

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