

Floridians no longer have luxury to pretend climate change isn't real | Fred Grimm

SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL | NOV 01, 2019



Floridians are forced to wade through the incontrovertible consequences of climate change, which explains why a Florida Atlantic University poll released Monday found Floridians considerably more alarmed by climate change than Americans in general, writes Sun Sentinel Columnist Fred Grimm. (ABOVE) An SUV drives through a flooded Buchanan Street due to king tides in late September in Hollywood. (Taimy Alvarez / South Florida Sun Sentinel)

Forgive the cliché, but it's not rocket science. It's climate science. And Floridians get it.

We're up to our figurative wazoos in what climate change deniers refuse to acknowledge. Come the king tides, when local waterways spill over their banks and flood streets and sidewalks, the figurative becomes knee-deep literal. In the record-setting heat, in a record-setting month, in a record-setting year, in a record-sizzling decade, Floridians are forced to wade through the incontrovertible consequences of climate change.

ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement



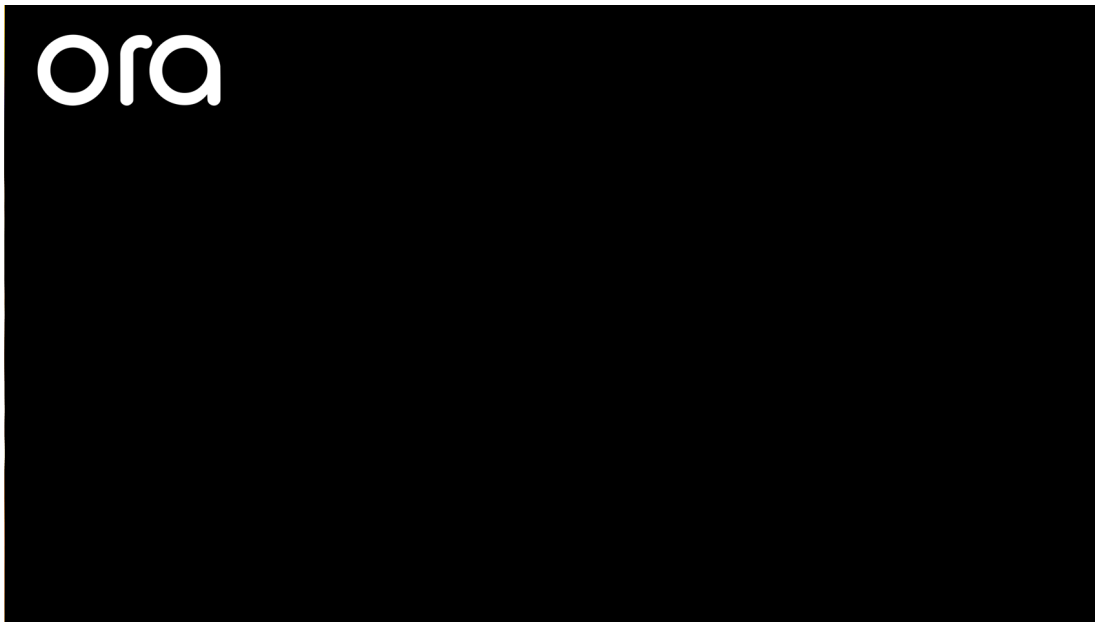
Which explains why a [Florida Atlantic University poll](#) released Monday found Floridians considerably more alarmed by climate change than Americans in general.

FAU reported that 68 percent of Floridians worry that global warming threatened “the well-being of future generations in Florida.” The FAU poll echoed a Quinnipiac University survey in March that found 72 percent of Florida were either “concerned” or “very concerned” about climate change.

Of course, we believe in climate change. We’re living it.

Americans overall, perhaps because some reside in regions where the effects aren’t so profound, are less enlightened. A Pew Research Center national survey released in August found 57 percent considered climate change a major threat. (Up from just 40 percent in 2013.)

Advertisement



What sets Floridians apart is that their concerns about climate change no longer parallel political party affiliation. Nationally, according to the Pew poll, only 27 percent of self-described Republicans indicated that they worried about climate change. In Florida, FAU reported that 44 percent of Florida Republicans not only agreed that climate change was real but accepted that it was caused by human activity. Which, for Republicans in the age of Trump, is like embracing blasphemy.

But Floridians don't have the luxury to pretend, as the president has tweeted, that climate change is a "hoax created for and by the Chinese."

Not while coastal flooding, even on sunny days, laps at some of the most [fabulous real estate](#) in America.

Not while knowing that the freakish powerful 185 mph Hurricane Dorian that settled over the Abacos like God's own weed wacker, was a harbinger of our superheated future. That, according to NOAA, five of the 10 strongest Atlantic hurricanes on record, with winds of at least 157 mph, have occurred *since 2016*. In Florida, we can't afford to dismiss the likes of Dorian, Michael, Maria, Irma and Matthew as leftist propaganda.

[Trumpian ideology](#) won't remove the stinking green algae clogging our interior waterways and the noxious red algae chasing tourists off our beaches or the aroma of massive fish kills lingering over waterside restaurants. Rick Scott-style know-nothingness ("I am not a scientist") won't prepare Florida for the [waves of tropical mosquitoes](#) entomologists warn will be coming our way with warmer temperatures, adding [Zika](#), West Nile, [dengue](#), Chikungunya, encephalitis and [yellow fever](#) to our collective misery.

Climate change denial won't stop saltwater, [pushed inland](#) by the rising sea, from contaminating freshwater wells. Cities all [along the Atlantic coast](#) have been forced to find new sources of water away from the coast or to install expensive reverse-osmosis desalination processes in their treatment plants.

(At the same time, even as we accept the reality of climate change, South Florida homeowners dearly hope — please, please, please, fingers crossed — that home insurers and mortgage lenders stick with the president's what-me-worry pseudo-science.)

Two years ago, Republican Mayor Tomás Regalado persuaded Miami voters to approve spending \$400 million on retrofitting city infrastructure against rising waters. Regalado and Republican Mayor James Cason of Coral Gables co-wrote an op-ed in the Miami Herald declaring that a fearsome realty had trumped politics.

"For us and most other public officials in South Florida, climate change is not a partisan talking point. It's a looming crisis that we must deal with — and soon," they wrote.

Last month, for the first time in a decade, a committee in the Republican-dominated Florida State Senate explored the impact of climate change — a term that state employees were forbidden to even utter during the benighted administration of former Gov. Rick Scott.

LATEST VIEWPOINTS

Florida unemployment a sign of Trump's failed coronavirus response | Opinion

Oklahoma just expanded Medicaid; why can't Florida be next? | Opinion

Questionnaire: Casimiro "Cazi" Navarro, Republican candidate for Broward County Sheriff

ADVERTISEMENT

“We lost a decade,” Republican Sen. Tom Lee, chairman of the Committee on Infrastructure and Security, told reporters.

He said younger state conservatives, at least, seemed ready to confront the challenges of global warming. “I think reality is going to set in and, if it doesn’t, it’s going to hit us right in the face,” Lee said.

That why Floridians believe the climate scientists. Reality is smacking us right in the face.

Fred Grimm (@grimm_fred or leogrimm@gmail.com), a longtime resident of Fort Lauderdale, has worked as a journalist in South Florida since 1976.
