

We don't want the politicians who let this **red tide** happen

We are Englewood Indivisible, a nonpartisan group of 600 residents. We came together to resist President Trump's agenda and protect our democracy. We worked together to save healthcare. We will fight together to save Medicare, Social Security and, of course, our environment.

We don't want the politicians who took money from polluters and let them pollute. We are working for candidates who will take care of our environment, our healthcare and our schools.

[Learn more and join us at EnglewoodIndivisible.org](http://EnglewoodIndivisible.org)
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Rick Scott's Record

- He gutted the state's five regional water management districts, slashing their budgets by \$700 million and packing their appointed boards with developers.
- He oversaw the firing of 134 employees at Florida's Department of Environmental Protection.
- Taking up the mantle of big polluters, he battled and eventually bested the EPA on the implementation of clean water standards.
- In 2012, Scott killed a statewide septic tank inspection program and an initiative that would've rehabilitated polluted freshwater springs.
- His appointees on the enfeebled South Florida Water Management District scuttled plans to buy 46,800 acres of sugar company land where the state had once planned to build giant retention ponds to store and filter polluted lake water.
- Under his watch, spending for Florida Forever, the state's land conservation program, plunged from \$100 million a year in Scott's first year to a paltry \$17 million by 2013.
- And in 2016, Scott signed into law weaker standards for toxic chemicals that flow into Florida's rivers, lakes, and coastal waters, a bill described as allowing "Big Ag to police itself when it comes to fertilizer pollution."
- Any of these protections could conceivably have mitigated the damage now being visited upon the southern Florida coastline and its residents. Instead, more pollution, less oversight, and a depleted budget for remediation set the stage for the current algal explosion.

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Government must address the red tide crisis now

This summer has been the summer of red tide and our Republican-led federal, state and county officials have failed to address the crisis.

The stench of red tide has come in waves over the course of this summer — first the respiratory irritation of the algae itself and then the noxious smell of the resulting fish kill. My family has been in this area for over 40 years and nobody has experienced a red tide like this one. Unfortunately, our so-called leadership has consistently shown a lack of concern for environmental issues, instead siding with their donors — big developers, fossil fuel companies,

Guest Columnist

**Tony
MOWRY**

agri-business, and Big Sugar.

Yes, red tide is a normal, annually occurring growth of algae. What is not normal is the current rate and spread of its growth. According to scientists at Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota and other studies, the species of algae that causes red tide, *Karenia brevis*, may use nutrients from runoff to sustain itself longer in the inshore environment than it would absent the nutrient runoff.

In other words, our

own policies, including rampant over-development, may be contributing to the smell coming from our beaches.

We must do better! I often boast about the beaches of Nokomis, Englewood and Venice. Although vaguely aware of it as a child, I now fully appreciate the public access and proximity of some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. We take pride in our beaches. The problem, however, is that the policies coming from our elected officials are in direct conflict with the will of the voters.

For example, in 2014, we passed Amendment 1 by an overwhelming margin, requiring the

use of documentary stamp fees to purchase land for conservation. The Florida Legislature has consistently ignored the requirements of Amendment 1, failing to use this money to conserve our land, as Floridians demanded.

Florida's delicate ecosystems are interconnected and the solutions to our environmental issues require statewide action. We have to take measures to combat the amount of harmful chemicals we're allowing into our waterways if we want clean, safe beaches. Our beaches could end up looking like Lake Okeechobee, where over 90 percent of the water's

surface is now covered in a thick layer of blue green algae — an outbreak largely attributed to groundwater runoff. The people have spoken and overwhelming decided to preserve our lands and protect our delicate and interconnected ecosystems.

This summer, red tide is affecting the quality of our beaches, threatening our wildlife, and putting the health of our residents and tourists at risk for months rather than a few weeks. The charter fishermen in my family have seen precipitous declines in fishing trips this summer. My elderly clients have suffered respiratory problems

with the air quality.

This is a crisis. It's time we stopped electing politicians that are funded primarily by special interests. Only then will we see the policy changes that benefit the people of Florida.

Floridians overwhelming support preserving our natural environment. Unfortunately, the Republican-led leadership has not listened to the people. It's time that our elected officials listened to the people, declare an emergency, and act now.

Tony Mowry is a Venice resident and the Democratic candidate for Florida House District 74.

Tony Mowry is one of the pro-environment candidates for office that Englewood Indivisible supports.

Get involved in making change!

Come to Englewood Indivisible's next meeting on Saturday, September 15th at 3:00 PM at the Elsie Quirk Library, 100 W. Dearborn Street.