

Bill No. SB 660



503302

CHAMBER ACTION

| <u>Senate</u> | . | <u>House</u> |
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| Comm: RCS | . | |
| 3/6/2008 | . | |
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1 The Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation
 2 (Jones) recommended the following **amendment**:

Senate Amendment

5 Delete lines 50 through 102
 6 and insert:
 7 beds of Brevard County, Charlotte County, Lee County, Manatee
 8 County, Monroe County, or Pinellas County or the natural
 9 resources that depend on the health and productivity of those
 10 seagrass beds.

11 (b) "Fund" means the Ecosystem Management and Restoration
 12 Trust Fund.

13 (c) "Natural resources" means land, air, water, ground
 14 water, drinking water supplies, fish and their habitats,
 15 wildlife and their habitats, biota, and other such resources

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16 belonging to, managed by, held in trust by, appertaining to, or
17 otherwise controlled by the state.

18 (d) "Seagrass bed" means a community of flowering
19 underwater plants which is located in shallow marine waters,
20 such as in a bay or lagoon, or along the continental shelf in
21 the Gulf of Mexico.

22 (2) The Legislature finds that:

23 (a) The preservation of seagrass beds is critical to
24 protecting the marine life, water quality, and ocean-based
25 economy of this state. Seagrass beds maintain water quality and
26 provide food, habitat, and nursery areas for numerous species of
27 marine life. This state's multimillion-dollar fishing and diving
28 industries depend on the health and productivity of the seagrass
29 beds. Estimates indicate that thousands of acres of seagrass
30 beds in this state have been scarred from boat propellers.
31 Impacts from boat groundings fragment the grass bed, restricting
32 the movement of the marine life that depends upon the habitat.
33 Seagrass beds can take up to a decade to recover from propeller
34 scars.

35 (b) Seagrass beds and the natural resources that depend on
36 the health and productivity of seagrass beds are subject to
37 instantaneous injury or loss from a variety of negligent and
38 willful acts in ways that cannot be foreseen and provided for in
39 the normal budget process. Due to the unforeseeability of such
40 incidents, funds have not been available for reimbursement of
41 extraordinary expenses incurred by the Department of
42 Environmental Protection in seeking compensation, on behalf of
43 the residents of the state, for the injury to or destruction of

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44 these natural resources. As a result, a significant amount of
45 monetary damages recovered by the state for injury to or
46 destruction of its seagrass beds and the natural resources that
47 depend on the health and productivity of seagrass beds are
48 deposited into the general accounts of the State Treasury and
49 are not specifically set aside for the restoration or
50 rehabilitation of the injured or destroyed natural resources in
51 areas of the state where the injury or loss occurred.

52 (3) The purpose of this section is to establish a pilot
53 program that provides for the immediate stabilization and
54 restoration of seagrass beds in Brevard, Charlotte, Lee,
55 Manatee, Monroe, and Pinellas Counties where damage has occurred
56 and to remediate the injury to or destruction of natural
57 resources that are dependent upon the health and productivity of
58 those seagrass beds.

59 (4) (a) All damages recovered by or on behalf of the state
60 for injury to or destruction of the seagrass beds in Brevard,
61 Charlotte,