



Good Morning!

This past week I returned to the Capitol for the final week of Interim Committee Hearings before the Legislative Session begins on January 14, 2020. I had the pleasure of visiting with members of the Indian River County and Brevard County Farm Bureaus, as well as the Space Coast League of Cities to discuss their legislative priorities for the coming year.

If you are traveling to the state Capitol, please don't hesitate to stop by my office – my door is always open to my constituents.

I consider it a great honor to represent all of the citizens and visitors of District 17. Please share [this link](#) with your friends and family so that they too can sign up for the [Mayfield Minute](#).



If you or someone you know needs my assistance, please don't hesitate to contact my office. My staff and I are here to serve you!

Committee Week 6

This past week in Tallahassee, the **Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government** met to hear Governor Ron DeSantis's budget proposals for the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year. Budget recommendations include more than \$625 million in recurring funding for Everglades restoration and the protection of vital water resources. This investment specifies \$322 million for Everglades restoration projects, \$150 million for water quality improvements, \$50 million for springs restoration and \$22 million to combat harmful algal blooms and red tide. The recommendations also specify \$50 million for beach nourishment to address Florida's eroded shorelines, \$9 million in coral reef protection funding, \$100 million for the Florida Forever Program and \$54 million in new funding for our state parks.

The Florida Water Environment Association Utility Council also presented on Florida's Water and Wastewater Infrastructure. In a recent report card by the American Society of Civil Engineers, Florida received a grade of "C" for wastewater infrastructure. With Florida's population growing at a rate of about 1% per year, or approximately 300,000 people per year, it is essential for our state to continue to strengthen our infrastructure. The report noted that while there are over 3,700 wastewater treatment facilities in Florida, one-third of our population is still served by septic tanks that rely on individuals to maintain and operate. Florida's wastewater system is increasing in age and the condition of installed treatment and conveyance systems are declining. There are also over 1,900 impaired water body segments throughout the state that require higher standards to be met. While Florida is a national leader in reclaimed water use, which helped

offset the State's potable water needs and is a vital component of water resource and ecosystem management, population growth, aging infrastructure, and sensitive ecological environments are increasing the need to invest in Florida's wastewater infrastructure. View more details of this report at InfrastructureReportCard.org.

The **Environment and Natural Resources Committee** met to hear an update on the implementation of the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The Florida Legislature dedicated historic funding of \$100 million to springs restoration projects during the 2019 legislative session. Restoration projects include wastewater collection and treatment, implementing agricultural best management practices and the septic upgrade incentive program. Projects are anticipated to reduce pollutants, like nitrogen, to our springs by more than 2.5 million pounds.

Members also heard a presentation by DEP on Perfluorinated Alkyl Substances (PFAS). PFAS are man-made chemicals used to make products like non-stick coatings, textiles, firefighting foams, stain repellents, etc. DEP is working with three water systems that have been impacted by PFAS, including the City of Stuart, Zephyrhills Fire Department and the Emerald Coast Authority. Granular Activated Carbon filters have been used to remove PFAS from drinking water and as a result of these coordinated efforts these facilities currently meet federal drinking water standards.

Health Policy Committee members met to consider [SB 404: Parental Consent for Abortion](#) which prohibits a physician from performing an abortion on a minor unless the physician has been presented with consent from the minor's mother, father, or legal guardian. This requirement does not apply if the abortion is performed during a medical emergency where there was insufficient time to obtain consent. Additionally, this legislation provides that a minor may petition the circuit court in the area where the minor resides to allow the abortion to proceed without obtaining consent. The bill was reported out of committee favorably.

The **Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee** met for a presentation on Selected Child Welfare Case Reviews by the Florida Department of Children and Families. Staff reported that the agency has struggled with a high turnover rate, reporting that nearly half of all state child protective investigators tasked with responding to child protection emergencies resigned in the last year. In an effort to improve retention, the agency has made changes to investigators workloads, proposed merit pay bonuses and career path mapping.

All committee meetings are available online through the [Florida Channel](#). To access the committee hearing agendas and materials, please visit the FLSenate.gov.

Clean Waterways Act Advances in Florida Senate

Last month I filed Senate Bill 712, also known as [The Clean Waterways Act](#), to protect and restore Florida's waters. This past week the bill passed its first stop in the Senate Committee on Community Affairs.

This comprehensive legislation incorporates recommendations from the Blue-Green Algae Task Force to expedite improvements and restoration of Florida's water bodies that have been adversely affected by blue-green algae blooms. The Blue-Green Algae Task Force, created by Governor Ron DeSantis earlier this year, received input from a variety of stakeholders and identified significant sources of nutrient pollution that are contributing to algal blooms. These sources include runoff from agricultural lands, onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems, sanitary sewer overflows, and stormwater runoff. In October 2019, the Task Force released recommendations to improve the state's policies and programs to achieve targeted nutrient reductions and protect public health.

“This bill focuses on long-term solutions for Florida’s water quality and represents the most comprehensive environmental reform the state has seen in more than a decade,” said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Noah Valenstein.

Any lasting solutions must address aging sewage treatment infrastructure, eliminating wastewater spills, septic to sewer conversions and biosolids. I look forward to working with Governor DeSantis, Secretary Valenstein and my colleagues to implement these reforms to make cleaner waterways a reality.

SB 712 has now been referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment and General Government for consideration.

District 17 Highlights

Indian River Lagoon Restoration

As your State Senator, protection of our water resources and the restoration of the Indian River Lagoon is one of my top priorities. Pollutants, specifically nitrogen and phosphorus, are entering our waterways from stormwater runoff, insufficient treatment at wastewater treatment facilities and densely clustered septic systems.

Septic systems are buried tanks that receive wastewater from a home or business, solids sink to the bottom of the tank to form sludge, while lighter layers float to the top. Every time wastewater is added to the system, some of this top liquid is pushed out into the drain field. Septic systems contribute pollutants to surface waters, especially in areas with highly permeable (sandy) soils like the Indian River Lagoon basin. This makes addressing septic tanks an important component in water quality restoration.

The Save Our Indian River Lagoon Plan notes there are almost 82,000 permitted septic systems within Brevard County, of which nearly 59,500 septic systems are polluting the groundwater that migrates to the lagoon.

While I continue to advocate in the Capitol for funding for infrastructure improvements and advanced waste treatment requirements to support the restoration of our treasured waterways, here are a few projects that are currently being implemented on the ground:

- **Merritt Island Septic Phase Out** project is currently in progress. Phase one and two of the project are complete, resulting in 23 septic to sewer hookups and construction of a stormwater treatment bioswale. Phase three will include 55 septic to sewer conversions.
- **Indian River County West Wabasso Septic Phase 2** is now complete, resulting in 65 septic tanks being taken offline and connected to the sewer main.
- **Kashi Church Foundation Septic to Sewer Project**, located in Sebastian, is expected to begin in December 2019. The project will accommodate 12 septic to sewer conversions and 3,000 feet of sewer line.

Beach Renourishment

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has begun a sand renourishment project on the beaches between Patrick AFB and Spessard Holland Park South in Melbourne Beach. Sand placement by dredge is underway between Spessard Holland Park and Loggerhead Park in Melbourne Beach. The Parks will remain open during sand placement, but access to the beach at certain crossovers may be restricted. Trucks are hauling sand to the southernmost mile of the Mid Reach between Flug Avenue and Poinsetta Street in unincorporated Indialantic. The project is expected to be completed by May 7, 2020.

An emergency dune restoration project has also begun on the South Beaches between Spessard Holland Park South and Sebastian Inlet State Park. Sand has been stockpiled at various upland sites within the project area and this past week, trucks began placing beach quality sand along the eroded dune bluff between 7495 and 8385 South Highway A1A. Work on this project is expected to be completed by April 30, 2020. For more information and updates on these projects, please visit Brevardfl.gov.

Tracking Station Park in Vero Beach has been closed to the public but will re-open in mid-December. The closure is part of Indian River County's Sector 5 Beach Renourishment project, which is scheduled to last several months. The newly constructed dunes from the Seaquay Pier north to the Vista Del Mar Condos will be receiving a mixture of native dune plants in mid-December. Construction has commenced from Conn/Jaycee Beach to the Seaquay pier. The County will be providing updates on the project progress and any beach closures at ircgov.com.

Joint Legislative Audit Committee Reviews Palm Bay

This past week I attended the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) hearing to review the findings from the City of Palm Bay Operational Audit.

In October, the Florida Audit General released the findings from the Palm Bay Audit and gave the City 30 days to respond. The Audit General found that *"the city did not document efforts to secure contributions from other governmental entities and from developers for the St. Johns Heritage Parkway/I-95 Interchange and the connector road project. In addition, City personnel did not provide complete and accurate information to the City Council regarding anticipated funding needs for the project."*

As a reminder, the St. John's Heritage Parkway (SJHP) was developed to provide a 5-mile arterial roadway extending from the Palm Bay city limits north to Ellis Road. The goal of the Parkway was to reduce congestion on I-95, provide more efficient access for local motorists, and connect roadways that will serve as emergency evacuation routes. The City of Palm Bay entered into an agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in 2013, which outlined the construction schedule for the project. FDOT completed the \$27.8 million Interchange in summer 2019, however, the City has not completed the connection to the public roadway. Due to the delays by the City, FDOT has incurred more than \$475,000 in additional costs to keep the interchange closed until the connecting road is complete.

City staff acknowledged that the historical records on this project have provided limited information to understand how decisions were made, and by whom. The city also has begun a corrective action plan to address findings cited in the report. Meanwhile, the SJHP/I-95 Interchange remains closed until the City completes the connecting road. The City has 18 months to implement their corrective action plan.

You may view the audit report at PalmBayFlorida.org or watch the full hearing on TheFloridaChannel.org.

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