

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

BILL: CS/SB 544

INTRODUCER: Environment and Natural Resources Committee and Senator Truenow

SUBJECT: Golf Courses

DATE: January 13, 2026

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Carroll	Rogers	EN	Fav/CS
2.			AEG	
3.			FP	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 544 transfers the golf course best management practices (BMPs) certification program, which it titles the “Golf Course Best Management Practices Certification Act,” from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS).

The bill provides a legislative finding that the transfer is appropriate because of the foundational agricultural nature of golf courses and DACS’s current role overseeing similar BMPs programs.

The bill provides that this type two transfer of the golf course BMPs certification program moves to DACS all powers, duties, functions, and administrative authority relating to the golf course BMPs certification.

The bill also provides that any binding contract or interagency agreement existing before July 1, 2026 that relates to the golf course BMPs certification program will continue as a binding contract or agreement for the remainder of the term of such contract or agreement.

II. Present Situation:

Best Management Practices

Best management practices (BMPs) are designed to protect water resources from nonpoint source pollution.¹ BMPs are guidelines containing practical measures that can reduce the effects of fertilizer, nutrients, and water use on the environment and otherwise manage the landscape to further protect water resources.² Producers of nonpoint source pollution within areas covered by a basin management action plan³ are required to comply with the established pollutant reductions in the basin management action plan by either implementing the appropriate BMPs or by conducting water quality monitoring.⁴

A nonpoint source discharger may be subject to enforcement action by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, or a water management district for failing to implement these requirements within a basin management action plan.⁵

Golf Course Best Management Practices Certification

Florida law requires the turfgrass science program at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) to coordinate with DEP to administer the golf course BMP certification program.⁶ The turfgrass science program must provide training and testing programs on golf course BMPs and issue certificates for satisfactory completion of the training. It must also review and approve other training and testing programs.⁷

A golf course BMPs certification expires after four years.⁸ A recertification may be issued if, within 30 days of the expiration, an applicant submits proof of having completed eight classroom hours of continuing education, including two hours focusing on fertilizer BMPs.⁹

A person with a golf course BMPs certification is exempt from additional local training requirements and local ordinances relating to water and fertilizer use blackout periods or

¹ University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension, *Best Management Practices*, <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/agriculture/agriculture-best-management-practices/> (last visited Dec. 18, 2025). Point sources are “any discernible, confined, and discrete conveyance, including any pipe, ditch, channel, tunnel, conduit, well, discrete fissure, container, rolling stock, concentrated animal feeding operation, landfill leachate collection system, vessel or other floating craft from which pollutants are or may be discharged. This term does not include return flows from irrigated agriculture or agricultural stormwater runoff.” Nonpoint sources are not point sources. Fla. Admin. Code R. 62-620.200(37).

² *Id.*

³ Basin management action plans are one of the primary mechanisms the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) use to address the entire pollution load for a watershed, including point and nonpoint discharges. Section 403.067(7), F.S.

⁴ Section 403.067(7)(b)2.g., F.S. For example, best management practices (BMPs) for agriculture include activities such as managing irrigation water to minimize losses, limiting the use of fertilizers, and waste management.

⁵ Section 403.067(7)(b)2.h., F.S., and section 403.067(7)(d), F.S. Producers of nonpoint source pollution included in a basin management action plan must comply with the established pollutant reductions by either implementing the appropriate BMPs or by conducting water quality monitoring. Section 403.067(7)(b)2.g., F.S.

⁶ Section 403.9339(1), F.S.

⁷ Section 403.9339(2), F.S.

⁸ Section 403.9339(4), F.S.

⁹ Section 403.9339(4)-(5), F.S.

restrictions, unless a state of emergency is declared.¹⁰ Additionally, the turfgrass science program may provide the status of certification holders to local and state governmental entities and is encouraged to create a registry of certification holders.¹¹

Golf Course Best Management Practices

The golf course industry in Florida is the largest of any state, with the National Golf Foundation reporting well above a thousand golf courses and facilities located in Florida in 2019.¹² It is important to consider how golf course development and management practices can affect surrounding natural ecosystems.¹³ For example, there are significant environmental concerns with golf course development and management practices that affect soil and water quality, primarily related to nutrients, pesticides, erosion, sediment, and waste handling and disposal.¹⁴ The implementation of BMPs can help mitigate these concerns and give golf courses an environmental advantage over other types of urban development.¹⁵

The golf course BMPs guide, which was published in association with the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, UF/IFAS, and DEP,¹⁶ covers the following topics related to golf course management:

- Environmental monitoring, especially water quality monitoring;
- Environmental concerns during the planning, design, and construction phases;
- Irrigation;
- Nutrient management;
- Turf grass management practices;
- Lake and aquatic plant management;
- Integrated pest management;
- Pesticide management;
- Pollinator protection;
- Maintenance operations; and
- Energy conservation.¹⁷

BMPs in the guide include, but are not limited to the following:

- For design and construction, the golf course should be designed to minimize the need to alter existing native landscapes and should be located to conserve critical wildlife habitat.¹⁸
- For drainage, internal golf course drains should not drain directly into an open waterbody, but should discharge into pretreatment zones or vegetative buffers to remove nutrients and sediment.¹⁹

¹⁰ Section 403.9339(6), F.S.

¹¹ Section 403.9339(8), F.S.

¹² *BMPs for the Enhancement of Env. Quality on FL Golf Courses*, 14 (Sept. 2021), available at <http://flgolfbmp.com/view-the-bmp-guide> (last visited Dec. 19, 2025).

¹³ *BMPs for the Enhancement of Env. Quality on FL Golf Courses* at 20.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 21.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 15-16.

¹⁶ *Best Management Practices for the Enhancement of Env. Quality on Florida Golf Courses*, <https://flgolfbmp.com/> (last visited Dec. 19, 2025).

¹⁷ *See, BMPs for the Enhancement of Env. Quality on FL Golf Courses*.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 35.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 38.

- For reclaimed water, signs should be posted in accordance with local utility and state requirements and information about the quality of the reclaimed water should be obtained at the time of contracting and updated annually.²⁰
- For irrigation system design, the design operating pressure must account for peak use times and supply line pressures at final buildout for the entire system and rain sensors should shut the irrigation system off after a certain amount of rain is received.²¹
- For nutrient management, nutrients should be applied when turfgrass is actively growing and slow-release nitrogen fertilizers should be applied at the appropriate time of year, taking into consideration the release rate of the chosen material.²²

Green Industries Best Management Practices Certification

UF/IFAS currently offers the Green Industries BMPs program, which teaches environmentally safe landscaping practices that protect water quality and natural resources.²³ The program was created for people working in lawn-care and landscape maintenance. Golf course employees are among those who benefit from green industries BMPs training.²⁴

Type Two Transfers

The transfer of an existing agency or department or a program, activity, or function thereof into another agency or department is a type two transfer.²⁵

Any agency or department, or any program, activity, or function thereof that is transferred by a type two transfer will retain its statutory powers, duties, and functions and its records, personnel, property, and unexpended balances of appropriations, allocations, or other funds once transferred.²⁶ The transfer of segregated funds must be made in such a way that the relation between the program and the revenue source is retained.²⁷

DEP currently only has a coordinating role with the turfgrass science program at the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.²⁸ Because of this, DEP does not have any records, offices, personnel, associated administrative support positions, property, pending issues, existing contracts, administrative rules, or unexpended balances of appropriations, allocations, or other funds specific to the golf course best management practices certification program.²⁹

²⁰ *Id.* at 72.

²¹ *Id.* at 78.

²² *Id.* at 153.

²³ UF/IFAS, *Green Industries BMPs*, <https://gibmp.ifas.ufl.edu/> (last visited Dec. 18, 2025); UF/IFAS, *FL Friendly Landscaping Program*, <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/ffl-and-you/gi-bmp-program/> (last visited Dec. 18, 2025).

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Section 20.06(2), F.S.

²⁶ Section 20.06(2)(a), F.S. Those statutory powers, duties, functions, records, personnel, property, and unexpended balances of appropriation, allocations, or other funds that are transferred elsewhere or abolished will not be retained in a type two transfer. *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ Email from Adam Blalock, Department of Environmental Protection (Jan. 6, 2026), on file with the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

²⁹ *Id.*

Unless otherwise provided by law, the head of any agency or department to which any agency or department or a program, activity, or function thereof is transferred may establish units or subunits to which the agency or department is assigned and may assign administrative authority for identifiable programs, activities, or functions, to the extent authorized in statute.³⁰ Further, unless otherwise provided by law, the administrative rules of any agency or department involved in the transfer that are in effect immediately before the transfer remain in effect until specifically changed in the manner provided in law.³¹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 transfers the golf course best management practices (BMPs) certification program from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS). The bill renumbers the section.³²

The bill titles the section the “Golf Course Best Management Practices Certification Act.” It also adds a legislative finding that transferring the golf course BMP certification program to DACS is appropriate because of the foundational agricultural nature of golf courses and because DACS currently oversees BMP programs for sod growing operations and the green industry.

The bill adds that certified participants must abide by BMPs governing fertilizer application on sod. It also defines the “department” as DACS, which reflects the transfer of the certification program to DACS. The bill makes other technical and conforming changes.

Section 2 provides for a type two transfer of the golf course BMPs certification program from DEP to DACS. The transfer includes all powers, duties, functions, and administrative authority relating to the golf course BMPs certification program.

The bill provides that any binding contract or interagency agreement existing before July 1, 2026, between DEP or an entity or agency of DEP and any other agency, entity, or person related to the golf course BMPs certification program will continue as a binding contract or agreement for the remainder of the term of such contract or agreement on the successor entity responsible for the program, activity, or functions relative to the contract or agreement.

Section 3 provides an effective date of July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

³⁰ Section 20.06(2)(b), F.S.

³¹ Section 20.06(2)(c), F.S.

³² The bill renumbers section 403.9339, F.S., to section 604.75, F.S.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 403.9339 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Environment and Natural Resources on January 13, 2026:

The committee substitute clarifies that only the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's powers, duties, functions, and administrative authority with respect to the golf course best management practices certification program will be transferred to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
