

1                               A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to the Eastpoint Water and Sewer  
3       District, Franklin County; amending chapter 2023-7,  
4       Laws of Florida; modifying the boundaries of the  
5       district to include additional lands; providing  
6       additional powers of the board; providing effective  
7       dates.

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9       WHEREAS, Apalachicola Bay is one of the most productive  
10      estuarine systems in the Northern Hemisphere, boasting a rich  
11      and diverse ecosystem that supports a wide array of habitats and  
12      wildlife, and

13      WHEREAS, Apalachicola Bay serves as a significant nursery  
14      ground for the Gulf of America, nurturing various species of  
15      fish and shellfish, and

16      WHEREAS, over 95 percent of commercially harvested species  
17      and 85 percent of recreationally harvested species in the open  
18      Gulf of America spend a portion of their life cycle in estuarine  
19      waters like Apalachicola Bay, and

20      WHEREAS, Apalachicola Bay supports a local fishing industry  
21      worth \$14-16 million annually, which in turn directly supports  
22      up to 85 percent of the local population, and

23      WHEREAS, untreated or inadequately treated wastewater from  
24      old, failing, poorly maintained or overloaded septic systems on  
25      St. George Island is causing excessive nutrients, disease-

HB 4081

2026

26 carrying pathogens, and chemical contaminants to be discharged  
27 into Apalachicola Bay, threatening the habitats, wildlife, and  
28 industry that the bay supports, and

29 WHEREAS, the private water utility servicing St. George  
30 Island has expressed a desire to transfer ownership of its  
31 assets and liability to the Eastpoint Water and Sewer District,  
32 and

33 WHEREAS, Florida courts have held that the expansion of the  
34 boundaries of an independent special district with voter-  
35 approved ad valorem tax millage does not create a new district  
36 requiring voter referendum before any ad valorem tax millage is  
37 levied, NOW, THEREFORE,

38  
39 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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41 **Section 1. Section 2 of section 2 of chapter 2023-7, Laws**  
42 **of Florida, is amended, and subsection (19) is added to section**  
43 **8 of that section, to read:**

44 Section 2. Boundaries.—The Eastpoint Water and Sewer  
45 District shall include all that portion of Eastpoint in said  
46 county described as follows:

47  
48 All of Sections 15, 19, 20, 21, 23 and ~~Section~~ 30 and  
49 all of Fractional Sections 29, 31, and 32 in Township  
50 8 South, Range 6 West; All of Section 28 and

Fractional Sections 25 and 36 in Township 8 South, Range 7 West; All of Fractional Section 1 in Township 9 South, Range 7 West; and all of Sections 22 and 29 and Fractional Section 6 in Township 9 South, Range 6 West.

Section 8. Powers of board.—The board may:

(19) Inspect septic tanks within the district to ensure the septic tanks are being operated in compliance with applicable permits and provide reasonable penalties for violations.

**Section 2. Effective October 1 of the year after the date the Eastpoint Water and Sewer District acquires the water utility serving St. George Island as of October 1, 2026, section 2 of section 2 of chapter 2023-7, Laws of Florida, as amended by section 1 of this act, is amended to read:**

Section 2. Boundaries.—The Eastpoint Water and Sewer District shall include all that portion of Eastpoint in said county described as follows:

All of Sections 15, 19, 20, 21, 23 and 30 and all of Fractional Sections 29, 31, and 32 in Township 8 South, Range 6 West; All of Section 28 and Fractional Sections 25 and 36 in Township 8 South, Range 7 West;

HB 4081

2026

76 All of Fractional Section 1 in Township 9 South, Range  
77 7 West; and all of Sections 22 and 29 and Fractional  
78 Section 6 in Township 9 South, Range 6 West.

79  
80 All of St. George Island.

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82  
83 **Section 3.** Except as otherwise expressly provided in this  
84 act, this act shall take effect October 1, 2026.