

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

**BILL #:** [CS/CS/HB 209](#)

**TITLE:** State Land Management

**SPONSOR(S):** Snyder, Gossett-Seidman

**COMPANION BILL:** [CS/SB 80](#) (Harrell)

**LINKED BILLS:** None

**RELATED BILLS:** None

**FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:** 112 Y's 0 N's

**GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Pending

### SUMMARY

#### Effect of the Bill:

The bill creates the State Park Preservation Act, which requires state parks to be managed for conservation-based recreational uses and in a manner that provides the greatest combination of benefits to the public and the land's natural resources. The bill prohibits the Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) from constructing sporting facilities within state parks. Additionally, the bill authorizes DRP to acquire, install, or permit the installation of campsites and cabins in state parks within certain guidelines and prohibits DRP from installing, or permitting the installation of, lodging establishments within state parks. The bill also requires DEP to provide a report to the Governor and Legislature regarding the status and operation of state parks. The bill redesignates the St. Marks River Preserve State Park as the Ney Landrum State Park. Additionally, the bill revises notice requirements for public meetings related to land management plans.

#### Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill may have an insignificant negative fiscal impact on DEP associated with creating the state parks report.

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## ANALYSIS

### EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill creates the State Park Preservation Act. (Section [1](#))

#### Florida State Parks

The bill requires state parks or preserves to be managed in a manner that provides the greatest combination of benefits to the public and the land's natural resources. Additionally, the bill requires state parks or preserves to be managed for conservation-based recreational uses and associated facilities; public access and related amenities, including roads, parking areas, walkways, and visitor centers; Florida heritage and wildlife viewing, including preservation of historical structures and activities such as glass bottom boat tours; and scientific research, including archeology. Such uses must be managed in a manner that is compatible with and that ensures the conservation of the state's natural resources by minimizing impacts to undisturbed habitat. (Section [3](#))

To ensure the protection of state park resources, native habitats, and archaeological or historical sites, the bill prohibits sporting facilities, including, but not limited to, golf courses, tennis courts, pickleball courts, ball fields, or other sporting facilities, from being constructed within the boundaries of state parks. The bill specifies this prohibition may not be construed to prohibit the continued operation, maintenance, or repair of any such sporting facilities, or other facilities, existing within a state park. (Section [3](#))

The bill defines "conservation-based recreational uses" to mean public outdoor recreational activities that do not significantly invade, degrade, or displace the natural resources, native habitats, or archaeological or historical sites that are preserved within state parks. These activities include, but are not limited to, fishing, camping, bicycling, hiking, nature study, swimming, boating, canoeing, horseback riding, diving, birding, sailing, and jogging. (Section [3](#))

The bill authorizes the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) to acquire, install, or permit the installation or operation of campsites and cabins at state parks. The installation and

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operation of the campsites and cabins must be compatible with the state park's land management plan and must be approved through the land management plan approval process. Additionally, campsites and cabins must be sited to avoid impacts to the state park's critical habitat and natural historical resources. (Section [4](#))

The bill prohibits DRP from authorizing uses or construction activities, including the building or alteration of structures, within the boundaries of a state park that may cause significant harm to the park's resources. Any use or construction activity must be conducted in a manner that avoids impacts to a state park's critical habitat and natural and historical resources. The bill prohibits DRP from installing or permitting the installation at state parks of any lodging establishment. The bill specifies that these prohibitions may not be construed to prohibit the continued operation, maintenance, or repair of any such establishment existing within a state park. (Section [4](#))

The bill redesignates the [St. Marks River Preserve State Park](#), located in Leon and Jefferson Counties, as the [Ney Landrum](#) State Park. (Section [5](#))

By December 1, 2025, the bill requires DEP to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature that includes the following information:

- Park amenities or areas of state parks that have limited use or are closed due to needed repairs, are in need of repair or renovation, or lack the infrastructure necessary to support park purposes as provided for in the park's most recent approved management plan;
- The state park system's estimated budget allocation expenditures for the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year, broken down by salaries and benefits, equipment costs, and contracting costs for the categories of operations, maintenance and repair, park improvement, and administrative overhead; and
- A plan for addressing any needs that have been identified in the report, including estimated costs for opening all such amenities or areas no later than July 1, 2035, to ensure access to and the safe enjoyment of the parks for the residents and visitors of Florida. (Section [7](#))

### **Conservation Land Management**

The bill specifies that in addition to the current requirement for a land management agency to hold a public hearing when developing a new land management plan, the agency must also hold a public hearing when updating an existing plan. The bill requires DEP's Division of State Lands to make electronic copies of [land management plans](#) for parcels over 160 acres or parcels within state parks publicly available at least 30 days before a public hearing on such plans. (Section [2](#))

The bill requires individual management plans, and any updates to such plans, for parcels of land within state parks to be developed with input from an [advisory group](#). A public hearing conducted by an advisory group on an individual management plan must be noticed at least 30 days before the public hearing. (Section [6](#))

Subject to the Governor's veto powers, the effective date of the bill is July 1, 2025. (Section [8](#))

### **FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:**

#### **STATE GOVERNMENT:**

The bill may have an insignificant negative fiscal impact on DEP associated with creating the state parks report.

### **RELEVANT INFORMATION**

#### **SUBJECT OVERVIEW:**

#### **Florida State Parks**

The Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for overseeing Florida's 175 state parks, spanning more than 800,000 acres and 100 miles of coastline.<sup>1</sup> For regulatory purposes, the state is divided into five park regions.<sup>2</sup> As part of overseeing the state parks, DRP is responsible for preserving, managing, and protecting all parks and recreational areas held by the

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<sup>1</sup> DEP, *Division of Recreation and Parks*, <https://floridadep.gov/parks> (last visited Jan. 28, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Section [258.001, F.S.](#)

state.<sup>3</sup> This includes studying the recreational needs of the state and disseminating information about recreation opportunities.<sup>4</sup> Popular recreational activities in state parks include hiking, bicycling, camping, kayaking, canoeing, swimming, fishing, and birding.<sup>5</sup> DRP also has the authority to acquire property in the name of the state to fulfill conservation and recreational goals.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, DRP works with the Division of Historical Resources of the Department of State to select and designate sites of historic interest within state parks.<sup>7</sup>

### **Conservation Land Management**

The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Board) is charged with the management, control, supervision, conservation, and protection of all lands owned or vested to the state or any of its agencies, departments, boards, or commissions.<sup>8</sup> The Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) is a 10-member body that makes recommendations on the acquisition, management, and disposal of state-owned lands to the Board.<sup>9</sup> DEP provides primary staff to support ARC.

State lands acquired as part of land conservation programs are required to be managed to ensure the conservation of the state's plant and animal species and to ensure the accessibility of state lands for the benefit and enjoyment of all people of the state, both present and future.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, all such lands are required to be managed in a manner that provides the greatest combination of benefits to the public and to the natural resources, that provides opportunities for public outdoor recreation that are compatible with the conservation and protection of public lands, and that aligns with the purposes for which the lands were acquired.<sup>11</sup> The Board may lease conservation lands to land management entities, such as state agencies, to ensure conservation lands are being managed appropriately.

### **Land Management Plans**

Land management plans are a mechanism the state uses to ensure conservation lands that have been leased to land managers are being properly managed in accordance with conservation and recreation goals. Land managers must submit a land management plan at least every 10 years to the Division of State Lands (DSL) within DEP for review.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the land management plan must be updated when the land manager proposes new facilities, makes substantive land use or management changes that were not addressed in the approved plan, or within one year after the addition of significant new lands.<sup>13</sup> When developing land management plans, at least one public hearing must be held in any one impacted county.<sup>14</sup> DSL must make electronic copies publicly available of each land management plan for parcels that exceed 160 acres in size.<sup>15</sup>

### **Advisory Group**

Individual land management plans for parcels over 160 acres in size must be developed with input from an advisory group.<sup>16</sup> The advisory group must include representatives from the lead land management agency, co-managing entities, local private property owners, the appropriate soil and water conservation district, a local conservation organization, and a local elected official.<sup>17</sup> The advisory group must hold one publicly noticed hearing within the county where the parcel or project is located.<sup>18</sup> If the parcel or project extends beyond one county, an

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<sup>3</sup> Section [258.004\(2\), F.S.](#)

<sup>4</sup> Section [258.004\(3\), F.S.](#)

<sup>5</sup> DEP, *Division of Recreation and Parks*, <https://floridadep.gov/parks> (last visited Jan. 28, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Section [258.007\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>7</sup> Section [258.007\(5\), F.S.](#)

<sup>8</sup> Section [253.03\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>9</sup> Section [259.035\(3\), F.S.](#)

<sup>10</sup> Section [253.034\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Section [253.034\(5\), F.S.](#)

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Section [253.034\(5\)\(f\), F.S.](#)

<sup>15</sup> Section [253.034\(5\)\(g\), F.S.](#)

<sup>16</sup> Section [259.032\(8\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

areawide meeting must be held within the county where the core parcels are located.<sup>19</sup> In the case of an areawide meeting, the lead land management agency must invite a local elected official from each county.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Land Management Plan Review***

DSL reviews land management plans for consistency with short-term and long-term management goals. The plans must, at a minimum, contain the following information:

- A physical description of the land.
- A quantitative data description of the land that includes an inventory of forest and other natural resources; exotic and invasive plants; hydrological features; infrastructure; and other significant land, cultural, or historical features.
- A detailed description of each short-term and long-term management goal, associated measurable objectives, and the related activities that will be performed to meet the land management objectives.
- A schedule of land management activities and a summary of the budget for such activities.

Once completed, the land management plan is sent to ARC for review. ARC has 90 days to review the plan and make recommendations to the Board. Once approved by the Board, a land management plan is effective. If a land management entity fails to comply with the requirements of a land management plan, the state may revoke a state lands lease.<sup>21</sup>

### **St. Marks River Preserve State Park**

The St. Marks River Preserve is located along the banks of the St. Marks River headwaters.<sup>22</sup> The park consists of multi-use trails for hikers, bikers, and equestrians.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the park has varied ecosystems including wetlands and forests, creating diverse habitats for many Florida native species such as the Florida black bear, gopher tortoises, various species of birds, and other flora and fauna.<sup>24</sup>

### **Ney Landrum**

Ney Landrum (1931-2017) is considered the father of the modern Florida State Park System.<sup>25</sup> He was the director of the Florida State Parks from 1970 to 1989, and became known for his dedication to preserving Florida's natural spaces by expanding the state park system into one of the largest systems in the country.<sup>26</sup> Once he retired, Landrum was recognized for his work by the Governor and Cabinet, and was conferred the title of Director Emeritus of Florida State Parks.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, after he retired from his position as the Director of the Florida State Parks System, he became the first executive director of the National Association of State Park Directors.<sup>28</sup>

### **The 2024-2025 Great Outdoors Initiative**

On August 19, 2024, DEP announced the 2024-2025 Great Outdoors Initiative to Increase Public Access, Recreation, and Lodging at Florida State Parks.<sup>29</sup> DEP intended to "expand public access, increase outdoor activities, and provide new lodging options across Florida's state parks" by increasing the number of campsites, cabins, and lodges on park property, as well as adding amenities like pickleball courts and golf courses.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> DEP, *Land Stewardship*, <https://floridadep.gov/lands/environmental-services/content/land-stewardship> (last visited Jan. 29, 2025).

<sup>22</sup> State Parks, *St. Marks River Preserve State Park Brochure*, [https://www.floridastateparks.org/sites/default/files/media/file/St%20Marks%20River%20SP\\_00225\\_Inset\\_Trifold\\_Bro\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.floridastateparks.org/sites/default/files/media/file/St%20Marks%20River%20SP_00225_Inset_Trifold_Bro_WEB.pdf) (last visited May 1, 2025).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> Visit Florida. *Ney C. Landrum*, <https://www.visitflorida.org/about-us/award-programs/florida-tourism-hall-of-fame/inductees/2011-inductee/> (last visited May 1, 2025).

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> Florida Park Service Ranger Association, *Ney Landrum Florida State Parks Director, 1970-1989*, <https://fpsra.org/Ney-Landrum> (last visited May 1, 2025).

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> DEP, *DEP Announces 2024-25 Great Outdoors Initiative to Increase Public Access, Recreation and Lodging at Florida State Parks*, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/FLDEP/bulletins/3afd277> (last visited Feb. 24, 2025).

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

announcement noted that these plans will “reinforce the state’s dedication to conservation, the outdoor recreation economy, and a high quality of life for Floridians.”<sup>31</sup>

On August 20, DEP noticed public meetings to be held on August 27 to review and update the land management plans of nine state parks, which included Anastasia, Camp Helen, Dr. Von. D Mizell Eula Johnson, Grayton Beach, Hillsborough River, Honeymoon, Jonathan Dickinson, Oleta River, and Topsail Hill Preserve State Parks. The proposed changes to the land management plans were published on August 20 and included proposals to build an 18-hole golf course,<sup>32</sup> 350-room capacity lodges,<sup>33</sup> pickleball courts,<sup>34</sup> and disc golf courses.<sup>35</sup> Following strong bipartisan opposition, the proposed plans were withdrawn.

**OTHER RESOURCES:**

- [Inventory of Outdoor Recreational Opportunities](#)
- [Current DRP Land Management Plans](#)
- [Withdrawn Great Outdoors Initiative Land Management Plans](#)

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<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> DEP, *Jonathan Dickinson State Park Unit Management Plan Amendment*, available at [https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Jonathan%20Dickinson%20UMP%20Amendment%202024\\_0.pdf](https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Jonathan%20Dickinson%20UMP%20Amendment%202024_0.pdf) (last visited Jan. 28, 2025).

<sup>33</sup> DEP, *Anastasia State Park Unit Management Plan*, available at <https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Anastasia%20UMP%20Amendment%202024%20%281%29.pdf> (last visited Jan. 28, 2025).

<sup>34</sup> DEP, *Honeymoon Island State Park Unit Management Plan*, available at [https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Honeymoon%20Island%20UMP%20Amendment%202024\\_0.pdf](https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Honeymoon%20Island%20UMP%20Amendment%202024_0.pdf) (last visited Jan. 28, 2025).

<sup>35</sup> DEP, *Grayton Beach State Park Unit Management Plan*, available at [https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Grayton%20Beach%20UMP%20Amendment%202024\\_0.pdf](https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Grayton%20Beach%20UMP%20Amendment%202024_0.pdf) (last visited Jan. 28, 2025).