



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2024-2025

LFIR # 2823

1. **Project Title**

2. **Senate Sponsor**

3. **Date of Request**

4. **Project/Program Description**

An area of approximately 20 acres within the Sebastian River, a tributary to the IRL, will be restored. Nursery-grown seagrass and freshwater submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) will be planted, protected, and monitored. Project updates will be posted on social media, distributed in eNewsletters, press releases, and articles. Key messages will focus on water quality improvements through natural habitat restoration. The goal of this project is to feed cleaner water into the IRL through water quality improvements to the Sebastian River. Other project benefits include enhancing habitat that provides protection for fish and other marine life, providing a continual food source for manatees, and reducing the risk of harmful algal blooms (HABs). This project will also demonstrate the effectiveness of using nursery-grown planting units, while helping to create a replicable model for estuaries nationwide that are suffering from seagrass and SAV loss.

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	1,100,000
Fixed Capital Outlay	0
Total State Funds Requested	1,100,000

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)	1,100,000	73%
Matching Funds		
Federal	0	0%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	409,994	27%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2024-2025	1,509,994	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?** Yes

a. **If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year.**

b. **Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.**

Federal and local grants would be an alternative to state funding.



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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	110,000
Other Salary and Benefits	NA	0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	NA	0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	NA	0
Operational Costs: Other		
Salary and Benefits	NA	0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	NA	0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Nursery grown seagrass and SAV production, permitting, installation of seagrass and SAV, protection of planting units using herbivory exclusion cages, maintenance of herbivory exclusion cages for one year, monitoring for three years, and regular progress reporting to provide updates on seagrass expansion.	990,000
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering		0
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		1,100,000

14. Program Performance

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



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The goal of this project is to expand on a successful demonstration project aimed at revegetating 5 tributaries to the Indian River Lagoon (IRL). By planting these tributaries with native SAV, this vegetation can stabilize sediments, cycle out harmful excess nutrients that cause algal blooms, provide food for starving manatees, and feed cleaner, healthier water into the IRL. This project will restore 20 acres in the Sebastian River, a tributary to the IRL. Similar pilot projects have shown a 30% reduction in nutrients. Restored meadows will provide habitat and protection for fish and other marine life, while providing a continual food source for manatees.

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

An area of approximately 20 acres within the Sebastian River, a tributary to the IRL, will be restored. Nursery-grown seagrass and freshwater SAV will be planted, protected, and monitored for a period of three years. The long-term goal of this project is to feed cleaner, healthier water into the IRL. This project will also demonstrate the effectiveness of using nursery-grown planting units, while helping to create a replicable model for estuaries nationwide that are suffering from seagrass loss. Project updates will be provided on social media, distributed in eNewsletters, press releases, and articles. Key messages will focus on water quality improvement through natural habitat restoration.

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

Project will provide water quality improvements to the IRL by restoring native seagrass and SAV to an IRL tributary that will help feed cleaner water into the IRL. Restored seagrass and SAV will provide habitat and protection for fish and other marine life, while providing a continual food source for manatees. Robust seagrass and SAV communities help reduce the risk of flooding, while sequestering carbon, to build resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change. One acre of seagrass sequesters up to 35 times more carbon annually terrestrial forests by area. By sequestering carbon, seagrass and SAV help build resilience against the effects climate change.

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. Currently, over 15% of Florida's restaurants and hotels are located in proximity to the lagoon. By enhancing the health of the Sebastian River that feeds into the IRL, the cultural experience of water-based recreational activities will be protected and enhanced for future generations. The City of Sebastian is the primary urban center along nearly nine miles of the lower eastern and southern banks of Sebastian River. According to the 2020 census, 25.05k people live in this city. 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?

This project aims to reduce nutrient loading into the IRL using a cost-effective, nature-based solution. Restoring native seagrass and SAV in the Sebastian River will create a natural filtration system, reducing nutrients, sediments, and pollutants that would otherwise flow into the Lagoon causing harmful algal blooms (HABs) that would be costly to mitigate through spraying/harvesting invasive plants, or dredging muck associated with decaying plants and animals caused by HABs. The project will be maintained for 12 months and monitored for three years to ensure its success. This project is designed as a sustainable long-term restoration solution, and ongoing maintenance is not required.

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**

b. Organization

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number **Ext.**

16. Recipient Contact Information



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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?

- Financially Disadvantaged Community (ch. 62-552, F.A.C)
- Financially Disadvantaged Municipality (ch. 62-552, F.A.C)
- Rural Area of Economic Concern



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Rural Area of Opportunity (s. 288.0656, Florida Statutes)

N/A

20. What is the status of construction?

Ready (5-month maintenance report for pilot project in Sebastian River has been completed).

21. What percentage of the construction has been completed?

0%

22. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

12/31/2025