

By Senator Ausley

3-00789B-22

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to a cost-share program for
3 agriculture, shellfish aquaculture, and timber
4 operations; providing a short title; creating s.
5 570.891, F.S.; providing legislative findings;
6 establishing a cost-share program within the
7 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;
8 requiring the program, subject to legislative
9 appropriation, to provide funds equal to a specified
10 percentage of the value of environmental services that
11 the agriculture, shellfish aquaculture, and timber
12 industries provide; requiring the department to
13 conduct a study to determine the value of such
14 environmental services, in consultation with certain
15 entities; requiring the department to cooperate with
16 certain entities to promote the cost-share program and
17 prioritize distributions to certain communities;
18 requiring the department to update certain materials
19 with information on participation in the cost-share
20 program; requiring the department to adopt rules;
21 providing an effective date.

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

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25 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Protecting
26 Florida's Natural Resources Act."

27 Section 2. Section 570.891, Florida Statutes, is created to
28 read:

29 570.891 Agriculture, shellfish aquaculture, and timber

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30 operations cost-share program.—

31 (1) The Legislature finds that:

32 (a) Maintaining healthy and sustainable agriculture,
33 shellfish aquaculture, and timber industries is vital to this
34 state's economy, environment, and natural resources, including
35 making significant environmental contributions to water quality
36 and quantity, air purification, carbon sequestration, coastal
37 resilience, and habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife
38 species.

39 (b) The continued expansion of urban and coastal areas has
40 increased pressure on the agriculture and timber industries, and
41 in recent years there has been a significant decrease in
42 agricultural and timber acreage.

43 (c) Water quality and quantity problems in this state's
44 coastal waters have harmed the aquaculture industry,
45 specifically shellfish farming. Filter feeder shellfish, such as
46 oysters, hard clams, and sunray venus clams, are beneficial to
47 this state's imperiled seagrass.

48 (d) To ensure healthy and sustainable agriculture,
49 shellfish aquaculture, and timber industries, a cost-share
50 program is necessary to provide incentives to the owners within
51 these industries to continue activities that are beneficial to
52 water quality and quantity, air purification, carbon
53 sequestration, nutrient remediation, coastal resilience, and
54 habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species.

55 (2) A cost-share program is established within the
56 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Subject to the
57 appropriation of funds by the Legislature, the program shall
58 reimburse the owners of agriculture, shellfish aquaculture, and

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59 timber operations for up to 75 percent of the value of the
60 environmental resources and services provided by such
61 industries.

62 (3) The department shall do all of the following:

63 (a) In consultation with the Florida Sea Grant and the
64 University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural
65 Sciences, conduct a study to determine the value of
66 environmental services, such as water recharge, stormwater
67 filtration, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, nutrient
68 remediation, coastal resilience and flood protection, and air
69 quality benefits, provided by the agriculture, shellfish
70 aquaculture, and timber industries.

71 (b) In cooperation with the University of Florida Shellfish
72 Aquaculture Research and Extension Program, the Wakulla
73 Environmental Institute, and the Florida Agricultural and
74 Mechanical University College of Agriculture and Food Sciences,
75 promote the cost-share program and prioritize distribution of
76 assistance to low-income communities, historically under-
77 resourced communities of color, and rural communities impacted
78 by Hurricane Michael in 2018.

79 (c) Update all relevant brochures, websites, and marketing
80 materials to provide information on participation in the cost-
81 share program.

82 (d) Adopt rules to implement this section.

83 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.