

# 2018

ANNUAL REPORT



IAN WILSON

[bullsugar.org](http://bullsugar.org)

**Dedicated to stopping the damaging discharges into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries and restoring the flow of clean freshwater to Florida Bay**

## No More Excuses

Four years ago, we founded Bullsugar.org because someone had to. Stuart, Florida had just experienced another “lost summer” due to polluted discharges from Lake Okeechobee.

Residents demanded answers. Instead they got excuses. Politicians blamed the rain and got away with it, even as their PACs overflowed with money from sugar industry giants Florida Crystals and U.S. Sugar—the big beneficiaries of the discharges.



**Chris Maroney**  
BOARD PRESIDENT

We started Bullsugar to help voters understand the link between sugar money and a water management system that works for Big Sugar but not for Floridians. We started Bullsugar to create the political will to solve this problem.

Florida is different now. All but one 2018 candidate for governor pledged not to accept donations from the sugar industry. The lone holdout, Adam Putnam, watched his campaign implode when Ron DeSantis called him “U.S. Sugar’s errand boy.” DeSantis not only won, but started his term by demanding the resignation of the entire governing board of the SFWMD, for putting the interests of two billionaire sugarcane families ahead of taxpayers.

Bullsugar has been the catalyst in this transformation. Our non-partisan voter guides helped Floridians understand candidates’ positions, our social media campaigns awakened the public and the media to Big Sugar’s disinformation tactics, and our leadership in the Now or Neverglades movement brought the Keys and both coasts together under “three estuaries, one solution,” and paved the way for the EAA reservoir.

As you may know, the reservoir was reduced in size by a massive sugar industry lobbying effort. Even a partial legislative victory over Big Sugar is an accomplishment, but we need more than a partial solution to our water problems.

With that in mind, our focus turns to the operational rules for South Florida’s water management. Working with Rep. Brian Mast on legislation, and with partners and experts on revisiting rules for managing Lake Okeechobee, we will ensure that all communities and the Everglades are treated fairly when deciding who gets water, drainage and adversity in South Florida.

We’ve got momentum, but there’s much more to do to end toxic discharges and restore the Everglades. Thank you for your support in this effort.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Maroney". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.



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

JOHN MORAN

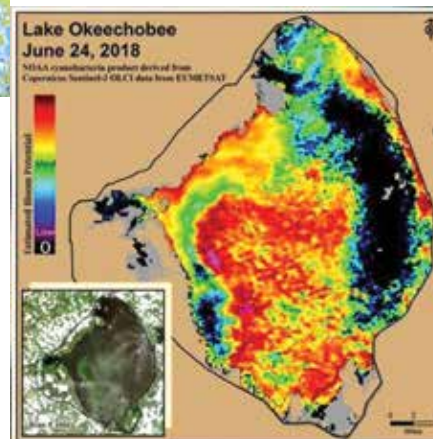
**THE PROBLEM**

**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.



JOHN MORAN



**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**  
**GAME-CHANGING VOTER AWARENESS**

**STATEWIDE VISIBILITY**  
 Bullsugar distributed more than 2,500 “Vote Water” yard signs; people from around the state asked to print their own. Voters from coast to coast proudly displayed non-partisan commitments to support toxic discharge reduction, Everglades restoration, and every citizen’s right to clean water.



**CLEAN WATER VOTER GUIDES**

Clean water found its political voice in 2018 as Bullsugar provided statewide voter guides for the primary and general elections, highlighting the most competitive races with a clear difference in candidates. Analysis was based on responses to Bullsugar’s candidate questionnaires, voting records, personal interviews, public statements, and campaign contribution sources. The effort’s influence was clear when all gubernatorial candidates (except for eventual upset loser Adam Putnam) pledged to run sugar-free campaigns, and later when agriculture commissioner favorite Matt Caldwell invested in anti-Bullsugar attack ads before his own upset loss to Bullsugar-endorsed Nikki Fried.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### EXPANDING SOCIAL MEDIA MOVEMENT

In an era where competing narratives crowd out the truth, Bullsugar built a loyal social media audience by defining ourselves as a credible source of information. We communicate with more than 330,000 followers every day, but more important, our engagement levels reached all-time highs during the 2018 election season and continue to climb. More people than ever are reading and reacting to our messages, especially to Bullsugar original content.



### PRODUCING INFLUENTIAL WEEKLY CONTENT

Bullsugar's newsletter and blog helped a growing list of subscribers understand the political, scientific, medical, and technical dimensions of Florida's fight for clean water, from independent scientists' analysis of project plans, to water quality reports and medical researchers' guidance on toxic blooms. Readers have come to expect Bullsugar to deliver the unvarnished truth, provide readable analysis that makes complex issues clear, and flag opportunities to speak up and take action.

### INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM/MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

When we can't find coverage for important stories, Bullsugar has the resources and talent to do it ourselves. From primary research on Everglades flooding, drainage and water consumption to first-hand accounts of sugarcane burning and the fight to save dogs poisoned by Lake Okeechobee discharges, our original reporting has had an impact.

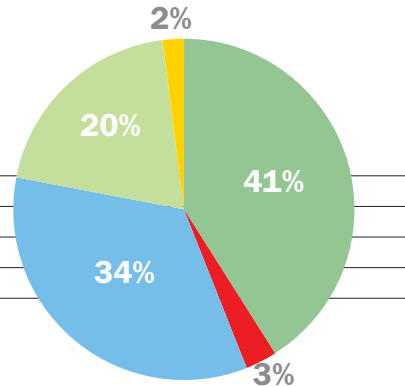
Bullsugar's communications team is also an asset to mainstream news producers, helping journalists source and report stories for national media like The Atlantic, NPR/All Things Considered, and Politico as well as top-tier TV, radio, and print outlets across Florida. Bullsugar appeared in more than 40 stories this year and helped produce dozens more to raise awareness of the problems and the solutions to our water crisis.

# 2018

## ANNUAL FINANCIAL REVIEW

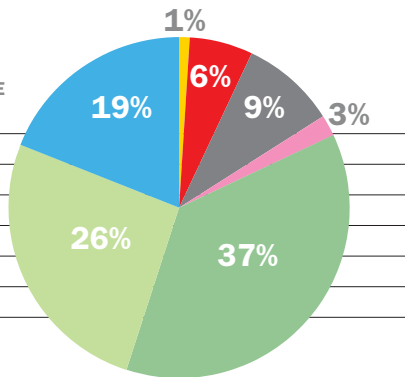
### SUPPORT

	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
Individuals	\$120,780	41%
Corporations	\$9,481	3%
Trusts/Foundation	\$105,524	34%
Membership	\$58,966	20%
Special Events and Sales	\$7,002	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$296,754</b>	



### EXPENDITURES

	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
Education and Outreach	\$92,375	37%
Voter Guides/Information	\$63,943	26%
Public Affairs	\$1,909	1%
Administration	\$46,287	19%
Fundraising	\$14,217	6%
Membership	\$23,422	9%
Webstore	\$6,444	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$248,600</b>	



bullsugar.org

### OFFICERS/STAFF (LISTED)

#### BOARD

Chris Maroney  
Lloyd Wruble  
Richard Trotta  
Betsy Bullard  
Marshall Cutchin  
Sandy Moret  
Blair Wickstrom

#### STAFF

Peter Girard  
Alex Gillen  
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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