



2025
FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM
DRAFT

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Martin County Board of County Commissioners

Martin County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) continues to work closely with our state legislative delegation to advance the priorities that serve the best interests of Martin County residents and visitors.



Left to right: Commissioner J. Blake Capps; District 3; Commissioner Eileen Vargas, District 1; Commissioner Stacey Hetherington, District 2; Chair Sarah Heard, District 4; and Vice Chairman Ed Ciampi, District 5;

COMPREHENSIVE EVERGLADES RESTORATION PLAN (CERP)

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is a framework for restoring, protecting and preserving the greater Everglades ecosystem. The plan is a 50-50 partnership between the State of Florida and the Federal Government.

REQUEST sufficient funding to meet the projections in the Army Corps of Engineers Integrated Delivery Schedule for CERP.

REQUEST the prioritization of the completion of the phase 2 components of IRL-S.

SUPPORT sufficient Operation and Maintenance funding.

WATER RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT ACT (WRDA)

SUPPORT the bi-annual passage of the Water Resources Development Act that authorizes the US Army Corps of Engineers projects and policies that often have statewide impacts to Florida, including Everglades restoration, port and inlet construction, and beach nourishment projects.

SUPPORT future WRDA provisions that would allow increased funding levels for the Indian River Lagoon South project and the Northern Estuaries Restoration Plan.

INDIAN RIVER LAGOON-SOUTH PHASE TWO (IRL-S)

The Indian River Lagoon-South (IRL-S) Restoration Project includes construction and operation of four new, large-scale above-ground reservoirs and their connecting canals, control structures, levees and pumps to capture water from the C-23, C-24, C-25 and C-44 canals for increased storage.

This project also includes construction and operation of three new stormwater treatment areas to reduce the amounts of sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen entering the estuary and the lagoon. Additionally, IRL-S includes the acquisition and restoration of 90,000 acres of natural area storage and treatment that will help reduce stormwater runoff, provide nutrient reduction, aquifer recharge, wildlife habitat and passive outdoor recreation. The final component of IRL-S will include muck removal and estuary habitat restoration. We will continue to support increased federal funding levels

BEACH RESTORATION AND INLET MANAGEMENT

SUPPORT adequate annual funding for the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Operations & Maintenance (O&M) “Small, Remote, or Subsistence Navigation” dredging account, including additional funding for dredging not identified in the annual Federal Administration Budget.

NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM (NEP)

SUPPORT full funding for the National Estuary Program.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the National Estuary Program (NEP) as a core water program authorized by Section 320 of the Clean Water Act. The Indian River Lagoon was nominated as an Estuary of National Significance and joined the NEP in 1990 under the sponsorship of the St. Johns and South Florida Water Management Districts. The mission of the NEP is to protect and restore the water quality and ecological integrity of the 28 estuaries designated by the U.S. Congress as “Estuaries of National Significance.”



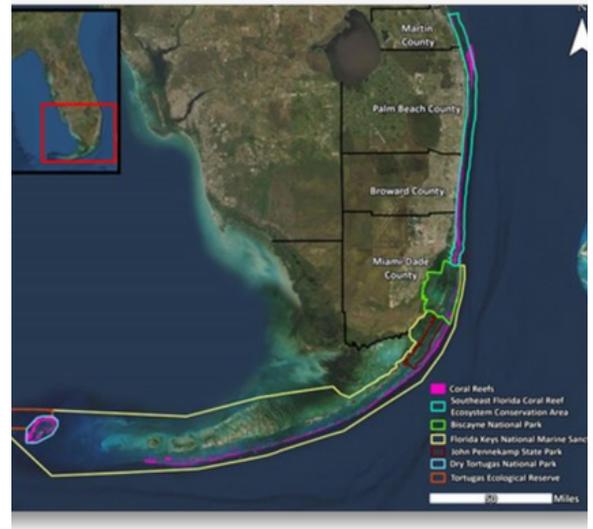
RESTORING RESILIENT REEFS ACT

REQUEST the establishment of a Coral Reef Conservation Fund.

SUPPORT the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act to allow the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to undertake several activities to understand, manage and protect coral reef ecosystems.

While disease outbreaks are not unprecedented along Florida's Coral Reef, this current disease event is unique in that it has:

- Persisted and continued to spread since 2014 and includes multiple diseases.
- Impacted over 18 species of stony coral, including primary reef builders and species that have been listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act.
- Effectively eliminated a few especially susceptible species from the known wild population.



The coral reef tract brings in over \$6 billion in revenue to the state, including 70,000 jobs and the generation of \$100 million annually from recreational fisheries. Coral reefs are a support system for nearly 25% of marine life within the ocean.

CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION

Acquisition of conservation lands is a foundational element of Martin County's priorities for water quality, open spaces and quality of life. There are several programs of interest related to land acquisition, each of which depend on state and federal partnerships to effectively achieve results.



SUPPORT the US Department of Agriculture conservation programs to assist in the implementation of the IRL-S and other CERP projects.

SUPPORT implementation of the feature of the IRL-S project that would restore natural lands.

The **Martin County Blue Ways program** provides conservation lands for local basin water quality projects, recreational access to the rivers, the lagoon and ocean.

The **Loxa-Lucie program** provides a wildlife and recreation corridor between Halpatiokee Regional Park, Atlantic Ridge State Park and Jonathon Dickinson State Park that would create a “super park” and serve as a destination for the public and wildlife.

The **Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project Plan** identified thousands of acres for acquisition to provide natural-area water storage and treatment. These areas also contribute to wildlife habitat and large open areas for passive recreation.

Acquisition in the **PalMar** area preserves some of the highest quality wetland in the greater Everglades. This is a critical effort to maintain and restore water quality and timing of freshwater flows for the wild and scenic Loxahatchee River.

These programs align with several state and federal programs for land acquisition assistance and the county supports active engagement with our state and federal delegations to advance these efforts.