SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 704

SPONSOR: Natural Resources Committee and Senator Kurth

SUBJECT: Marine Biotechnology Research

DATE: March 14, 2000 REVISED: _____ _____ _____ _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Gee	Voigt	NR	Favorable/CS
2.			FP	
3.				
4.				
5.				

I. Summary:

This bill creates the Florida Marine Biotechnology Research and Development Program, to be administered by the Director of the Florida Marine Research Institute and the Director of the Florida Sea Grant College Program. It provides an appropriation to fund research projects on a competitive basis.

This bill creates as yet unnumbered sections of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Marine biotechnology is the development of goods and services derived from marine organisms and processes. Examples include pharmaceuticals for the treatment of cancer and for diseases such as arthritis and others, safe and effective chemicals for agricultural uses, technologies for a marine veterinary industry for aquaculture and oceanaria, technologies to ensure the safety of seafood, technologies for the detection of toxins in the environment, and new varieties of plants for coastal restoration.

It is expected that promotion of the biotechnological industry will create and attract new, clean, high technology industries to the state which should result in increased high paying jobs. Florida is well-suited for the industry due to its enormous coastline and variety of marine habitats.

The Florida Sea Grant College Program, located at the University of Florida, is one of 29 state Sea Grant Programs under the National Sea Grant Program. The Sea Grant Program is a partnership between the nation's universities and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that began in 1966, when the U.S. Congress passed the National Sea Grant College Program Act. Florida Sea Grant is a state university program that works with and funds projects for all 15 private and public Florida universities and research facilities throughout the state. The Florida Sea Grant Program funded 17 projects in aquaculture, coastal processes, fisheries, and marine biotechnology in 1998.

In recent years, marine biotechnology has become a priority area for Florida Sea Grant research funding. The Florida Sea Grant Program is currently funding 11 marine biotechnology projects throughout the state and is receiving $1,000,000 in federal funding for 1999-2000. The Florida Sea Grant Program is responsible for matching one dollar for every two federal dollars funded.

Pursuant to s. 20.331, F.S., the Florida Marine Research Institute, assigned to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, (FWCC) shall:

- Serve as the primary source of research and technical information and expertise on the status of Florida's saltwater resources;
- Monitor the status and health of saltwater habitat, marine life, and wildlife;
- Develop and implement restoration techniques for marine habitat and enhancement of saltwater plant and animal populations;
- Respond and provide critical technical support for marine catastrophes including oil spills, ship groundings, major marine species die-offs, hazardous spills, and natural disaster;
- Identify and monitor marine toxic red tides and their impacts, and provide technical support for state and local public health concerns; and
- Provide state and local governments with estuarine, marine, coastal technical information and research results.

Section 287.057, F.S., requires that contracts for contracted services in excess of $25,000 be awarded by competitive sealed bidding or through competitive sealed proposals. In certain documented circumstances, services available only from a single source may be excepted from the competitive bid or proposal requirements. When the Florida Marine Research Institute contracts for scientific and research services, it has not always done so through the sealed bid or proposal process.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1. This section establishes the Florida Marine Biotechnology Research and Development Program. The program will establish partnerships among research scientists in Florida universities and research laboratories and the marine biotechnology industry for the purpose of promoting commerce, creating jobs, and benefiting from potential commercial opportunities in Florida. The program will be jointly administered by the Director of the Florida Marine Research Institute and the Director of the Florida Sea Grant College Program, with input from a steering committee appointed by both directors.

The steering committee will have a member from each of the following: the University of Florida, Florida Atlantic University, Florida State University, the University of South Florida, the University of Miami, the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, Mote Marine Laboratory, the Florida Marine Research Institute, and BIO+Florida. The steering committee is to determine

research priorities to be used in requesting project proposals that will be selected and funded using funds provided in SB 704.

The Florida Marine Research Institute and the Florida Sea Grant College Program are directed to make a joint report to the Legislature on program progress by July 1 of each year that the program is being funded.

Section 2. This section requires the Florida Marine Biotechnology Research and Development Program to focus in the following areas:

aquaculture, marine animal health, marine natural products, biofilm/bioadhesion, bioremediation, and marine ecology.

Section 3. This section requires that program funding be awarded to projects competitively, through a scientific peer review process which may include the advice of a nationwide panel of experts. Review criteria will include project rationale, scientific merit, potential applications, industrial sponsorship, and investigator qualifications. All universities, public research laboratories, and private nonprofit research laboratories in Florida are eligible to compete for funding. This section provides for a $2 million general revenue appropriation to the Florida Marine Research Institute for FY 2000-2001 for the first year's funding and provides intent that the program continue for a total of 5 years, with an annual appropriation each year. Projects started using program funds will require that the annual appropriations be spent over a 30-month period. The Florida Marine Research Institute and the Florida Sea Grant College Program will disburse all funds on a competitive basis. Projects funded within the Florida Marine Research Institute will receive funds directly from the institute; funds awarded to universities and private nonprofit research laboratories will be transferred by the Florida Marine Research Institute by contract through the Florida Sea Grant College Program. All projects should promote public and private partnerships when possible. No more than $25,000 each may be used by the Florida Marine Research Institute and the Florida Sea Grant College Program for technical administration of this program. Up to $16,000 may be used by the Florida Sea Grant College Program for the expenses of the peer review and technical panel expenses.

Section 4. This section provides that the long-term goal of the program is the creation of products and processes that will advance the marine biotechnology industry in Florida. This industry will create new, clean, high technology businesses, will provide high paying jobs, and will create training opportunities that will keep Florida-trained students in the state.

Section 5. This section provides that contractual services procured under this act are not subject to the requirements of s. 287.057, F.S.

Section 6. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is directed to develop rules to implement the act . The rules, at a minimum, must address the solicitation of proposals, award of grants, monitoring of grants, and dispute resolution.

Section 7. The act will take effect July 1, 2000.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Private nonprofit research facilities in Florida could receive funds from the program if they successfully compete for grants.

C. Government Sector Impact:

From each annual appropriation, the Florida Marine Research Institute and the Florida Sea Grant College Program may receive no more than $25,000 each for program administration and the Florida Sea Grant College program may use up to $16,000 for peer review expenses.

The Florida Marine Research Institute and Florida universities will receive undetermined amounts if they successfully compete for grants.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.