A bill to be entitled

An act relating to the Florida National Estuary Program Act; creating s. 373.45941, F.S.; providing legislative findings; providing that partnering with the Federal Government and local governments to protect specified water resources is an important state interest; requiring the Department of Environmental Protection to give funding consideration to the conservation and management of specified estuaries identified under the National Estuary Program; requiring that funds be used for specified projects; requiring each program receiving funding to prepare an annual report and submit the report to the Governor, the Legislature, the department, and the respective water management districts; specifying requirements for the report; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 373.45941, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

373.45941 Florida National Estuary Program Act.—
(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.—The Legislature finds that:
(a) Estuaries in the state designated as estuaries of national significance by the United States Congress provide diverse ecologically and economically productive habitats that support many wildlife populations, such as migratory birds, commercially valuable fish species, shellfish, and other species
that depend on estuarine environments;

(b) Significant water quality issues in the state arising from increased pollution from stormwater and agricultural runoff, wastewater discharges, industrial pollution, and commercial and recreational waste are degrading the state’s estuaries of national significance;

(c) Estuaries of national significance identified under the National Estuary Program are governed and funded by federal, state, and local governmental entities, including the department and the respective water management districts;

(d) The natural resource protection and restoration efforts of the National Estuary Program provide substantial public health and economic benefits to the state, including its real estate and tourism sectors;

(e) The state’s estuaries of national significance encompass 50 percent of its coastline and a large proportion of its population and are economically, environmentally, and socially defined by some of the state’s most important and vulnerable water resources; and

(f) There is an important state interest in partnering with the Federal Government and local governments to protect the water resources of the National Estuary Program water bodies in this state identified in paragraph (2)(a) through restoration priorities identified in their respective adopted comprehensive conservation and management plans.

(2) FUNDING.—

(a) The department shall give funding consideration to the conservation and management of the following programs identified under the National Estuary Program and designated pursuant to s.
320 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. s. 1330:

1. Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program.
2. Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership.
3. Tampa Bay Estuary Program.
4. Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

(b) Funds provided pursuant to paragraph (a) must be used for projects identified in the program’s adopted comprehensive conservation and management plan, including, but not limited to, projects that:

1. Improve water quality;
2. Improve fisheries and natural habitats;
3. Enhance resiliency and protect human health, safety, and welfare;
4. Monitor environmental conditions to determine trends and project success;
5. Promote technology innovation and pilot projects that support such innovations; or

(3) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(a) Each National Estuary Program receiving recurring dedicated state funding shall, in coordination with its respective county and municipal governments, prepare a comprehensive annual report for water and habitat resource projects identified for state funding consideration within its jurisdictions. At a minimum, the report must include the:

1. Funds expended on each listed project in the fiscal year and the total estimated cost of each project;
2. Estimated completion date of each listed project;
3. Source and amount of financial assistance provided by
county or municipal governments, water management districts, or other entities for each listed project; and

4. Implementation status of each project that has received state funding but has not been completed.

(b) By January 1 of each year, each National Estuary Program receiving recurring dedicated state funding shall submit its comprehensive annual report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the department, and the appropriate water management districts.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.