

FROM THE OFFICE OF  
GOVERNOR  
RON DESANTIS

@GOVRONDESANTIS | WWW.FLGOV.COM | 850-717-9282 | MEDIA@EOG.MYFLORIDA.COM

**For Immediate Release**

April 29, 2019

**Contact:** Governor's Press Office

(850) 717-9282

[Media@eog.myflorida.com](mailto:Media@eog.myflorida.com)

## **Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Appointments to the Newly Formed Blue-Green Algae Task Force**

**Hobe Sound, Fla.** – Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointments of five expert researchers and leading scientists to the newly established Blue-Green Algae Task Force. The Governor was joined by First Lady Casey DeSantis and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Noah Valenstein.

“The current algae blooms in the St. Johns River and Lake George are a stark reminder of how important and urgent this issue really is,” **said Governor DeSantis.** “My administration is taking another step forward toward addressing this by appointing five internationally renowned and respected scientists to the new Blue-Green Algae Task Force.”

“The Governor’s appointment of these five highly qualified experts and leading scientists signal the start of a new day in Florida,” **said First Lady Casey DeSantis.** “The water truly is the lifeblood of our state. From our economy and tourism to our quality of life, we have to make sure our water is clean and safe. I look forward to the future accomplishments of this Task Force and am honored to be a part of these efforts.”

“I am excited to join Governor DeSantis in announcing these five prominent environmental researchers to the Blue-Green Algae Task Force,” **said DEP Secretary Noah Valenstein.** “By bringing together these scientific leaders, I am confident we will continue to move forward with the governor’s bold vision to achieve more now for Florida’s environment.”

The focus of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force is to support key funding and restoration initiatives and make recommendations to expedite nutrient reductions in Lake Okeechobee and the downstream estuaries. The Task Force will identify opportunities to fund priority projects with state, local and federal funding. These recommended projects will build upon DEP’s updated Basin Management Action Plans (BMAP) data.

The Task Force will also review and prioritize projects that will provide the largest and most meaningful nutrient reductions in key waterways.



*Photo Credit: Governor's Press Office*

### **Dr. Wendy Graham**

Dr. Graham is the Carl S. Swisher Eminent Scholar in Water Resources in the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering and Director of the Water Institute at the University of Florida. Dr. Graham holds a B.S. in environmental engineering from the University of Florida, and a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

### **Dr. Evelyn Gaiser**

Dr. Gaiser holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Kent State University, a master's in animal ecology from Iowa State University and a doctorate in ecology from the University of Georgia. Research in Dr. Gaiser's lab has informed the progress of Everglades restoration and is integrated into the Florida Coastal Everglades Long-Term Ecological Research program, which she has led since 2007.

### **Dr. Michael Parsons**

Dr. Parsons is a professor of marine science at Florida Gulf Coast University and director of the Coastal Watershed Institute and Vester Field Station. He was a State of Louisiana Board of Regents Fellow and received his doctorate from Louisiana State University in biological oceanography.

### **Dr. James Sullivan**

Dr. Sullivan, executive director of FAU's Harbor Branch, is an expert on marine ecosystem health. He earned his master's and doctorate degrees in biological oceanography with specializations in phytoplankton physiology and ecology, as well as

bio-optics and biophysics, from the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography.

**Dr. Valerie Paul**

Dr. Paul has served as director of the Smithsonian Marine Station at Fort Pierce, Florida, since 2002. She received her B.A. from the University of California San Diego with majors in Biology and in Chemical Ecology and her Ph.D. in Marine Biology from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego.