

By Senator Hutson

7-01276A-24

20241638__

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to funding for environmental resource
3 management; creating s. 260.0145, F.S.; creating,
4 subject to appropriation, the Local Trail Management
5 Grant Program within the Department of Environmental
6 Protection for a specified purpose; providing for the
7 administration and prioritization of awards;
8 specifying the authorized and prohibited uses of grant
9 funds; requiring the department to submit an annual
10 report to the Governor and the Legislature by a
11 specified date; providing requirements for the report;
12 creating s. 380.095, F.S.; providing legislative
13 findings and intent; requiring the Department of
14 Revenue to distribute, on a monthly basis, a specified
15 percentage of the revenue share payments received
16 under the 2021 gaming compact; providing requirements
17 for the distributions; creating s. 403.0676, F.S.;
18 creating the Water Quality Work Program within the
19 Department of Environmental Protection; providing the
20 purpose of the program; creating a water quality
21 project revolving loan program within the department
22 for a specified purpose; authorizing the department to
23 provide loans to local governments for certain water
24 projects; providing requirements for and the terms of
25 such loans; requiring the department to develop a 5-
26 year work plan for the water quality project revolving
27 loan program; providing for funding for the program;
28 providing project eligibility requirements; requiring
29 the department to contract with the Water School at

7-01276A-24

20241638__

30 Florida Gulf Coast University for specified purposes;
31 requiring the Water School to provide certain
32 recommendations; requiring the department to implement
33 the loan program based upon the recommendations;
34 requiring the department to create application
35 procedures for the loan program; requiring the Water
36 School, subject to appropriation, to conduct a study
37 to identify and analyze certain impaired water bodies;
38 providing requirements for the study; authorizing the
39 Water School to work with the department and use
40 specified data; amending s. 403.890, F.S.; revising
41 the purposes for which the department must use certain
42 revenues deposited into or appropriated to the Water
43 Protection and Sustainability Program Trust Fund;
44 requiring certain funds to be kept in a separate
45 account and be used only for specified purposes;
46 providing requirements for such funds; providing
47 appropriations to the Institute of Food and
48 Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) at the University of
49 Florida and the Water School for specified purposes;
50 requiring the IFAS and the Water School to submit
51 reports to the Executive Office of the Governor and
52 the Legislature by a specified date; providing an
53 appropriation to the Water School for a specified
54 study; providing appropriations; providing an
55 effective date.

56
57 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
58

7-01276A-24

20241638__

59 Section 1. Section 260.0145, Florida Statutes, is created
60 to read:

61 260.0145 Local Trail Management Grant Program.—

62 (1) Subject to appropriation, the Local Trail Management
63 Grant Program is created within the department to assist local
64 governments with costs associated with the operation and
65 maintenance of trails within the Florida Greenways and Trails
66 System.

67 (2) A local government may receive multiple grant awards
68 per application cycle.

69 (3) The department shall give priority to each of the
70 following:

71 (a) A local government that provides cost share for the
72 costs associated with the operation and maintenance of the
73 trails, except for trails within fiscally constrained counties
74 or rural areas of opportunity.

75 (b) Trails within the Florida wildlife corridor as defined
76 in s. 259.1055.

77 (4) A local government may only use grant funds for the
78 operation and maintenance of trails, including, but not limited
79 to, the purchase of equipment and capital assets; the funding of
80 necessary repairs to ensure the safety of trail users; and other
81 necessary maintenance, such as pressure washing, bush pruning,
82 and clearing debris. A local government may not use grant funds
83 for the planning, design, or construction of trails.

84 (5) Beginning January 15, 2025, and each January 15
85 thereafter, the department shall submit a report listing the
86 grants awarded pursuant to this section to the Governor, the
87 President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of

7-01276A-24

20241638__

88 Representatives in accordance with s. 286.001. The report must
89 include the following information for each grant award: the
90 grant recipient's name, a description of the individual
91 components of the trail, a description of the maintenance
92 activities funded, the total management cost for the trail
93 components, and the cost share, if any, provided by the
94 recipient.

95 Section 2. Section 380.095, Florida Statutes, is created to
96 read:

97 380.095 Dedicated funding for conservation lands and clean
98 water infrastructure.-

99 (1) The Legislature recognizes that the conservation and
100 preservation of the land and water resources of this state are
101 essential to maintaining the quality of life enjoyed by
102 Floridians and to sustaining and growing a thriving state
103 economy, including legacy industries such as tourism and
104 agriculture.

105 (a) The Legislature recognizes that historic investments in
106 land conservation continue to foster the preservation of working
107 farmland and ranchland, allow for the strategic expansion and
108 interconnectivity of the Florida wildlife corridor, and promote
109 the protection of endangered native species, including the
110 Florida panther.

111 (b) The Legislature further recognizes that funding for the
112 management of conservation lands ensures opportunities for
113 expanded public access to state lands, including state parks,
114 the Florida Greenways and Trails System, and game lands, among
115 others, for recreation; and promotes opportunities to protect
116 such lands from wildfire damage and the infiltration of

7-01276A-24

20241638__

117 dangerous nonnative plant and animal species, among other
118 benefits.

119 (c) Furthermore, the Legislature recognizes that
120 projections for significant population growth necessitate an
121 additional recurring revenue source for further funding and
122 planning associated with the protection of this state's
123 conservation lands and clean water infrastructure.

124 (d) Therefore, the Legislature intends to dedicate revenues
125 from the 2021 gaming compact between the Seminole Tribe of
126 Florida and the State of Florida to acquire and manage
127 conservation lands and to identify and fund the prioritization
128 of critical clean water infrastructure investments.

129 (2) Notwithstanding s. 285.710, on a monthly basis the
130 Department of Revenue shall distribute 96 percent of the revenue
131 share payments received under the compact as defined in s.
132 285.710. The funds shall be kept in a separate account within
133 each trust fund and shall be distributed as follows:

134 (a) Thirty-two percent to the Incidental Trust Fund within
135 the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for
136 conservation easements pursuant to s. 570.71 and land
137 acquisitions pursuant to s. 589.07. The Department of
138 Agriculture and Consumer Services shall give priority to land
139 within the Florida wildlife corridor as defined in s. 259.1055.

140 (b) Thirty-two percent to state land managers for the
141 management of state-owned uplands and removal of invasive
142 exotics, which must be divided as follows:

143 1. Nine percent to the Internal Improvement Trust Fund
144 within the Department of Environmental Protection for the
145 purpose of implementing the Local Trail Management Grant Program

7-01276A-24

20241638__

146 created pursuant to s. 260.0145.

147 2. Nine percent to the State Park Trust Fund within the
148 Department of Environmental Protection for land management
149 activities within the state park system.

150 3. Twenty-seven percent to the Incidental Trust Fund within
151 the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for land
152 management activities.

153 4. Fifty-five percent to the State Game Trust Fund within
154 the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for land
155 management activities.

156
157 For subparagraphs 2., 3., and 4., a land manager may not use
158 more than 10 percent of the distribution for operation capital
159 outlay or capital assets.

160 (c) Thirty-two percent to the Water Protection and
161 Sustainability Program Trust Fund within the Department of
162 Environmental Protection to implement the Water Quality Work
163 Program created pursuant to s. 403.0676.

164 Section 3. Section 403.0676, Florida Statutes, is created
165 to read:

166 403.0676 Water Quality Work Program.—

167 (1) WATER QUALITY WORK PROGRAM.—In light of the state's
168 commitment to protect this state's water resources, and in
169 recognition of the vast number of projects and amount of funding
170 necessary to repair and protect this state's water bodies, the
171 Water Quality Work Program is created within the department. The
172 purpose of the program is to provide a comprehensive statewide
173 assessment of critical water quality projects and to include
174 predictable financing options for local governments to implement

7-01276A-24

20241638__

175 such projects on a set schedule based upon a data-driven
176 methodology for prioritization.

177 (2) WATER QUALITY PROJECT REVOLVING LOAN PROGRAM.—In order
178 to assist local governments with financing water quality
179 projects, a water project revolving loan program is created
180 within the department as part of the Water Quality Work Program.

181 (a) The department may, subject to appropriation and in
182 accordance with the 5-year work plan required by subsection (3),
183 provide loans to local governments for projects to construct,
184 upgrade, or expand facilities to provide advanced waste
185 treatment or connect onsite sewage treatment and disposal
186 systems to central sewer facilities.

187 (b) The loans must be interest-free and provided through a
188 promissory note or other form of written agreement evidencing an
189 obligation to repay the borrowed funds to the department.

190 (c) The term of the loan is 240 months, commencing 12
191 months after the execution of the loan agreement.

192 (d) The loans become due and payable in accordance with the
193 terms of the agreement. However, loan payments may be made at
194 any time before the loan is due without penalty, and early
195 repayment is encouraged as other funding sources or revenues
196 become available.

197 (3) FIVE-YEAR WORK PLAN.—In order to assist local
198 governments in planning, the department shall develop a 5-year
199 work plan for the water quality project revolving loan program.
200 The planned funding for the work plan must include funds
201 distributed pursuant to s. 380.095 and anticipate an additional
202 annual 5 percent increase from loan repayments. The first year
203 of the work plan must commence July 1, 2025, and include the

7-01276A-24

20241638__

204 unexpended balance of funds from the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

205 (a) To be eligible for the work plan a project must:

206 1. Connect onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems to
207 existing central sewer facilities; or

208 2. Construct, upgrade, or expand domestic wastewater
209 treatment facilities.

210 (b) The department shall contract with the Water School at
211 Florida Gulf Coast University to develop parameters for project
212 criteria and for setting priorities for the work plan.

213 (c) The Water School shall recommend whether the scope of
214 eligible projects should be expanded and shall provide
215 prioritization criteria based upon an analysis of this state's
216 water resources. The prioritization criteria must:

217 1. Provide a data-driven framework for scoring projects,
218 with consideration given for economic as well as environmental
219 factors, including a consideration of the return on investment;
220 and

221 2. Promote efficiency through cross-jurisdictional
222 planning, such as planning for the construction of wastewater
223 transmission infrastructure concurrently with transportation
224 facility projects.

225 (d) The Water School may work with the department and use
226 readily available data, such as data gathered as part of:

227 1. The plans developed pursuant to s. 403.064(17);

228 2. The basin management plans and reports developed under
229 ss. 403.067 and 403.0671;

230 3. The assessments and survey data compiled by the Office
231 of Economic and Demographic Research pursuant to s. 403.928; and

232 4. The plans developed pursuant to s. 403.086(7).

7-01276A-24

20241638__

233 (e) The department shall, based upon the recommendations
234 provided by the Water School, implement the loan program. The
235 department shall create a loan application and set an
236 application deadline and may request any other information
237 necessary to review and evaluate an application. Once the
238 application deadline has passed, the department shall, based
239 upon the qualified applicants, select the list of projects to
240 include within the 5-year work plan in accordance with the Water
241 School's recommendations for prioritization.

242 (4) WATER QUALITY STUDY.—Subject to appropriation, the
243 Water School shall conduct a study to identify and analyze
244 impaired water bodies, including upstream sources, and determine
245 the root causes of such impairment.

246 (a) At a minimum, the study must include an analysis of the
247 following river basins: Apalachicola, Caloosahatchee, Indian,
248 Peace, St. Johns, St. Lucie, and Suwannee.

249 (b) The Water School may work with the department and shall
250 have access to other state readily available data.

251 Section 4. Present subsection (3) of section 403.890,
252 Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (4), paragraph
253 (d) is added to subsection (1) of that section, and a new
254 subsection (3) is added to that section, to read:

255 403.890 Water Protection and Sustainability Program.—

256 (1) Revenues deposited into or appropriated to the Water
257 Protection and Sustainability Program Trust Fund shall be
258 distributed by the Department of Environmental Protection for
259 the following purposes:

260 (d) The Water Quality Work Program as provided in s.
261 403.0676.

7-01276A-24

20241638__

262 (3) Funds deposited into or appropriated to the Water
263 Protection and Sustainability Program Trust Fund for the
264 purposes of the water quality revolving loan program must be
265 kept in a separate account and may only be used for such purpose
266 and, notwithstanding s. 216.301 and pursuant to s. 216.351, any
267 balance in the trust fund at the end of any fiscal year for the
268 water quality revolving loan program must remain in the trust
269 fund at the end of the year and must be available for carrying
270 out the purposes of the program. All moneys in the account not
271 needed on an immediate basis for loans must be invested pursuant
272 to s. 215.49. The principal and interest of all loans repaid and
273 investment earnings must be deposited into the account.

274 Section 5. (1) Contingent upon funds being distributed to
275 the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission pursuant to s.
276 380.095, Florida Statutes, and for the 2024-2025 fiscal year,
277 the sum of \$5 million in nonrecurring funds from the State Game
278 Trust Fund within the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
279 is appropriated to the Institute of Food and Agricultural
280 Sciences (IFAS) at the University of Florida to perform a study
281 of state agencies' upland land management activities.

282 (2) The study must include all of the following:

283 (a) Recommendations for best management practices for
284 inclusion in the land management plans with regard to the
285 separate missions of the land management agencies and based upon
286 the purposes for which the land is managed.

287 (b) A review of land management plans to determine if the
288 10-year frequency of plan updates is adequate for best
289 management practices.

290 (c) A review of the resources of each land management

7-01276A-24

20241638__

291 agency to determine current expenditures, including personnel
292 costs, spent on upland management activities.

293 (d) A recommendation on the most efficient and effective
294 use of the distribution of funds to the state agencies specified
295 in s. 380.095(2)(b), Florida Statutes.

296 (3) IFAS shall submit a report of the results of the study
297 to the Executive Office of the Governor, the President of the
298 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by
299 January 3, 2025.

300 Section 6. Contingent on the funds being distributed to the
301 Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to s.
302 380.095(2)(c), Florida Statutes, and for the 2024-2025 fiscal
303 year:

304 (1) The sum of \$5 million in nonrecurring funds from the
305 Water Protection and Sustainability Trust Fund within the
306 Department of Environmental Protection is appropriated to the
307 Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University to develop a
308 report, including recommendations to implement the 5-year work
309 plan for the water project revolving loan program pursuant to s.
310 403.0676(3), Florida Statutes. The recommendations must include
311 a framework for the work plan and any implementing statutory
312 language needed to implement the work plan. The Water School
313 shall submit the report to the Executive Office of the Governor,
314 the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
315 Representatives by January 3, 2025.

316 (2) The sum of \$25 million in nonrecurring funds from the
317 Water Protection and Sustainability Trust Fund within the
318 Department of Environmental Protection is appropriated to the
319 Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University to perform the

7-01276A-24

20241638__

320 study required by s. 403.0676(4), Florida Statutes.

321 Section 7. Contingent upon funds being distributed to the
322 Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to s.
323 380.095(2)(b)1., Florida Statutes, and for the 2024-2025 fiscal
324 year, the sum of \$11,520,000 in nonrecurring funds from the
325 Internal Improvement Trust Fund within the Department of
326 Environmental Protection is appropriated for the purpose of
327 implementing the Local Trail Management Grant Program created
328 pursuant to s. 260.0145, Florida Statutes.

329 Section 8. Contingent upon funds being distributed to the
330 Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to s.
331 380.095(2)(b)2., Florida Statutes, and for the 2024-2025 fiscal
332 year, the sum of \$11,520,000 in nonrecurring funds from the
333 State Park Trust Fund within the Department of Environmental
334 Protection is appropriated for land management activities as
335 specified in s. 380.095(2)(b)2., Florida Statutes.

336 Section 9. Contingent upon funds being distributed to the
337 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services pursuant to s.
338 380.095(2)(b)3., Florida Statutes, and for the 2024-2025 fiscal
339 year, the sum of \$34,560,000 in nonrecurring funds from the
340 Incidental Trust Fund within the Department of Agriculture and
341 Consumer Services is appropriated for land management activities
342 as specified in s. 380.095(2)(b)3., Florida Statutes.

343 Section 10. Contingent upon funds being distributed to the
344 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission pursuant to s.
345 380.095(2)(b)4., Florida Statutes, and for the 2024-2025 fiscal
346 year, the sum of \$65,400,000 in nonrecurring funds from the
347 State Game Trust Fund within the Fish and Wildlife Conservation
348 Commission is appropriated for control of invasive exotics and

7-01276A-24

20241638__

349 upland land management activities pursuant to s.
350 380.095(2)(b)4., Florida Statutes.

351 Section 11. Contingent upon funds being distributed to the
352 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services pursuant to s.
353 380.095(2)(a), Florida Statutes, and for the 2024-2025 fiscal
354 year, the sum of \$128 million in recurring funds from the
355 Incidental Trust Fund within the Department of Agriculture and
356 Consumer Services is appropriated in fixed capital outlay for
357 conservation easements pursuant to s. 570.71, Florida Statutes,
358 and land acquisitions pursuant to s. 589.07, Florida Statutes.

359 Section 12. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.