

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/CS/SB 1954 — Statewide Flooding and Sea Level Rise Resilience

by Appropriations Committee; Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and Senators Rodrigues and Garcia

The bill establishes statewide programs for adaptation to flooding and sea level rise. The programs are intended to address flooding all across the state. The bill creates:

- The Resilient Florida Grant Program within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to provide grants to counties or municipalities for community resilience planning, such as vulnerability assessments, plan development, and projects to adapt critical assets. The bill provides a comprehensive definition for “critical asset.” Specified information from such vulnerability assessments must be submitted to DEP.
- The Comprehensive Statewide Flood Vulnerability and Sea Level Rise Data Set and Assessment, which must be updated at least every five years. The bill requires DEP to:
 - o By July 1, 2022, develop a statewide data set, including statewide sea level rise projections, containing information necessary to determine the risks of flooding and sea level rise to inland and coastal communities.
 - o By July 1, 2023, develop a statewide assessment, using the statewide data set, identifying vulnerable infrastructure, geographic areas, and communities. The statewide assessment must include an inventory of critical assets.
- The Statewide Flooding and Sea Level Rise Resilience Plan. By December 1, 2021, and each December 1 thereafter, DEP must develop the plan on a three-year planning horizon and submit it to the Governor and Legislature. The plan must consist of ranked projects addressing the risks of flooding and sea level rise to communities in the state. The funding proposed in the plan may not exceed \$100 million in one year and is subject to review and appropriation by the Legislature. Each project must have a minimum 50 percent cost-share unless it assists or is within a financially disadvantaged small community, as defined in the bill. Counties, municipalities, and regional resilience entities are authorized to submit to DEP lists of proposed projects for inclusion in the plan, and water management districts and flood control districts are authorized to submit to DEP lists of proposed projects specifically relating to water supplies or water resources for inclusion in the plan. DEP must assess projects for inclusion in the plan by implementing a four-tiered scoring system specified in the bill.

The bill authorizes DEP to provide funding to regional resilience entities for providing technical assistance to counties and municipalities, coordinating multijurisdictional vulnerability assessments, and developing project proposals for the statewide resilience plan.

The bill requires DEP to initiate rulemaking by August 1, 2021, to implement the statewide resilience programs.

The bill creates the Florida Flood Hub for Applied Research and Innovation (Hub) within the University of South Florida (USF) College of Marine Science. USF’s College of Marine Science or its successor will serve as the lead institution to coordinate efforts to support applied research

and innovation to address flooding and sea level rise in the state. The Hub must conduct activities specified in the bill, including developing data and modeling, coordinating research funds across participating entities, establishing community-based programs, and assisting with training and workforce development. By July 1, 2022, and each July 1 thereafter, the Hub must submit to the Governor and Legislature an annual comprehensive report on its goals and its efforts and progress on reaching those goals.

The bill requires the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to include in its annual assessment of Florida's water resources and conservation lands an analysis of flooding issues, including resilience efforts. When appropriations or expenditures are made to address flooding, the analysis must identify any gaps between estimated revenues and projected expenditures.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 118-0