

# 2018

ANNUAL REPORT



IAN WILSON

**BULLSUGAR**  
ALLIANCE

**Bullsugar Alliance is dedicated to solving Florida's water management crisis through research, education, legal exploration, nonpartisan advocacy and other charitable activities.**

## A Time for Optimism

***“Never give up on something that you can’t go a day without thinking about.”***

*—Winston Churchill*

We have a public health and safety crisis, a system-wide ecological collapse, dysfunctional operations, and political corruption, whoa, talk about a head wind. Florida is facing the kind of challenge that kills your spirit. Stomps out your will. Keeps winners winning and losers, well, losing.

I’m talking about a water management crisis created by greed and indifference. Toxic discharges solely due to political corruption. Two corporate industrial sugarcane growers making billions of dollars in federal subsidies while our public resources are destroyed.



**Blair Wickstrom**  
BOARD PRESIDENT

And that’s why Bullsugar was founded in 2014. Fortunately for Florida we have a dedicated group of staff, board members and volunteers working at solving this crisis. It’s going to take research, education and money to stem the political influence of Big Sugar and make the health of our communities and our waterways a priority again, but we don’t have a choice.

It’s time to put the future of Florida ahead of two Sugar companies.

Bullsugar Alliance made an outsized impact in 2018, leading the effort to raise awareness and popular support for Rep. Brian Mast’s Stop Harmful Discharges Act, a critical bill expected to be reintroduced in early 2019 in the U.S. House. Bullsugar worked with community activist Erin Brockovich and medical researchers to warn the public of the dangers of toxic blooms. And we changed the toxic narrative of Big Sugar’s unmatched influence.

Now Bullsugar Alliance is leading the effort to connect the public to the U.S. Army Corps’ process to review the way South Florida’s water is managed, from Lake Okeechobee all the way to Florida Bay. As more people learn what they can do to win fairer, safer water policy that prioritizes our health, safeguards our drinking water, and protects our lakes, rivers, and estuaries for future generations, Bullsugar’s leadership is increasingly the catalyst that turns awareness into action.

Supporters like you are the reason for this optimism, the reason for our success and the reason Floridians have a renewed hope for sugar-free water policy in our lifetime.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Blair Wickstrom".

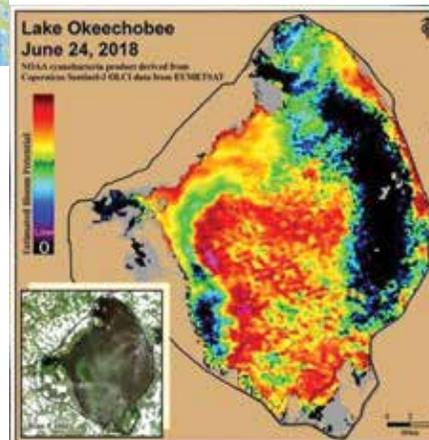


**A FEDERAL LAW PROPOSED in 2018 could change the fate of Florida forever by making human health and safety the primary consideration ...**

JOHN MORAN



JOHN MORAN



## THE PROBLEM

### PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY CRISIS

An urgent human health crisis has developed from Lake Okeechobee discharges: toxic algae. Cyanobacteria discharged into the St. Lucie River last summer tested positive for microcystin at 495 parts per billion—roughly 50 times more than the safe level for human contact. Just one of an array of cyanotoxins, microcystin is associated with permanent liver damage, and recent studies have found clusters of fatal liver failure and neurodegenerative diseases (ALS, Alzheimer's) where people are exposed to cyanobacteria blooms.

### SYSTEM-WIDE ECOLOGICAL COLLAPSE

The historic southern flow of water from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay that once hydrated the Everglades is now dammed and rerouted into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers. Unable to tolerate these massive loads of freshwater, the northern estuaries are collapsing, marine life is dying, and tourism is in freefall. Meanwhile the Everglades are starved for freshwater, triggering vast seagrass die-offs and threatening the drinking water of eight million people, more than 1 in 3 Floridians.

### DYSFUNCTIONAL OPERATIONS

The current operational system used to manage Lake Okeechobee takes every interest into consideration except the most important and widespread dilemma facing Floridians right now, human health. The health of communities from coast to coast is almost constantly in jeopardy because of the toxic discharges coming from Lake Okeechobee and the results are tragic. A federal law proposed in 2018 could change the fate of Florida forever by making human health and safety the primary consideration for the management of the Central and Southern Florida Project through operational changes.

### POLITICAL CORRUPTION

These unfolding catastrophes share a common source: politically influenced water management for the sugarcane crop, worth less than \$500 million annually to two billionaire families, but more than enough to fund the careers of hundreds of lawmakers from both parties, and the key to a big slice of the sugar industry's \$1.4 billion annual federal subsidies. Taxpayers aren't merely watching a private industry use political leverage to destroy public resources—they're funding it.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### INDEPENDENT, EFFECTIVE POLICY WORK

#### THE STOP HARMFUL DISCHARGES ACT (HR 6700)

Bullsugar was the only conservation group to independently introduce federal legislation, in conjunction with Congressman Brian Mast to deliver immediate relief to the estuaries. Bullsugar led the effort to raise awareness and gather support in Congress for the bill expected to be reintroduced in 2019. Bullsugar policy experts negotiated face-to-face in Washington with representatives from native Tribes of Florida, federal agencies, and environmental organizations, briefing lawmakers and building national support for a legislative solution to this crisis.

**The bill proposes to make public health and safety the primary consideration for the management of the Central and Southern Florida Project. That means:**

- Fixing the operational system to manage Lake Okeechobee to reduce the frequency, volume, and duration of harmful discharges
- Minimizing the potential for toxic cyanobacteria blooms
- Preventing toxin-containing discharges into areas including the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers where they cause or exacerbate human health risks
- Ensuring the integrity and stability of the Herbert Hoover Dike
- Maintaining all provisions of applicable state and federal water quality laws, policies and regulations
- Ensuring necessary water volume and quality reaches the Everglades National Park, Florida Bay and Caloosahatchee Watershed to restore the natural habitat



### UNBIASED COMMENTARY ON SB 10

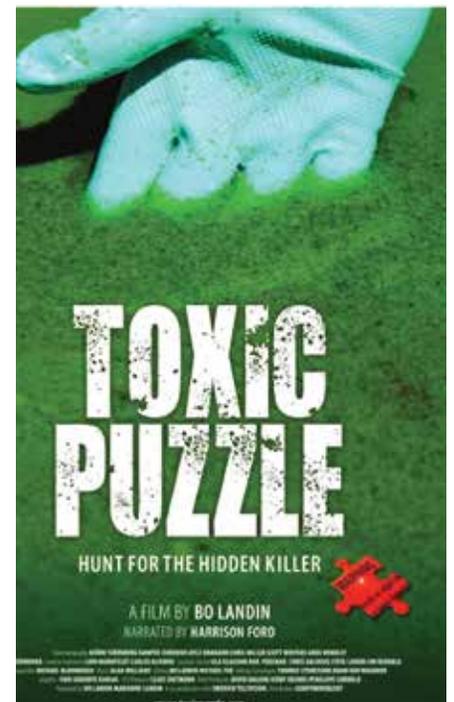
At every public meeting, Bullsugar representatives brought tough questions and constructive feedback to push water management officials to design a project with guaranteed capacity to clean enough water to stop toxic discharges. When shortfalls emerged, Bullsugar was a leading voice providing independent analyses, giving Floridians a deeper exploration of the design and projections, and pledging to continue to advocate for a reservoir built to deliver the benefits we were promised.

**Bullsugar arranged a series of citizen bus trips to Tallahassee to let residents tell their stories of adversity directly to legislators. Their testimony made a difference, providing crucial evidence of real businesses and livelihoods impacted most by broken water management policies.**





The bigmouth sleeper, *Gobiomorus dormitor*, is one of several possible species that should be petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act.



**NATIONWIDE EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH**

A Now or Neverglades Founder and Leader:

- As a founding member, Bullsugar helped unite conservation groups and anglers across Florida to raise national awareness of Florida’s fight for clean water.
- Patagonia, a fellow Now or Neverglades member and visionary outdoor brand, collaborated on a national tour of six fly fishing industry events between January and March introducing Bullsugar and the Now or Neverglades Declaration to thousands of people with a passion for clean water. The outpouring of support was extraordinary, boosting Now or Neverglades visibility and growing Bullsugar’s audience from coast to coast.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES**

Bullsugar Alliance helped secure over \$200,000 at the local government level for protection of the St. Lucie River. Martin County agreed to enter into a contract for \$121,000 with Dr. Grant Gilmore to apply to list species in the St. Lucie River under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is the strongest environmental law in our country. The St. Lucie River and Estuary is the most bio-diverse estuary in North America. Bullsugar Alliance helped facilitate this contract and also helped to draw pro bono support from the Center for Biological Diversity in listing the aquatic species in the St. Lucie. In addition, advice from Bullsugar Alliance helped encourage the City of the Stuart to earmark \$100,000 for funding to be used in defense of the river. Bullsugar Alliance continues to work with many local governments.

**WORKING WITH ERIN BROCKOVICH**

On the heels of another toxic summer, legendary environmentalist Erin Brockovich stood with Bullsugar and Congressman Brian Mast in front of the toxic St. Lucie River to publicly support federal legislation that does the right thing: prioritize people’s health and safety in water management decisions.

**ALGAE BLOOM EDUCATION AND TOXIC PUZZLE**

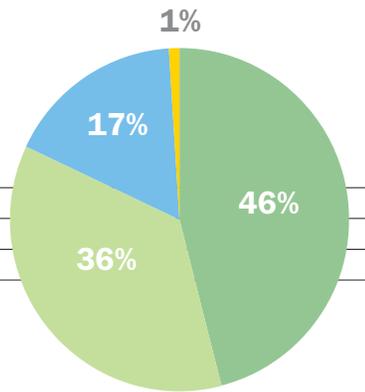
Bullsugar Alliance brought pioneering cyanobacteria and neuroscience researcher Dr. James Metcalf and toxic bloom expert Dr. Larry Brand to Stuart to share their expertise with a large audience. The attendees gained a better understanding of algae blooms, what risks they posed to the community, and how it was necessary to correct misinformation about them circulating in the media and through state agencies. The event included a screening of the documentary Toxic Puzzle: Hunt for the Hidden Killer, featuring groundbreaking research by Dr. Paul Cox into the links between cyanotoxins and neurological diseases, including ALS, Alzheimer’s Disease, and Parkinson’s Disease.

# 2018

## ANNUAL FINANCIAL REVIEW

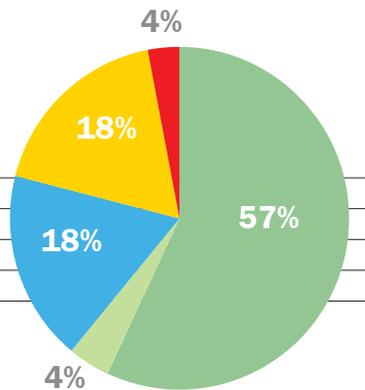
### SUPPORT

	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
Individuals	\$81,208	36%
Corporations	\$38,607	17%
Trusts/Foundation	\$105,100	46%
Special Events	\$2,640	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$227,556</b>	



### EXPENSES

	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
Education and Outreach	\$129,874	57%
Research	\$8,026	4%
Public Affairs	\$41,783	18%
Administration	\$39,934	18%
Fundraising	\$8,240	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$227,857</b>	



## BULLSUGAR ALLIANCE

### OFFICERS/STAFF (LISTED)

#### BOARD

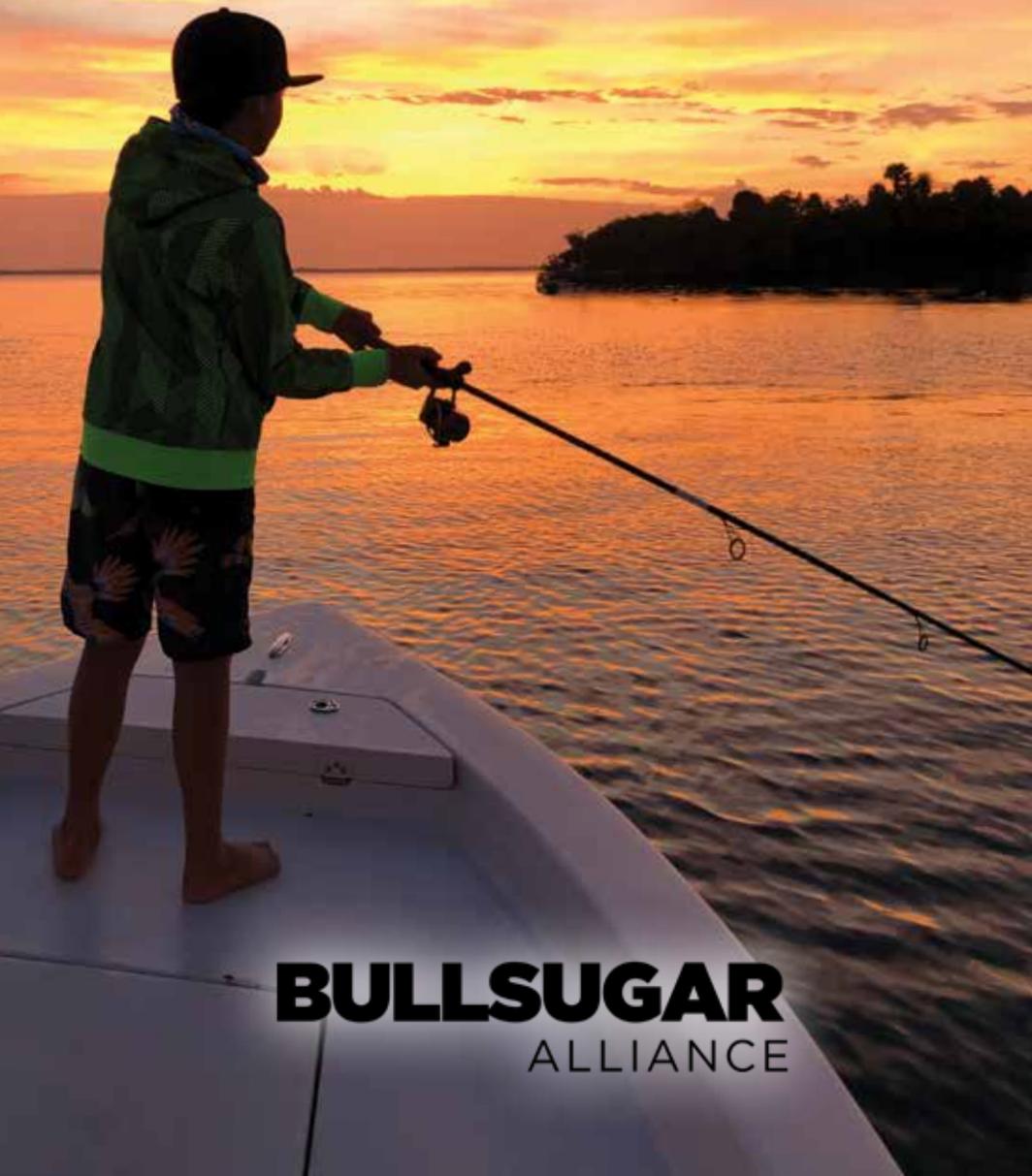
Blair Wickstrom PRESIDENT  
 Julian Robertson VICE PRESIDENT  
 Richard Trotta TREASURER  
 Peter Upton SECRETARY  
 Alan Farago  
 Nathaniel Linville  
 Chris Maroney  
 Dave Preston

#### STAFF

Alex Gillen  
 Peter Girard  
 Allie Preston  
 Kym Hurchalla  
 Emily Mauri  
 Miki Blumenthal

“There are no other Everglades in the world. They are, they have always been, one of the unique regions of the earth; remote, never wholly known. Nothing anywhere else is like them...”

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas,  
The Everglades: River of Grass*



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