



Protecting nature. Preserving life.

## The Nature Conservancy Florida Chapter 2020 Florida Legislative Results Report

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The 2020 Florida Legislative Session has adjourned. Overall, there is \$690 million dedicated to the environment and conservation in Florida.

*“Thanks to the positive strides taken by Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature, conservation in our state continues to move in a positive direction. With \$650 million allocated for water quality advancements; progress toward implementing the recommendations of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force; allotting essential funds for land acquisitions through Florida Forever; including \$8.6 million for agriculture conservation easements; we are well on our way towards a better quality of life for Floridians and a more sustainable future for the state. It is now imperative to follow these achievements with action and begin implementation to secure the protection of Florida’s natural resources that we all depend upon. As we are all rapidly adjusting to our current situation and concerns around the spread of COVID-19, it is important that we acknowledge achievements and good news where we can along with recognizing the role that nature plays in our health and wellbeing.”*

*Temperince Morgan  
Executive Director  
The Nature Conservancy, Florida*

### **Policy** **Senate Bill 712 – Omnibus Water Bill**

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This important bill is supported by the Chapter and through its amendment process, a key priority for TNC was included. TNC actively supported the Reclaimed Water bills in the House and Senate to begin the process to take reclaimed water and treat it to drinking water standards, also known as the Toilet to Tap legislation. The House passed its bill and the Senate did not. The key language was taken from the House bill and added to Senate Bill 712. This is a great win for Florida and for the Chapter’s legislative Priority. The bill does the following:

- Directs FDEP to begin rulemaking to make potable water a drinking water source and formally defining reclaimed water as a water source in public water supply systems - the recommendations of the Potable Reuse Commission
- Creating a new matching funding program for septic to sewer and wastewater improvements;
- Gives FDEP rulemaking authority for the first time to require utilities to address inflow and infiltration issues;

- Requires substantial rulemaking and many of the rules required by the bill will come back to the legislature for ratification so that these water quality issues will remain on the legislative agenda for years to come;
- Moves regulation of septic tanks from DOH to FDEP
- Requires enhanced BMP inspections and enforcement.

**Signed into law – June 30, 2020**

**Senate Bill 178 – the Slip Study Bill** - Any coastal construction project receiving state funds will require a “sea level impact projection” (SLIP) study before commencing. This is a significant step in recognizing sea-level rise in planning for coastal projects.

**Signed into law – June 30, 2020**

**HB 1061** – creates the Nature Coast Aquatic Preserve for state coastal waters off Citrus, Hernando and Pasco Counties

**Signed into law – June 30, 2020**

**SB 410** – A bill that pre-empted Charter counties local control of growth management and development.

**Vetoed – June 30, 2020**

## **Appropriations – in the approved 2021 Florida Budget**

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### **Florida Forever**

- Rare and sensitive lands acquisition – \$67,000,000
- Working Waterfronts – \$2,000,000
- Florida Communities Trust – \$10,000,000

### **Water Quality Enhancements – \$10,800,000**

Increased water quality monitoring, creation of a water quality public information portal establishment of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force - The task force will support key funding and restoration initiatives to expedite nutrient reduction in Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries. The task force will identify priority projects for funding that are based on scientific data and build upon Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) to provide the largest and most significant impacts.

### **Panhandle Estuaries**

Northwest Florida Estuary Program – St. Andrews/St. Joe Bay - \$500,000

Northwest Florida Estuary Program – Pensacola and Perdido Bay – \$500,000

### **Innovative Technologies – \$10,000,000**

For the purpose of supporting the evaluation and implementation of innovative technologies and short-term solutions to combat or clean up harmful algal blooms and nutrient enrichment of Florida’s fresh waterbodies, including lakes, rivers, estuaries and canals. Funds may be used for the Department’s red tide emergency grant to support local governments in cleaning beaches and coastal areas to minimize the impacts of red tide to residents and visitors. Funds may also be used to implement water quality

treatment technologies, identified by the department, near water control structures in Lake Okeechobee.

**Everglades Restoration – \$264,248,776**

\$64,000,000 in recurring funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund is provided to transfer to the Everglades Trust Fund within the South Florida Water Management District.

\$1,651,224 in nonrecurring funds from the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund and \$168,248,776 in nonrecurring funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund shall be distributed to the South Florida Water Management District for the planning, design, engineering, and construction of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

**Everglades and Estuaries - \$45,342,089**

\$28,175,082 in recurring funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, and \$17,167,007 in nonrecurring funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund shall be used to implement the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program.

**Alternative Water Supply – \$38,200,000**

Water supply and water resource development grant program to help communities plan for and implement conservation, reuse and other water supply and water resource development projects. Priority funding will be given to regional projects in the areas of greatest need and for projects that provide the greatest benefit.

**Water Quality Improvements – Everglades Restoration – \$50,000,000**

Distributed to the South Florida Water Management District for the design, engineering, and construction of the specific project components designed to achieve the greatest reductions in harmful discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries as identified in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project Draft Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impact Statement dated July 2018. The South Florida Water Management District is directed to negotiate a pre-partnership credit agreement with the United States Army Corps of Engineers as authorized under Section 6004 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.

**Water Quality Improvements – \$25,000,000**

Providing for a grant program to provide up to a 50 percent matching grant to local governmental agencies as defined in section 403.1835, Florida Statutes, for wastewater and stormwater improvements, including septic conversion and remediation. No match is required for local governmental agencies defined as a rural area of opportunity under section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, or if a local governmental agency is implementing a public private partnership pay for performance agreement. The program supports the efforts of the Blue-Green Algae Task Force consensus findings to address nutrient loads to impaired waterbodies affected by blue-green algae. The Department of

Environmental Protection may contract with local governmental agencies to administer the program.

**Indian River Lagoon Water Quality Improvement Projects - \$25,000,000**

Provided to the St. Johns River Water Management District for Indian River Lagoon water quality improvement projects.

**Coral Reef Protection and Restoration - \$10,000,00**

**St. Johns/Suwannee/Apalachicola Rivers watersheds and Springs Coast watershed water quality improvements - \$25,000,000**

**Florida Resilient Coastline Initiative – \$10,000,000**

To assist local governments with storm resiliency, sea level rise planning, coastal resilience projects, and coral reef health.

- Land Management to Water Management Districts – \$10,237,210
- FDEP Land Management - \$3,634,992
- FDACS Land Management - \$6,886,703
- FDEP DRP State Park Facility Improvements \$50,000,000
- Florida Forest Service Budget – \$104,500,799