

## Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

### **CS/CS/HB 1557 — Department of Environmental Protection**

by Infrastructure Strategies Committee; Water Quality, Supply & Treatment Subcommittee; and Rep. Chaney and others (CS/CS/SB 1386 by Fiscal Policy Committee; Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government; and Senator Calatayud)

The bill amends provisions relating to aquatic preserves, resilience, onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems (OSTDSs, otherwise known as septic systems), and wastewater treatment facilities.

The bill requires all applicants for permits to construct and operate a domestic wastewater treatment facility to prepare a reuse feasibility study. Domestic treatment facilities that dispose of effluent by certain means must implement reuse to the extent feasible and must consider the ecological or public water supply benefits afforded by any disposal.

The bill makes revisions to facilitate the ongoing transfer of the OSTDS program from the Department of Health to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) including:

- Creating new procedures for DEP regarding the processing and enforcement of septic tank requirements.
- Directing DEP to adopt rules for a general permit for projects which have, individually or cumulatively, a minimal adverse impact on public health or the environment.
- Directing DEP to establish an enhanced nutrient-reducing OSTDS approval program.

Regarding domestic wastewater treatment facilities and wastewater treatment plans, the bill:

- Requires certain public and private facilities to participate in developing the domestic wastewater treatment plan including providing certain information to the applicable local government.
- Requires certain wastewater treatment facilities that provide reclaimed water within a basin management action plan or reasonable assurance plan area to meet advanced waste treatment standards.

Regarding reclaimed water, the bill:

- Directs the water management districts and DEP to develop rules to promote reclaimed water and encourage potable water offsets that produce significant water savings.
- Authorizes extended permits for those applicants or permittees that propose a development or water resource development project using reclaimed water.

Regarding the Resilient Florida Grant Program, the bill:

- Authorizes DEP to provide grants to counties or municipalities to fund:
  - An update of their inventory of critical assets, including those that are currently or reasonably expected to be impacted by flooding and sea level rise;
  - Development of strategies to enhance community preparations for threats from flooding and sea level rise, including adaptation plans; and

- Permitting for projects designed to achieve reductions in the risks or impacts of flooding and sea level rise using nature-based solutions.
- Requires vulnerability assessments to use data from the Florida Flood Hub that is certified by the Chief Resilience Officer.
- Requires certain data and planning horizons to be used in the assessment.

The bill requires the Comprehensive Statewide Flood Vulnerability and Sea Level Rise Data Set and Assessment to include the 20- and 50-year projected sea level rise at each active National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration tidal gauge off the Florida coast as derived from statewide sea level rise projections.

Regarding the Statewide Flooding and Sea Level Rise Resilience Plan, the bill:

- Authorizes the plan to include projects not yet identified in the comprehensive statewide flood vulnerability and sea level rise assessment at the discretion of DEP and the Chief Resilience Officer.
- Expands the types of projects that can be submitted by local or regional entities.

The bill requires DEP to include the projects funded under the water quality grant program on a user-friendly website or dashboard.

The bill requires the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to provide a publicly-accessible data visualization tool on its website related to its statewide wastewater and stormwater needs analysis.

Regarding aquatic preserves, the bill:

- Provides that it is a noncriminal infraction to operate a vessel outside a lawfully marked channel in a careless manner that causes seagrass scarring within the Nature Coast Aquatic Preserve.
- Declares the Kristin Jacobs Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area to be an aquatic preserve.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

*Vote: Senate 36-0; House 119-0*