

# ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT AND THE CLIMATE/JUSTICE CRISIS

The climate crisis is also a justice crisis. The wealthiest 20% of the world's population consumes 80% of our earth's resources, while the most impoverished suffer the worst consequences. Several friends and representatives have shared how climate change impacts us, and how we can transform the system to provide justice for all.

## CONGRESSWOMAN KATHY CASTOR

"For Floridians... climate change isn't just about the weather, it is about your wallet. You have to run your air conditioner longer... it's really a cost of living issue more than ever before, and we have to build the political power to build more clean energy... the utilities make so much money off of keeping us away from solar, hooked on gas... Did you know that in Florida, 75% [of our energy is generated on] fracked gas? The utilities... don't want you to use any kind of energy efficiency... we have to take that all on. That's not just a Democratic issue, that's an issue for all Floridians. I hope you all will be interested in fighting that battle in the years ahead."



## FGCU SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR KATHLEEN CRAWFORD

Climate change is having a clear and growing impact here in Southwest Florida.

We've seen firsthand how stronger hurricanes like Irma and Ian have devastated communities—damaging homes, disrupting lives, and causing billions in losses... a direct effect of warming ocean waters.

Warmer waters, nutrient runoff, and altered ecosystems [in the Gulf of Mexico] have contributed to longer and more intense red tide events, which harm marine life, hurt our tourism economy, and create health issues for residents. We're also seeing fewer [temperature drops] in winter, which used to help keep insect populations and invasive reptiles like Burmese pythons in check. [T]hese species are [now] thriving and disrupting native ecosystems.

To combat this, we need to reduce our carbon emissions by investing in clean energy, improving building codes for climate resilience, protecting wetlands and mangroves, and supporting policies that reduce pollution runoff. On an individual level, changes like using energy-efficient appliances, turning off and/or unplugging items when not in use, driving less, supporting local and sustainable businesses, and staying engaged in community efforts all make a difference.



## JAYNA K., FLORIDA COLLEGE STUDENT

"In Florida, I deal with hotter days, stronger storms, and flooding. [Climate change] also impacts my workplace as a veterinary receptionist, since many pets come in with health problems caused by extreme weather conditions. Beyond my own experience, rising temperatures are driving extreme weather, disrupting the economy, harming health, and even threatening food supplies. Climate change touches everyone's life no matter where they live, and that's why real change needs to happen."



## ALIVIA L., FLORIDA COLLEGE STUDENT

"Climate change has impacted my life because as the years go on, the heat becomes unbearable. My family has to run the air conditioning more, which raises our electricity bills. Although [deforestation] isn't the only cause of climate change, every time I'm out and about I can't help but notice the amount of trees that have been cut down for urbanizing. Unfortunately by cutting down these trees, more carbon dioxide is present in the atmosphere which leads to the heating problem of climate change. I feel like some changes we can make [is to] plant more trees and plants, save energy at home, and drive less. The little things can definitely make a difference."

## SAMANTHA F., FL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

"Not only does global warming affect the Arctic region, it has detrimental effects on Florida's aquatic life. With warming waters, it is visually evident that algal blooms and coral bleaching is on the rise, harming the natural breeding grounds of many fish species. I have seen this problem affecting the highly popular fishing culture we have in Florida. With a lack of habitat, less fish are able to thrive. Some measurements to prevent this problem include volunteering for local restoration projects and mangrove planting events to bring back some habitats!"



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