



2025
STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM
DRAFT

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Martin County Board of County Commissioners

Martin County's State Delegation

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;



**Senator
Gayle Harrell**
District 31



**Representative
John Snyder**
District 86



**Representative
Toby Overdorf**
District 85

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Martin County Priorities

Martin County Local Bill Request

Counties are mandated to provide health care to inmates and those incarcerated awaiting trial. Inmate healthcare spending has increased exponentially statewide and nationwide, which is putting pressure on county budgets.

In the past 16 months, Martin County spent approximately \$968,000 on outside-the-jail medical care such as hospitals, physicians and ambulances to provide care for inmates who the jail medical staff cannot provide for. As a result, the high cost of covering inmate medical expenses has limited Martin County's ability to provide other critical needs and services for its residents. Therefore, Martin County is seeking ways to contain inmate medical costs. In Florida, section 945.6041, Florida Statutes, allows the Florida Department of Corrections to limit payments to outside medical providers to 110% of the established Medicare rate.



Martin County is proposing a local bill that will reduce county jail medical expenses by extending the state caps to Martin County and setting a standardized reimbursement rate for health care providers that mimics the language already in the Florida Statutes. Compensation would be limited to 110% of the Medicare allowable rate, or 125% of the Medicare allowable rate if the health care provider reported a negative operating margin for the previous year.

Martin County Priorities

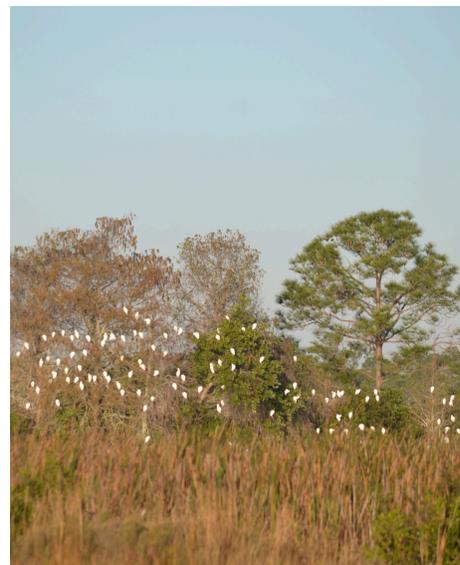
Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)

SUPPORT continued dedicated funding for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)

SUPPORT long-term funding commitments to finance the completion of the projects on the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS), Indian River Lagoon-South (IRL-S) Project including funding for the continued IRL-S Phase Two

SUPPORT the land acquisition of the Natural Lands Component of IRL-S, which includes 90,000 acres of wetland restoration

SUPPORT Loxahatchee Flowway 3 restoration of N. Fork of Loxahatchee River



The **IRL-S Restoration Project, part of CERP**, was authorized to address the damaging effects of pollution and unnaturally large freshwater discharges and local basin runoff to our ecologically vital water bodies and its impact to our public health and safety. The IRL-S Project employs a regional approach to address the Martin and St. Lucie County portions of the lagoon. The IRL-S Project will greatly reduce polluted freshwater discharges into the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon.

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Martin County Priorities *continued*

Conservation Land Acquisition

Acquisition of conservation lands is a foundational element of Martin County's priorities of 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 state funding for PalMar land acquisition and Florida Forever funding for state land acquisition

CERP 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.

The **Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Conservation Initiative project** would provide a wildlife and recreation corridor between Halpatiokee Regional Park, Atlantic Ridge State Park and Jonathan Dickinson State Park that would create a "super park" to serve as a destination for people and wildlife.

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



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

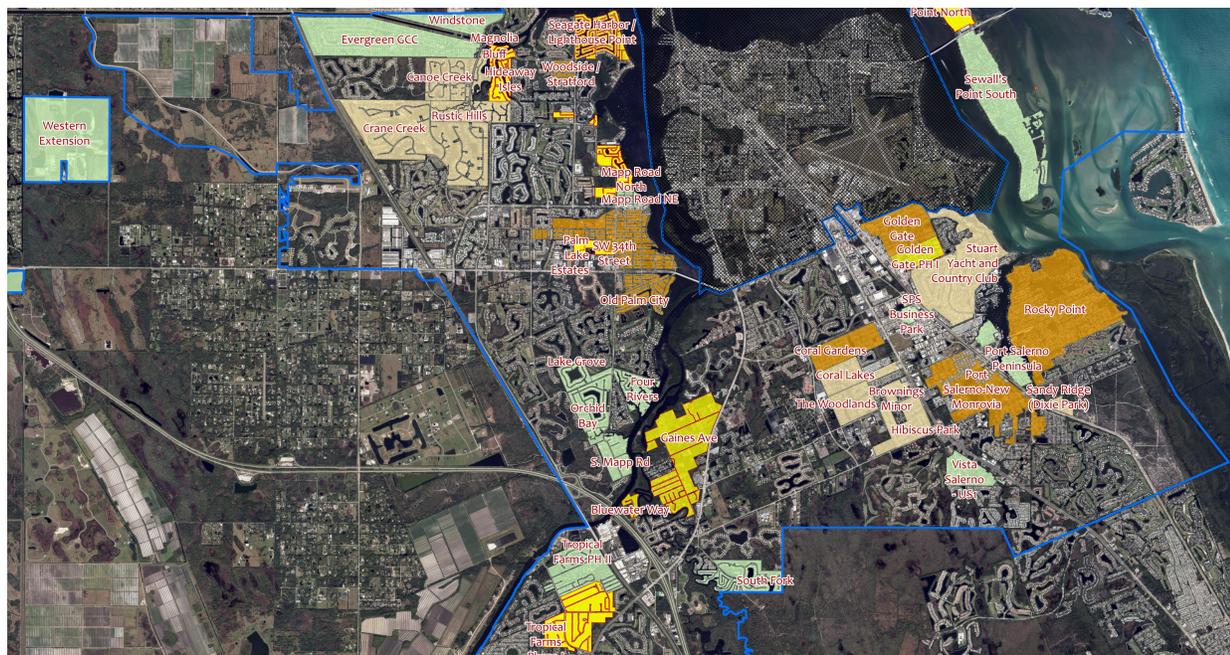
Land acquisition in the PalMar area preserves some of the highest quality wetland in the greater Everglades. This is a critical effort to maintain and restore water quality and timing for the wild and scenic Loxahatchee River.

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Martin County Priorities *continued*

Septic to Sewer Conversion

SUPPORT the Wastewater Grant Program and any other funding sources identified by the legislature for septic to sewer conversion projects



While discharges from Lake Okeechobee, along with local stormwater runoff, are significant threats to the health of our waterways, septic systems can also add to the problem. Leaching of septic tank effluent, especially in high density residential neighborhoods and those close to the water, contributes to the nutrient load in local waterways. The County is committed to efforts that will restore the health of the St. Lucie Estuary, Indian River Lagoon and nearshore coral reef tract. The reduction and elimination of septic systems is one tangible way we can proactively improve the health of our unique environment.

Biosolids

SUPPORT land acquisition for biosolids. Excess nutrients from land application of human waste from wastewater treatment effluent, termed “biosolids,” reach surface waters and continue to increase the occurrence of chronic harmful algal blooms (HAB)

Martin County Priorities *continued*

Dedicated Coral Reef Funding & Florida Resilient Coastlines Program

SUPPORT efforts and dedicated funding for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to protect and restore the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Tract

SUPPORT efforts and continued dedicated funding for resources to prepare Florida's coastal communities and habitats for the effects of rising sea levels

SUPPORT the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's efforts on Coral Reef Evaluation and Monitoring Project (CREMP)



Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program (IRL NEP)

SUPPORT the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program's legislative priorities

Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative (LRPI)

SUPPORT continued funding of projects identified through the LRPI, a partnership of governmental agencies brought together for the common goal of the restoration and enhancement of the Loxahatchee River

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Martin County Policy Statements

Home Rule & Unfunded Mandates

Home rule power is conferred to Florida counties by Article VIII, Section 1(f) and 1(g) of the Florida Constitution (1968), and by section 125.01, Florida Statutes. The Martin County Board of County Commissioners is dedicated to the preservation of this Florida constitutional principle whereby a local government can exercise powers to protect the health, safety and welfare of its citizens.

SUPPORT maintaining the integrity of county home rule power, both administrative and fiscal, which allows counties to develop and implement community-based solutions to local problems

OPPOSE legislation that circumvents local oversight, limits local control or prevents local officials from being responsive to their constituents

OPPOSE legislation that shifts the financial burden from what are traditionally state responsibilities to the local level

Water Quality & Natural Resources

Martin County is home to one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world.

SUPPORT legislation that protects our natural resources and environment. The County will continue advocacy efforts to reduce Lake Okeechobee discharges to the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie River

SUPPORT critical grant funding programs to protect the health and sustainability of our local waterways

SUPPORT a dedicated annual funding source at a minimum of \$50 million from any funding sources identified by the legislature to protect our beach shoreline for statewide beach nourishment and inlet management projects

OPPOSE legislation that weakens local level wetland protections. Martin County's wetland protections are a model throughout the state

OPPOSE legislation that bans stronger fertilizer ordinances, especially during summer months

Martin County Policy Statements *continued*

Human Services & Public Safety

A very critical and essential role of government is to provide the necessary protection for its residents against crime, disasters and other unfortunate events.

SUPPORT continued investment in the Martin County Emergency Operation Center

SUPPORT efforts to limit substance abuse and increased funding for mental health treatment

SUPPORT full funding of the State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) program, the Sadowski Trust Fund and other accessible housing projects

SUPPORT full funding of the District 19 Medical Examiner facility

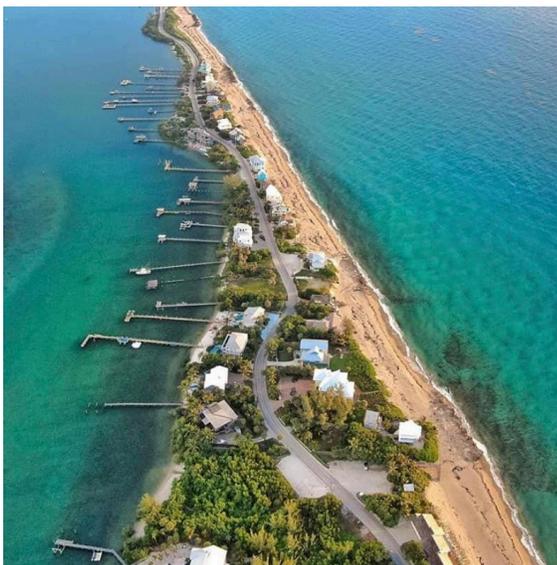
Economic Growth & Tourism

Martin County recognizes the importance of having a fair and transparent tax structure to help residents benefit from economic growth.

SUPPORT legislation that simplifies the tax code or provides an economic boost to Florida Taxpayers

Martin County recognizes the importance of lowering or removing certain taxes to benefit local businesses and our residents, helping support a competitive and strong economy.

SUPPORT policies that promote private property rights, which encourages economic autonomy



The County has an effective tourism division to help encourage local economic stimulation within our community. Programs such as **VISIT FLORIDA** increase the exposure of our unique ecosystem, beaches and parks, local hotels, businesses, restaurants and other locations specific to Martin County.

OPPOSE decreasing funding levels to **VISIT FLORIDA**

OPPOSE any legislation that expands the allowed usage of bed tax. This vital program allows local businesses to gain access to customers through increased tourism spending

Martin County Policy Statements *continued*

Infrastructure, Recreation & Transportation

The County manages over 70 parks including beaches, causeways, community centers and many other outdoor areas, and is home to many historical sites that require monitoring and preservation.

SUPPORT continued grant programs that maintain Florida's historic buildings and archaeological sites as well as any program that provides funding for acquisition or development for public outdoor recreation

SUPPORT the Department of Transportation's Five-Year Work Plan, which includes funding for road construction, road improvements and resurfacing, and public transportation

SUPPORT Florida's Department of Transportation's Target Zero campaign

SUPPORT funding for capital projects that expands or establishes a new intercity passenger rail service, including privately operated intercity passenger rail service

