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By the Committees on Community Affairs; Environmental Preservation and Conservation; and Senators Jones and Bennett

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to environmental permitting; requiring the Department of Environmental Protection to conduct a study and implement a plan to provide parity in salaries for permitting staff and submit such plan to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations; requiring the department to develop a plan to implement the remaining phases of an e-permitting program and submit such plan to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations; prohibiting local governments from requiring the production of certain written documentation from the Department of Environmental Protection or a water management district showing that a project does not require a particular permit; amending s. 403.061, F.S.; revising the department's powers and duties to include maintaining a list of projects or activities that applicants may consider when developing proposals for certain projects or activities; amending s. 403.813, F.S.; prohibiting a local government from requiring further verification from the department for certain projects that are exempt from permit requirements other than a general permit; revising a provision relating to the replacement or repair of existing docks and piers; authorizing local governments to require permitting or a one-time registration for the construction of certain private docks; providing an effective date.

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Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. The Department of Environmental Protection shall conduct a study to develop a plan that will implement parity in salaries for environmental permitting staff. The department shall phase in the plan over 3 years, beginning with the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The plan must include salaries that are comparable to salaries for similar positions within water management districts, local governments, and the marine construction industry. The plan must enable the department to obtain and retain qualified staff who are involved with environmental resource permitting and related wetlands permit programs at the state and district levels. The department shall submit the plan to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations by November 1, 2008.

Section 2. The Department of Environmental Protection shall develop a project management plan that implements the remaining phases of an e-permitting program that allows for timely submittal, processing, and exchange of information relating to permit applications and compliance. The plan must include an implementation timetable, estimated costs, and transaction fees. The department shall submit the plan to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations by November 1, 2008.

Section 3. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law to the contrary, a local government may not require the production

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of written documentation from the Department of Environmental Protection or a water management district showing that a project does not require a permit pursuant to s. 403.813(2), Florida Statutes.

Section 4. Present subsection (40) of section 403.061, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (41), and a new subsection (40) is added to that section to read:

403.061 Department; powers and duties.--The department shall have the power and the duty to control and prohibit pollution of air and water in accordance with the law and rules adopted and promulgated by it and, for this purpose, to:

(40) Maintain a prioritized list of projects or activities that applicants may consider when developing proposals to meet the mitigation or public interest requirements of chapter 253, chapter 373, or this chapter. The contents of such a list are not a rule as defined in chapter 120, and listing a specific project or activity does not imply approval by the department for such project or activity. Each county government is encouraged to develop a prioritized inventory of projects or activities for inclusion on the list by obtaining input from local stakeholders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, including local governments, port authorities, marine contractors, other representatives of the marine construction industry, environmental or conservation organizations, and other interested parties. Counties may establish dedicated funds depositing public interest donations into a reserve for future public interest projects, including improvements to on-water law enforcement activities.

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The department shall implement such programs in conjunction with its other powers and duties and shall place special emphasis on reducing and eliminating contamination that presents a threat to humans, animals or plants, or to the environment.

Section 5. Subsections (2) and (3) of section 403.813, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

403.813 Permits issued at district centers; exceptions.--

- (2) A permit is not required under this chapter, chapter 373, chapter 61-691, Laws of Florida, or chapter 25214 or chapter 25270, 1949, Laws of Florida, and a local government may not require further verification from the department for activities associated with the following types of projects; however, except as otherwise provided in this subsection, nothing in this subsection does not relieve relieves an applicant from any requirement to obtain permission to use or occupy lands owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund or any water management district in its governmental or proprietary capacity or from complying with applicable local pollution control programs authorized under this chapter or other requirements of county and municipal governments:
- (a) The installation of overhead transmission lines, with support structures which are not constructed in waters of the state and which do not create a navigational hazard.
- (b) The installation and repair of mooring pilings and dolphins associated with private docking facilities or piers and the installation of private docks, piers and recreational docking facilities, or piers and recreational docking facilities of local governmental entities when the local governmental entity's

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activities will not take place in any manatee habitat, any of which docks:

- 1. Has 500 square feet or less of over-water surface area for a dock which is located in an area designated as Outstanding Florida Waters or 1,000 square feet or less of over-water surface area for a dock which is located in an area which is not designated as Outstanding Florida Waters;
- 2. Is constructed on or held in place by pilings or is a floating dock which is constructed so as not to involve filling or dredging other than that necessary to install the pilings;
- 3. Shall not substantially impede the flow of water or create a navigational hazard;
- 4. Is used for recreational, noncommercial activities associated with the mooring or storage of boats and boat paraphernalia; and
- 5. Is the sole dock constructed pursuant to this exemption as measured along the shoreline for a distance of 65 feet, unless the parcel of land or individual lot as platted is less than 65 feet in length along the shoreline, in which case there may be one exempt dock allowed per parcel or lot.

Nothing in this paragraph shall prohibit the department from taking appropriate enforcement action pursuant to this chapter to abate or prohibit any activity otherwise exempt from permitting pursuant to this paragraph if the department can demonstrate that the exempted activity has caused water pollution in violation of this chapter.

(c) The installation and maintenance to design specifications of boat ramps on artificial bodies of water where

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navigational access to the proposed ramp exists or the installation of boat ramps open to the public in any waters of the state where navigational access to the proposed ramp exists and where the construction of the proposed ramp will be less than 30 feet wide and will involve the removal of less than 25 cubic yards of material from the waters of the state, and the maintenance to design specifications of such ramps; however, the material to be removed shall be placed upon a self-contained upland site so as to prevent the escape of the spoil material into the waters of the state.

- (d) The replacement or repair of existing docks and piers, except that no fill material is to be used and provided that the replacement or repaired dock or pier is in approximately the same location and no larger in size and in substantially the same configuration and dimensions as the existing dock or pier being replaced or repaired.
- (e) The restoration of seawalls at their previous locations or upland of, or within 1 foot waterward of, their previous locations. However, this shall not affect the permitting requirements of chapter 161, and department rules shall clearly indicate that this exception does not constitute an exception from the permitting requirements of chapter 161.
- (f) The performance of maintenance dredging of existing manmade canals, channels, intake and discharge structures, and previously dredged portions of natural water bodies within drainage rights-of-way or drainage easements which have been recorded in the public records of the county, where the spoil material is to be removed and deposited on a self-contained, upland spoil site which will prevent the escape of the spoil

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material into the waters of the state, provided that no more dredging is to be performed than is necessary to restore the canals, channels, and intake and discharge structures, and previously dredged portions of natural water bodies, to original design specifications or configurations, provided that the work is conducted in compliance with s. 370.12(2)(d), provided that no significant impacts occur to previously undisturbed natural areas, and provided that control devices for return flow and best management practices for erosion and sediment control are utilized to prevent bank erosion and scouring and to prevent turbidity, dredged material, and toxic or deleterious substances from discharging into adjacent waters during maintenance dredging. Further, for maintenance dredging of previously dredged portions of natural water bodies within recorded drainage rightsof-way or drainage easements, an entity that seeks an exemption must notify the department or water management district, as applicable, at least 30 days prior to dredging and provide documentation of original design specifications or configurations where such exist. This exemption applies to all canals and previously dredged portions of natural water bodies within recorded drainage rights-of-way or drainage easements constructed prior to April 3, 1970, and to those canals and previously dredged portions of natural water bodies constructed on or after April 3, 1970, pursuant to all necessary state permits. This exemption does not apply to the removal of a natural or manmade barrier separating a canal or canal system from adjacent waters. When no previous permit has been issued by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund or the United States Army Corps of Engineers for construction or maintenance dredging of

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the existing manmade canal or intake or discharge structure, such maintenance dredging shall be limited to a depth of no more than 5 feet below mean low water. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund may fix and recover from the permittee an amount equal to the difference between the fair market value and the actual cost of the maintenance dredging for material removed during such maintenance dredging. However, no charge shall be exacted by the state for material removed during such maintenance dredging by a public port authority. The removing party may subsequently sell such material; however, proceeds from such sale that exceed the costs of maintenance dredging shall be remitted to the state and deposited in the Internal Improvement Trust Fund.

The maintenance of existing insect control structures, (q) dikes, and irrigation and drainage ditches, provided that spoil material is deposited on a self-contained, upland spoil site which will prevent the escape of the spoil material into waters of the state. In the case of insect control structures, if the cost of using a self-contained upland spoil site is so excessive, as determined by the Department of Health, pursuant to s. 403.088(1), that it will inhibit proposed insect control, thenexisting spoil sites or dikes may be used, upon notification to the department. In the case of insect control where upland spoil sites are not used pursuant to this exemption, turbidity control devices shall be used to confine the spoil material discharge to that area previously disturbed when the receiving body of water is used as a potable water supply, is designated as shellfish harvesting waters, or functions as a habitat for commercially or recreationally important shellfish or finfish. In all cases, no

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more dredging is to be performed than is necessary to restore the dike or irrigation or drainage ditch to its original design specifications.

- (h) The repair or replacement of existing functional pipes or culverts the purpose of which is the discharge or conveyance of stormwater. In all cases, the invert elevation, the diameter, and the length of the culvert shall not be changed. However, the material used for the culvert may be different from the original.
- (i) The construction of private docks of 1,000 square feet or less of over-water surface area and seawalls in artificially created waterways where such construction will not violate existing water quality standards, impede navigation, or affect flood control. A local government may require permitting or a one-time registration in order to ensure compliance with local ordinances, codes, or regulations relating to building or zoning. This exemption does not apply to the construction of vertical seawalls in estuaries or lagoons unless the proposed construction is within an existing manmade canal where the shoreline is currently occupied in whole or part by vertical seawalls.
 - (j) The construction and maintenance of swales.
- (k) The installation of aids to navigation and buoys associated with such aids, provided the devices are marked pursuant to s. 327.40.
- (1) The replacement or repair of existing open-trestle foot bridges and vehicular bridges that are 100 feet or less in length and two lanes or less in width, provided that no more dredging or filling of submerged lands is performed other than that which is necessary to replace or repair pilings and that the structure to be replaced or repaired is the same length, the same

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configuration, and in the same location as the original bridge. No debris from the original bridge shall be allowed to remain in the waters of the state.

- (m) The installation of subaqueous transmission and distribution lines laid on, or embedded in, the bottoms of waters in the state, except in Class I and Class II waters and aquatic preserves, provided no dredging or filling is necessary.
- (n) The replacement or repair of subaqueous transmission and distribution lines laid on, or embedded in, the bottoms of waters of the state.
- (o) The construction of private seawalls in wetlands or other surface waters where such construction is between and adjoins at both ends existing seawalls; follows a continuous and uniform seawall construction line with the existing seawalls; is no more than 150 feet in length; and does not violate existing water quality standards, impede navigation, or affect flood control. However, in estuaries and lagoons the construction of vertical seawalls is limited to the circumstances and purposes stated in s. 373.414(5)(b)1.-4. This paragraph does not affect the permitting requirements of chapter 161, and department rules must clearly indicate that this exception does not constitute an exception from the permitting requirements of chapter 161.
- (p) The restoration of existing insect control impoundment dikes which are less than 100 feet in length. Such impoundments shall be connected to tidally influenced waters for 6 months each year beginning September 1 and ending February 28 if feasible or operated in accordance with an impoundment management plan approved by the department. A dike restoration may involve no more dredging than is necessary to restore the dike to its

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original design specifications. For the purposes of this paragraph, restoration does not include maintenance of impoundment dikes of operating insect control impoundments.

- (q) The construction, operation, or maintenance of stormwater management facilities which are designed to serve single-family residential projects, including duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes, if they are less than 10 acres total land and have less than 2 acres of impervious surface and if the facilities:
- 1. Comply with all regulations or ordinances applicable to stormwater management and adopted by a city or county;
- 2. Are not part of a larger common plan of development or sale; and
- 3. Discharge into a stormwater discharge facility exempted or permitted by the department under this chapter which has sufficient capacity and treatment capability as specified in this chapter and is owned, maintained, or operated by a city, county, special district with drainage responsibility, or water management district; however, this exemption does not authorize discharge to a facility without the facility owner's prior written consent.
- (r) The removal of aquatic plants, the removal of tussocks, the associated replanting of indigenous aquatic plants, and the associated removal from lakes of organic detrital material when such planting or removal is performed and authorized by permit or exemption granted under s. 369.20 or s. 369.25, provided that:
- 1. Organic detrital material that exists on the surface of natural mineral substrate shall be allowed to be removed to a

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depth of 3 feet or to the natural mineral substrate, whichever is less;

- 2. All material removed pursuant to this paragraph shall be deposited in an upland site in a manner that will prevent the reintroduction of the material into waters in the state except when spoil material is permitted to be used to create wildlife islands in freshwater bodies of the state when a governmental entity is permitted pursuant to s. 369.20 to create such islands as a part of a restoration or enhancement project;
- 3. All activities are performed in a manner consistent with state water quality standards; and
- 4. No activities under this exemption are conducted in wetland areas, as defined by s. 373.019(25), which are supported by a natural soil as shown in applicable United States Department of Agriculture county soil surveys, except when a governmental entity is permitted pursuant to s. 369.20 to conduct such activities as a part of a restoration or enhancement project.

The department may not adopt implementing rules for this paragraph, notwithstanding any other provision of law.

- (s) The construction, installation, operation, or maintenance of floating vessel platforms or floating boat lifts, provided that such structures:
- 1. Float at all times in the water for the sole purpose of supporting a vessel so that the vessel is out of the water when not in use;
- 2. Are wholly contained within a boat slip previously permitted under ss. 403.91-403.929, 1984 Supplement to the Florida Statutes 1983, as amended, or part IV of chapter 373, or

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do not exceed a combined total of 500 square feet, or 200 square feet in an Outstanding Florida Water, when associated with a dock that is exempt under this subsection or associated with a permitted dock with no defined boat slip or attached to a bulkhead on a parcel of land where there is no other docking structure;

- 3. Are not used for any commercial purpose or for mooring vessels that remain in the water when not in use, and do not substantially impede the flow of water, create a navigational hazard, or unreasonably infringe upon the riparian rights of adjacent property owners, as defined in s. 253.141;
- 4. Are constructed and used so as to minimize adverse impacts to submerged lands, wetlands, shellfish areas, aquatic plant and animal species, and other biological communities, including locating such structures in areas where seagrasses are least dense adjacent to the dock or bulkhead; and
- 5. Are not constructed in areas specifically prohibited for boat mooring under conditions of a permit issued in accordance with ss. 403.91-403.929, 1984 Supplement to the Florida Statutes 1983, as amended, or part IV of chapter 373, or other form of authorization issued by a local government.

Structures that qualify for this exemption are relieved from any requirement to obtain permission to use or occupy lands owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and, with the exception of those structures attached to a bulkhead on a parcel of land where there is no docking structure, shall not be subject to any more stringent permitting requirements, registration requirements, or other regulation by any local

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government. Local governments may require either permitting or one-time registration of floating vessel platforms to be attached to a bulkhead on a parcel of land where there is no other docking structure as necessary to ensure compliance with local ordinances, codes, or regulations. Local governments may require either permitting or one-time registration of all other floating vessel platforms as necessary to ensure compliance with the exemption criteria in this section; to ensure compliance with local ordinances, codes, or regulations relating to building or zoning, which are no more stringent than the exemption criteria in this section or address subjects other than subjects addressed by the exemption criteria in this section; and to ensure proper installation, maintenance, and precautionary or evacuation action following a tropical storm or hurricane watch of a floating vessel platform or floating boat lift that is proposed to be attached to a bulkhead or parcel of land where there is no other docking structure. The exemption provided in this paragraph shall be in addition to the exemption provided in paragraph (b). The department shall adopt a general permit by rule for the construction, installation, operation, or maintenance of those floating vessel platforms or floating boat lifts that do not qualify for the exemption provided in this paragraph but do not cause significant adverse impacts to occur individually or cumulatively. The issuance of such general permit shall also constitute permission to use or occupy lands owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. No local government shall impose a more stringent regulation, permitting requirement, registration requirement, or other regulation covered by such general permit. Local governments may require

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either permitting or one-time registration of floating vessel platforms as necessary to ensure compliance with the general permit in this section; to ensure compliance with local ordinances, codes, or regulations relating to building or zoning that are no more stringent than the general permit in this section; and to ensure proper installation and maintenance of a floating vessel platform or floating boat lift that is proposed to be attached to a bulkhead or parcel of land where there is no other docking structure.

- (t) The repair, stabilization, or paving of existing county maintained roads and the repair or replacement of bridges that are part of the roadway, within the Northwest Florida Water Management District and the Suwannee River Water Management District, provided:
- 1. The road and associated bridge were in existence and in use as a public road or bridge, and were maintained by the county as a public road or bridge on or before January 1, 2002;
- 2. The construction activity does not realign the road or expand the number of existing traffic lanes of the existing road; however, the work may include the provision of safety shoulders, clearance of vegetation, and other work reasonably necessary to repair, stabilize, pave, or repave the road, provided that the work is constructed by generally accepted engineering standards;
- 3. The construction activity does not expand the existing width of an existing vehicular bridge in excess of that reasonably necessary to properly connect the bridge with the road being repaired, stabilized, paved, or repaved to safely accommodate the traffic expected on the road, which may include expanding the width of the bridge to match the existing connected

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road. However, no debris from the original bridge shall be allowed to remain in waters of the state, including wetlands;

- 4. Best management practices for erosion control shall be employed as necessary to prevent water quality violations;
- 5. Roadside swales or other effective means of stormwater treatment must be incorporated as part of the project;
- 6. No more dredging or filling of wetlands or water of the state is performed than that which is reasonably necessary to repair, stabilize, pave, or repave the road or to repair or replace the bridge, in accordance with generally accepted engineering standards; and
- 7. Notice of intent to use the exemption is provided to the department, if the work is to be performed within the Northwest Florida Water Management District, or to the Suwannee River Water Management District, if the work is to be performed within the Suwannee River Water Management District, 30 days prior to performing any work under the exemption.

Within 30 days after this act becomes a law, the department shall initiate rulemaking to adopt a no fee general permit for the repair, stabilization, or paving of existing roads that are maintained by the county and the repair or replacement of bridges that are part of the roadway where such activities do not cause significant adverse impacts to occur individually or cumulatively. The general permit shall apply statewide and, with no additional rulemaking required, apply to qualified projects reviewed by the Suwannee River Water Management District, the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and the South Florida Water Management

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District under the division of responsibilities contained in the operating agreements applicable to part IV of chapter 373. Upon adoption, this general permit shall, pursuant to the provisions of subsection (3), supersede and replace the exemption in this paragraph.

- (u) Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in this subsection, a permit or other authorization under chapter 253, chapter 369, chapter 373, or this chapter is not required for an individual residential property owner for the removal of organic detrital material from freshwater rivers or lakes that have a natural sand or rocky substrate and that are not Aquatic Preserves or for the associated removal and replanting of aquatic vegetation for the purpose of environmental enhancement, providing that:
- 1. No activities under this exemption are conducted in wetland areas, as defined by s. 373.019(25), which are supported by a natural soil as shown in applicable United States Department of Agriculture county soil surveys.
 - 2. No filling or peat mining is allowed.
- 3. No removal of native wetland trees, including, but not limited to, ash, bay, cypress, gum, maple, or tupelo, occurs.
- 4. When removing organic detrital material, no portion of the underlying natural mineral substrate or rocky substrate is removed.
- 5. Organic detrital material and plant material removed is deposited in an upland site in a manner that will not cause water quality violations.

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6. All activities are conducted in such a manner, and with appropriate turbidity controls, so as to prevent any water quality violations outside the immediate work area.

7. Replanting with a variety of aquatic plants native to the state shall occur in a minimum of 25 percent of the preexisting vegetated areas where organic detrital material is removed, except for areas where the material is removed to bare rocky substrate; however, an area may be maintained clear of vegetation as an access corridor. The access corridor width may not exceed 50 percent of the property owner's frontage or 50 feet, whichever is less, and may be a sufficient length waterward to create a corridor to allow access for a boat or swimmer to reach open water. Replanting must be at a minimum density of 2 feet on center and be completed within 90 days after removal of existing aquatic vegetation, except that under dewatered conditions replanting must be completed within 90 days after reflooding. The area to be replanted must extend waterward from the ordinary high water line to a point where normal water depth would be 3 feet or the preexisting vegetation line, whichever is less. Individuals are required to make a reasonable effort to maintain planting density for a period of 6 months after replanting is complete, and the plants, including naturally recruited native aquatic plants, must be allowed to expand and fill in the revegetation area. Native aquatic plants to be used for revegetation must be salvaged from the enhancement project site or obtained from an aquatic plant nursery regulated by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Plants that are not native to the state may not be used for replanting.

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8. No activity occurs any farther than 100 feet waterward of the ordinary high water line, and all activities must be designed and conducted in a manner that will not unreasonably restrict or infringe upon the riparian rights of adjacent upland riparian owners.

- 9. The person seeking this exemption notifies the applicable department district office in writing at least 30 days before commencing work and allows the department to conduct a preconstruction site inspection. Notice must include an organic-detrital-material removal and disposal plan and, if applicable, a vegetation-removal and revegetation plan.
- 10. The department is provided written certification of compliance with the terms and conditions of this paragraph within 30 days after completion of any activity occurring under this exemption.
- (3) The provisions of subsection (2) are superseded by general permits established pursuant to ss. 373.118 and 403.814 which include the same activities. Until such time as general permits are established, or if should general permits are be suspended or repealed, the exemptions under subsection (2) shall remain or shall be reestablished in full force and effect.
 - Section 6. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.