

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES LOCAL BILL STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 869 Broward County

SPONSOR(S): Clarke-Reed

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Local Government Affairs Subcommittee	12 Y, 0 N	Darden	Miller
2) Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee			
3) Local & Federal Affairs Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), counties, and municipalities may establish "boating-restricted areas," placing limits on vessel speed and volume, for the purpose of protecting public safety. To enforce speed limits in "boating-restricted areas," FWC must place regulatory markers (such as speed limit signs). The New River Canal and the Florida Intracoastal Waterway in Broward County are defined as "boating-restricted areas." Currently, Broward County is responsible for the cost of constructing and maintaining speed limit signs in these areas.

The bill repeals the section of Ch. 86-364, Laws of Florida requiring Broward County to pay for the cost of constructing and maintain speed limit signs. Any responsibility for constructing and maintaining signs after the passage of the act would pass to FWC under general law.

Broward County currently spends \$30,000 per year on "upgrades" to the speed limit signs. The bill would shift those costs from the county to FWC.

This bill would take effect upon becoming law.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

Boating-Restricted Areas

Under the Florida Vessel Safety Law, boating-restricted areas may be established for “any purpose necessary to protect the safety of the public,” as long as the restrictions relate to boating accidents, visibility, hazardous currents or water levels, vessel traffic congestion, or other navigational hazards.¹ Both vessel speed and vessel traffic may be restricted.²

A boating-restricted area may be created by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) by adopting an administrative rule pursuant to ch. 120, F.S.,³ or by a county or municipality by adoption of an ordinance.⁴ Boating can only be restricted in an area with consultation and coordination with the governing body of the county or municipality where the area is located, and with the Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers, where the area is part of the navigable waters of the United States.⁵

It is unlawful to operate a vessel in a boating-restricted area or to carry on any prohibited activity⁶ if the area has been clearly marked by regulatory markers.⁷ Violating s. 327.46, F.S. is a noncriminal infraction⁸ and violators are subject to a \$50 fine.⁹ The restriction and penalties do not apply in the case of an emergency, or to any law enforcement, firefighting, or rescue vessel owned or operated by a governmental entity.¹⁰

The ability to enforce regulations in boating-restricted areas is dependent upon the placement of regulatory markers.¹¹ FWC is required to adopt rules establishing a uniform system of regulatory markers compatible with Coast Guard regulations.¹² Counties and municipalities which have been granted a boating-restricted area designation for a portion of the Florida Intracoastal Waterway may apply to FWC for permission to place regulatory markers under the procedures of s. 327.40, F.S.¹³

Boating-Restricted Areas in Broward County

Chapter 86-364, Laws of Florida, establishes a speed limit of thirty miles per hour for vessels travelling on the New River Canal and Florida Intracoastal Waterway.¹⁴ Boaters are informed of the speed limit by signs at locations designated by Florida Marine Patrol.¹⁵ Broward County is responsible for the cost of erecting and maintaining the signs in unincorporated areas, while municipalities are responsible for

¹ S. 327.46(1), F.S.

² *Id.*

³ S. 327.46(1)(a), F.S.

⁴ S. 327.46(1)(b)-(c), F.S.

⁵ S. 327.46(2), F.S.

⁶ “Prohibited activity” is defined for the purposes of ch. 327 as an “activity that will impede or disturb navigation or creates a safety hazard on waterways of this state.” S. 327.02(35), F.S.

⁷ S. 327.46(3), F.S.

⁸ S. 327.73(1)(k), F.S.

⁹ S. 327.73(1), F.S.

¹⁰ S. 327.46(4), F.S.

¹¹ *See* s. 327.46(3), F.S.

¹² S. 327.41(1), F.S.

¹³ S. 327.41(2), F.S.

¹⁴ Ch. 86-364, s. 1, Laws of Fla.

¹⁵ Ch. 86-364, s. 2, Laws of Fla. The Florida Marine Patrol’s functions are now part of FWC’s Division of Law Enforcement.

these costs for any sign inside their boundaries.¹⁶ The speed limit set by the act does not apply in regulatory zones, idle speed/no wake zones, and manatee zones.¹⁷

The act is currently enforced by FWC, who has also adopted a rule concerning “Broward County Boating Restricted Areas.”¹⁸ An earlier version of this rule specifically authorized Broward County to install and maintain regulatory markers, as directed by the Division of Law Enforcement, within boating-restricted areas.¹⁹ This authorization was removed with the intention of shifting authority and responsibility for managing regulatory markers along the Florida Intracoastal Waterway from Broward County and the City of Fort Lauderdale to FWC.²⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill transfers authority for the construction and maintenance of speed limit signs along the New River Canal and Florida Intracoastal Waterway in Broward County from the county to FWC.

The bill also removes a provision stating the speed limits set by ch. 86-364, s. 1, Laws of Florida do not apply in regulatory zones, idle speed/no wake zones, and manatee zones. The removal of this provision, however, creates no substantive changes, since ch. 86-364, s.1, states the speed limit does not apply in “areas posted ‘idle speed/no wake’ or ‘slowdown/minimum wake’”²¹ and speed restrictions in manatee protection areas in Broward County are defined by idle speed.²²

Broward County has previously spent money erecting speed limit signs in the New River Canal and Florida Intracoastal Waterway.²³ Most of these signs are still in good condition and the county currently spends approximately \$30,000 a year for upgrades as part of its Parks and Recreation budget.²⁴ FWC maintains ninety percent of the markers for manatee protection.²⁵

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Repeals s. 2, Ch. 86-364, Laws of Florida, concerning speed limit signs on the New River Canal and Florida Intracoastal Waterway, Broward County.

Section 2: Provides that the bill shall take effect upon becoming law.

II. NOTICE/REFERENDUM AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. NOTICE PUBLISHED? Yes No

IF YES, WHEN? December 28, 2014.

WHERE? The Sun-Sentinel, a daily newspaper published in Broward, Palm Beach, and Miami-Dade County, Florida.

B. REFERENDUM(S) REQUIRED? Yes No

IF YES, WHEN?

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Rule 68D-24.008, F.A.C. (effective 7/21/13).

¹⁹ Rule 68D-24.008(3), F.A.C. (effective 12/18/94).

²⁰ Letter from Major Richard Moore, Boating and Waterways Section Leader, FWC, to Barbara Sharief, Mayor of Broward County, Re: Broward County Special Acts of Local Application Numbers 86-364 and 89-428, dated 2/10/14. A copy of this letter is on file with the House Local Government Affairs Subcommittee.

²¹ Ch. 86-364, s. 1, Laws of Fla.

²² Rule 68C-22.010, F.A.C.

²³ Economic Impact Statement for HB 869 (2015).

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

C. LOCAL BILL CERTIFICATION FILED? Yes, attached [x] No []

D. ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT FILED? Yes, attached [x] No []

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not provide authority or require executive branch rulemaking.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES