

Legislative Issue Brief

2017 LEGISLATIVE DAYS



Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir Proposal—**OPPOSE**

SB 10 – Sen. Rob Bradley (R-SD 5)**HB 761** – Rep. Thad Altman (R-HD 52)

What does this legislation do?

This legislation removes 60,000 acres of the most productive farmland in the world from agricultural production. The land would be used to build a reservoir with the goal of reducing discharges from Lake Okeechobee east and west to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries.

Specifically, this legislation requires the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to seek proposals from willing sellers of land within the EAA suitable to build one or two reservoirs with a total storage capacity of 360,000 acre feet. If the SFWMD is unable to acquire such land, the state would exercise the option to purchase more than 150,000 acres of U.S. Sugar land at fair market value pursuant to the 2010 agreement. If land is not acquired pursuant to the first two options, Legacy Florida funding is increased by \$50 million annually for CERP, including the EAA Reservoir project component.

Why is this legislation important?

The EAA is among the most fertile and productive farmland in the world and our country's largest supplier of winter vegetables including sweet corn, radishes, green beans, lettuce and other leafy greens, as well as rice and sugarcane. SB 10 is an expensive and radical proposal for a reservoir that would do little to reduce water discharges like the ones experienced in the summer of 2016 and ignores much more effective options to reduce pollutants entering Lake Okeechobee and invest in the completion of existing environmental restoration projects.

Farm Bureau Policy:

221. Environmental Mandates and Restoration

Environmental mandates or any other governmental entity's regulatory management of agriculture must be based on sound, scientific data.

232. Everglades Restoration Programs

We support the continuation of agricultural production in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA), the C-139 basin and the Northern Everglades. We support the Everglades Forever Act, the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP), the Integrated Delivery Schedule, and the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project (collectively, the Everglades Restoration Programs). Any changes made in the Everglades Restoration Programs must be based on sound, scientific evidence and a cost-benefit analysis.

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Pollution Notification

SB 532 – Sen. Bill Galvano (R-SD 21)
69)

HB 1065 – Rep. Kathleen Peters (R-HD)

What does this legislation do?

This legislation codifies in Florida Statutes the “Public Notice of Pollution Act,” enhancing public transparency through reporting by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This legislation requires DEP to establish and public the types and amounts of a substance that, if released, would constitute a reportable release, providing needed predictability and stability to public notification of pollution events. Additionally, this legislation helps to streamline the communications process between the entity reporting the pollution event, DEP, and the public.

Why is this legislation important?

In response to a St. Petersburg sewage leak and a sinkhole event at a Mosaic property, DEP issued a rule in 2016 requiring businesses to report pollution events to the media, placing the burden of public notification on individual businesses. Florida Farm Bureau, along with other business organizations, challenged that rule and won. Florida Farm Bureau supports this legislation because it provides enhanced public transparency of pollution events without placing additional hardships or burdens on private business. This legislation relies on DEP to continue reporting pollution events to the public.

Farm Bureau Policy:

221. Environmental Mandates and Restoration

Environmental mandates or any other governmental entity's regulatory management of agriculture must be based on sound, scientific data. Further, we recommend that in cases where an agricultural industry will be affected and removed as an accused source of pollution, that the area in question be monitored to ascertain if the removal will rectify the problem.

We encourage legislation that provides fast track recourse for landowners who are unjustly slandered or adversely affected by environmental mandates or restoration projects.

No single sector of the economy should pay a disproportionate share of the cost of any ecosystem restoration program.

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Sales Tax Exemptions

SB – Sen. Keith Perry (R-SD 8)**HB 765** – Rep. Stan McClain (R-HD 23)

What does this legislation do?

Animal Health Products

This legislation creates a specific sales tax exemption for prescription and non-prescription animal health products used for poultry and livestock.

Trailers Used in Agricultural Production

In 2015, the first \$20,000 of the purchase price of trailers weighing less than 12,000 pounds and used exclusively for agricultural production were exempted from sales tax. This legislation raises the threshold of that sales tax exemption from \$20,000 to \$25,000, capturing a vast majority of trailers used in agricultural production and transport.

Farm Fencing

Fencing is a necessary, essential and expensive tool used in agricultural production and this legislation exempts all fencing products used on a farm from sales tax.

Compressed or Liquefied Oxygen

Compressed or liquefied oxygen is an integral part of certain parts of aquaculture production and this legislation provides an exemption from sales tax on this product.

Why is this legislation important?

Florida Farm Bureau continues to fight for our mission of increasing the net income of farmers and ranchers and eliminating any competitive disadvantage facing our state's agricultural producers. This year is no different. This legislative tax relief package eliminates state sales tax on important and expensive agricultural inputs that will help keep our family farms in business and strengthen the agricultural industry.

Farm Bureau Policy:

32. Animal Health Products

We support the continued sale of over-the-counter health products and oppose further restrictions on their use.

200. State Sales Tax Exemptions

We support a phase-out of sales and use tax for all inputs for farms.

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Agriculture Legislative Package

SB – Sen. Keith Perry (R-SD 8)**HB** – Rep. Jake Raburn (R-HD 57)

What does this legislation do?

The 2017 general agricultural legislative package has several provisions that will impact agriculture. Florida Farm Bureau worked with other agricultural organizations to create a general agriculture package prior to the 2017 legislative session in an effort to provide help, support and solutions to several challenges facing the agriculture industry within one piece of legislation.

This bill has four main components:

Restricted Truck Tags (Farm Bureau Policy #213)

- The bill expands the travel radius of trucks with restricted farm tags from a limited 150-mile radius around the farms to statewide.
- Restricted tags may be purchased for trucks used exclusively in agriculture production at a greatly reduced cost. Trucks weighing less than 44,000 pounds can get a tag for \$87.75 instead of up to \$405. Trucks weighing more than 44,000 pounds can get a tag for \$324 instead of up to \$1,322.
- Because of reductions in buying points and markets, many times farmers must haul products more than 150 miles.
- This will help reduce costs for farmers and ranchers without having a large impact on the state budget.

Farm Product Definition (Farm Bureau Policy #193, #197)

- The bill simply clarifies the definition of “Farm Product” in the Right to Farm Law to ensure that only farm animals are covered under the definition.
- The current law defines a farm product as “any plant, animal or insect useful to humans...” This overly broad definition could allow the production of non-agricultural animals to be protected by the Right to Farm Law because they are in some way “useful to humans.”
- The definition would be revised to be “any plant...useful to humans, livestock as defined in 468.382(6), poultry, aquaculture and bees.”

Trespassing (Farm Bureau Policy #155)

- The bill simplifies and streamlines Florida trespassing laws so that farmers and landowners can easily mark their property lines in a way that lasts longer and is easily identifiable to potential trespassers.
- Instead of requiring posted signs every 500 feet, the bill allows orange vertical stripes to be painted on trees or posts every 100 feet.

Supplemental Pesticide Fee Repeal (Farm Bureau Policy #112)

- The bill repeals the Supplemental Pesticide Fee that was enacted around 2008 in an attempt to help balance the budget during the recession.
- Many other fees were instituted at that time but have since been repealed because they are no longer needed.

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UF/IFAS Budget Requests

Background

Florida Farm Bureau has been a long-time advocate and supporter of the University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) and the work it does for Florida's agriculture industry. UF/IFAS is a nationwide leader in agricultural research and science, and Florida's farmers and ranchers are blessed to have a great partnership and working relationship with the university and extension.

Florida Farm Bureau will continue to be an advocate for fully funding research and teaching dollars that are essential to ensuring that Florida and American agriculture remain on the cutting edge of technological advancements and resources. This enables our farmers to stay competitive and relevant, and helps us feed the world.

UF/IFAS Budget Requests

Workload Formula Increase (\$3.985 million)

- Provides funds for increased demand for UF/IFAS research and extension activities based on the delivery of research information to IFAS clientele throughout Florida. The costs are determined based on a formula that accounts for everything including patents and licenses, field consultants, research materials, educational materials, group learning events. Etc.

Water Quantity and Quality BMP Support Project (\$1.8 million)

- Provides UF/IFAS with resources to work on the development of the next generation of Best Management Practices (BMPs). These funds will enable UF/IFAS to develop an organizational structure to provide a truly statewide BMP extension and research program and improve the current BMP program providing grower education of BMPs and BMP research. This effort would provide resources to enable UF/IFAS to partner with other agencies to accomplish the goals set out in the comprehensive water policy bill passed during the 2016 legislative session.

Infrastructure and Equipment Upgrades to Research and Education Centers

- Southwest Florida REC Facility Upgrades (\$1 million)
- Suwannee Valley Agricultural Extension Center Upgrade (\$1.919 million)
- Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC) facility renovations (\$3.9 million)

Farm Bureau Policy

95. The University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

- We urge the Legislature to recognize that the UF/IFAS budget is a unique budget item of the state that provides for economic development and consumer benefits.
- We urge the Florida Legislature and Congress to provide funding to UF/IFAS to primarily meet the challenges of commercial agriculture in this state.
- We strongly support the continuation of UF/IFAS as an integrated research, teaching and extension program and a separate budgetary unit for conducting the food and agricultural programs at UF.

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FDACS Budget & Policy Requests

Background

Florida Farm Bureau will support the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and Commissioner Adam Putnam's efforts to assist and serve Florida's agriculture industry. Fully funding programs and departments within FDACS is extremely important to the efficiency and effectiveness of farmers and ranchers and their ability to improve agricultural production, trade, water conservation and environmental stewardship, transport, and more.

Reforming Florida's Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)

SB 600 – Sen. Denise Grimsley (R-SD 26)

HB 333 – Rep. Chuck Clemons (R-HD 21)

Florida's rural communities are currently experiencing additional challenges compared to their urban counterparts in many quality of life indicators. The state has an opportunity to improve the economic competitiveness of Florida's rural communities by reforming REDI.

Specifically, this bill will:

- Focus the mission of REDI on challenges rural communities face in the areas of workforce development and education, infrastructure, and access to healthcare.
- Streamline REDI membership and put decision-makers at the table.
- Make REDI a real tool for rural communities as they navigate through the red tape of state government.

Legislative Budget Request Summary

Agricultural Water Policy: (Farm Bureau Policy #249)

- \$15 million in Land Acquisition Trust Fund Fixed Capital Outlay funding to address agricultural nutrient water retention projects at the basin, sub-basin and farm levels in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. (#232)
- \$5.5 million in the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to promote rotational crop practices within Florida's spring sheds. (#232)
- \$1.5 million in General Revenue funding for agricultural water supply planning and conservation programs. (#243)
- Base funding for the BMP program of \$8.9 million in general revenue and \$23.7 million in Trust Fund revenue. (#232)

Florida Forest Service:

- \$50 million in Florida Forever funding for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. (#179)
- \$3 million in General Revenue funding for reforestation projects on private lands. (#68)

Plant Pest and Disease Control:

Citrus Issues

- \$8 million in General Revenue funding for citrus greening research. (#186, #171)
- \$7.1 million in trust funding to support the Citrus Health Response Program (CHRP). (#172)
- \$2.5 million in General Revenue transfer funding to support the Citrus Inspection Trust Fund. (#171)

Animal Pest and Disease:

- \$4.1 million of General Revenue funding to complete construction of a new testing facility at the Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic lab in Kissimmee. (#172)

Agricultural Products Marketing:

- \$4.5 million in General Revenue funding for the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign. (#158)