

By Senator Rodriguez

40-01041B-24

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1 A bill to be entitled  
 2 An act relating to carbon sequestration; creating s.  
 3 403.945, F.S.; providing definitions; providing  
 4 legislative findings; creating the Carbon  
 5 Sequestration Task Force adjunct to the Department of  
 6 Environmental Protection; providing for task force  
 7 membership and duties; requiring the task force to  
 8 submit specified reports to the Secretary of  
 9 Environmental Protection and to the Governor and  
 10 Legislature by specified dates; providing for  
 11 expiration of the task force; providing an  
 12 appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

16 Section 1. Section 403.945, Florida Statutes, is created to  
 17 read:

18 403.945 Carbon Sequestration Task Force.—

19 (1) As used in this section, the term:

20 (a) "Blue carbon" means carbon sequestered by marine and  
 21 coastal ecosystems.

22 (b) "Carbon sequestration" means the long-term storage of  
 23 carbon in plants, soils, geologic formations, and the ocean  
 24 through land and aquatic habitat management.

25 (2) The Legislature finds that:

26 (a) Maintaining coastal and freshwater wetlands, nearshore  
 27 and offshore aquatic ecosystems, conservation lands, healthy and  
 28 sustainable agriculture, shellfish aquaculture, and timber and  
 29 silvicultural industries is vital to the state's economy,

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30 environment, and natural resources, including significant  
31 environmental contributions to water quality and quantity, air  
32 purification, carbon sequestration, blue carbon, coastal  
33 resilience, and habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife.

34 (b) The continued expansion of urban sprawl and the  
35 development of coastal areas have led to losses of the state's  
36 natural and agricultural lands and decreases in water quality  
37 and quantity that have harmed coastal ecosystems and industries,  
38 including imperiled wetlands, coral reefs, seagrasses, and  
39 shellfish aquaculture.

40 (c) To ensure healthy and sustainable agriculture,  
41 shellfish aquaculture and silvicultural industries, and natural  
42 and working lands and waters, a statewide program is necessary  
43 to provide incentives for landowners and managers to continue  
44 activities and land uses that sequester carbon.

45 (3) The Carbon Sequestration Task Force, a task force as  
46 defined in s. 20.03, is created adjunct to the department to  
47 provide recommendations for the development of a statewide  
48 carbon sequestration program. The task force shall operate in a  
49 manner consistent with the requirements of s. 20.052.

50 (4) (a) The task force shall be composed of the following  
51 members:

52 1. The Secretary of Environmental Protection, or his or her  
53 designee.

54 2. The Commissioner of Agriculture, or his or her designee.

55 3. The executive director of the Fish and Wildlife  
56 Conservation Commission, or his or her designee.

57 4. The Chief Resilience Officer, or his or her designee.

58 5. A representative from the National Estuary Program,

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59 appointed by the Secretary of Environmental Protection.

60 6. A member of an environmental not-for-profit, appointed  
61 by the Secretary of Environmental Protection.

62 7. A landowner of working agricultural lands, appointed by  
63 the Commissioner of Agriculture.

64 8. A representative from a state university with expertise  
65 in energy or sustainability, appointed by the Secretary of  
66 Environmental Protection.

67 9. A representative from the University of Florida  
68 Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, appointed by the  
69 Commissioner of Agriculture.

70 10. A representative from the Florida Sea Grant Program,  
71 appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture.

72 (b) Appointments to the task force must be made by August  
73 1, 2024.

74 (c) Each appointed member serves at the pleasure of the  
75 appointing official.

76 (d) A vacancy on the task force must be filled in the same  
77 manner as the original appointment.

78 (e) The task force shall elect a chair from among the  
79 members.

80 (f) The task force shall convene no later than September 1,  
81 2024. The task force shall meet quarterly or upon the call of  
82 the chair. The task force shall hold its meetings in person or  
83 through teleconference or other electronic means.

84 (5) The duties of the task force shall include all of the  
85 following:

86 (a) Identify and inventory terrestrial and aquatic  
87 environments suitable for carbon sequestration in this state.

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88       (b) Consider possible methods of increasing carbon  
89 sequestration within the natural environment through state land  
90 and marine resource use policies; agricultural, aquacultural,  
91 and silvicultural practices; and other practices to achieve  
92 restoration of natural resources and long-term conservation.

93       (c) Develop a standardized methodology, including  
94 appropriate technology and existing research, to establish  
95 baseline carbon levels and account for increases in carbon  
96 sequestration over time.

97       (d) Evaluate additional ecosystem services and benefits of  
98 terrestrial and aquatic environments that may promote  
99 conservation and ecosystem restoration success, including water  
100 recharge, stormwater filtration, threatened or endangered  
101 wildlife habitat, nutrient reduction, flood mitigation and  
102 protection, coastal resilience, air quality, soil health, and  
103 food security.

104       (e) Recommend short-term and long-term benchmarks for  
105 increasing carbon sequestration in terrestrial and aquatic  
106 ecosystems.

107       (f) Identify existing carbon markets and other  
108 considerations relevant to participation by the state in such  
109 markets.

110       (g) Identify potential funding mechanisms to encourage  
111 carbon sequestration practices and activities in this state.

112       (6) By October 1, 2025, the task force shall submit to the  
113 Secretary of Environmental Protection a report summarizing the  
114 task force activities and findings in its first year, including  
115 a nonrecurring budget request for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

116       (7) By October 1, 2026, the task force shall submit to the

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117 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the  
118 House of Representatives a report that compiles the findings and  
119 recommendations of the task force. The task force shall  
120 terminate on April 30, 2027.

121       Section 2. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of  
122 \$350,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the  
123 Operating Trust Fund to the Department of Environmental  
124 Protection for the purpose of providing administrative and  
125 support services to the Carbon Sequestration Task Force pursuant  
126 to s. 403.945, Florida Statutes.

127       Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.