



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2025-2026

LFIR # 2781

1. Project Title Fort Pierce Seagrass Restoration Project Phase 4

2. Senate Sponsor Erin Grall

3. Date of Request 3/4/2025

4. Project/Program Description

This project will restore 16.5 acres of marine habitat in the Fort Pierce area of the Indian River Lagoon, expanding on a multi-year project that has proven that despite poor water quality, wave energy, and grazing pressure, seagrass can re-establish itself in the IRL. Seagrass cleans the water, stabilizes the sediment, provides critical habitat and food for many species, and sequesters carbon. By expanding into a fourth phase of this project, the seagrass in Fort Pierce can reach a critical mass scale and naturally expand, resulting in double, triple, or even quadruple growth outside of planted areas. Planting sites will be located in areas that encourage natural recruitment into surrounding barren areas; have adequate light availability; and have stable salinity conditions and sufficient water quality necessary for survival and widespread expansion. Herbivory exclusion devices will be placed over planting units to protect them from grazers until the grasses' roots become established.

5. State Agency to receive requested funds Department of Environmental Protection

State Agency contacted? Yes

6. Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2025-2026

Type of Funding	Amount
Operating	950,000
Fixed Capital Outlay	0
Total State Funds Requested	950,000

7. Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (including matching funds available for this project)

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	950,000	100%
Matching Funds		
Federal	0	0%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2025-2026	950,000	100%

8. Has this project previously received state funding? Yes

If yes, provide the most recent instance:

Fiscal Year (yyyy-yy)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		
2023-24	0	1,426,310	SF2140HF2010	No

9. Is future-year funding likely to be requested? Yes

a. If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year. 1,500,000

b. Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.



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A grant application for an FDEP Indian River Lagoon Water Quality Improvements Grant has been submitted (8/2024); awaiting award notification.

Complete questions 10 and 11 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

10. Status of Construction

a. What is the current phase of the project?

☐ Planning ☐ Design ☐ Construction ☐ N/A

b. Is the project "shovel ready" (i.e permitted)?

No

c. What is the estimated start date of construction?

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

e. What funding stream will be used for ongoing operations and maintenance of the project?

11. List the owners of the facility to receive, directly or indirectly, any fixed capital outlay funding. Include the relationship between the owners of the facility and the entity.

12. Details on how the requested state funds will be expended

Spending Category	Description	Amount
Administrative Costs:		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits	Administration, Contracting, and Public Outreach	95,000
Other Salary and Benefits	NA	0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	Hotels, fuel/mileage, Per Diem for site visits, outreach/education events. Production of educational materials.	9,500
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	NA	0
Operational Costs		
Salary and Benefits	NA	0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	NA	0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Nursery grown seagrass production, permitting, installation of seagrass, protection of planting units using herbivory exclusion cages, maintenance of herbivory exclusion cages for one year, monthly monitoring for three years, and regular progress reporting to provide updates on seagrass expansion.	845,500
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering		0
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		950,000

13. Program Performance

a. What specific purpose or goal will be achieved by the funds requested?



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The goal of this project is to expand on previous phases of seagrass restoration in the Fort Pierce area of the IRL. By expanding into a fourth phase of this project, the seagrass in the Fort Pierce area can reach a critical mass scale by which it can naturally expand on its own resulting in double, triple, or even quadruple growth outside of planted areas. Seagrass can reset an ecosystem and prevent the need and costs associated with mitigating harmful algal blooms (HABs). Enhanced meadows will also stabilize sediment, improve water quality, enhance fish habitats, and provide a sustainable source of foraged for starving manatees.

b. What activities and services will be provided to meet the intended purpose of these funds?

An area of approximately 16.5 acres within the IRL will be restored. Nursery-grown seagrass will be planted, protected, and monitored. Planting sites will be strategically located in areas that encourage natural recruitment into the surrounding barren areas; have adequate light availability; and provide stable salinity conditions and sufficient water quality necessary for seagrass survival and widespread expansion. The long-term goal of this project is to demonstrate the effectiveness of using nursery-grown planting units, while helping to create a replicable model for estuaries nationwide that are suffering from seagrass loss. Project updates will be given on social media, distributed in eNewsletters, press releases, and articles. Key messages will focus on water quality improvement through natural habitat restoration. Project will be monitored monthly for three years and regular project reports will document project success.

c. What direct services will be provided to citizens by the appropriation project?

This project will provide water quality improvements to the IRL by restoring 16.5 more acres of seagrass. Restored seagrass will provide habitat and protection for fish and other marine life, while providing a continual food source for manatees. Robust seagrass communities help reduce the risk of flooding, while sequestering carbon (up to 35 times more than terrestrial forests), to build resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change. Seagrass also creates drag in the water column, which attenuates wave energy and reduces erosion in high-energy environments. Enhanced ecosystem services will draw more locals and tourists outdoors for recreational opportunities. Numerous studies have documented the mental health benefits of spending time outdoors. All industries dependent on ecotourism and healthy waterbodies will benefit from enhanced seagrass meadows in the IRL.

d. Who is the target population served by this project? How many individuals are expected to be served?

The IRL has been renowned for its recreational activities since the turn of the 20th century. Currently, over 15% of Florida's restaurants and hotels are located in proximity to the lagoon. By enhancing the health of the IRL, the cultural experience of water-based recreational activities will be protected and enhanced for future generations. According to the EPA's Environmental Justice Mapper (<https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>), there are multiple communities that fall within low income brackets and contain high percentiles of people of color. Bolstering the local economy will serve these disadvantaged communities as well as any Floridian or tourist visiting the area.

e. What is the expected benefit or outcome of this project? What is the methodology by which this outcome will be measured?

According to studies by state agencies, the IRL has lost 58% of its seagrass since 2009. In the area immediately south of the inlet, approximately 200 acres have been lost since 2009. FDEP released a Unit Management Plan (UMP) for Fort Pierce Inlet State Park in 2021 with objectives to monitor and document imperiled plant species, including seagrass. Restored seagrass meadows in the IRL will create a natural filtration system, oxygenate the water, and reduce nutrients, sediments, and pollutants that otherwise could lead to HABs. This project will help achieve the objectives of the UMP. This project is designed as a sustainable long-term restoration and ongoing maintenance is not required (the project will be maintained for 12-months and monitored for three years to ensure its success).

f. What are the suggested penalties that the contracting agency may consider in addition to its standard penalties for failing to meet deliverables or performance measures provided for in the contract?

If deliverables are not achieved, full monies allocated to the deliverable should be withheld.

14. Is this project related to mitigation, response, or recovery from a natural disaster?

a. If Yes, what phase best describes the project?

- ☐ Mitigation (reducing or eliminating potential loss of life or property)
- ☐ Response (addressing the immediate and short-term effects of a natural disaster)



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- ☐ Recovery (assisting communities return to normal operations, including rebuilding damaged infrastructure)

b. Name of the natural disaster (or Executive Order # for events not under a federal declaration):

15. Has the entity applied for or received federal assistance for this project?

- ☐ Yes, Applied
- ☐ Yes, Received
- ☐ No
- ☐ No, but intends to apply

a. If yes, provide the FEMA project worksheet ID#:

b. Provide the total project cost listed on the FEMA project worksheet:

16. Has the entity applied for or received state assistance for this project (other than this request)?

- ☐ Yes, Applied
- ☐ Yes, Received
- ☐ No
- ☐ No, but intends to apply

a. If yes, specify the program and state agency (ex. Local Government Emergency Bridge Loan, Department of Commerce):

Please complete questions 17 through 21 for Water Projects only.

17. Have you been awarded or applied for alternative state funding for this project?

- ☒ Water Quality Improvement Grant Program
- ☐ Resilient Florida Grant Program
- ☐ Wastewater Revolving Loan
- ☐ Drinking Water Revolving Loan
- ☐ Small Community Wastewater Treatment Grant
- ☐ Other (please specify, ex. Alternative Water Supply Grants)
- ☐ N/A



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18. What is the population economic status?

- ☐ Financially Disadvantaged Community (ch. 62-552, F.A.C)
- ☒ Financially Disadvantaged Municipality (ch. 62-552, F.A.C)
- ☐ Rural Area of Economic Concern
- ☐ Rural Area of Opportunity (s. 288.0656, Florida Statutes)
- ☐ N/A

19. What is the status of construction?

Not ready

20. What percentage of the construction has been completed?

0

21. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

04/01/2027

22. Requester Contact Information

a. First Name Last Name

b. Organization

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number Ext.

23. Recipient Contact Information

a. Organization

b. Municipality and County

c. Organization Type

- ☐ For Profit Entity
- ☒ Non Profit 501(c)(3)
- ☐ Non Profit 501(c)(4)
- ☐ Local Entity
- ☐ University or College
- ☐ Other (please specify)

d. First Name Last Name

e. E-mail Address

f. Phone Number Ext.



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24. Lobbyist Contact Information

a. Name	<input type="text" value="Natalie Fausel"/>
b. Firm Name	<input type="text" value="Arrow Group Consulting"/>
c. E-mail Address	<input type="text" value="natalie@anfieldflorida.com"/>
d. Phone Number	<input type="text" value="(561)317-0889"/>

The information provided will be posted to the Florida Senate website for public viewing if sponsored by a Senator.