By Senator Garcia

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to nature-based methods for improving coastal resilience; amending s. 380.0933, F.S.; requiring the Florida Flood Hub for Applied Research and Innovation at the University of South Florida College of Marine Science to develop design guidelines and standards for green and gray infrastructure and models for conceptual designs of green infrastructure and green-gray infrastructure; creating s. 380.0938, F.S.; requiring the Department of Environmental Protection to adopt rules for nature-based methods for coastal resilience; providing requirements for such rules; requiring the department, in consultation with the Division of Insurance Agent and Agency Services of the Department of Financial Services, to conduct a statewide feasibility study regarding the value of nature-based methods being used for a specified purpose; requiring the department to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature by a specified date; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the coastline is a critical state resource that benefits the public interest by providing economic benefits, such as flood control, fishing, recreation, and navigation, and natural habitat and biodiversity functions, such as improved water quality and habitat for endangered and threatened species and other flora and fauna, and

WHEREAS, rising sea levels and an increasing frequency of adverse weather events pose a significant risk to people and

property along the coastline and threaten the public benefits and functions offered by the coastline, and

WHEREAS, as identified in the Miami-Dade Back Bay Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study, natural infrastructure, including mangrove stands, living seawalls, and other nature-based designs, can play an essential role in improving coastal resilience and mitigating harm to this state's coastlines, and

WHEREAS, the Legislature intends to promote state and local efforts to restore mangrove forests along the coastline and further study the impact of other nature-based methods on this state's coastal resilience and economic development, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. Present paragraphs (c) through (i) of subsection (2) of section 380.0933, Florida Statutes, are redesignated as paragraphs (e) through (k), respectively, and new paragraphs (c) and (d) are added to that subsection, to read:

380.0933 Florida Flood Hub for Applied Research and Innovation.—

(2) The hub shall, at a minimum:

(c) Develop design guidelines and standards for optimal combinations of green and gray infrastructure to address sea level rise and the impact of storm surges.

(d) Model the effects, including flood risk reduction and socio-economic benefits, of conceptual designs of green infrastructure and hybrid green-gray infrastructure, and integration of green natural systems into gray infrastructure

systems, on this state's coastal resilience.

Section 2. Section 380.0938, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

380.0938 Nature-based methods for improving coastal resilience.—

(1) The Department of Environmental Protection shall adopt rules governing nature-based methods for improving coastal resilience. The rules must do all of the following:

(a) Address significant erosion in areas of critical state concern.

(b) Identify ways that new developments can avoid or mitigate their impacts on mangrove stands.

(c) Encourage local governmental entities to develop or participate in:

1. Mangrove replanting and hydrological restoration programs; and

2. Restoration of oyster reefs, salt marshes, and coral reefs.

(d) Identify and monitor threats to mangroves.

(e) Protect barrier and spoil islands.

(f) Assist efforts to improve coastal resilience through the use of green infrastructure, beach renourishment, dune restoration, living seawalls, shoreline and vegetation planting, stormwater planters, permeable pavements, and ecologically sound building materials.

(g) Promote public awareness of the value of green infrastructure and statewide education campaigns conducted by local governmental entities.

(h) Identify vulnerable public and private properties along

the coastline and encourage partnerships with local governmental entities to create local protection and restoration zone programs for implementing the rules developed by the department pursuant to this section.

(i) Protect and maintain access to and navigation of the marked channel and the right-of-way of the Florida Intracoastal Waterway as defined in s. 327.02.

(j) Create permitting incentives and approvals of, and encourage the use of, new strategies and technologies, such as 3D printing, for living shorelines and nature-based features for coastal protection.

(k) Assist in the development of workforce training in this state which includes flood and sea level rise research, prediction, and adaptation and mitigation strategies. The department shall provide incentives to local communities that apply for funding through the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program pursuant to s. 1011.801 to implement such workforce training.

(l) Encourage partnerships with local governmental entities to create projects using green infrastructure for coastal protection through the Resilient Florida Grant Program pursuant to s. 380.093(3)(b)1.d.

(m) Develop guidelines for determining when a green infrastructure project is clearly in the public interest under s. 373.414(1)(a).

(n) Streamline the permitting process under s. 373.4131 for green infrastructure projects.

(o) Streamline permitting after designated storm events or disasters to replace failed coastal infrastructure with green or

hybrid green-gray infrastructure that follows established green and green-gray design guidelines.

(2) The department, in consultation with the Division of Insurance Agent and Agency Services, shall conduct a statewide feasibility study to determine the value of nature-based methods for coastal flood risk reduction within coastal communities to reduce insurance premiums and improve local governments' community ratings in the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System. The department shall submit a report on the findings of the study to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by July 1, 2026.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.