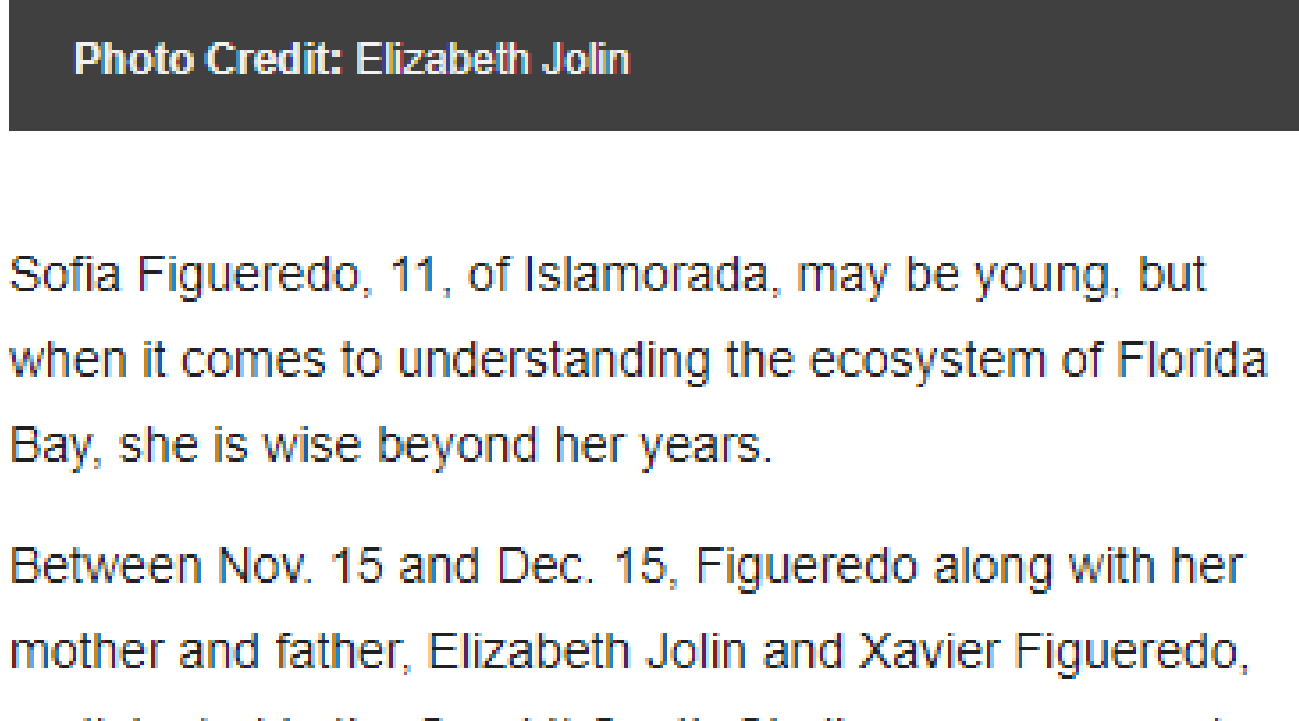


Photo Credit: Elizabeth Jolin

Sofia Figueredo, 11, of Islamorada, may be young, but when it comes to understanding the ecosystem of Florida Bay, she is wise beyond her years.

Between Nov. 15 and Dec. 15, Figueredo along with her mother and father, Elizabeth Jolin and Xavier Figueredo, participated in the Send It South Challenge — an event created by the Florida Bay Forever nonprofit to raise awareness for ecosystem restoration in the Everglades system.

Over 50 participants paddled on kayaks, paddleboards or canoes distances of 5 kilometers (about 3.5 miles), 26 miles (about the distance from Flamingo in Everglades National Park to Islamorada in the Florida Keys, or 99 miles through the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness Waterway from Everglades City to Flamingo.)

For Figueredo, she'll never forget paddleboarding alongside some of the marine wildlife that calls Florida Bay home. [\[Read more...\]](#)

EPA agrees to let Florida oversee more wetlands development

By Zachary T. Sampson, Tampa Bay Times

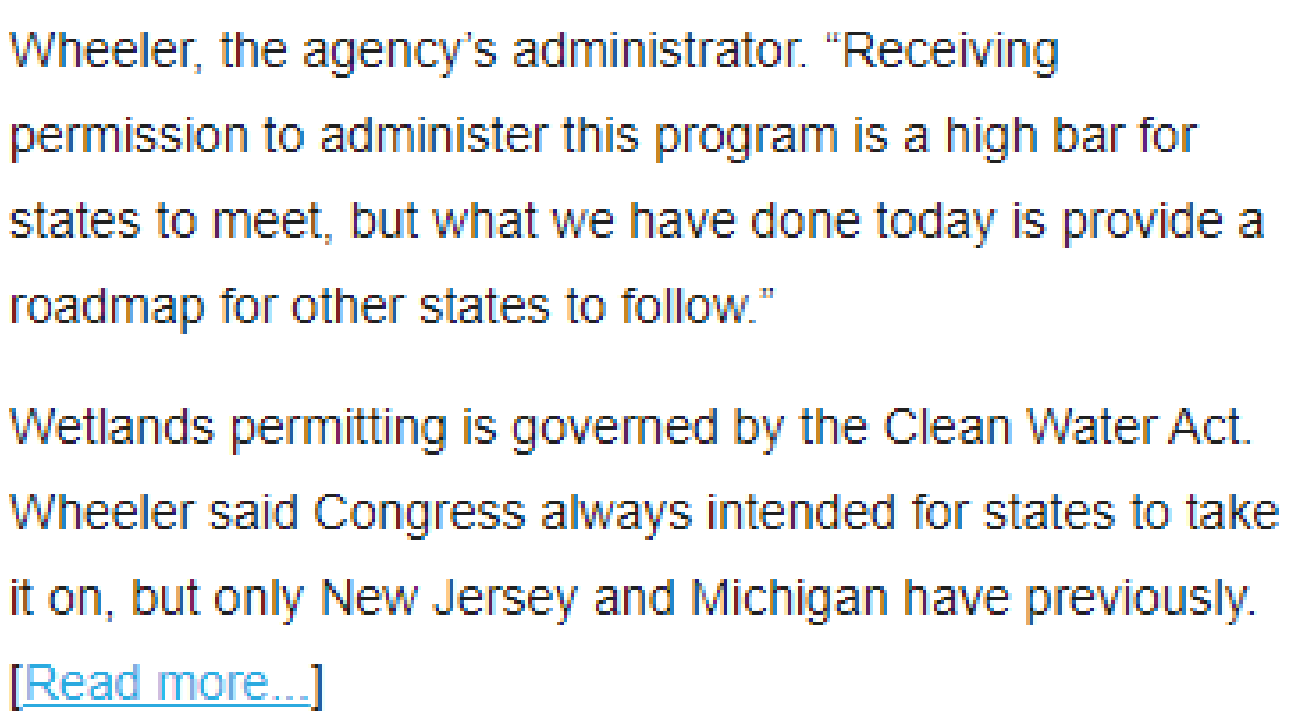


Photo Credit: Douglas Clifford, Tampa Bay Times

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday approved Florida taking control of development decisions in more of the state's wetlands, a proposal long opposed by many environmentalists.

"Florida has a wealth of aquatic resources. They care about their resources as least as much and I would say probably more than the federal government," said Andrew Wheeler, the agency's administrator. "Receiving permission to administer this program is a high bar for states to meet, but what we have done today is provide a roadmap for other states to follow."

Wetlands permitting is governed by the Clean Water Act. Wheeler said Congress always intended for states to take it on, but only New Jersey and Michigan have previously. [\[Read more...\]](#)

3 states quarrel as waterway collapses

By Kevin Spear, Orlando Sentinel

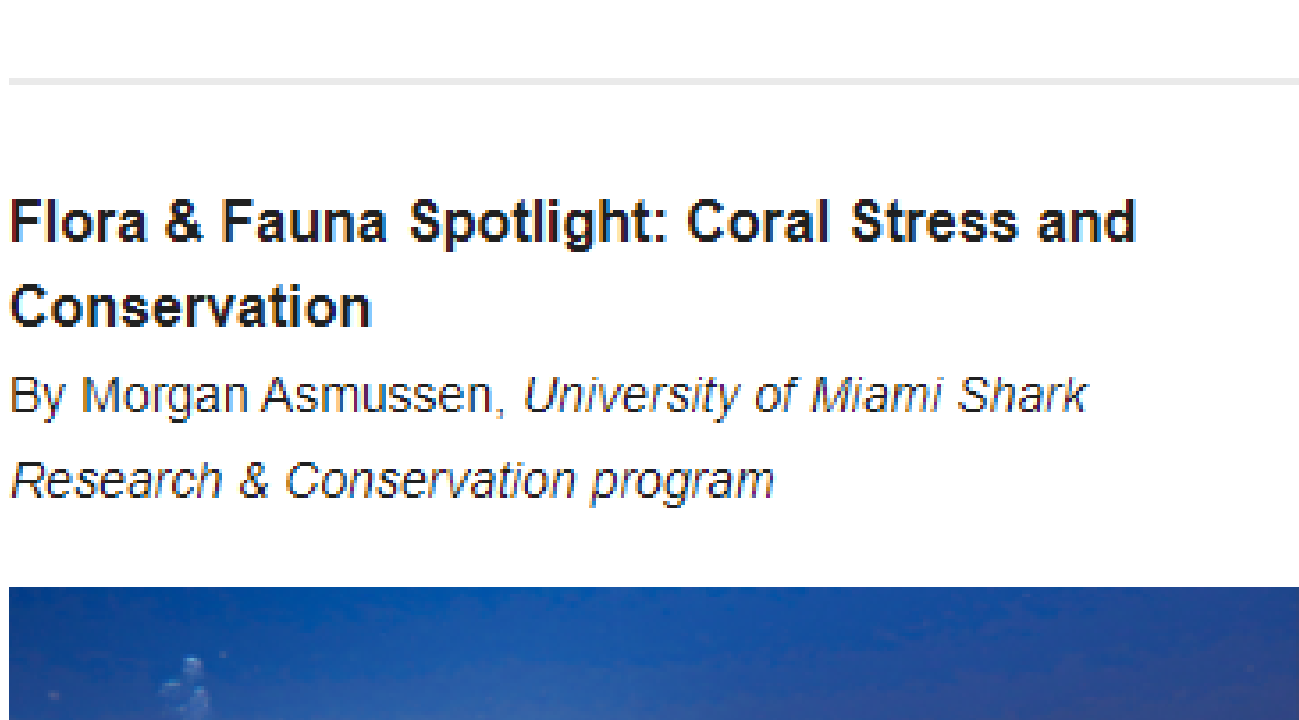


Photo Credit: Orlando Sentinel

The Apalachicola River descends 106 miles across the Panhandle to the Gulf of Mexico as the creator and caretaker of Florida's largest forested floodplain, sandbar beaches, breezy bluffs, coastal marsh and a fertile relationship with Apalachicola Bay.

Tan, old but fast for a Florida river, the "Apalach" was a waterway for indigenous tribes, carried barges until late into the last century and lures kayakers today. It is the state's largest river by volume and a United Nations biosphere reserve.

The river hosts giant mussels and ancient sturgeon, embodies mazes of incoming tributaries and outgoing distributaries, and ends by nourishing a bay that brought Florida fame for its oysters.

But the Apalach and its greater ecosystem are dying of thirst and starving to death.

"There is clearly a fix," said Georgia Ackerman, director of the Apalachicola Riverkeeper group. "It should have been done long ago." [\[Read more...\]](#)

Flora & Fauna Spotlight: Coral Stress and Conservation

By Morgan Asmussen, University of Miami Shark Research & Conservation program

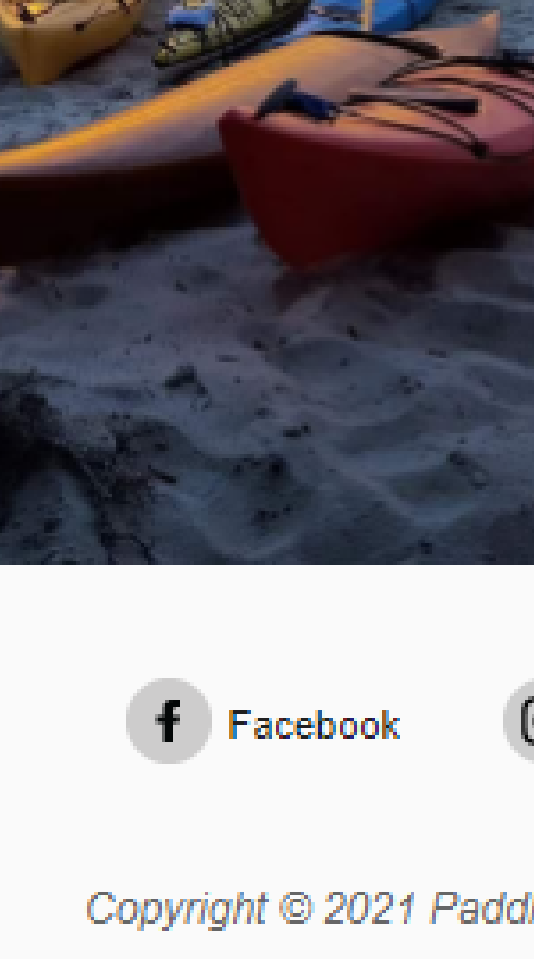


Photo Credit: NOAA Fisheries

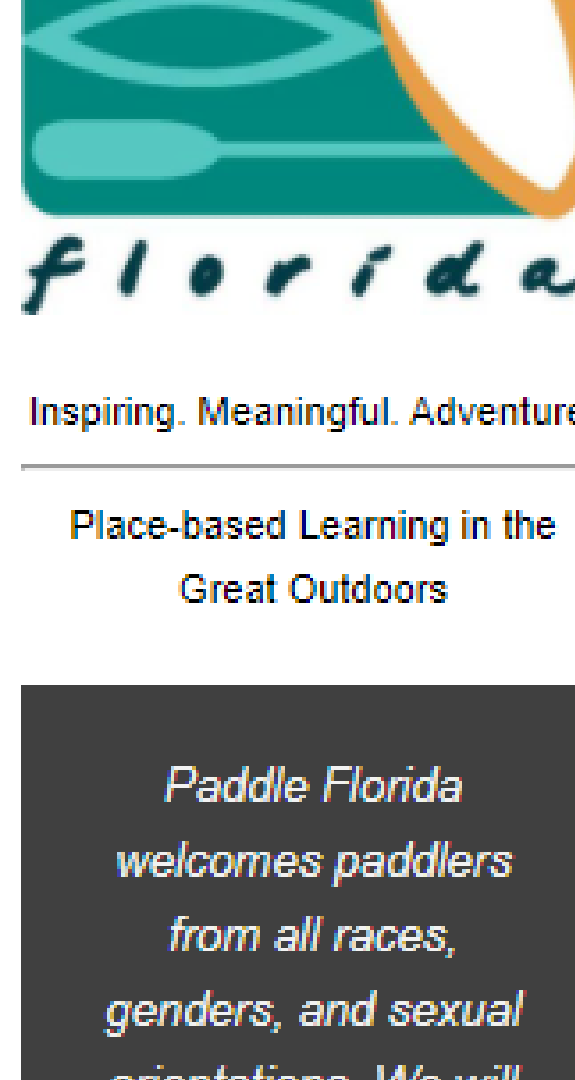
The oceans are vital to Earth and its inhabitants as it covers more than seventy percent of the planet and holds about ninety-seven percent of Earth's water. Climate change, however, is linked to human habits and activity in our daily lives. Climate change occurs with the increase of greenhouse gases due to human activities that involve the burning of fossil fuels for sources of heat and energy, the production of industrial products, raising livestock, fertilizing crops and even deforestation (Trenberth 2001).

All of these human activities then cause a buildup of greenhouse gases to heat up our atmosphere. With rising composition of gases in the atmosphere causes the ocean to absorb an excess amount of carbon dioxide and methane leading to many consequences specifically impacting the survivability of coral species on a global scale.

The ocean regulates global climate and makes the Earth habitable for humans and all of its inhabitants. Carbon dioxide levels that have been measured in Earth's atmosphere have been at an all-time high and most likely ties to human activity (Rogers 2018). The greenhouse effect is then amplified due to the large amount of gases such as carbon dioxide and methane which hold heat within the atmosphere and warm the Earth. Initially this was seen as beneficial for Earth as a large diverse population of species was then able to flourish at warm temperatures. However, as time went on and temperatures continued to rise, the presence of greenhouse gases rose almost thirty percent (Rogers 2018). Earth contains absorbent oceans which trap this heat and prevent it from reaching uninhabitable temperatures. With higher values of carbon dioxide, the chemistry of the ocean then began to alter which inevitably effected its inhabitants. With rising gas comes ocean acidification leading to a decrease in growth rates and structural integrity of coral reefs. [\[Read more...\]](#)



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Place-based Learning in the Great Outdoors

Paddle Florida welcomes paddlers from all races, genders, and sexual orientations. We will continue to strive to promote diversity among the paddling community and work to create a safe space for all to enjoy our paddling adventures.

2020-21 Paddle Florida Season

Black Creek Paddling Festival (NEW) January 29-31, 2021

Our inaugural Black Creek Paddling Festival will take place at Camp Chowenawaw Park in Green Cove Springs. Join us as we explore the scenic waters of Black Creek and Peter's Creek in 10 and 8 mile segments on Saturday and Sunday. One of Paddle Florida's favorite entertainers will perform a benefit concert Saturday. Proceeds will support continuing our programs at Paddle Florida. The weekend will also feature hiking through nearby trails, and an opportunity to hear from local experts dedicated to preserving North Florida's rivers, springs and watersheds.

Register by: January 15th

Wild, Wonderful Withlacoochee February 9-14, 2021

Beginning at Lake Panasoffkee, paddlers will thread their way through hardwood swamps and tannic streams on a 60-mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico. The adventure includes a side trip to the colorful Rainbow River and its world class first magnitude spring.

Register by: January 26th

Springtime on the Chipola (NEW) March 17-23, 2021

This will be our 4th different trip in Florida's panhandle, joining the Ochlockonee, the Choctawhatchee, and the Perdido. Given the right conditions, this river will be suitable for all paddlers and paddlecraft. Florida Caverns State Park is the starting point for staging this event next March, when spring will be blooming in the panhandle. This is going to be a great experience!

Register by: February 28th

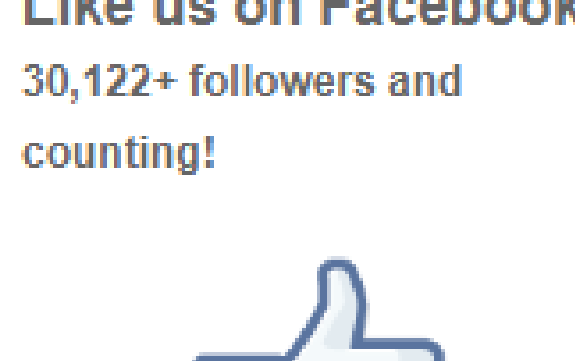
Suwannee River Paddling Festival April 2-4, 2021

With camping atop the bluff overlooking two beautiful rivers, our season-capping festival takes place at Suwannee River State Park near Live Oak. The weekend will offer supported 8-12 mile paddling options on both the Suwannee and Withlacoochee Rivers, a concert featuring Paddle Florida's favorite musicians, and educational presentations from regional waterway experts.

Registration for this event is full.

Note: Many of Paddle Florida trips have historically sold out before the registration deadline, so to ensure you have a spot, please register early.

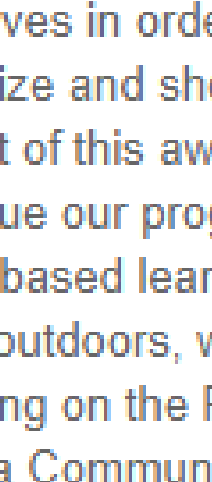
How To: Tips for Cold Weather Paddling



Paddling in the fall, in the winter, in the spring is absolutely amazing. Especially in the winter – it is stunning, but a lot of times paddlers don't realize the dangers of cold water. [\[Read more...\]](#)

Like us on Facebook

30,122+ followers and counting!



Reconnect with paddling friends and make new ones on Paddle Florida's Facebook page. Our daily feeds provide updates on the news impacting Florida's waterways and wildlife as well as our upcoming trips. Send us your favorite photo depicting paddling in Florida and it might be selected as our 'Picture of the Day!'

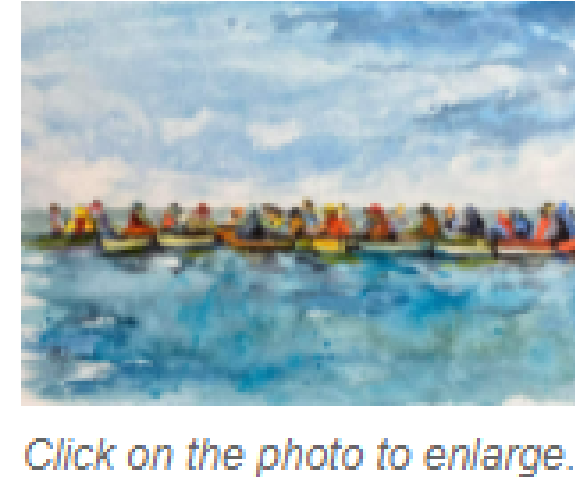
Support Paddle Florida

During this challenging time, we are all changing our daily lives in order to minimize and shorten the impact of this awful virus. To continue our programs of place-based learning in the great outdoors, we are counting on the Paddle Florida Community to help us through this difficult time.

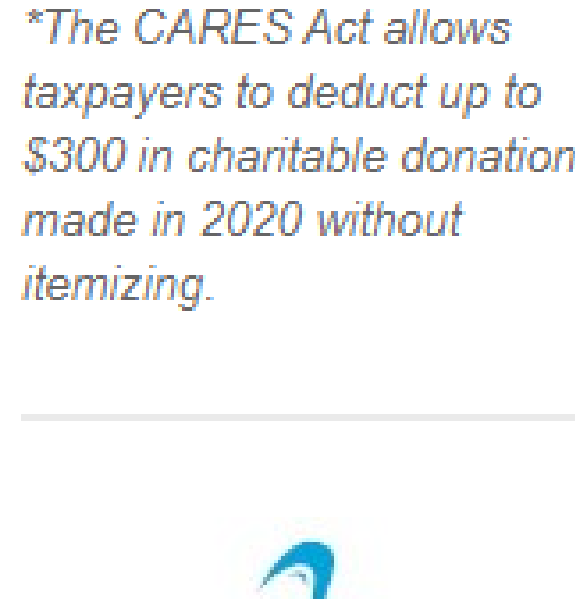
Please consider making a donation* to show your support of our mission of connecting people to nature and each other.

In appreciation of your donation, you will receive a special gift.

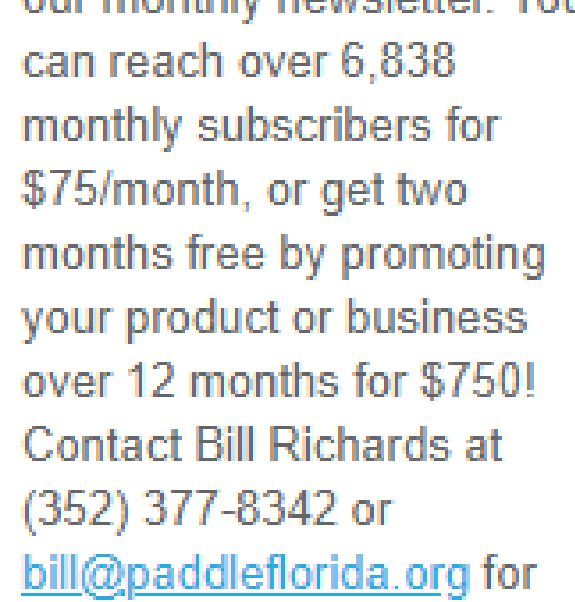
Make a \$25 donation [HERE](#) and receive a Paddle Florida buff that can be worn as a face mask, hat, scarf, or to protect face from the sun.



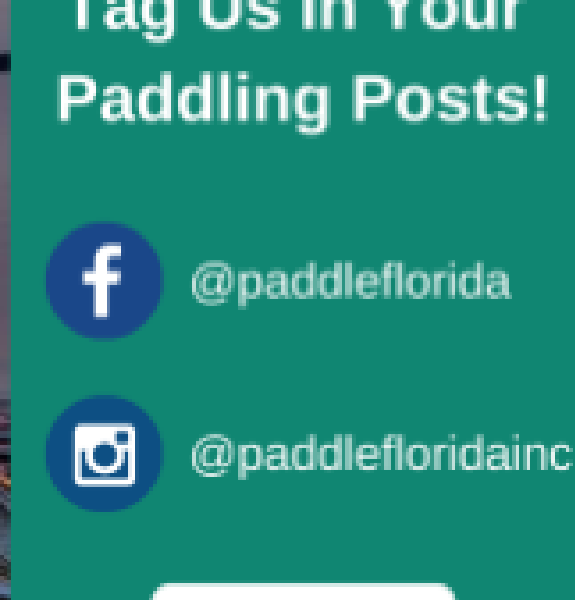
Make a \$50 donation [HERE](#) and receive a Paddle Florida dry bag.



Make a \$75 donation [HERE](#) and receive a long-sleeved, dri-fit Paddle Florida shirt.



Make a \$100 donation [HERE](#) and receive an 11x14 watercolor paper giclée print "A Bay of Paddlers" painted by one of our own paddlers, Peggy Perry



Click on the photo to enlarge.

We are all in this together.

To donate online using your debit or credit card, please click the links above.

To donate by check, please send an email with your name and address to bill@paddleflorida.org

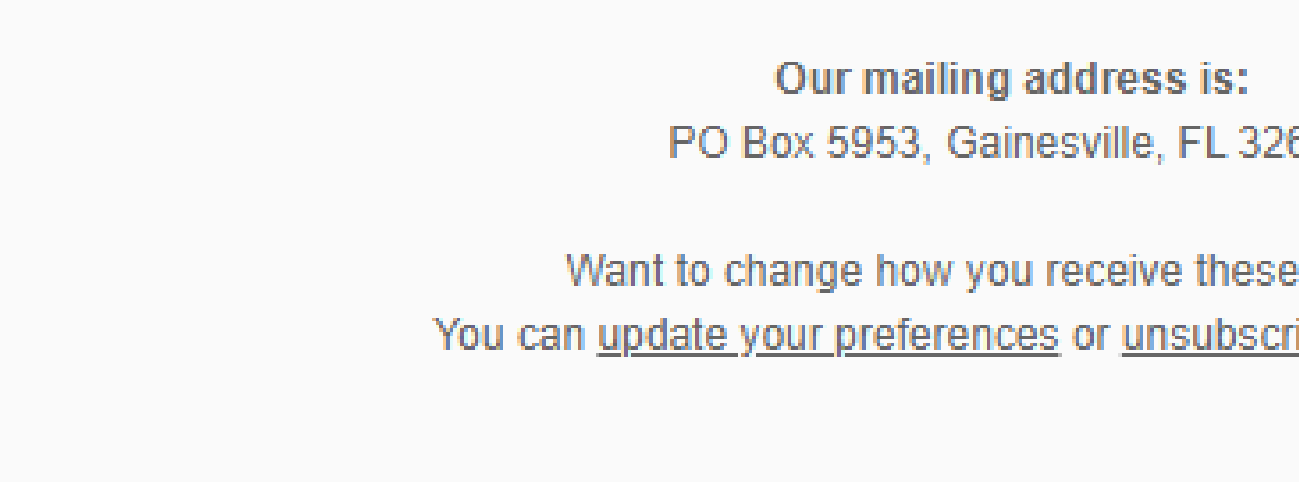
*The CARES Act allows taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 in charitable donations made in 2020 without itemizing.

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Contact Bill Richards at (352) 377-8342 or bill@paddleflorida.org for details.



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