

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/CS/SB 494 — Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

by Appropriations Committee, Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and Senator Hutson

The bill revises laws administered by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and other law enforcement entities.

The bill amends the Florida Forever Act to require each lead land managing agency, in consultation with FWC, to consider the feasibility of using a portion of state lands as a gopher tortoise recipient site for all state lands under the management of the agency that are greater than 40 contiguous acres.

The bill directs FWC to improve the public and private gopher tortoise recipient site application review process by December 31, 2022. It directs FWC to encourage the establishment of new recipient sites and update its permitting systems by October 31, 2023. The bill requires FWC to submit a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives regarding gopher tortoise recipient sites by February 1, 2023.

The bill specifies that a vessel is at risk of becoming derelict if it is tied to an unlawful or unpermitted mooring or other structure. The bill specifies the circumstances in which law enforcement may destroy or dispose of a vessel and places liability for costs of vessel removal, storage, destruction, and disposition on the owner or responsible party after notice is given.

The bill specifies that a certificate of title may not be issued for a public nuisance vessel. It adds public nuisance vessels to the definition of abandoned property.

The bill authorizes operation of human-powered vessels in the marked channel of the Florida Intracoastal Waterway for specified reasons. It specifies that a local government cannot create a public bathing beach or swim area in the marked channel of the Florida Intracoastal Waterway or within 100 feet of the marked channel.

The bill authorizes FWC law enforcement officers to use drones to manage and eradicate invasive plants or animals on public lands and to suppress and mitigate wildfire threats.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022 unless otherwise provided.
Vote: Senate 37-0; House 116-0