

CHAPTER 2023-126

House Bill No. 641

An act relating to the restoration of Osborne Reef; providing legislative findings and intent; requiring the Department of Environmental Protection to submit a status report on the Osborne Reef cleanup and tire removal project to the Legislature by a specified date; requiring the department to develop a restoration plan for the reef by a specified date; providing requirements for the restoration plan; requiring the department to submit a report to the Legislature upon completion of the plan; providing requirements for the report; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Osborne Reef; restoration plan.—

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—

(a) The Legislature finds that:

1. More than 1 million tires were deposited in the ocean off the coast of Broward County during the 1970s to create an artificial reef habitat by providing structures to which coral could attach and attract additional marine life; however, many of the tires have corroded, broken loose, and dislodged along the coastline, damaging the existing fragile coral reef system and prompting the Legislature to appropriate millions of dollars to retrieve the tires.

2. Coral reefs are an important part of this state's coastal ecosystem, creating habitats that provide shelter, food, and breeding grounds for plants and animals.

(b) The Legislature intends to restore Osborne Reef to being capable of creating a habitat for plants and animals, and to dedicate resources toward restoring the artificial reef and the nearby natural coral reef systems once the cleanup of the site has been completed.

(2) STATUS REPORT.—By December 1, 2023, the Department of Environmental Protection shall submit a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the status of the Osborne Reef cleanup and tire removal project. At a minimum, the report must include a description of the condition of the remaining Osborne Reef structure, any restoration efforts undertaken to restore the reef structure, the number of tires retrieved since the project began and the number of tires that still need to be retrieved, and an estimated timeline for the completion of the cleanup and tire removal project.

(3) RESTORATION PLAN.—

(a) By July 1, 2024, the Department of Environmental Protection shall develop a comprehensive coral reef restoration plan for Osborne Reef to be commenced, subject to appropriation by the Legislature, upon the completion of the cleanup and tire removal project. At a minimum, the restoration plan must include a preliminary plan for the restoration of the existing reef, the restoration of any nearby natural reefs that were destroyed by the tire installation, the shifting of resources from tire retrieval to reef restoration, and coordination with other coral reef restoration projects and resources.

(b) Upon completion of the plan, the department shall provide a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The report must include an update on the status of the restoration plan and any recommendations for statutory changes necessary to achieve the identified restoration goals.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.

Approved by the Governor May 24, 2023.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 24, 2023.