

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/CS/SB 56 — Geoengineering and Weather Modification Activities

by Rules Committee; Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and Senators Garcia, Leek, Yarborough, and Gruters

The bill prohibits geoengineering and weather modification activities and provides such activities are a third-degree felony, punishable by up to five years' imprisonment and fines of up to \$100,000, except aircraft operators and controllers who are subject to a fine of up to \$5,000 and five years' imprisonment. All funds collected must be deposited in the Air Pollution Control Trust Fund. The bill directs the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to establish a dedicated e-mail address and online form to allow people to report suspected geoengineering and weather modification activities. DEP must investigate reports warranting further review and must refer reports to the Department of Health or the Division of Emergency Management when appropriate.

The bill provides that, beginning October 1, 2025, publicly owned airports must report monthly to the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) any aircraft equipped for geoengineering or weather modification activities. DOT may not expend state funds to support public airports that do not comply.

The bill also removes DEP's authority to conduct studies, research, experimentation, and evaluations in the field of weather modification.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 28-9; House 82-28

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/SB 164 — Vessel Accountability

by Environment and Natural Resources Committee and Senator Rodriguez

The bill amends and creates statutes concerning vessel ownership, nuisance and derelict vessels, and anchoring and mooring practices.

The bill clarifies and expands the definition of a “vessel owner.” For vessels at risk of becoming derelict, the bill provides that if the owner or operator is present on the vessel, a law enforcement officer can immediately conduct a test of the vessel’s effective means of propulsion for safe navigation. The bill provides that a vessel will be declared a public nuisance if it is found to be at risk of becoming derelict three times within a 24-month period.

The bill creates a free long-term anchoring permit for vessel owners or operators who intend to anchor a vessel within one linear nautical mile of an anchorage point for 14 days or more within a 30-day period.

Regarding civil and criminal penalties, the bill:

- Adds violations relating to expired registration and long-term anchoring to the list of noncriminal violations that may be enforced by a uniform boating citation.
- Provides penalties for long-term anchoring violations.
- Increases penalties for subsequent violations of derelict vessel laws and makes residing or dwelling on a derelict vessel a criminal offense.

The bill also expands the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s existing local government grant program to support the derelict vessel prevention and voluntary turn-in program.

Except as otherwise provided in the bill, if approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 113-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/CS/HB 209 — State Land Management

by State Affairs Committee; Natural Resources & Disasters Subcommittee; and Reps. Snyder, Gossett-Seidman, and others (CS/SB 80 by Environment and Natural Resources Committee and Senators Harrell, Bradley, Smith, Gaetz, Davis, Bernard, and Avila)

The State Park Preservation Act requires the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to manage state parks and preserves in a manner that will provide the greatest combination of benefits to the public and to the land's natural resources, as well as for conservation-based recreational uses, public access, Florida heritage and wildlife viewing, and scientific research.

The bill defines “conservation-based recreational uses” and requires those uses to be managed in a manner that ensures the conservation of the state's natural resources by minimizing impacts to undisturbed habitat. It prohibits the construction of sporting facilities, including, but not limited to, golf courses, tennis courts, pickleball courts, ball fields, and other similar facilities. However, it does not prohibit the continued operation, maintenance, or repair of any such sporting facilities, or other facilities existing within a state park.

The bill allows for the acquisition or installation of campsites and cabins at state parks, which must be compatible with land management plans and sited to avoid impacts to a park's critical habitat and natural and historical resources. It prohibits DEP from authorizing use or construction activities within a state park that may cause significant harm to the park's resources. It directs that any use or construction activity must be conducted to avoid impacts to a state park's critical habitat and natural and historical resources. The bill prohibits the installation or operation of certain lodging establishments at a state park. However, it does not prohibit the continued operation, maintenance, or repair of any such lodging establishment existing within a state park.

The bill renames the St. Marks River Preserve State Park as the Ney Landrum State Park.

Regarding land management plans, the bill requires public hearings for plan updates, adds a 30-day deadline for publication of a land management plan before a public hearing, requires plans for state parks to be published by that deadline, directs plans for state parks to be developed with input from an advisory group, and adds a 30-day notice deadline for advisory group public hearings.

The bill directs DEP to submit a report on the state park system to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2025.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 112-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

HB 295 — Comprehensive Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan

by Reps. Casello, Hart, and others (SB 200 by Senator Berman)

The bill directs the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop a comprehensive waste reduction and recycling plan by July 1, 2026, to be based on the recommendations contained within DEP’s “Florida and the 2020 75% Recycling Goal, Final Report.” The bill directs DEP to convene a technical assistance group within DEP to help develop the plan and provide a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives upon its completion. The report must include recommendations for statutory changes necessary to achieve the recycling goals and strategies identified in the plan.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 116-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/SB 388 — Trust Funds for Wildlife Management

by Appropriation Committee and Senator Rodriguez

The bill amends statutes that provide for two trust funds created within the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The bill specifies that the Grants and Donations Trust Fund must be used for grant and donor agreement activities regardless of the source of funding for those activities.

Regarding the Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund, the bill removes the requirement that FWC must designate an identifiable unit to administer the trust fund and it authorizes FWC to use trust fund proceeds for law enforcement purposes. Current law authorizes FWC to enter into cooperative agreements or memoranda of understanding with related agencies to coordinate nongame programs. The bill adds that FWC may enter into voluntary agreements. It also allows FWC to enter into cooperative agreements, voluntary agreements, or memoranda of understanding with related agencies and private landowners to coordinate nongame programs.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 112-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/CS/HB 481 — Anchoring Limitation Areas

by State Affairs Committee; Natural Resources & Disasters Subcommittee; and Reps. Lopez, V. and others (SB 866 by Senator Martin)

The bill creates an exception to allow local governments to regulate vessels that anchor for one hour or more overnight for more than 30 days in any six-month period within the jurisdiction of a county with a population of 1.5 million or more. This excludes any time vessels are anchored overnight in a mooring field or for marine construction, installation, or maintenance work.

The bill adds five additional anchoring limitation areas in Biscayne Bay in Miami-Dade County, within which a person may not anchor a vessel at any time overnight. The additional anchoring limitation areas lie between:

- Palm Island and Star Island,
- Palm Island and Hibiscus Island,
- Palm Island and Watson Island,
- The Sunset Islands, and
- Sunset Island I and State Road 112.

The bill prevents the owner or operator of a vessel or floating structure from anchoring or mooring within 300 feet outward from the marked boundary of a public mooring field. The bill extends the prohibition from 100 to 300 feet.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming a law.

Vote: Senate 29-8; House 115-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/CS/SB 492 — Mitigation Banks

by Rules Committee; Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government; and Senator McClain

The bill establishes the following standardized schedule for releasing mitigation credits:

- 30 percent upon recording a conservation easement and establishing financial assurances (or 100 percent for preservation-only banks).
- 30 percent after completing initial construction activities.
- 20 percent upon meeting interim performance criteria.
- 20 percent upon meeting final success criteria.

The bill provides that permit applicants are entitled to a one-time use of credits from a mitigation bank outside the mitigation bank service area if the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) or water management district confirms there are an insufficient number or type of credits available within the impacted area. Out-of-service-area credits may not be used until all out-of-kind credits within the service area are used. The following multipliers, which the bill declares to meet the requirements for addressing cumulative impacts, apply to credits outside the service area:

- 1.0 multiplier for use of in-kind credits within the service area.
- 1.0 multiplier for use of in-kind and out-of-service-area credits when the service area overlays part of the same regional watershed as the proposed impacts.
- 1.2 multiplier for use of in-kind and out-of-service-area credits located within a regional watershed immediately adjacent to the regional watershed overlain by a mitigation bank service area in which proposed impacts are located.
- When in-kind credits are not available to offset impacts in the regional watershed immediately adjacent to the regional watershed overlain by a bank service area in which the proposed impacts are located, an additional 0.25 multiplier must be applied for each additional regional watershed boundary crossed.
- An additional 0.50 multiplier must be applied if the mitigation used to offset impacts entails an out-of-kind replacement.

Once the amount of mitigation required to offset impacts is determined, the bill requires DEP or the water management district to contact all mitigation banks with a service area encompassing the location of the proposed impacts within seven business days to verify the availability of credits. Mitigation banks have 15 days to respond; if no response is received, it is presumed credits from that bank are not available. Mitigation banks must submit annual reports detailing the number and type of available credits for sale. DEP and water management districts must compile these reports and provide an annual assessment of the state's mitigation banking system to the Legislature.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 30-3; House 87-26

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/HB 733 — Brownfields

by Natural Resources & Disasters Subcommittee and Reps. Anderson and others (CS/CS/SB 736 by Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government; Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and Senators Truenow and Brodeur)

The bill removes provisions related to local governments' role in mapping institutional controls. For a brownfield site within a larger contaminated area, if cleanup criteria are met, the bill prohibits the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) or delegated local programs from: (1) denying "No Further Action" status, or (2) refusing to issue a site rehabilitation completion order, regardless of whether the site has engineering or institutional controls.

Rather than allowing tax credit applicants to receive 25 percent of the total site rehabilitation costs in the final year once a "No Further Action" order is issued, the bill provides that applicants are eligible for this additional credit after DEP has approved the annual site rehabilitation application and issued a site rehabilitation order. The applicant must submit the claim for the additional 25 percent within two years of receiving the site rehabilitation completion order. The bill removes a provision that prohibited unpermitted sites operated for monetary compensation from claiming tax credits for the costs of solid waste removal under the brownfield program. It also changes the deadline for the annual site rehabilitation tax credit certificate award from May 1 to June 1 and extends the time DEP has to respond to a tax credit applicant's response to a notice of deficiency.

The bill allows local governmental entities, including persons organized or united with the local governmental entity for business purposes, to participate in the program, provided they did not cause or contribute to the contamination of the brownfield site after July 1, 2025.

The bill removes references to brownfield sites being commercial, industrial, or contaminated sites. Instead, the bill defines brownfield site as real property identified in a brownfield site rehabilitation agreement executed by the person responsible for brownfield site rehabilitation of the property and DEP or a delegated local pollution control program, as applicable.

The bill also provides that, for sites subject to certain federal enforcement actions or permits that would otherwise be ineligible to participate in the brownfield program, DEP must allow participation if the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issues a no-objection letter, and the applicant can reasonably demonstrate compliance with contamination cleanup criteria. DEP may not require as a condition of such letter that EPA forego enforcement of federal corrective action authority at brownfield sites that have received a site rehabilitation completion order.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 32-0; House 116-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

HB 735 — Water Access Facilities

by Rep. Brackett and others (SB 1162 by Senators Leek and Brodeur)

The bill provides that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection may designate facilities as “Clean Marine Manufacturers.” Like other marinas, boatyards, mooring fields, and marine retailers with similar designations, Clean Marine Manufacturers are eligible for a discount on sovereignty submerged land leases and a waiver of extended-term lease surcharges.

The bill expands the authorized uses of funds from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s grant programs, which are funded by the Fuel Tax Collection Trust Fund, to include construction and maintenance of parking for boat-hauling vehicles and trailers.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 112-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

SB 796 — General Permits for Distributed Wastewater Treatment Systems

by Senator Bradley

The bill grants a general permit for the replacement of existing onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems with distributed wastewater treatment systems (DWTSSs), which are composed of one or more distributed wastewater treatment units (DWTUs). The bill defines a DWTU as an advanced onsite closed-tank wastewater treatments system that is remotely operated and controlled by the permittee using a control system and is designed to achieve secondary treatment standards and a minimum of 80 percent total nitrogen removal before discharging to a subsurface application system.

The general permit granted by the bill allows the installation of a DWTU to proceed without further action by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) if the permittee notifies DEP at least 30 days before the installation. The notification must certify that a Florida registered professional designed the DWTU in compliance with applicable rules and the proposed DWTU meets specific design and operational requirements. To be eligible for the general permit, the DWTU and the DWTSS must be commonly owned and operated by the permittee. The bill also requires that the permittee conduct monthly reporting, annual inspections, recordkeeping, and biosolids management in accordance with applicable rules.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 114-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/SB 830 — Disposition of Migrant Vessels

by Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government and
Senator Rodriguez

The bill prohibits a person, firm, or corporation from leaving any migrant vessel upon waters of the state. It defines a “migrant vessel” as an irregularly constructed and equipped maritime vessel designed, intended, or used for the purpose of undocumented immigrant transportation which was built or assembled using or combining makeshift or improvised materials or material components and either was not constructed by a boat manufacturer or was not assigned a hull identification number.

The bill requires a migrant vessel on public property to be removed within five days following a law enforcement officer posting a notice on the vessel. If it is not removed during that timeframe, the bill authorizes a law enforcement agency to remove and dispose of the vessel.

The bill authorizes state funds and the use of federal disaster funds for the removal of migrant vessels.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 112-0

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2025 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED

**Committee on Environment and
Natural Resources**

HB 1123 — Sewer Collection Systems

by Reps. Cassel, Woodson, and others (SB 1784 by Senator Pizzo)

The bill authorizes a municipality to utilize revenue generated by the municipality from operation of the municipality's central sewage system for expansion of the central sewage system.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 111-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

HB 1143 — Permits for Drilling, Exploration, and Extraction of Oil and Gas Resources

by Reps. Shoaf and Tant (SB 1300 by Senators Simon and Brodeur)

The bill prohibits drilling, exploration, or production of oil, gas, or other petroleum products within areas of counties designated as rural areas of opportunity that are within 10 miles of a national estuarine research reserve.

The bill also requires the Department of Environmental Protection to consider certain factors when determining whether natural resources of certain bodies of water and shore areas are adequately protected from potential accidents or blowouts from oil or gas drilling and exploration activities. Specifically, the department's evaluation must consider the ecological community's current condition, hydrologic connection, uniqueness, location, fish and wildlife use, time lag, and the potential costs of restoration.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-1; House 109-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

SB 1228 — Spring Restoration

by Senator McClain

The bill allows a domestic wastewater facility with an approved plan to eliminate nonbeneficial surface water discharges to request to amend the plan to incorporate a reclaimed water project identified in an Outstanding Florida Springs recovery or prevention strategy. The Department of Environmental Protection must approve the request within 60 days if the following conditions are met:

- The identified use of reclaimed water will benefit a rural area of opportunity.
- The project will provide at least 35 million gallons per day of reclaimed water to benefit an Outstanding Florida Spring.
- The project involves more than one domestic wastewater treatment facility.
- The project implementation and surface water discharge elimination schedule meets the minimum flows and minimum water levels requirements for Outstanding Florida Springs and has an implementation date of no later than January 1, 2039.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 109-0

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/SB 1388 — Vessels

by Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government and
Senator Trumbull

The “Boater Freedom Act” provides that a law enforcement officer may not board any vessel or perform a vessel stop without probable cause that a violation of vessel safety laws has occurred or is occurring, regardless of whether the owner or operator of the vessel is on board. It prohibits a law enforcement officer from performing a vessel stop or boarding a vessel for the sole purpose of making a safety or marine sanitation equipment inspection and provides that a violation of safety and marine sanitation equipment requirements may only be considered a secondary offense.

The bill requires the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to create a “Florida Freedom Boater” safety inspection decal. The decal will be issued following the demonstration of compliance with safety equipment carriage and use requirements.

The bill also contains the “Watercraft Energy Source Freedom Act,” which prohibits a state agency, municipality, government entity, or county from restricting the use or sale of a watercraft based on the energy source used to power the watercraft.

The bill authorizes FWC to modify the allowable means of anchoring, mooring, beaching, or grounding of vessels within springs protection zones. This is added to current law, which authorizes FWC to restrict vessel speed and operation and to prohibit vessel anchoring, mooring, beaching, or grounding within springs protection zones. The bill revises the threshold to establish these zones from preventing *harm* to preventing *significant harm* to certain springs, spring groups, and spring runs. The bill requires vessel operation, anchoring, mooring, beaching, or grounding to be the predominant cause of the significant harm.

The bill prohibits FWC from issuing a fishing license to any commercial fishing vessel owned by any alien power. Current law prohibits FWC from issuing a fishing license to any commercial fishing vessel owned by an alien power associated with communism.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 35-2; House 104-7

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

SB 7000 — OGSR/Site-Specific Location Information for Endangered and Threatened Species

by Environment and Natural Resources Committee

The bill saves from repeal the current public records exemption making site-specific location information on endangered and threatened species not held in captivity exempt from public inspection and copying requirements.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect October 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 113-2