



Resilient and Sustainable Florida

Policy Position Statement:

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation that promotes a resilient and sustainable Florida, including:

- Funding for water quality improvements.
- Establishing policies and funding for alternative water supply development.
- Providing for intergovernmental coordination and planning on strategies to address climate challenges such as drought, coastal flooding and inland flooding.
- Enabling local authority to implement natural resource protection strategies.

Background:

Water Quality & Alternative Water Supply

- The development of alternatives to ground and surface water for public users will be critical for meeting the demands of population growth while accommodating needs of agricultural and industrial users.
- To provide safe and sustainable sources for water supply, Florida must plan and develop alternative water sources that can sustain water supplies in times of drought. Such sources should include the consideration of incorporating reclaimed water as a reliable and sustainable source integral to a wholistic “one-water” approach to water supply.
- CS/CS/SB 712, passed in 2020, requires local governments to undertake additional projects to improve water quality. The bill establishes a wastewater grant program but does not provide a source of dedicated funding.
- Concern is growing about the presence of Per- and Polyflouro Alkyl Substances (PFAS) in soil, groundwater and drinking water. Local governments will face significant financial challenges in addressing potential PFAS contamination.
- State funding assistance can help offset the financial challenges for municipalities in developing alternative water supplies, improving water quality and addressing the growing threat of PFAS.
- For FY 2020-21, the Legislature appropriated \$40 million for alternative water supplies, \$25 million in matching grants for septic-to-sewer conversions and wastewater upgrades, \$50 million for springs restoration and \$25 million for the Total Maximum Daily Load program.
- Increased state funding assistance may be limited by budget constraints in 2021. If so, the Legislature should strive to at least maintain its current level of commitments.

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Coastal and Inland Flooding

- Florida's local governments face increasing threats to property and infrastructure from sea level rise, coastal flooding and inland flooding from extreme weather events.
- The 2019 Annual Report from Florida's chief resilience officer stated that efforts to address resiliency in Florida are disjointed and led largely through siloed local efforts and that the state lacks a statewide strategy.
- Communities are overwhelmed by the demands of addressing resiliency challenges alone and need a place to turn for guidance, information sharing and financial and technical assistance.
- Florida would benefit from an interagency program to assist the state and local governments in assessing and responding to the effects of climate change, including development of an annual resiliency plan to assess climate effects and to make recommendations on mitigation strategies.

Natural Resource Protection Strategies

- Local government tree protections benefit natural habitats, climate adaptation and mitigation, nutrient uptake and filtration, stormwater management, open space, quality of life and community character.
- Section 163.045, Florida Statutes, is intended to provide a limited exemption for residential property owners to remove an imminently dangerous tree without a local permit. Vague and undefined terms in the statute have led to conflict and abuses, including the removal of trees on empty lots to accommodate new development.
- The statute should be clarified to close loopholes to address ongoing abuses of the law that are jeopardizing essential natural resource protection strategies.

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