



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2025-2026

LFIR # 3508

1. **Project Title**

2. **Senate Sponsor**

3. **Date of Request**

4. **Project/Program Description**

Tampa Bay Watch's principle mission for over 32 years has been the restoration and preservation of shorelines and improving water quality around greater Tampa Bay. Damages to coastal shorelines in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties caused by hurricanes in 2024 further demonstrate a need to proactively protect the coast from surge and rising sea levels. Tampa Bay Watch has proven highly effective in mobilizing the local community to participate in habitat restoration projects, including Living Shorelines, that preserve and protect the coast. Our initiatives simultaneously create habitat for the eastern oyster, which provide a nature-based solution by filtering and improving waters that are both cost-effective and timely.

5. **State Agency to receive requested funds**

State Agency contacted?

6. **Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2025-2026**

Type of Funding	Amount
Operating	1,500,000
Fixed Capital Outlay	0
Total State Funds Requested	1,500,000

7. **Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (including matching funds available for this project)**

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	1,500,000	49%
Matching Funds		
Federal	864,862	29%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	649,666	22%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2025-2026	3,014,528	100%

8. **Has this project previously received state funding?**

If yes, provide the most recent instance:

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

9. **Is future-year funding likely to be requested?**

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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Complete questions 10 and 11 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

10. 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)?

No

c. What is the estimated start date of construction?

10/1/2025

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

6/30/26

e. What funding stream will be used for ongoing operations and maintenance of the project?

The funding streams that will be used for ongoing operations include state funding, matching federal dollars, and donations.

11. 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.

Tampa Bay Watch is a 501(C)3 non-profit organization. The Board of Directors and staff are comprised of members from the community and there are no individual owners.

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

Spending Category	Description	Amount
Administrative Costs:		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits		0
Other Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
Operational Costs		
Salary and Benefits	Project Manager, 100% time; Lead Scientist, 75% time; Oyster Shell Program Manager, 70% time; Native Plant Coordinator, 80% time; GIS Coordinator, 50% time; Oyster Reef Ball Coordinator, 80% time; Oyster Shell Recycling Program Coordinator, 50% time; Oyster Shell Recycling Specialist, 50% time; Volunteer Manager, 50% time; Two Habitat Restoration Specialists, 100% time \$457,833, Payroll taxes & benefits \$96,145. Total: 553,978	553,978
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	Field Materials: \$46,922; Production Materials: \$93,500; Volunteer Supplies: \$20,000; A/V: \$12,000; Software: \$1,500; Equipment: \$45,100 Travel (in-state): \$52,000	271,022
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Engineering: \$160,000 Oyster Reef Ball fabrication/installation: \$515,000	675,000
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering		0
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		1,500,000



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13. Program Performance

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

Sea rise imposes an existential threat to low-lying coastal communities like Tampa Bay. Living shoreline solutions provide a nature-based approach to achieve long-term resiliency that preserves the delicate balance between natural and human systems. Matured living shorelines are proven to be stronger than traditional seawall; these projects will address ecosystem concerns, including the stabilization of the shoreline, to help protect both residents and species.

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

Tampa Bay Watch will engage the community to create living shoreline projects throughout the bay, including the construction of oyster reefs and sea and marsh grass plantings. Additionally, TBW will expand an already successful oyster shell recycling program, working with local restaurants to collect the shells before being discarded to be used in living shoreline creation project which reduce land-fill and accelerate oyster volume, resulting in better water filtration.

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

These projects generally have multiple goals and objectives including the creation and restoration of aquatic habitat, creation of foraging area and food sources for local wildlife, filtering nutrients, improving water quality, stabilizing sediments to reduce erosion and engagement of the community in environmental stewardship and hands-on restoration efforts.

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

The target population served by the project is the entire Tampa Bay community - particularly those residents who live in coastal and low lying areas. All Tampa Bay area residents will benefit from better shoreline protection and recovery, as well as the increase in estuarine habitat and water quality improvement provided by the projects completed.

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

The efforts of Tampa Bay Watch will provide effective long-term improvements to the bay and empower our community to counteract storm damage and local environmental problems. Outcomes of successful living shorelines projects include: reduced coastal erosion, reduced flooding, improved water quality, wildlife habitat creation, and in some cases, recovered shoreline. This will be measured by the number of living shoreline projects being implemented, the number of community volunteers involved in the projects, and the data collected on the projects that will allow for us to implement adaptive management strategies based on the findings.

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 in the contract?

Tampa Bay Watch (TBW) has been operating for over 32 years and has successfully completed hundreds of projects and initiatives. If the organization were unable to meet its commitments, TBW understands that funds would be reclaimed/due to the agency, and also recognizes funding for future initiatives would not be considered due to this precedent.

14. Is this project related to mitigation, response, or recovery from a natural disaster?

a. If Yes, what phase best describes the project?

- Mitigation (reducing or eliminating potential loss of life or property)
- Response (addressing the immediate and short-term effects of a natural disaster)
- Recovery (assisting communities return to normal operations, including rebuilding damaged infrastructure)

b. Name of the natural disaster (or Executive Order # for events not under a federal declaration):

Hurricanes Helene & Milton

15. Has the entity applied for or received federal assistance for this project?



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- Yes, Applied
- Yes, Received
- No
- No, but intends to apply

a. If yes, provide the FEMA project worksheet ID#:

b. Provide the total project cost listed on the FEMA project worksheet:

16. Has the entity applied for or received state assistance for this project (other than this request)?

- Yes, Applied
- Yes, Received
- No
- No, but intends to apply

a. If yes, specify the program and state agency (ex. Local Government Emergency Bridge Loan, Department of Commerce):

Please complete questions 17 through 21 for Water Projects only.

17. Have you been awarded or applied for alternative state funding for this project?

- Water Quality Improvement Grant Program
- Resilient Florida Grant Program
- Wastewater Revolving Loan
- Drinking Water Revolving Loan
- Small Community Wastewater Treatment Grant
- Other (please specify, ex. Alternative Water Supply Grants)
- N/A

18. What is the population economic status?

- Financially Disadvantaged Community (ch. 62-552, F.A.C)
- Financially Disadvantaged Municipality (ch. 62-552, F.A.C)



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- Rural Area of Economic Concern
- Rural Area of Opportunity (s. 288.0656, Florida Statutes)
- N/A

19. What is the status of construction?

Ready

20. What percentage of the construction has been completed?

n/a

21. What is the estimated completion date of construction? 000000

22. Requester Contact Information

a. **First Name** Frederick "Dwayne" **Last Name** Virgint
 b. **Organization** Tampa Bay Watch, Inc.
 c. **E-mail Address** dvirgint@tampabaywatch.org
 d. **Phone Number** (727)867-8166 **Ext.** 223

23. Recipient Contact Information

a. **Organization** Tampa Bay Watch, Inc.
 b. **Municipality and County** Pinellas

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** Frederick "Dwayne" **Last Name** Virgint
 e. **E-mail Address** dvirgint@tampabaywatch.org
 f. **Phone Number** (727)867-8166 **Ext.** 223

24. Lobbyist Contact Information

a. **Name** RJ Myers
 b. **Firm Name** Myers Consulting Group
 c. **E-mail Address** rj@myersconsulting.group



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d. Phone Number

The information provided will be posted to the Florida Senate website for public viewing if sponsored by a Senator.