



2027 STATE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership, which includes 10 counties and 27 cities in Central and Southwest Florida, as well as state and federal govt. agencies, have the following collective state legislative priorities for 2027. The CHNEP is part of the National Estuary Program (NEP) authorized by Congress, which fosters natural resource management that is consensus-based, non-regulatory, and based on sound science.

- Continue and expand annual funding for the Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership, including recurrent dedicated state funding.
- Create or strengthen nutrient and pollution reduction policies to reduce loads from wastewater, septic, agricultural runoff, reclaimed water, stormwater, fertilizer and internal “legacy loads”.
- Expand funding for innovative nutrient reduction projects, especially those that promote natural system solutions.
- Establish a statewide, long-term funding program through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection with sufficient funds for competitive, local cost-share projects for estuary restoration including:
 - Upgrading wastewater treatment to advanced wastewater treatment and increasing capacity
 - Septic to sewer conversion
 - Groundwater contamination remediation projects
 - Habitat protection and restoration (ex. seagrass, oysters, living shorelines)
 - Stormwater retrofitting projects
 - Legacy load / muck removal remediation projects
 - Resiliency projects and planning
- Support increased funding of both the Florida Forever and Florida Rural and Family Lands programs.
- Support of local governments’ continued ability to collect revenue to fund water and other natural resource projects in their communities, as well as to enact and maintain more stringent environmental protection ordinances.
- Support harmful algal bloom monitoring and emergency event response, prioritizing nutrient reduction efforts.



2027 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PRIORITIES

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP), which includes 10 counties and 27 cities in Central and Southwest Florida, as well as state and federal governmental agencies, have the following collective federal legislative priorities for 2027. The CHNEP is part of the National Estuary Program (NEP) authorized by Congress, which fosters natural resource management that is consensus-based, non-regulatory, and based on sound science.

- NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM AUTHORIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION
 - Support enactment and effective implementation of legislation reauthorizing the National Estuary Program under Section 320 of the Clean Water Act at no less than \$50 million annually.
- NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM FUNDING
 - Support \$50 million for the National Estuary Program in FY27 to fully support existing estuaries of national significance, address rising program costs, and position the program to accommodate future National Estuary Program designations in a manner consistent with congressional intent. This funding level would provide at least \$1 million per National Estuary Program and \$4 million for the competitive awards program.
- CONGRESSIONAL ESTUARY CAUCUS AND NEP 40TH ANNIVERSARY
 - Support expansion of the bipartisan Congressional Estuary Caucus and use the National Estuary Program's 40th anniversary to highlight the program's locally driven accomplishments, economic benefits, and importance to communities nationwide.
- EVERGLADES RESTORATION
 - Support full funding of Everglades Restoration and projects that restore the Western Everglades including the Caloosahatchee River & Estuary.
- ADDITIONAL FEDERAL FUNDING
 - Support supplemental funding for priority restoration, research, and monitoring needs of the Florida National Estuary Program entities (including for harmful algal bloom research and monitoring, new resiliency and freshwater storage and supply projects, as well as transformational infrastructure improvement projects that benefit water quality, hydrological restoration, fisheries/habitat, etc.)
 - USFWS Everglades to Gulf Coast Conservation Area implementation.