

By Senator Garcia

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to nature-based solutions for
3 improving coastal resilience; creating s. 380.0938,
4 F.S.; defining terms; requiring the Department of
5 Environmental Protection to adopt rules and guidelines
6 for nature-based solutions for improving coastal
7 resilience; providing requirements for such rules and
8 guidelines; requiring the department, in consultation
9 with the Division of Insurance Agent and Agency
10 Services of the Department of Financial Services, to
11 conduct a statewide feasibility study regarding the
12 value of nature-based solutions being used for a
13 specified purpose; requiring the department to submit
14 a report to the Governor and the Legislature by a
15 specified date; providing an appropriation; providing
16 an effective date.
17

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

24 WHEREAS, rising sea levels and an increasing frequency of
25 adverse weather events pose a significant risk to people and
26 property along the coastline and threaten the public benefits
27 and functions offered by the coastline, and

28 WHEREAS, as identified in the Miami-Dade Back Bay Coastal
29 Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study, nature-based solutions,

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including mangrove stands and living seawalls, 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 solutions on this state's coastal resilience and economic development, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. Section 380.0938, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

380.0938 Nature-based solutions for improving coastal resilience.-

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

(a) "Gray infrastructure" means the use of conventionally engineered structures to manage stormwater and mitigate flooding.

(b) "Green infrastructure" means the use of natural systems to manage stormwater, improve water quality, and mitigate flooding.

(c) "Hybrid infrastructure" means infrastructure that combines the use of gray and green infrastructure to create resilient solutions that are more effective than either approach alone.

(d) "Nature-based solutions" means the use of natural features and processes to reduce risks from hazards, such as flooding and erosion.

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(2) The Department of Environmental Protection shall adopt rules and guidelines for the implementation of nature-based solutions to improve coastal resilience. The rules and guidelines must, at a minimum, do all of the following:

(a) Provide methods and practices to mitigate erosion in areas of critical state concern.

(b) Provide a framework for developers to avoid or mitigate impacts on existing mangrove stands.

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

1. Mangrove replanting and hydrological restoration programs; and

2. Oyster reef, salt marsh, and coral reef restoration.

(d) Create mechanisms that identify and monitor threats to mangroves.

(e) Provide for the protection of barrier and spoil islands.

(f) Provide a framework for the implementation of nature-based solutions, which must include, but need not be limited to, all of the following:

1. Beach renourishment.

2. Dune restoration and reinforcement.

3. Wetland restoration.

4. Reef restoration.

5. Living seawalls.

6. Shoreline and vegetation planting.

7. Stormwater planters.

8. Permeable pavements.

9. Ecologically sound building materials.

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88 10. Green infrastructure.

89 (g) Provide a framework for local governments to identify
90 vulnerable public and private properties along coastlines so
91 that such entities may create local protection and restoration
92 zone programs or projects that implement nature-based solutions
93 through the Resilient Florida Grant Program pursuant to s.
94 380.093(3).

95 (h) Encourage local governments to promote awareness of the
96 value of nature-based solutions, including wetland and
97 floodplain preservation and restoration, through education
98 campaigns.

99 (i) Provide for the protection, maintenance, continued
100 access to, and navigation of the marked channel and the right-
101 of-way of the Florida Intracoastal Waterway as defined in s.
102 327.02.

103 (j) Create permitting incentives and approval processes for
104 the use of new strategies and technologies, such as 3D printing,
105 for living shorelines and nature-based solutions.

106 (k) Provide for the development of workforce training that
107 includes flood and sea level rise research methods, predictive
108 strategies, and adaptation and mitigation strategies. The
109 department shall provide incentives to local communities that
110 apply for funding through the Workforce Development
111 Capitalization Incentive Grant Program pursuant to s. 1011.801
112 to implement such workforce training.

113 (l) Develop methodology for determining whether a green
114 infrastructure project is not contrary to the public interest or
115 is clearly in the public interest pursuant to s. 373.414(1)(a).

116 (m) Streamline the permitting process under s. 373.4131 for

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117 green infrastructure projects.

118 (n) Streamline permitting, after designated storm events or
119 disasters, for the replacement of failed coastal infrastructure
120 with hybrid infrastructure that follows established stormwater
121 infrastructure design guidelines.

122 (o) Provide guidance on the optimal combination of nature-
123 based solutions and hybrid infrastructure to address sea level
124 rise and mitigate the impact of storm surges.

125 (p) Model the projected effects, including flood risk
126 reduction, socioeconomic benefits, and environmental benefits,
127 of the integration of hybrid infrastructure designs.

128 (3) The department, in consultation with the Division of
129 Insurance Agent and Agency Services within the Department of
130 Financial Services, shall conduct a statewide feasibility study
131 to determine the value of nature-based solutions for coastal
132 flood risk reduction within coastal communities to reduce
133 insurance premiums and improve local governments' community
134 ratings in the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating
135 System. The department shall submit a report on the findings of
136 the study to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the
137 Speaker of the House of Representatives by July 1, 2027.

138 Section 2. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of
139 \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds from the Resilient Florida Trust
140 Fund is appropriated to the Department of Environmental
141 Protection to conduct the feasibility study for coastal flood
142 risk reduction required by this act.

143 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.