



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2024-2025

LFIR # 2700

1. **Project Title**
2. **Senate Sponsor**
3. **Date of Request**

4. Project/Program Description

The purpose of this project is to plant, protect, maintain, and monitor 40 acres of seagrass in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) at Preachers Hole and Big Slough in Brevard County. Using scientifically validated methodologies that have been successfully demonstrated elsewhere in the IRL, this project will complement other efforts underway to create seagrass nurseries and out-planting projects within the Lagoon. Aside from water quality benefits, this habitat restoration project aims to restore critically important seagrass meadows within the IRL. Restored seagrass is vital to a healthy aquatic ecosystem and will provide essential habitat for fish and other marine life as well as a continual food source for manatees and green sea turtles. Once this vegetation has established and reaches a tipping point, it will expand and continue to grow on its own spreading beyond the project area. Scope of work includes permitting, planting, protecting, maintaining, and monitoring seagrass.

5. **State Agency to receive requested funds**
- State Agency contacted?** Yes

6. Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Type of Funding	Amount
Operations	2,804,130
Fixed Capital Outlay	0
Total State Funds Requested	2,804,130

7. Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (including matching funds available for this project)

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	2,804,130	89%
Matching Funds		
Federal	0	0%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	340,000	11%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2024-2025	3,144,130	100%

8. **Has this project previously received state funding?** No

Fiscal Year (yyyy-yy)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		

9. **Is future funding likely to be requested?** No
- a. **If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year.**
- b. **Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.**



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A grant application for an FDEP Indian River Lagoon Water Quality Improvements Grant has been submitted (8/2023); awaiting award notification. A match was provided by the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida.

10. Has the entity requesting this project received any federal assistance related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

If yes, indicate the amount of funds received and what the funds were used for.

Complete questions 11 and 12 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

11. Status of Construction

a. What is the current phase of the project?

- Planning
 Design
 Construction
 N/A

b. Is the project "shovel ready" (i.e permitted)?

c. What is the estimated start date of construction?

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

12. List the owners of the facility to receive, directly or indirectly, any fixed capital outlay funding. Include the relationship between the owners of the facility and the entity.

13. Details on how the requested state funds will be expended

Spending Category	Description	Amount
Administrative Costs:		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits	Administration, Contracting, and Public Outreach	168,248
Other Salary and Benefits	Project oversight by finance and administrative staff	112,165
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	NA	0
Operational Costs: Other		
Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Nursery grown seagrass production, permitting, installation of seagrass, protection of planting units using herbivory exclusion cages, maintenance of herbivory exclusion cages for one year, monthly monitoring for three years, and regular progress reporting to provide updates on seagrass expansion.	2,523,717
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering		0
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		2,804,130



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14. Program Performance

a. What specific purpose or goal will be achieved by the funds requested?

The purpose of this project is to plant, protect, maintain, and monitor 40 acres of seagrass in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) in Preachers Hole and Big Slough in Brevard County. Using scientifically validated methodologies that have been successfully demonstrated elsewhere in the IRL, this project will complement other efforts underway to create seagrass nurseries and out-planting projects within the Lagoon. Seagrass expansion beyond the 40-acre project area could result in a four-fold increase in vegetation, totaling 160-acres and creating a return on investment within three years. Seagrass meadow expansion will stabilize the sediment, improve water quality, reduce algal blooms, enhance fish habitats, sequester carbon, and provide a sustainable food source for starving manatees.

b. What activities and services will be provided to meet the intended purpose of these funds?

Enhancing habitat will enhance water quality which will reduce harmful algal blooms (HABs) and the need to dredge muck from decaying plants and animals, and/or incur the costs of the effects of manatee starvation. Seagrass cycles out excess nutrients (N & P) that, if left unaddressed, could result in HABs that will rob the IRL of oxygen and choke off all plant and animal life. Similar projects in Florida have shown a 30% reduction in nutrients. Restored meadows will provide a source of food for manatees. Scope of work includes permitting, planting, protecting planting units from grazers until their roots become established, maintenance and monitoring (for three years).

c. What direct services will be provided to citizens by the appropriation project?

Seagrass meadow expansion will stabilize the sediment, improve water quality, reduce algal blooms, enhance fish habitats, and provide a sustainable food source for starving manatees. Sportfishing, boating, and other water-based recreational activities will be enhanced with improvements in water quality and habitat. Numerous studies have shown that being in nature can improve mental wellbeing. As opportunities for outdoor recreational activities are improved, mental health will improve. Robust seagrass meadows also build resilience against climate change. Seagrass can sequester up to 35 times more carbon than terrestrial forests. Meadows also create drag in the water column, attenuating wave energy to reduce erosion in high-energy environments.

d. Who is the target population served by this project? How many individuals are expected to be served?

The IRL has been renowned for its recreational activities since the turn of the 20th century. The lagoon supports 1/7 of the region's economy and generates more than \$300M in boat and marine sales annually, according to a report by the IRLNEP. Currently, over 15% of Florida's restaurants and hotels are located in proximity to the IRL. By enhancing the health of the IRL, water-based recreational activities and cultural experiences will be protected and enhanced for future generations. Improving the health of the lagoon's waters will improve the economy, boat and marine sales, ecotourism, commercial and recreational fishing opportunities, and hotels and restaurants near the lagoon, safeguarding and increasing jobs in these fields. Benefits of this project will expand to the local community, businesses who rely on the health of the river and lagoon, and numerous tourists who visit the region each year.

e. What is the expected benefit or outcome of this project? What is the methodology by which this outcome will be measured?

The Central IRL BMAP cites an economic study prepared by East Coast Florida Regional Planning Council & Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (2016) that estimated a ROI of 33:1 for projects that improve the IRL's water quality & restore seagrass. The BMAP states that investing in projects that meet these goals is important not only for environmental considerations, but also to improve the regional economy. Also, due to natural seagrass expansion, an investment in one acre of seagrass typically nets four acres, quadrupling the ROI (similar projects in Florida have shown that a four-fold expansion beyond the direct project area may be achieved once a plant biomass reaches this tipping point). Similar projects also have shown a 30% reduction in nutrients levels (TN and TP).

f. What are the suggested penalties that the contracting agency may consider in addition to its standard penalties for failing to meet deliverables or performance measures provided for the contract?

If deliverables are not achieved, full monies allocated to the deliverable should be withheld.

15. Requester Contact Information

a. First Name **Last Name**



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b. Organization

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number Ext.

16. Recipient Contact Information

a. Organization

b. Municipality and County

c. Organization Type

- For Profit Entity
- Non Profit 501(c)(3)
- Non Profit 501(c)(4)
- Local Entity
- University or College
- Other (please specify)

d. First Name Last Name

e. E-mail Address

f. Phone Number

17. Lobbyist Contact Information

a. Name

b. Firm Name

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number

Please complete the questions below for Water Projects only.

18. Have you applied for alternative state funding?

- Waste Water Revolving Loan
- Drinking Water Revolving Loan
- Small Community Wastewater Treatment Grant
- Other (please specify) FDEP Indian River Lagoon Water Quality Improvements Grant
- N/A

19. What is the population economic status?



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- Financially Disadvantaged Community (ch. 62-552, F.A.C)
- Financially Disadvantaged Municipality (ch. 62-552, F.A.C)
- Rural Area of Economic Concern
- Rural Area of Opportunity (s. 288.0656, Florida Statutes)
- N/A

20. What is the status of construction?

Construction has not begun, but design is completed

21. What percentage of the construction has been completed?

0%

22. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

12/31/2025