

By the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources; and
Senator Boyd

592-02541-23

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Seagrass Restoration Technology
3 Development Initiative; creating s. 403.93344, F.S.;
4 providing legislative intent; defining terms;
5 establishing the Seagrass Restoration Technology
6 Development Initiative within the Department of
7 Environmental Protection; providing the purpose and
8 goal of the initiative; providing for funding;
9 specifying allowable uses of the funding; requiring
10 the creation of a 10-year Florida Seagrass Restoration
11 Plan; requiring the initiative to submit an annual
12 report by a specified date to the Governor, the
13 Legislature, the Secretary of Environmental
14 Protection, and the executive director of the Fish and
15 Wildlife Conservation Commission; establishing the
16 Initiative Technology Advisory Council as part of the
17 initiative; providing for the meetings, membership,
18 terms of office, and compensation of the advisory
19 council; providing for the expiration of the
20 initiative; providing an effective date.

21
22 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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24 Section 1. Section 403.93344, Florida Statutes, is created
25 to read:

26 403.93344 Seagrass Restoration Technology Development
27 Initiative; Initiative Technology Advisory Council.-

28 (1) It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a
29 collaborative and coordinated effort among public and private

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30 research entities to develop restoration technologies and
31 approaches to address the loss of seagrass and the cascading
32 ecological and economic impacts of that loss to communities in
33 this state.

34 (2) As used in this section, the term:

35 (a) "Department" means the Department of Environmental
36 Protection.

37 (b) "Initiative" means the Seagrass Restoration Technology
38 Development Initiative.

39 (c) "Program" means the Aquatic Reserve Program within the
40 department's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection.

41 (3) The Seagrass Restoration Technology Development
42 Initiative is established within the department as a partnership
43 between the program, Mote Marine Laboratory, and the University
44 of Florida.

45 (a) The purpose of the initiative is to take the lead in
46 and expedite the development of innovative technologies and
47 approaches that are critically needed to restore coastal
48 seagrass ecosystems by building upon research and restoration
49 efforts in the public and private sectors.

50 (b) The goal of the initiative is to develop, test, and
51 implement innovative, effective, and environmentally sustainable
52 technologies and approaches for restoring coastal seagrass
53 ecosystems.

54 (c) The department shall award funds specifically
55 appropriated by the Legislature for the initiative to Mote
56 Marine Laboratory, which shall function as the lead
57 administrative component to achieve the goals of the initiative.

58 1. Mote Marine Laboratory may, with the concurrence of the

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59 department, use a portion of the awarded funds to facilitate
60 additional engagement with other pertinent marine science and
61 technology development organizations in this state and around
62 the world to pursue applied research and technology for the
63 successful restoration of seagrass ecosystems.

64 2. Mote Marine Laboratory may not use more than 5 percent
65 of its awarded funds for direct annual initiative administration
66 and coordination costs.

67 3. The initiative shall leverage state-appropriated funds
68 with additional funds from private and federal sources.

69 (d) In collaboration with the program, Mote Marine
70 Laboratory and the University of Florida shall create a 10-year
71 Florida Seagrass Restoration Plan to implement tools and
72 technologies developed under the initiative.

73 (e) Beginning January 15, 2024, and each January 15
74 thereafter until its expiration, the initiative shall submit a
75 report that contains an overview of its accomplishments to date
76 and priorities for subsequent years to the Governor, the
77 President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of
78 Representatives, the Secretary of Environmental Protection, and
79 the executive director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation
80 Commission.

81 (4) The Initiative Technology Advisory Council, an advisory
82 council as defined in s. 20.03(7), is established as part of the
83 initiative. The advisory council's membership must include
84 marine science, technology development, and natural resource
85 management representatives from this state's aquatic preserves,
86 private organizations, and public or private research
87 institutions. The council shall meet at least twice annually.

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88 (a) The council shall be co-chaired by the president and
89 chief executive officer of Mote Marine Laboratory and a
90 representative from the University of Florida and shall be
91 composed of the following members:

92 1. One member from a private commercial enterprise,
93 appointed by the Governor.

94 2. One member from a public or private university in this
95 state, appointed by the President of the Senate.

96 3. One member from a non-university public or private
97 marine environmental organization, appointed by the Speaker of
98 the House of Representatives.

99 4. One member from the program who has expertise in
100 seagrass ecosystems, appointed by the Secretary of Environmental
101 Protection.

102 5. One member from the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
103 who has expertise in seagrass, appointed by the executive
104 director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

105 (b) Council members shall serve staggered 2-year terms and
106 may be reappointed.

107 (c) Council members shall serve without compensation, and
108 each organization represented shall cover all expenses of its
109 respective representative.

110 (5) This section expires June 30, 2028.

111 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.