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1
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; requiring the department to implement
20 seagrass restoration projects, subject to legislative
21 appropriation, that are procured on a specified basis;
22 providing for the expiration of the initiative;
23 providing an appropriation; providing an effective
24 date.

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

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28 Section 1. Section 403.93344, Florida Statutes, is created
29 to read:

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30 403.93344 Seagrass Restoration Technology Development
31 Initiative; Initiative Technology Advisory Council.—

32 (1) It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a
33 collaborative and coordinated effort among public and private
34 research entities to develop restoration technologies and
35 approaches to address the loss of seagrass and the cascading
36 ecological and economic impacts of that loss to communities in
37 this state.

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

39 (a) "Department" means the Department of Environmental
40 Protection.

41 (b) "Initiative" means the Seagrass Restoration Technology
42 Development Initiative.

43 (c) "Program" means the Aquatic Preserve Program within the
44 department's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection.

45 (3) The Seagrass Restoration Technology Development
46 Initiative is established within the department as a partnership
47 between the program, Mote Marine Laboratory, and the University
48 of Florida.

49 (a) The purpose of the initiative is to take the lead in
50 and expedite the development of cost-efficient innovative
51 technologies and approaches that are critically needed to
52 restore coastal seagrass ecosystems by building upon research
53 and restoration efforts in the public and private sectors.

54 (b) The goal of the initiative is to develop, test, and
55 implement innovative, effective, cost-efficient, and
56 environmentally sustainable technologies and approaches for
57 restoring coastal seagrass ecosystems.

58 (c) The department shall award funds specifically

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59 appropriated by the Legislature for the initiative to Mote
60 Marine Laboratory, which shall function as the lead
61 administrative component to achieve the goals of the initiative.

62 1. Mote Marine Laboratory may, with the concurrence of the
63 department, use a portion of the awarded funds to facilitate
64 additional engagement with other pertinent marine science and
65 technology development organizations in this state and around
66 the world to pursue applied research and technology for the
67 successful restoration of seagrass ecosystems.

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

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

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

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

85 (4) The Initiative Technology Advisory Council, an advisory
86 council as defined in s. 20.03, is established as part of the
87 initiative. The advisory council's membership must include

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88 marine science, technology development, and natural resource
89 management representatives from this state's aquatic preserves,
90 private organizations, and public or private research
91 institutions. The council shall meet at least twice annually.

92 (a) The council shall be co-chaired by the president and
93 chief executive officer of Mote Marine Laboratory and a
94 representative from the University of Florida and shall be
95 composed of the following members:

96 1. One member from a private commercial enterprise,
97 appointed by the Governor.

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

100 3. One member from a non-university public or private
101 marine environmental organization, appointed by the Speaker of
102 the House of Representatives.

103 4. One member from the program who has expertise in
104 seagrass ecosystems, appointed by the Secretary of Environmental
105 Protection.

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

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

111 (c) Council members shall serve without compensation, and
112 each organization represented shall cover all expenses of its
113 respective representative.

114 (5) Pending the completion of the research conducted
115 pursuant to this section and any recommendations of the council,
116 the department shall, subject to legislative appropriation,

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117 implement seagrass restoration projects that are procured on a
118 payment-for-performance basis to protect the investment made by
119 this state in seagrass restoration efforts.

120 (6) This section expires June 30, 2028.

121 Section 2. Beginning in the 2023-2024 fiscal year, and for
122 each fiscal year thereafter through the 2027-2028 fiscal year,
123 the sum of \$2 million is appropriated from the General Revenue
124 Fund to the Department of Environmental Protection for the
125 purpose of implementing s. 403.93344, Florida Statutes, as
126 created by this act.

127 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.