

FLORIDA NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM ACT

Proposed Florida Legislation

HOUSE BILL 791

sponsored by Representative Heather
Fitzenhagen (R), District: 78 – Parts of
Lee County

SENATE BILL 1608

sponsored by Senator Debbie Mayfield
(R), District 17 - Indian River County
and part of Brevard County

URGENT NEED

- Recognizes the importance of Florida’s 4 National Estuary Programs designated by the U.S. Congress as “Estuaries of National Significance” as authorized by Section 320 of the Clean Water Act.
- Supports state funding consideration from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.
- Requires that annual reports be submitted from funded NEPs to the Florida Governor, Senate President, Speaker of the House, FL Department of Environmental Protection and Water Management Districts.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

Why pass the Florida National Estuary Act in 2020?

- Legislation formally recognizes the environmental and economic importance of Florida's 4 National Estuary Programs, representing approximately 50% of Florida's coastline, large watersheds and billions of dollars of annual economic value. No direct financial impact to FY 2020-2021 Florida budget.
- Legislation enhances the ability of Florida's National Estuary Programs to secure Congressional reauthorization of Section 320 of the Clean Water Act. Bi-partisan Congressional reauthorization bills have been filed in both the House (HR 4044) and Senate (S3171). If passed, the re-authorization language would fund the National Estuary Program at \$50 million per year for five years beginning in 2022, up from \$26.5 million annually in the previous reauthorization. This could increase Florida program funding from the current \$2.4 million (\$600,000 for each program) to \$4 million (up to \$1 million each). Congressional authorization also provides additional competitive grant funds for an estuary restoration competitive grant program.
- Legislation allows for annual funding through FDEP. NEPs are required to secure local and state matching funds. FDEP currently supports Florida's NEPs at varying levels, but there is no legislative direction to do so.
- Enhances program accountability and financial transparency: Requires that each program funded by the state provide annual reports and financial disclosures to the Governor, Legislature, DEP, & Water Management Districts.

BUDGET IMPACT: NONE

