

- ◆ CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM
- ◆ INDIAN RIVER LAGOON NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM
- ◆ SARASOTA BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM
- ◆ TAMPA BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM



The Problem: Florida is experiencing a water crisis that threatens its environment, economy and quality of life. Poor water quality, recurring harmful algal blooms including red tides, cyanobacterial blooms in lakes and rivers that impact human health, and fish and wildlife kills damage Florida's brand and economy.

The Result: Florida's reputation as a global tourism destination, property values, legacy industries (construction and agriculture) and future economic growth prospects of emerging industry sectors along our coasts.

The Evidence: Scientific research supports that nutrient pollution (excess Nitrogen and Phosphorus) coming from stormwater, wastewater, groundwater, atmospheric, and legacy sources are contributing to Florida's harmful algae bloom problems. In addition, many of these sources serve as pathways for other pathogens and toxicants to enter Florida's surface and groundwater threatening ecological and human health.

The primary impediment to implementing needed multi-year water restoration projects that address these threats is ***the lack of dedicated, recurrent funding for estuary and coastal water restoration.***

The Solution: Reducing nutrients and other pollutants at the source requires infrastructure improvements, technology advancements and changes in Florida's stormwater and wastewater management. Additionally, removing nutrients already in waters will require building natural and man-made filtration projects.

An Estuary Fund is needed.

Inadequate annual state appropriations impede the ability to effectively plan and implement multi-year restoration projects across broad coastal regions. Florida's Governor and Legislature recognized this need for Everglades and Springs restoration, moving from annual appropriations to a dedicated recurrent source of funding. This single Legislative action enables infrastructure improvements and water quality restoration efforts to be accelerated and expanded in these regions.

Coastal watersheds and communities support billions of dollars of economic activity, as well as thousands of jobs. A recent (2016) economic analysis conducted by the Treasure Coast and East Central Florida Regional Planning Councils and funded by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity estimated a return on investment for restoration of the Indian River Lagoon at \$33 to \$1, another priority region for the State.

An Estuary Fund is vital to providing the recurrent dedicated funding necessary for protecting water resources and supplies, public health, and the water-based tourism and real-estate industries that fuel Florida's economy.

Role of Florida's National Estuary Alliance

Florida's four estuaries of national significance (Charlotte Harbor, Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay and Indian River Lagoon) represent more than a quarter of the state's coastal waters, Florida's most populous coastal communities, and a combined economic value that exceeds \$44 billion annually.

National Estuary Programs convene a Management Conference comprised of local, state, and federal governmental entities as well as private industry and non-profit stakeholders to bring a non-regulatory, science-based and consensus-driven approach for implementing solutions to address estuary problems. Each is guided by a *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* with oversight of elected officials and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

National Estuary programs have a long track record of success, leveraging governmental dollars with private funding and in-kind services to produce at least \$19 of restoration for each governmental dollar received. This model of cooperative non-regulatory public-private partnership allows for more efficient and effective restoration.

Examples of Florida Estuary Alliance Activities

- ◆ Providing on-going educational events and materials to educate and engage communities in reducing fertilizer use, picking up pet waste, and inspecting/maintaining their septic
- ◆ Restoring coastal habitats and wetlands , as well as Installing created oyster reefs and seagrass plantings, that naturally filter and uptake nutrients as well as provide fish habitat
- ◆ Implementing hydrological restoration projects that reduce flooding, rehydrate natural wetlands to filter water, and improve water quality conditions in downstream waters.

Needed Legislation

Statewide legislation focused on Florida's estuaries of national significance, similar to Everglades and Springs restoration legislation, would:

- Provide dedicated recurring state legislative funding for a "Florida Estuary Fund" of up to \$100 million to be administered by FDEP to fund projects for water quality improvements (including wastewater and stormwater infrastructure improvements, habitat restoration, water quality monitoring and water pollution technology innovation pilot projects).
- Direct that a minimum of \$2 - 4 million be appropriated from the "Florida Estuary Fund" for each of the four Florida estuaries dedicated by Congress as "Estuaries of National Significance" (i.e. Charlotte Harbor, Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay and Indian River Lagoon) to implement the respective *Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans* and projects approved by FDEP in partnership with our local, regional, state and federal partners.

To learn more about the members of the Florida Estuaries Alliance:

Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program:

<https://www.chnep.org>

Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program

<http://www.irlcouncil.com>

Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program

<https://sarasotabay.org>

Tampa Bay National Estuary Program

<http://www.tbep.org>

