

## CHAPTER 2023-47

### Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 724

An act relating to the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative; creating s. 403.93344, F.S.; providing legislative intent; defining terms; establishing the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative within the Department of Environmental Protection; providing the purpose and goal of the initiative; providing for funding; specifying allowable uses of the funding; requiring the creation of a 10-year Florida Seagrass Restoration Plan; requiring the initiative to submit an annual report by a specified date to the Governor, the Legislature, the Secretary of Environmental Protection, and the executive director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; establishing the Initiative Technology Advisory Council as part of the initiative; providing for the meetings, membership, terms of office, and compensation of the advisory council; requiring the department to implement seagrass restoration projects, subject to legislative appropriation, that are procured on a specified basis; providing for the expiration of the initiative; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 403.93344, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

403.93344 Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative; Initiative Technology Advisory Council.—

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a collaborative and coordinated effort among public and private research entities to develop restoration technologies and approaches to address the loss of seagrass and the cascading ecological and economic impacts of that loss to communities in this state.

(2) As used in this section, the term:

(a) “Department” means the Department of Environmental Protection.

(b) “Initiative” means the Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative.

(c) “Program” means the Aquatic Preserve Program within the department’s Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection.

(3) The Seagrass Restoration Technology Development Initiative is established within the department as a partnership between the program, Mote Marine Laboratory, and the University of Florida.

(a) The purpose of the initiative is to take the lead in and expedite the development of cost-efficient innovative technologies and approaches that are critically needed to restore coastal seagrass ecosystems by building upon research and restoration efforts in the public and private sectors.

(b) The goal of the initiative is to develop, test, and implement innovative, effective, cost-efficient, and environmentally sustainable technologies and approaches for restoring coastal seagrass ecosystems.

(c) The department shall award funds specifically appropriated by the Legislature for the initiative to Mote Marine Laboratory, which shall function as the lead administrative component to achieve the goals of the initiative.

1. Mote Marine Laboratory may, with the concurrence of the department, use a portion of the awarded funds to facilitate additional engagement with other pertinent marine science and technology development organizations in this state and around the world to pursue applied research and technology for the successful restoration of seagrass ecosystems.

2. Mote Marine Laboratory may not use more than 5 percent of its awarded funds for direct annual initiative administration and coordination costs.

3. The initiative shall leverage state-appropriated funds with additional funds from private and federal sources.

(d) In collaboration with the program, Mote Marine Laboratory and the University of Florida shall create a 10-year Florida Seagrass Restoration Plan to implement tools and technologies developed under the initiative.

(e) Beginning January 15, 2024, and each January 15 thereafter until its expiration, the initiative shall submit a report that contains an overview of its accomplishments to date and priorities for subsequent years to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Secretary of Environmental Protection, and the executive director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

(4) The Initiative Technology Advisory Council, an advisory council as defined in s. 20.03, is established as part of the initiative. The advisory council's membership must include marine science, technology development, and natural resource management representatives from this state's aquatic preserves, private organizations, and public or private research institutions. The council shall meet at least twice annually.

(a) The council shall be co-chaired by the president and chief executive officer of Mote Marine Laboratory and a representative from the University of Florida and shall be composed of the following members:

1. One member from a private commercial enterprise, appointed by the Governor.

2. One member from a public or private university in this state, appointed by the President of the Senate.

3. One member from a non-university public or private marine environmental organization, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

4. One member from the program who has expertise in seagrass ecosystems, appointed by the Secretary of Environmental Protection.

5. One member from the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute who has expertise in seagrass, appointed by the executive director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

(b) Council members shall serve staggered 2-year terms and may be reappointed.

(c) Council members shall serve without compensation, and each organization represented shall cover all expenses of its respective representative.

(5) Pending the completion of the research conducted pursuant to this section and any recommendations of the council, the department shall, subject to legislative appropriation, implement seagrass restoration projects that are procured on a payment-for-performance basis to protect the investment made by this state in seagrass restoration efforts.

(6) This section expires June 30, 2028.

Section 2. Beginning in the 2023-2024 fiscal year, and for each fiscal year thereafter through the 2027-2028 fiscal year, the sum of \$2 million is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Environmental Protection for the purpose of implementing s. 403.93344, Florida Statutes, as created by this act.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.

Approved by the Governor May 11, 2023.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 11, 2023.