

CHAPTER 2026-2

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 1417

An act relating to the Department of Environmental Protection; amending s. 20.255, F.S.; removing provisions creating the Environmental Regulation Commission; amending s. 163.3205, F.S.; requiring certain solar facility permit applicants to incorporate certain protections in the development and implementation of erosion and sediment control plans for the construction of such facilities; specifying requirements for such plans; providing requirements for certain operational phase stormwater management systems; requiring solar facility operators to implement specified construction and operational permit requirements; amending s. 255.065, F.S.; revising the definition of the term “qualifying project”; amending s. 373.469, F.S.; specifying that commercial and residential properties of a specified size with existing onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems, and located in a certain area, must connect to a central sewer or upgrade to a specified type of nutrient-reducing wastewater treatment system; requiring a permitting agency to notify a property owner of such requirement if the agency, before a certain date, receives an application to repair, modify, or replace a conventional onsite sewage treatment and disposal system on certain property; creating s. 380.0934, F.S.; providing definitions; authorizing the department to take certain actions to encourage private sector investment in coastal resiliency projects; requiring the department to publish certain information on its website; amending s. 403.0872, F.S.; revising the date by which certain major permitted sources of air pollution must pay an annual operation license fee; authorizing the department to impose penalties; removing provisions relating to certain administrative costs; repealing s. 403.804, F.S., relating to the powers and duties of the Environmental Regulation Commission; amending ss. 120.81, 373.421, 376.302, 403.031, 403.061, 403.067, 403.1838, 403.704, 403.707, 403.7222, 403.7234, 403.803, 403.805, 403.8055, and 403.814, F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; reenacting s. 373.4595, F.S., relating to the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 403.067, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting s. 403.0873, F.S., relating to the Florida Air-Operation License Fee Account, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 403.1838, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting s. 403.1835(3)(d), F.S., relating to water pollution control financial assistance, to incorporate the amendment made to s. 403.1838, F.S., in a reference thereto; ratifying specified rules relating to the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Priority Springs minimum flows and recovery strategy for the sole and exclusive purpose of satisfying any condition on effectiveness pursuant to s. 120.541(3), F.S., which requires ratification of any rule exceeding the specified thresholds for likely adverse impact or increase in regulatory costs; providing construction; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (6) of section 20.255, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

20.255 Department of Environmental Protection.—There is created a Department of Environmental Protection.

~~(6) There is created as a part of the Department of Environmental Protection an Environmental Regulation Commission. The commission shall be composed of seven residents of this state appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate. In making appointments, the Governor shall provide reasonable representation from all sections of the state. Membership shall be representative of agriculture, the development industry, local government, the environmental community, lay citizens, and members of the scientific and technical community who have substantial expertise in the areas of the fate and transport of water pollutants, toxicology, epidemiology, geology, biology, environmental sciences, or engineering. The Governor shall appoint the chair, and the vice chair shall be elected from among the membership. All appointments shall be for 4-year terms. The Governor may at any time fill a vacancy for the unexpired term. The members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but shall be paid travel and per diem as provided in s. 112.061 while in the performance of their official duties. Administrative, personnel, and other support services necessary for the commission shall be furnished by the department. The commission may employ independent counsel and contract for the services of outside technical consultants.~~

Section 2. Subsection (5) of section 163.3205, Florida Statutes, is renumbered as subsection (6), and a new subsection (5) is added to that section, to read:

163.3205 Solar facility approval process; construction requirements.—

(5) CONSTRUCTION BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.—

(a)1. An applicant for permits required under s. 373.413 shall incorporate site-specific and appropriate additional protections in the development and implementation of an erosion and sediment control plan for the construction of a solar facility. Such plans must include, but are not limited to, all of the following:

a. Soil percolation testing on the premises of a proposed solar facility.

b. Implementation of stormwater best management practices and related erosion controls for runoff during the construction of a solar facility that are based on rainfall amounts up to the 100-year, 24-hour design storm for the project site.

c. Clearing and stabilization in phases as needed to reduce disturbed portions of the project site which may be susceptible to erosion during construction.

2. Inspections must be performed by a certified Florida Stormwater, Erosion, and Sedimentation Control Inspector during construction to ensure the plan is being implemented in accordance with the permitting requirements under s. 373.413.

(b) Within the jurisdictional boundary of the Northwest Florida Water Management District, an operational phase stormwater management system permitted under part IV of chapter 373 that serves a solar facility must be designed based on the 100-year, 24-hour design storm for the project site. This paragraph applies to applications for new solar facilities filed after July 1, 2026.

(c) The operator of a solar facility or a proposed solar facility shall implement all construction and operational permit requirements developed and applicable under paragraph (a).

Section 3. Paragraph (i) of subsection (1) of section 255.065, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

255.065 Public-private partnerships.—

(1) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

(i) “Qualifying project” means:

1. A facility or project that serves a public purpose, including, but not limited to, any ferry or mass transit facility, vehicle parking facility, airport or seaport facility, rail facility or project, fuel supply facility, oil or gas pipeline, medical or nursing care facility, recreational facility, sporting or cultural facility, or educational facility or other building or facility that is used or will be used by a public educational institution, or any other public facility or infrastructure that is used or will be used by the public at large or in support of an accepted public purpose or activity;

2. An improvement, including equipment, of a building that will be principally used by a public entity or the public at large or that supports a service delivery system in the public sector;

3. A water, wastewater, or surface water management facility or other related infrastructure; or

4. A coastal resiliency project as defined in s. 380.0934(1); or

~~5.4.~~ Notwithstanding any provision of this section, for projects that involve a facility owned or operated by the governing board of a county, district, or municipal hospital or health care system, or projects that involve a facility owned or operated by a municipal electric utility, only those

projects that the governing board designates as qualifying projects pursuant to this section.

Section 4. Paragraph (d) of subsection (3) of section 373.469, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

373.469 Indian River Lagoon Protection Program.—

(3) THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON PROTECTION PROGRAM.—The Indian River Lagoon Protection Program consists of the Banana River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, Central Indian River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, North Indian River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, and Mosquito Lagoon Reasonable Assurance Plan, and such plans are the components of the Indian River Lagoon Protection Program which achieve phosphorous and nitrogen load reductions for the Indian River Lagoon.

(d) *Onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems.*—

1. Beginning on January 1, 2024, unless previously permitted, the installation of new onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems is prohibited within the Banana River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, Central Indian River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, North Indian River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, and Mosquito Lagoon Reasonable Assurance Plan areas where a publicly owned or investor-owned sewerage system is available as defined in s. 381.0065(2)(a). Where central sewerage is not available, only enhanced nutrient-reducing onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems or other wastewater treatment systems that achieve at least 65 percent nitrogen reduction are authorized.

2. By July 1, 2030, any commercial property or any residential property of 10 acres or less with an existing onsite sewage treatment and disposal system located within the Banana River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, Central Indian River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, North Indian River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan, and Mosquito Lagoon Reasonable Assurance Plan areas must connect to central sewer if available or upgrade to an enhanced nutrient-reducing onsite sewage treatment and disposal system or other wastewater treatment system that achieves at least 65 percent nitrogen reduction. For all applications submitted before July 1, 2030, to a permitting agency to repair, modify, or replace a conventional onsite sewage treatment and disposal system on a commercial property or a residential property of 10 acres or less, the permitting agency shall notify the property owner of the requirement provided in this subparagraph.

Section 5. Section 380.0934, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

380.0934 Public-private partnerships for coastal resiliency projects.—

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

(a) “Coastal resiliency project” means:

1. Planning, contracting, and executing a project to address flooding and sea level rise in a coastal or inland community in this state under s. 380.093(5);

2. Public infrastructure repair and upgrades to seawalls and stormwater drainage; and

3. Resiliency measures designed to withstand extreme weather, mitigate flooding, and prevent coastal erosion, including:

a. Acquisition of at-risk coastal and flood-prone properties;

b. Acquisition of properties in areas at high risk of flooding;

c. Infrastructure hardening and development of natural barriers;

d. Construction of large-scale seawalls, levees, and elevated flood barriers; or

e. Expansion and restoration of natural protective systems.

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

(c) “Public-private partnership” means a coastal resiliency project entered into by a local government under s. 255.065.

(2) To encourage investment from the private sector in coastal resiliency projects, the department may:

(a) Enter into long-term revenue-sharing agreements.

(b) Provide expedited permitting for construction.

(c) Seek comments from local governments and the public during project planning and execution and incorporate actions responsive to such comments into the project.

(d) Engage in-state vocational schools and apprenticeship programs to train workers in specialized resiliency construction.

(3) The department shall publish on its website biennial progress reports for each coastal resiliency project funded through a public-private partnership, including project milestones, expenditures, and public benefits. The department shall also create and maintain on its website an online dashboard for real-time updates on project execution.

Section 6. Subsection (11) of section 403.0872, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.0872 Operation permits for major sources of air pollution; annual operation license fee.—Provided that program approval pursuant to 42 U.S.C. s. 7661a has been received from the United States Environmental

Protection Agency, beginning January 2, 1995, each major source of air pollution, including electrical power plants certified under s. 403.511, must obtain from the department an operation permit for a major source of air pollution under this section. This operation permit is the only department operation permit for a major source of air pollution required for such source; provided, at the applicant's request, the department shall issue a separate acid rain permit for a major source of air pollution that is an affected source within the meaning of 42 U.S.C. s. 7651a(1). Operation permits for major sources of air pollution, except general permits issued pursuant to s. 403.814, must be issued in accordance with the procedures contained in this section and in accordance with chapter 120; however, to the extent that chapter 120 is inconsistent with this section, the procedures contained in this section prevail.

(11) Each major source of air pollution permitted to operate in this state must pay by June 30 ~~between January 15 and April 1~~ of each year, upon written notice from the department, an annual operation license fee in an amount determined by department rule. The annual operation license fee shall be terminated immediately in the event the United States Environmental Protection Agency imposes annual fees solely to implement and administer the major source air-operation permit program in Florida under 40 C.F.R. s. 70.10(d).

(a) The annual fee must be assessed based upon the source's previous year's emissions and must be calculated by multiplying the applicable annual operation license fee factor times the tons of each regulated air pollutant actually emitted, as calculated in accordance with the department's emissions computation and reporting rules. The annual fee shall only apply to those regulated pollutants, except carbon monoxide and greenhouse gases, for which an allowable numeric emission limiting standard is specified in the source's most recent construction or operation permit; provided, however, that:

1. The license fee factor is \$25 or another amount determined by department rule which ensures that the revenue provided by each year's operation license fees is sufficient to cover all reasonable direct and indirect costs of the major stationary source air-operation permit program established by this section. The license fee factor may be increased beyond \$25 only if the secretary of the department affirmatively finds that a shortage of revenue for support of the major stationary source air-operation permit program will occur in the absence of a fee factor adjustment. The annual license fee factor may never exceed \$35.

2. The amount of each regulated air pollutant in excess of 4,000 tons per year emitted by any source, or group of sources belonging to the same Major Group as described in the Standard Industrial Classification Manual, 1987, may not be included in the calculation of the fee. Any source, or group of sources, which does not emit any regulated air pollutant in excess of 4,000 tons per year, is allowed a one-time credit not to exceed 25 percent of the first

annual licensing fee for the prorated portion of existing air-operation permit application fees remaining upon commencement of the annual licensing fees.

3. If the department has not received the fee by ~~March 1~~ of the calendar year, ~~the permittee must be sent a written warning of the consequences for failing to pay the fee by April 1. If the fee is not postmarked by June 30~~ April 1 of the calendar year, the department shall impose, in addition to the fee, a penalty of 50 percent of the amount of the fee, plus interest on such amount computed in accordance with s. 220.807. The department may not impose such penalty or interest on any amount underpaid, provided that the permittee has timely remitted payment of at least 90 percent of the amount determined to be due and remits full payment within 60 days after receipt of notice of the amount underpaid. The department may waive the collection of underpayment and may not be required to refund overpayment of the fee, if the amount due is less than 1 percent of the fee, up to \$50. The department may revoke any major air pollution source operation permit if it finds that the permitholder has failed to timely pay any required annual operation license fee, penalty, or interest.

4. Notwithstanding the computational provisions of this subsection, the annual operation license fee for any source subject to this section may not be less than \$250, except that the annual operation license fee for sources permitted solely through general permits issued under s. 403.814 may not exceed \$50 per year.

5. Notwithstanding s. 403.087(7)(a)5.a., which authorizes air pollution construction permit fees, the department may not require such fees for changes or additions to a major source of air pollution permitted pursuant to this section, unless the activity triggers permitting requirements under Title I, Part C or Part D, of the federal Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. ss. 7470-7514a. ~~Costs to issue and administer such permits shall be considered direct and indirect costs of the major stationary source air-operation permit program under s. 403.0873.~~ The department shall, however, require fees pursuant to s. 403.087(7)(a)5.a. for the construction of a new major source of air pollution that will be subject to the permitting requirements of this section once constructed and for activities triggering permitting requirements under Title I, Part C or Part D, of the federal Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. ss. 7470-7514a.

(b) Annual operation license fees collected by the department must be sufficient to cover all reasonable direct and indirect costs required to develop and administer the major stationary source air-operation permit program, which shall consist of the following elements to the extent that they are reasonably related to the regulation of major stationary air pollution sources, in accordance with United States Environmental Protection Agency regulations and guidelines:

1. Reviewing and acting upon any application for such a permit.

2. Implementing and enforcing the terms and conditions of any such permit, excluding court costs or other costs associated with any enforcement action.

3. Emissions and ambient monitoring.

4. Preparing generally applicable regulations or guidance.

5. Modeling, analyses, and demonstrations.

6. Preparing inventories and tracking emissions.

7. Implementing the Small Business Stationary Source Technical and Environmental Compliance Assistance Program.

8. Any audits conducted under paragraph (c).

(c) An audit of the major stationary source air-operation permit program must be conducted 2 years after the United States Environmental Protection Agency has given full approval of the program to ascertain whether the annual operation license fees collected by the department are used solely to support any reasonable direct and indirect costs as listed in paragraph (b). A program audit must be performed biennially after the first audit.

Section 7. Section 403.804, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

Section 8. Subsection (6) of section 120.81, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

120.81 Exceptions and special requirements; general areas.—

(6) RISK IMPACT STATEMENT.—The Department of Environmental Protection shall prepare a risk impact statement for any rule that is proposed for adoption which ~~approval by the Environmental Regulation Commission and that~~ establishes or changes standards or criteria based on impacts to or effects upon human health. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall prepare a risk impact statement for any rule that is proposed for adoption that establishes standards or criteria based on impacts to or effects upon human health.

(a) This subsection does not apply to rules adopted pursuant to federally delegated or mandated programs where such rules are identical or substantially identical to the federal regulations or laws being adopted or implemented by the Department of Environmental Protection or Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, as applicable. However, the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall identify any risk analysis information available to them from the Federal Government that has formed the basis of such a rule.

(b) This subsection does not apply to emergency rules adopted pursuant to this chapter.

(c) The Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall prepare and publish notice of the availability of a clear and concise risk impact statement for all applicable rules. The risk impact statement must explain the risk to the public health addressed by the rule and shall identify and summarize the source of the scientific information used in evaluating that risk.

(d) ~~Nothing in~~ This subsection does not shall be construed to create a new cause of action or basis for challenging a rule nor diminish any existing cause of action or basis for challenging a rule.

Section 9. Subsection (1) of section 373.421, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (b) of subsection (7) of that section is reenacted, to read:

373.421 Delineation methods; formal determinations.—

(1) ~~The department's Environmental Regulation Commission shall adopt a unified statewide methodology for the delineation of the extent of wetlands as defined in s. 373.019(27). This methodology shall consider regional differences in the types of soils and vegetation that may serve as indicators of the extent of wetlands. This methodology shall also include provisions for determining the extent of surface waters other than wetlands for the purposes of regulation under s. 373.414. This methodology shall not become effective until ratified by the Legislature. Subsequent to legislative ratification, the wetland definition in s. 373.019(27) and the adopted wetland methodology shall be binding on the department, the water management districts, local governments, and any other governmental entities. Upon ratification of such wetland methodology, the Legislature preempts the authority of any water management district, state or regional agency, or local government to define wetlands or develop a delineation methodology to implement the definition and determines that the exclusive definition and delineation methodology for wetlands shall be that established pursuant to s. 373.019(27) and this section. Upon such legislative ratification, any existing wetlands definition or wetland delineation methodology shall be superseded by the wetland definition and delineation methodology established pursuant to this chapter. Subsequent to legislative ratification, a delineation of the extent of a surface water or wetland by the department or a water management district, pursuant to a formal determination under subsection (2), or pursuant to a permit issued under this part in which the delineation was field-verified by the permitting agency and specifically approved in the permit, shall be binding on all other governmental entities for the duration of the formal determination or permit. All existing rules and methodologies of the department, the water management districts, and local governments, regarding surface water or wetland definition and delineation shall remain in full force and effect until the common methodology rule becomes effective. However, this shall not be~~

construed to limit any power of the department, the water management districts, and local governments to amend or adopt a surface water or wetland definition or delineation methodology until the common methodology rule becomes effective.

(7)

(b) Wetlands contiguous to surface waters of the state as defined in s. 403.031(13), Florida Statutes (1991), shall be delineated pursuant to the department's rules as such rules existed prior to January 24, 1984, while wetlands not contiguous to surface waters of the state as defined in s. 403.031(13), Florida Statutes (1991), shall be delineated pursuant to the applicable methodology ratified by s. 373.4211 for any development which obtains an individual permit from the United States Army Corps of Engineers under 33 U.S.C. s. 1344:

1. Where a jurisdictional determination validated by the department pursuant to rule 17-301.400(8), Florida Administrative Code, as it existed in rule 17-4.022, Florida Administrative Code, on April 1, 1985, is revalidated pursuant to s. 373.414(13) and the affected lands are part of a project for which a vested rights determination has been issued pursuant to s. 380.06, or

2. Where the lands affected were grandfathered pursuant to s. 403.913(6), Florida Statutes (1991), and proof of prior notification pursuant to s. 403.913(6), Florida Statutes (1991), is submitted to the department within 180 days of the publication of a notice by the department of the existence of this provision. Failure to timely submit the proof of prior notification to the department serves as a waiver of the benefits conferred by this subsection.

3. This subsection shall not be applicable to lands:

a. Within the geographical area to which an individual or general permit issued prior to June 1, 1994, under rules adopted pursuant to this part applies; or

b. Within the geographical area to which a conceptual permit issued prior to June 1, 1994, under rules adopted pursuant to this part applies if wetland delineations were identified and approved by the conceptual permit as set forth in s. 373.414(12)(b)1. or 2.; or

c. Where no development activity as defined in s. 380.01(1) or (2)(a)-(d) and (f) has occurred within the project boundaries since October 1, 1986; or

d. Of a project which is not in compliance with this part or the rules adopted pursuant to ss. 403.91-403.929, 1984 Supplement to the Florida Statutes 1983, as amended.

4. The wetland delineation methodology required in this subsection shall only apply within the geographical area of an individual permit issued by the

United States Army Corps of Engineers under 33 U.S.C. s. 1344. The requirement to obtain such individual permit to secure the benefit of this subsection shall not apply to any activities exempt or not subject to regulation under 33 U.S.C. s. 1344.

5. Notwithstanding subsection (1), the wetland delineation methodology required in this subsection and any wetland delineation pursuant thereto, shall only apply to agency action under this part and shall not be binding on local governments except in their implementation of this part.

Section 10. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 376.302, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

376.302 Prohibited acts; penalties.—

(1) It shall be a violation of this chapter and it shall be prohibited for any reason:

(a) To discharge pollutants or hazardous substances into or upon the surface or ground waters of the state or lands, which discharge violates any departmental “standard” as defined in s. 403.803 ~~s. 403.803(13)~~.

Section 11. Paragraph (b) of subsection (23) of section 403.031, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.031 Definitions.—In construing this chapter, or rules and regulations adopted pursuant hereto, the following words, phrases, or terms, unless the context otherwise indicates, have the following meanings:

(23) “Waters” include, but are not limited to, rivers, lakes, streams, springs, impoundments, wetlands, and all other waters or bodies of water, including fresh, brackish, saline, tidal, surface, or underground waters. Waters owned entirely by one person other than the state are included only in regard to possible discharge on other property or water. Underground waters include, but are not limited to, all underground waters passing through pores of rock or soils or flowing through in channels, whether manmade or natural. Solely for purposes of s. 403.0885, waters of the state also include navigable waters or waters of the contiguous zone as used in s. 502 of the Clean Water Act, as amended, 33 U.S.C. ss. 1251 et seq., as in existence on January 1, 1993, except for those navigable waters seaward of the boundaries of the state set forth in s. 1, Art. II of the State Constitution. Solely for purposes of this chapter, waters of the state also include the area bounded by the following:

(b) The area bounded by the line described in paragraph (a) generally includes those waters to be known as waters of the state. The landward extent of these waters shall be determined by the delineation methodology ratified in s. 373.4211. Any waters which are outside the general boundary line described in paragraph (a) but which are contiguous thereto by virtue of the presence of a wetland, watercourse, or other surface water, as determined by the delineation methodology ratified in s. 373.4211, shall

be a part of this waterbody. Any areas within the line described in paragraph (a) which are neither a wetland nor surface water, as determined by the delineation methodology ratified in s. 373.4211, shall be excluded therefrom. ~~If the Florida Environmental Regulation Commission designates the waters within the boundaries an Outstanding Florida Water, waters outside the boundaries may not be included as part of such designation unless a hearing is held pursuant to notice in each appropriate county and the boundaries of such lands are specifically considered and described for such designation.~~

Section 12. Subsections (7) and (32) of section 403.061, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

403.061 Department; powers and duties.—The department shall have the power and the duty to control and prohibit pollution of air and water in accordance with the law and rules adopted and promulgated by it and, for this purpose, to:

(7) Adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement this act. Any rule adopted pursuant to this act must be consistent with the provisions of federal law, if any, relating to control of emissions from motor vehicles, effluent limitations, pretreatment requirements, or standards of performance. A county, municipality, or political subdivision may not adopt or enforce any local ordinance, special law, or local regulation requiring the installation of Stage II vapor recovery systems, as currently defined by department rule, unless such county, municipality, or political subdivision is or has been in the past designated by federal regulation as a moderate, serious, or severe ozone nonattainment area. Rules adopted pursuant to this act may not require dischargers of waste into waters of the state to improve natural background conditions. The department shall adopt rules to reasonably limit, reduce, and eliminate domestic wastewater collection and transmission system pipe leakages and inflow and infiltration. Discharges from steam electric generating plants existing or licensed under this chapter on July 1, 1984, may not be required to be treated to a greater extent than may be necessary to assure that the quality of nonthermal components of discharges from nonrecirculated cooling water systems is as high as the quality of the makeup waters; that the quality of nonthermal components of discharges from recirculated cooling water systems is no lower than is allowed for blowdown from such systems; or that the quality of noncooling system discharges which receive makeup water from a receiving body of water which does not meet applicable department water quality standards is as high as the quality of the receiving body of water. ~~The department may not adopt standards more stringent than federal regulations, except as provided in s. 403.804.~~

(32) Adopt rules necessary to obtain approval from the United States Environmental Protection Agency to administer the Federal National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program in Florida under ss. 318, 402, and 405 of the federal Clean Water Act, Pub. L. No. 92-500, as amended. This authority shall be implemented consistent with the provisions of part II, which shall be applicable to facilities certified

thereunder. The department shall establish all rules, standards, and requirements that regulate the discharge of pollutants into waters of the United States as defined by and in a manner consistent with federal regulations; provided, however, that the department may adopt a standard that is stricter or more stringent than one set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency if approved by the Governor and Cabinet in accordance with the procedures of s. 403.804(2).

The department shall implement such programs in conjunction with its other powers and duties and shall place special emphasis on reducing and eliminating contamination that presents a threat to humans, animals or plants, or to the environment.

Section 13. Paragraph (c) of subsection (6) of section 403.067, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.067 Establishment and implementation of total maximum daily loads.—

(6) CALCULATION AND ALLOCATION.—

(c) Adoption of rules. The total maximum daily load calculations and allocations established under this subsection for each water body or water body segment shall be adopted by rule by the secretary pursuant to ss. 120.536(1), 120.54, and 403.805. Where additional data collection and analysis are needed to increase the scientific precision and accuracy of the total maximum daily load, the department is authorized to adopt phased total maximum daily loads that are subject to change as additional data becomes available. Where phased total maximum daily loads are proposed, the department shall, in the detailed statement of facts and circumstances justifying the rule, explain why the data are inadequate so as to justify a phased total maximum daily load. The rules adopted pursuant to this paragraph are not subject to approval by the Environmental Regulation Commission and are not subject to the provisions of s. 120.541(3). As part of the rule development process, the department shall hold at least one public workshop in the vicinity of the water body or water body segment for which the total maximum daily load is being developed. Notice of the public workshop shall be published not less than 5 days nor more than 15 days before the public workshop in a newspaper of general circulation in the county or counties containing the water bodies or water body segments for which the total maximum daily load calculation and allocation are being developed.

Section 14. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (3) of section 403.1838, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

403.1838 Small Community Sewer Construction Assistance Act.—

(3)(a) In accordance with rules adopted by the department ~~Environmental Regulation Commission under this section~~, the department may

provide grants, from funds specifically appropriated for this purpose, to financially disadvantaged small communities for up to 100 percent of the costs of planning, designing, constructing, upgrading, or replacing wastewater collection, transmission, treatment, disposal, and reuse facilities, including necessary legal and administrative expenses.

(b) The rules of the department Environmental Regulation Commission must:

1. Require that projects to plan, design, construct, upgrade, or replace wastewater collection, transmission, treatment, disposal, and reuse facilities be cost-effective, environmentally sound, permissible, and implementable.

2. Require appropriate user charges, connection fees, and other charges sufficient to ensure the long-term operation, maintenance, and replacement of the facilities constructed under each grant.

3. Require grant applications to be submitted on appropriate forms with appropriate supporting documentation, and require records to be maintained.

4. Establish a system to determine eligibility of grant applications.

5. Establish a system to determine the relative priority of grant applications. The system must consider public health protection and water pollution prevention or abatement and must prioritize projects that plan for the installation of wastewater transmission facilities to be constructed concurrently with other construction projects occurring within or along a transportation facility right-of-way.

6. Establish requirements for competitive procurement of engineering and construction services, materials, and equipment.

7. Provide for termination of grants when program requirements are not met.

Section 15. Subsection (9) of section 403.704, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.704 Powers and duties of the department.—The department shall have responsibility for the implementation and enforcement of this act. In addition to other powers and duties, the department shall:

(9) Adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement and enforce this act, including requirements for the classification, construction, operation, maintenance, and closure of solid waste management facilities and requirements for, and conditions on, solid waste disposal in this state, whether such solid waste is generated within this state or outside this state as long as such requirements and conditions are not based on the out-of-state origin of the waste and are consistent with applicable law. When classifying

solid waste management facilities, the department shall consider the hydrogeology of the site for the facility, the types of wastes to be handled by the facility, and methods used to control the types of waste to be handled by the facility and shall seek to minimize the adverse effects of solid waste management on the environment. ~~Whenever the department adopts any rule stricter or more stringent than one that has been set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the procedures set forth in s. 403.804(2) shall be followed.~~ The department may shall not, however, adopt hazardous waste rules for solid waste for which special studies were required before ~~prior to~~ October 1, 1988, under s. 8002 of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, 42 U.S.C. s. 6982, as amended, until the studies are completed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the information is available to the department for consideration in adopting its own rule.

Section 16. Paragraph (d) of subsection (3) and paragraph (h) of subsection (9) of section 403.707, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

403.707 Permits.—

(3)

(d) The department may adopt rules to administer this subsection. ~~However, the department is not required to submit such rules to the Environmental Regulation Commission for approval.~~ Notwithstanding the limitations of s. 403.087(7)(a), permit fee caps for solid waste management facilities must ~~shall~~ be prorated to reflect the extended permit term authorized by this subsection.

(9) The department shall establish a separate category for solid waste management facilities that accept only construction and demolition debris for disposal or recycling. The department shall establish a reasonable schedule for existing facilities to comply with this section to avoid undue hardship to such facilities. However, a permitted solid waste disposal unit that receives a significant amount of waste prior to the compliance deadline established in this schedule shall not be required to be retrofitted with liners or leachate control systems.

(h) The department shall ensure that the requirements of this section are applied and interpreted consistently throughout this ~~the~~ state. ~~In accordance with s. 20.255,~~ The Division of Waste Management shall direct the district offices and bureaus on matters relating to the interpretation and applicability of this section.

Section 17. Subsection (3) of section 403.7222, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.7222 Prohibition of hazardous waste landfills.—

(3) This section does not prohibit the department from banning the disposal of hazardous waste in other types of waste management units in a

manner consistent with federal requirements, ~~except as provided under s. 403.804(2).~~

Section 18. Subsection (4) of section 403.7234, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.7234 Small quantity generator notification and verification program.—

(4) Within 30 days of receipt of a notification, which includes a survey form, a small quantity generator shall disclose its management practices and the types and quantities of waste to the county government. Annually, each county shall verify the management practices of at least 20 percent of its small quantity generators. The procedure for verification used by the county must shall be developed as part of the guidance established by the department under s. 403.7226. The department may also regulate the waste management practices of small quantity generators in order to ensure proper management of hazardous waste in a manner consistent with federal requirements, ~~except as provided under s. 403.804(2).~~

Section 19. Section 403.803, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.803 Definitions.—When used in this part act, the term, phrase, or word:

(1) “Branch office” means a geographical area, the boundaries of which may be established as a part of a district.

(2) “Canal” is a manmade trench, the bottom of which is normally covered by water with the upper edges of its sides normally above water.

(3) “Channel” is a trench, the bottom of which is normally covered entirely by water, with the upper edges of its sides normally below water.

~~(4) “Commission” means the Environmental Regulation Commission.~~

~~(4)(5)~~ “Department” means the Department of Environmental Protection.

~~(5)(6)~~ “District” or “environmental district” means one of the geographical areas, the boundaries of which are established pursuant to this act.

~~(6)(7)~~ “Drainage ditch” or “irrigation ditch” is a manmade trench dug for the purpose of draining water from the land or for transporting water for use on the land and is not built for navigational purposes.

~~(7)(8)~~ “Environmental district center” means the facilities and personnel which are centralized in each district for the purposes of carrying out the provisions of this act.

~~(8)(9)~~ “Headquarters” means the physical location of the offices of the secretary and the division directors of the department.

~~(9)~~(10) “Insect control impoundment dikes” means artificial structures, including earthen berms, constructed and used to impound waters for the purpose of insect control.

~~(10)~~(11) “Manager” means the head of an environmental district or branch office who shall supervise all environmental functions of the department within such environmental district or branch office.

~~(11)~~(12) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Environmental Protection.

~~(12)~~(13) “Standard” means any rule of the Department of Environmental Protection relating to air and water quality, noise, solid-waste management, and electric and magnetic fields associated with electrical transmission and distribution lines and substation facilities. The term “standard” does not include rules of the department which relate exclusively to the internal management of the department, the procedural processing of applications, the administration of rulemaking or adjudicatory proceedings, the publication of notices, the conduct of hearings, or other procedural matters.

~~(13)~~(14) “Swale” means a manmade trench which:

(a) Has a top width-to-depth ratio of the cross-section equal to or greater than 6:1, or side slopes equal to or greater than 3 feet horizontal to 1 foot vertical;

(b) Contains contiguous areas of standing or flowing water only following a rainfall event;

(c) Is planted with or has stabilized vegetation suitable for soil stabilization, stormwater treatment, and nutrient uptake; and

(d) Is designed to take into account the soil erodibility, soil percolation, slope, slope length, and drainage area so as to prevent erosion and reduce pollutant concentration of any discharge.

Section 20. Subsections (1) and (3) of section 403.805, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

403.805 Secretary; powers and duties; review of specified rules.—

(1) The secretary shall have the powers and duties of heads of departments set forth in chapter 20, including the authority to adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement this chapter and the provisions of chapters 253, 373, and 376 and this chapter. ~~The secretary shall have rulemaking responsibility under chapter 120, but shall submit any proposed rule containing standards to the Environmental Regulation Commission for approval, modification, or disapproval pursuant to s. 403.804, except for total maximum daily load calculations and allocations developed pursuant to s. 403.067(6).~~ The secretary shall have responsibility for final agency action regarding total maximum daily load calculations and allocations developed pursuant to s. 403.067(6). The secretary shall employ

legal counsel to represent the department in matters affecting the department. Except for appeals on permits specifically assigned by this act to the Governor and Cabinet, and unless otherwise prohibited by law, the secretary may delegate the authority assigned to the department by this act to the assistant secretary, division directors, and district and branch office managers and to the water management districts.

(3) After adoption of proposed rule 62-302.531(9), Florida Administrative Code, a nonseverability and effective date provision approved by the commission on December 8, 2011, ~~in accordance with the commission's legislative authority under s. 403.804~~, notice of which was published by the department on December 22, 2011, in the Florida Administrative Register, Vol. 37, No. 51, page 4446, any subsequent rule or amendment altering the effect of such rule must shall be submitted to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than 30 days before the next regular legislative session, and such amendment may not take effect until it is ratified by the Legislature.

Section 21. Section 403.8055, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.8055 Department adoption of federal standards.—Notwithstanding ~~s. 120.54 ss. 120.54 and 403.804~~, the secretary is empowered to adopt rules substantively identical to regulations adopted in the Federal Register by the United States Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to federal law, in accordance with the following procedures:

(1) The secretary shall publish notice of intent to adopt a rule pursuant to this section in the Florida Administrative Register at least 21 days before ~~prior to~~ filing the rule with the Department of State. The secretary shall mail a copy of the notice of intent to adopt a rule to the Administrative Procedures Committee at least 21 days before ~~prior to~~ the date of filing with the Department of State. Before ~~Prior to~~ filing the rule with the Department of State, the secretary shall consider any written comments received within 21 days after the date of publication of the notice of intent to adopt a rule. The rule must shall be adopted upon filing with the Department of State. Substantive changes from the rules as noticed shall require republishing of notice as required in this section.

(2) Any rule adopted pursuant to this section becomes shall become effective upon the date designated in the rule by the secretary; however, ~~no~~ such a rule may not shall become effective earlier than the effective date of the substantively identical United States Environmental Protection Agency regulation.

(3) The secretary shall stay any terms or conditions of a permit implementing department rules adopted pursuant to this section if the substantively identical provisions of a United States Environmental Protection Agency regulation have been stayed under federal judicial review. A stay issued pursuant to this subsection shall terminate upon completion of federal judicial review.

(4) Any domestic for-profit or nonprofit corporation or association formed, in whole or in part:

- (a) To promote conservation or natural beauty;
- (b) To protect the environment, personal health, or other biological values;
- (c) To preserve historical sites;
- (d) To promote consumer interests;
- (e) To represent labor, commercial, or industrial groups; or
- (f) To promote orderly development;

and any other substantially affected person may, within 14 days after the date of publication of the notice of intent to adopt a rule, file an objection to rulemaking with the department ~~Environmental Regulation Commission~~. The objection shall specify the portions of the proposed rule to which the person objects and the reasons for the objection. The secretary shall not have the authority under this section to adopt those portions of a proposed rule specified in such objection. Objections which are frivolous shall not be considered sufficient to prohibit the secretary from adopting rules under this section.

(5) Whenever all or part of any rule proposed for adoption by the department is substantively identical to a regulation adopted in the Federal Register by the United States Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to federal law, such rule shall be written in a manner so that the rule specifically references such regulation whenever possible.

Section 22. Subsection (1) of section 403.814, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.814 General permits; delegation.—

(1) The secretary is authorized to adopt rules establishing and providing for a program of general permits under this chapter and chapter 253 ~~and this chapter~~ for projects, or categories of projects, which have, either singly or cumulatively, a minimal adverse environmental effect. Such rules must ~~shall~~ specify design or performance criteria that ~~which~~, if applied, would result in compliance with appropriate standards ~~adopted by the commission~~. Except as provided for in subsection (3), any person complying with the requirements of a general permit may use the permit 30 days after giving notice to the department without any agency action by the department.

Section 23. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 403.067, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, section 373.4595, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

373.4595 Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program.—

(1) FINDINGS AND INTENT.—

(a) The Legislature finds that the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed are critical water resources of the state, providing many economic, natural habitat, and biodiversity functions benefiting the public interest, including agricultural, public, and environmental water supply; flood control; fishing; navigation and recreation; and habitat to endangered and threatened species and other flora and fauna.

(b) The Legislature finds that changes in land uses, the construction of the Central and Southern Florida Project, and the loss of surface water storage have resulted in adverse changes to the hydrology and water quality of Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers and their estuaries.

(c) The Legislature finds that improvement to the hydrology, water quality, and associated aquatic habitats within the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed, is essential to the protection of the greater Everglades ecosystem.

(d) The Legislature also finds that it is imperative for the state, local governments, and agricultural and environmental communities to commit to restoring and protecting the surface water resources of the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed, and that a watershed-based approach to address these issues must be developed and implemented immediately.

(e) The Legislature finds that phosphorus loads from the Lake Okeechobee watershed have contributed to excessive phosphorus levels throughout the Lake Okeechobee watershed and downstream receiving waters and that a reduction in levels of phosphorus will benefit the ecology of these systems. The excessive levels of phosphorus have also resulted in an accumulation of phosphorus in the sediments of Lake Okeechobee. If not removed, internal phosphorus loads from the sediments are expected to delay responses of the lake to external phosphorus reductions.

(f) The Legislature finds that the Lake Okeechobee phosphorus loads set forth in the total maximum daily loads established in accordance with s. 403.067 represent an appropriate basis for restoration of the Lake Okeechobee watershed.

(g) The Legislature finds that, in addition to phosphorus, other pollutants are contributing to water quality problems in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed, and that the total maximum daily load requirements of s. 403.067 provide a means of identifying and addressing these problems.

(h) The Legislature finds that the expeditious implementation of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program, the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Program, and the St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Program is needed to improve the quality, quantity, timing, and distribution of water in the northern Everglades ecosystem and that this section, in conjunction with s. 403.067, including the implementation of the plans developed and approved pursuant to subsections (3) and (4), and any related basin management action plan developed and implemented pursuant to s. 403.067(7)(a), provide a reasonable means of achieving the total maximum daily load requirements and achieving and maintaining compliance with state water quality standards.

(i) The Legislature finds that the implementation of the programs contained in this section is for the benefit of the public health, safety, and welfare and is in the public interest.

(j) The Legislature finds that sufficient research has been conducted and sufficient plans developed to immediately expand and accelerate programs to address the hydrology and water quality in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed.

(k) The Legislature finds that a continuing source of funding is needed to effectively implement the programs developed and approved under this section which are needed to address the hydrology and water quality problems within the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed.

(l) It is the intent of the Legislature to protect and restore surface water resources and achieve and maintain compliance with water quality standards in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed, and downstream receiving waters, through the phased, comprehensive, and innovative protection program set forth in this section which includes long-term solutions based upon the total maximum daily loads established in accordance with s. 403.067. This program shall be watershed-based, shall provide for consideration of all water quality issues needed to meet the total maximum daily load, and shall include research and monitoring, development and implementation of best management practices, refinement of existing regulations, and structural and nonstructural projects, including public works.

(m) It is the intent of the Legislature that this section be implemented in coordination with the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan project components and other federal programs in order to maximize opportunities for the most efficient and timely expenditures of public funds.

(n) It is the intent of the Legislature that the coordinating agencies encourage and support the development of creative public-private partnerships and programs, including opportunities for water storage and quality

improvement on private lands and water quality credit trading, to facilitate or further the restoration of the surface water resources of the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed, consistent with s. 403.067.

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

(a) “Best management practice” means a practice or combination of practices determined by the coordinating agencies, based on research, field-testing, and expert review, to be the most effective and practicable on-location means, including economic and technological considerations, for improving water quality in agricultural and urban discharges. Best management practices for agricultural discharges shall reflect a balance between water quality improvements and agricultural productivity.

(b) “Biosolids” means the solid, semisolid, or liquid residue generated during the treatment of domestic wastewater in a domestic wastewater treatment facility, formerly known as “domestic wastewater residuals” or “residuals,” and includes products and treated material from biosolids treatment facilities and septage management facilities regulated by the department. The term does not include the treated effluent or reclaimed water from a domestic wastewater treatment facility, solids removed from pump stations and lift stations, screenings and grit removed from the preliminary treatment components of domestic wastewater treatment facilities, or ash generated during the incineration of biosolids.

(c) “Caloosahatchee River watershed” means the Caloosahatchee River, its tributaries, its estuary, and the area within Charlotte, Glades, Hendry, and Lee Counties from which surface water flow is directed or drains, naturally or by constructed works, to the river, its tributaries, or its estuary.

(d) “Coordinating agencies” means the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the South Florida Water Management District.

(e) “Corps of Engineers” means the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

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

(g) “District” means the South Florida Water Management District.

(h) “Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project” means the construction project developed pursuant to this section.

(i) “Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan” means the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project and the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program.

(j) “Lake Okeechobee watershed” means Lake Okeechobee, its tributaries, and the area within which surface water flow is directed or drains, naturally or by constructed works, to the lake or its tributaries.

(k) “Northern Everglades” means the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the St. Lucie River watershed.

(l) “Project component” means any structural or operational change, resulting from the Restudy, to the Central and Southern Florida Project as it existed and was operated as of January 1, 1999.

(m) “Restudy” means the Comprehensive Review Study of the Central and Southern Florida Project, for which federal participation was authorized by the Federal Water Resources Development Acts of 1992 and 1996 together with related congressional resolutions and for which participation by the South Florida Water Management District is authorized by s. 373.1501. The term includes all actions undertaken pursuant to the aforementioned authorizations which will result in recommendations for modifications or additions to the Central and Southern Florida Project.

(n) “River Watershed Protection Plans” means the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan and the St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plan developed pursuant to this section.

(o) “Soil amendment” means any substance or mixture of substances sold or offered for sale for soil enriching or corrective purposes, intended or claimed to be effective in promoting or stimulating plant growth, increasing soil or plant productivity, improving the quality of crops, or producing any chemical or physical change in the soil, except amendments, conditioners, additives, and related products that are derived solely from inorganic sources and that contain no recognized plant nutrients.

(p) “St. Lucie River watershed” means the St. Lucie River, its tributaries, its estuary, and the area within Martin, Okeechobee, and St. Lucie Counties from which surface water flow is directed or drains, naturally or by constructed works, to the river, its tributaries, or its estuary.

(q) “Total maximum daily load” means the sum of the individual wasteload allocations for point sources and the load allocations for nonpoint sources and natural background adopted pursuant to s. 403.067. Before determining individual wasteload allocations and load allocations, the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body or water segment can assimilate from all sources without exceeding water quality standards must first be calculated.

(3) LAKE OKEECHOBEE WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program shall consist of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan, the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067, the Lake Okeechobee Exotic Species Control Program, and the Lake Okeechobee

Internal Phosphorus Management Program. The Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067 shall be the component of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program that achieves phosphorus load reductions for Lake Okeechobee. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program shall address the reduction of phosphorus loading to the lake from both internal and external sources. Phosphorus load reductions shall be achieved through a phased program of implementation. In the development and administration of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program, the coordinating agencies shall maximize opportunities provided by federal cost-sharing programs and opportunities for partnerships with the private sector.

(a) *Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan.*—To protect and restore surface water resources, the district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, shall complete a Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan in accordance with this section and ss. 373.451-373.459. Beginning March 1, 2020, and every 5 years thereafter, the district shall update the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan to ensure that it is consistent with the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Plan shall identify the geographic extent of the watershed, be coordinated with the plans developed pursuant to paragraphs (4)(a) and (c), and include the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project and the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program. The plan shall consider and build upon a review and analysis of the performance of projects constructed during Phase I and Phase II of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project, pursuant to subparagraph 1.; relevant information resulting from the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan, pursuant to paragraph (b); relevant information resulting from the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program, pursuant to subparagraph 2.; relevant information resulting from the Lake Okeechobee Exotic Species Control Program, pursuant to paragraph (c); and relevant information resulting from the Lake Okeechobee Internal Phosphorus Management Program, pursuant to paragraph (d).

1. *Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project.*—To improve the hydrology and water quality of Lake Okeechobee and downstream receiving waters, including the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers and their estuaries, the district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, shall design and construct the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project. The project shall include:

a. *Phase I.*—Phase I of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project shall consist of a series of project features consistent with the recommendations of the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group's Lake Okeechobee Action Plan. Priority basins for such projects include S-191, S-154, and Pools D and E in the Lower Kissimmee River. To obtain phosphorus load reductions to Lake Okeechobee as soon as possible, the following actions shall be implemented:

(I) The district shall serve as a full partner with the Corps of Engineers in the design and construction of the Grassy Island Ranch and New Palm Dairy stormwater treatment facilities as components of the Lake Okeechobee Water Retention/Phosphorus Removal Critical Project. The Corps of Engineers shall have the lead in design and construction of these facilities. Should delays be encountered in the implementation of either of these facilities, the district shall notify the department and recommend corrective actions.

(II) The district shall obtain permits and complete construction of two of the isolated wetland restoration projects that are part of the Lake Okeechobee Water Retention/Phosphorus Removal Critical Project. The additional isolated wetland projects included in this critical project shall further reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Okeechobee.

(III) The district shall work with the Corps of Engineers to expedite initiation of the design process for the Taylor Creek/Nubbins Slough Reservoir Assisted Stormwater Treatment Area, a project component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The district shall propose to the Corps of Engineers that the district take the lead in the design and construction of the Reservoir Assisted Stormwater Treatment Area and receive credit towards the local share of the total cost of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

b. Phase II technical plan and construction.—The district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, shall develop a detailed technical plan for Phase II of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project which provides the basis for the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted by the department pursuant to s. 403.067. The detailed technical plan shall include measures for the improvement of the quality, quantity, timing, and distribution of water in the northern Everglades ecosystem, including the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the estuaries, and for facilitating the achievement of water quality standards. Use of cost-effective biologically based, hybrid wetland/chemical and other innovative nutrient control technologies shall be incorporated in the plan where appropriate. The detailed technical plan shall also include a Process Development and Engineering component to finalize the detail and design of Phase II projects and identify additional measures needed to increase the certainty that the overall objectives for improving water quality and quantity can be met. Based on information and recommendations from the Process Development and Engineering component, the Phase II detailed technical plan shall be periodically updated. Phase II shall include construction of additional facilities in the priority basins identified in sub-subparagraph a., as well as facilities for other basins in the Lake Okeechobee watershed. The technical plan shall:

(I) Identify Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project facilities designed to contribute to achieving all applicable total maximum daily loads established pursuant to s. 403.067 within the Lake Okeechobee watershed.

(II) Identify the size and location of all such Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project facilities.

(III) Provide a construction schedule for all such Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project facilities, including the sequencing and specific timeframe for construction of each Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project facility.

(IV) Provide a schedule for the acquisition of lands or sufficient interests necessary to achieve the construction schedule.

(V) Provide a detailed schedule of costs associated with the construction schedule.

(VI) Identify, to the maximum extent practicable, impacts on wetlands and state-listed species expected to be associated with construction of such facilities, including potential alternatives to minimize and mitigate such impacts, as appropriate.

(VII) Provide for additional measures, including voluntary water storage and quality improvements on private land, to increase water storage and reduce excess water levels in Lake Okeechobee and to reduce excess discharges to the estuaries.

(VIII) Develop the appropriate water quantity storage goal to achieve the desired Lake Okeechobee range of lake levels and inflow volumes to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries while meeting the other water-related needs of the region, including water supply and flood protection.

(IX) Provide for additional source controls needed to enhance performance of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project facilities. Such additional source controls shall be incorporated into the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan pursuant to paragraph (b).

c. Evaluation.—Within 5 years after the adoption of the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan pursuant to s. 403.067 and every 5 years thereafter, the department, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, shall conduct an evaluation of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project and identify any further load reductions necessary to achieve compliance with the Lake Okeechobee total maximum daily loads established pursuant to s. 403.067. The district shall identify modifications to facilities of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project as appropriate to meet the total maximum daily loads. Modifications to the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project resulting from this evaluation shall be incorporated into the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan and included in the applicable annual progress report submitted pursuant to subsection (6).

d. Coordination and review.—To ensure the timely implementation of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project, the design of project facilities shall be coordinated with the department and other interested

parties, including affected local governments, to the maximum extent practicable. Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project facilities shall be reviewed and commented upon by the department before the execution of a construction contract by the district for that facility.

2. Lake Okeechobee Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program.—The coordinating agencies shall implement a Lake Okeechobee Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program. Results from the program shall be used by the department, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, to make modifications to the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067, as appropriate. The program shall:

a. Evaluate all available existing water quality data concerning total phosphorus in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, develop a water quality baseline to represent existing conditions for total phosphorus, monitor long-term ecological changes, including water quality for total phosphorus, and measure compliance with water quality standards for total phosphorus, including any applicable total maximum daily load for the Lake Okeechobee watershed as established pursuant to s. 403.067. Beginning March 1, 2020, and every 5 years thereafter, the department shall reevaluate water quality and quantity data to ensure that the appropriate projects are being designated and incorporated into the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067. The district shall implement a total phosphorus monitoring program at appropriate structures owned or operated by the district and within the Lake Okeechobee watershed.

b. Develop a Lake Okeechobee water quality model that reasonably represents the phosphorus dynamics of Lake Okeechobee and incorporates an uncertainty analysis associated with model predictions.

c. Determine the relative contribution of phosphorus from all identifiable sources and all primary and secondary land uses.

d. Conduct an assessment of the sources of phosphorus from the Upper Kissimmee Chain of Lakes and Lake Istokpoga and their relative contribution to the water quality of Lake Okeechobee. The results of this assessment shall be used by the coordinating agencies as part of the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067 to develop interim measures, best management practices, or regulations, as applicable.

e. Assess current water management practices within the Lake Okeechobee watershed and develop recommendations for structural and operational improvements. Such recommendations shall balance water supply, flood control, estuarine salinity, maintenance of a healthy lake littoral zone, and water quality considerations.

f. Evaluate the feasibility of alternative nutrient reduction technologies, including sediment traps, canal and ditch maintenance, fish production or other aquaculture, bioenergy conversion processes, and algal or other

biological treatment technologies and include any alternative nutrient reduction technologies determined to be feasible in the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067.

g. Conduct an assessment of the water volumes and timing from the Lake Okeechobee watershed and their relative contribution to the water level changes in Lake Okeechobee and to the timing and volume of water delivered to the estuaries.

(b) *Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan.*—The Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067 shall be the watershed phosphorus control component for Lake Okeechobee. The Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan shall be a multifaceted approach designed to achieve the total maximum daily load by improving the management of phosphorus sources within the Lake Okeechobee watershed through implementation of regulations and best management practices, continued development and continued implementation of improved best management practices, improvement and restoration of the hydrologic function of natural and managed systems, and use of alternative technologies for nutrient reduction. As provided in s. 403.067(7)(a)6., the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan must include milestones for implementation and water quality improvement, and an associated water quality monitoring component sufficient to evaluate whether reasonable progress in pollutant load reductions is being achieved over time. An assessment of progress toward these milestones shall be conducted every 5 years and shall be provided to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Revisions to the plan shall be made, as appropriate, as a result of each 5-year review. Revisions to the basin management action plan shall be made by the department in cooperation with the basin stakeholders. Revisions to best management practices or other measures must follow the procedures set forth in s. 403.067(7)(c)4. Revised basin management action plans must be adopted pursuant to s. 403.067(7)(a)5. The department shall develop an implementation schedule establishing 5-year, 10-year, and 15-year measurable milestones and targets to achieve the total maximum daily load no more than 20 years after adoption of the plan. The initial implementation schedule shall be used to provide guidance for planning and funding purposes and is exempt from chapter 120. Upon the first 5-year review, the implementation schedule shall be adopted as part of the plan. If achieving the total maximum daily load within 20 years is not practicable, the implementation schedule must contain an explanation of the constraints that prevent achievement of the total maximum daily load within 20 years, an estimate of the time needed to achieve the total maximum daily load, and additional 5-year measurable milestones, as necessary. The coordinating agencies shall develop an interagency agreement pursuant to ss. 373.046 and 373.406(5) which is consistent with the department taking the lead on water quality protection measures through the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067; the district taking the lead on hydrologic improvements pursuant to paragraph (a); and the

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services taking the lead on agricultural interim measures, best management practices, and other measures adopted pursuant to s. 403.067. The interagency agreement must specify how best management practices for nonagricultural nonpoint sources are developed and how all best management practices are implemented and verified consistent with s. 403.067 and this section and must address measures to be taken by the coordinating agencies during any best management practice reevaluation performed pursuant to subparagraphs 5. and 10. The department shall use best professional judgment in making the initial determination of best management practice effectiveness. The coordinating agencies may develop an intergovernmental agreement with local governments to implement nonagricultural nonpoint source best management practices within their respective geographic boundaries. The coordinating agencies shall facilitate the application of federal programs that offer opportunities for water quality treatment, including preservation, restoration, or creation of wetlands on agricultural lands.

1. Agricultural nonpoint source best management practices, developed in accordance with s. 403.067 and designed to achieve the objectives of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program as part of a phased approach of management strategies within the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan, shall be implemented on an expedited basis.

2. As provided in s. 403.067, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in consultation with the department, the district, and affected parties, shall initiate rule development for interim measures, best management practices, conservation plans, nutrient management plans, or other measures necessary for Lake Okeechobee watershed total maximum daily load reduction. The rule shall include thresholds for requiring conservation and nutrient management plans and criteria for the contents of such plans. Development of agricultural nonpoint source best management practices shall initially focus on those priority basins listed in subparagraph (a)1.a. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in consultation with the department, the district, and affected parties, shall conduct an ongoing program for improvement of existing and development of new agricultural nonpoint source interim measures and best management practices. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall adopt such practices by rule. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall work with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences to review and, where appropriate, develop revised nutrient application rates for all agricultural soil amendments in the watershed.

3. As provided in s. 403.067, where agricultural nonpoint source best management practices or interim measures have been adopted by rule of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the owner or operator of an agricultural nonpoint source addressed by such rule shall either implement interim measures or best management practices or demonstrate compliance with state water quality standards addressed by the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067

by conducting monitoring prescribed by the department or the district. Owners or operators of agricultural nonpoint sources who implement interim measures or best management practices adopted by rule of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall be subject to s. 403.067.

4. The district or department shall conduct monitoring at representative sites to verify the effectiveness of agricultural nonpoint source best management practices.

5. Where water quality problems are detected for agricultural nonpoint sources despite the appropriate implementation of adopted best management practices, a reevaluation of the best management practices shall be conducted pursuant to s. 403.067(7)(c)4. If the reevaluation determines that the best management practices or other measures require modification, the rule shall be revised to require implementation of the modified practice within a reasonable period as specified in the rule.

6. As provided in s. 403.067, nonagricultural nonpoint source best management practices, developed in accordance with s. 403.067 and designed to achieve the objectives of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program as part of a phased approach of management strategies within the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan, shall be implemented on an expedited basis.

7. The department and the district are directed to work with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences to develop appropriate nutrient application rates for all nonagricultural soil amendments in the watershed. As provided in s. 403.067, the department, in consultation with the district and affected parties, shall develop nonagricultural nonpoint source interim measures, best management practices, or other measures necessary for Lake Okeechobee watershed total maximum daily load reduction. Development of nonagricultural nonpoint source best management practices shall initially focus on those priority basins listed in sub-subparagraph (a)1.a. The department, the district, and affected parties shall conduct an ongoing program for improvement of existing and development of new interim measures and best management practices. The department or the district shall adopt such practices by rule.

8. Where nonagricultural nonpoint source best management practices or interim measures have been developed by the department and adopted by the district, the owner or operator of a nonagricultural nonpoint source shall implement interim measures or best management practices and be subject to s. 403.067.

9. As provided in s. 403.067, the district or the department shall conduct monitoring at representative sites to verify the effectiveness of nonagricultural nonpoint source best management practices.

10. Where water quality problems are detected for nonagricultural nonpoint sources despite the appropriate implementation of adopted best management practices, a reevaluation of the best management practices shall be conducted pursuant to s. 403.067(7)(c)4. If the reevaluation determines that the best management practices or other measures require modification, the rule shall be revised to require implementation of the modified practice within a reasonable time period as specified in the rule.

11. Subparagraphs 2. and 7. do not preclude the department or the district from requiring compliance with water quality standards or with current best management practices requirements set forth in any applicable regulatory program authorized by law for the purpose of protecting water quality. Subparagraphs 2. and 7. are applicable only to the extent that they do not conflict with any rules adopted by the department that are necessary to maintain a federally delegated or approved program.

12. The program of agricultural best management practices set forth in the Everglades Program of the district meets the requirements of this paragraph and s. 403.067(7) for the Lake Okeechobee watershed. An entity in compliance with the best management practices set forth in the Everglades Program of the district may elect to use that permit in lieu of the requirements of this paragraph. The provisions of subparagraph 5. apply to this subparagraph. This subparagraph does not alter any requirement of s. 373.4592.

13. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in cooperation with the department and the district, shall provide technical and financial assistance for implementation of agricultural best management practices, subject to the availability of funds. The department and district shall provide technical and financial assistance for implementation of nonagricultural nonpoint source best management practices, subject to the availability of funds.

14. Projects that reduce the phosphorus load originating from domestic wastewater systems within the Lake Okeechobee watershed shall be given funding priority in the department's revolving loan program under s. 403.1835. The department shall coordinate and provide assistance to those local governments seeking financial assistance for such priority projects.

15. Projects that make use of private lands, or lands held in trust for Indian tribes, to reduce nutrient loadings or concentrations within a basin by one or more of the following methods: restoring the natural hydrology of the basin, restoring wildlife habitat or impacted wetlands, reducing peak flows after storm events, increasing aquifer recharge, or protecting range and timberland from conversion to development, are eligible for grants available under this section from the coordinating agencies. For projects of otherwise equal priority, special funding priority will be given to those projects that make best use of the methods outlined above that involve public-private partnerships or that obtain federal match money. Preference

ranking above the special funding priority will be given to projects located in a rural area of opportunity designated by the Governor. Grant applications may be submitted by any person or tribal entity, and eligible projects may include, but are not limited to, the purchase of conservation and flowage easements, hydrologic restoration of wetlands, creating treatment wetlands, development of a management plan for natural resources, and financial support to implement a management plan.

16. The department shall require all entities disposing of domestic wastewater biosolids within the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the remaining areas of Okeechobee, Glades, and Hendry Counties to develop and submit to the department an agricultural use plan that limits applications based upon phosphorus loading consistent with the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067. The department may not authorize the disposal of domestic wastewater biosolids within the Lake Okeechobee watershed unless the applicant can affirmatively demonstrate that the phosphorus in the biosolids will not add to phosphorus loadings in Lake Okeechobee or its tributaries. This demonstration shall be based on achieving a net balance between phosphorus imports relative to exports on the permitted application site. Exports shall include only phosphorus removed from the Lake Okeechobee watershed through products generated on the permitted application site. This prohibition does not apply to Class AA biosolids that are marketed and distributed as fertilizer products in accordance with department rule.

17. Private and government-owned utilities within Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, Okeechobee, Highlands, Hendry, and Glades Counties that dispose of wastewater biosolids sludge from utility operations and septic removal by land spreading in the Lake Okeechobee watershed may use a line item on local sewer rates to cover wastewater biosolids treatment and disposal if such disposal and treatment is done by approved alternative treatment methodology at a facility located within the areas designated by the Governor as rural areas of opportunity pursuant to s. 288.0656. This additional line item is an environmental protection disposal fee above the present sewer rate and may not be considered a part of the present sewer rate to customers, notwithstanding provisions to the contrary in chapter 367. The fee shall be established by the county commission or its designated assignee in the county in which the alternative method treatment facility is located. The fee shall be calculated to be no higher than that necessary to recover the facility's prudent cost of providing the service. Upon request by an affected county commission, the Florida Public Service Commission will provide assistance in establishing the fee. Further, for utilities and utility authorities that use the additional line item environmental protection disposal fee, such fee may not be considered a rate increase under the rules of the Public Service Commission and shall be exempt from such rules. Utilities using this section may immediately include in their sewer invoicing the new environmental protection disposal fee. Proceeds from this

environmental protection disposal fee shall be used for treatment and disposal of wastewater biosolids, including any treatment technology that helps reduce the volume of biosolids that require final disposal, but such proceeds may not be used for transportation or shipment costs for disposal or any costs relating to the land application of biosolids in the Lake Okeechobee watershed.

18. No less frequently than once every 3 years, the Florida Public Service Commission or the county commission through the services of an independent auditor shall perform a financial audit of all facilities receiving compensation from an environmental protection disposal fee. The Florida Public Service Commission or the county commission through the services of an independent auditor shall also perform an audit of the methodology used in establishing the environmental protection disposal fee. The Florida Public Service Commission or the county commission shall, within 120 days after completion of an audit, file the audit report with the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives and shall provide copies to the county commissions of the counties set forth in subparagraph 17. The books and records of any facilities receiving compensation from an environmental protection disposal fee shall be open to the Florida Public Service Commission and the Auditor General for review upon request.

19. The Department of Health shall require all entities disposing of septage within the Lake Okeechobee watershed to develop and submit to that agency an agricultural use plan that limits applications based upon phosphorus loading consistent with the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067.

20. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall initiate rulemaking requiring entities within the Lake Okeechobee watershed which land-apply animal manure to develop resource management system level conservation plans, according to United States Department of Agriculture criteria, which limit such application. Such rules must include criteria and thresholds for the requirement to develop a conservation or nutrient management plan, requirements for plan approval, site inspection requirements, and recordkeeping requirements.

21. The district shall revise chapter 40E-61, Florida Administrative Code, to be consistent with this section and s. 403.067; provide for a monitoring program for nonpoint source dischargers required to monitor water quality by s. 403.067; and provide for the results of such monitoring to be reported to the coordinating agencies.

(c) *Lake Okeechobee Exotic Species Control Program.*—The coordinating agencies shall identify the exotic species that threaten the native flora and fauna within the Lake Okeechobee watershed and develop and implement measures to protect the native flora and fauna.

(d) *Lake Okeechobee Internal Phosphorus Management Program.*—The district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies and interested

parties, shall evaluate the feasibility of Lake Okeechobee internal phosphorus load removal projects. The evaluation shall be based on technical feasibility, as well as economic considerations, and shall consider all reasonable methods of phosphorus removal. If projects are found to be feasible, the district shall immediately pursue the design, funding, and permitting for implementing such projects.

(e) *Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program implementation.*—The coordinating agencies shall be jointly responsible for implementing the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program, consistent with the statutory authority and responsibility of each agency. Annual funding priorities shall be jointly established, and the highest priority shall be assigned to programs and projects that address sources that have the highest relative contribution to loading and the greatest potential for reductions needed to meet the total maximum daily loads. In determining funding priorities, the coordinating agencies shall also consider the need for regulatory compliance, the extent to which the program or project is ready to proceed, and the availability of federal matching funds or other nonstate funding, including public-private partnerships. Federal and other nonstate funding shall be maximized to the greatest extent practicable.

(f) *Priorities and implementation schedules.*—The coordinating agencies are authorized and directed to establish priorities and implementation schedules for the achievement of total maximum daily loads, compliance with the requirements of s. 403.067, and compliance with applicable water quality standards within the waters and watersheds subject to this section.

(4) CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM AND ST. LUCIE RIVER WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM. A protection program shall be developed and implemented as specified in this subsection. To protect and restore surface water resources, the program shall address the reduction of pollutant loadings, restoration of natural hydrology, and compliance with applicable state water quality standards. The program shall be achieved through a phased program of implementation. In addition, pollutant load reductions based upon adopted total maximum daily loads established in accordance with s. 403.067 shall serve as a program objective. In the development and administration of the program, the coordinating agencies shall maximize opportunities provided by federal and local government cost-sharing programs and opportunities for partnerships with the private sector and local government. The program shall include a goal for salinity envelopes and freshwater inflow targets for the estuaries based upon existing research and documentation. The goal may be revised as new information is available. This goal shall seek to reduce the frequency and duration of undesirable salinity ranges while meeting the other water-related needs of the region, including water supply and flood protection, while recognizing the extent to which water inflows are within the control and jurisdiction of the district.

(a) *Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan.*—The district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, Lee County, and affected

counties and municipalities, shall complete a River Watershed Protection Plan in accordance with this subsection. The Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan shall identify the geographic extent of the watershed, be coordinated as needed with the plans developed pursuant to paragraph (3)(a) and paragraph (c) of this subsection, and include the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Construction Project and the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program.

1. Caloosahatchee River Watershed Construction Project.—To improve the hydrology, water quality, and aquatic habitats within the watershed, the district shall, no later than January 1, 2012, plan, design, and construct the initial phase of the Watershed Construction Project. In doing so, the district shall:

a. Develop and designate the facilities to be constructed to achieve stated goals and objectives of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan.

b. Conduct scientific studies that are necessary to support the design of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Construction Project facilities.

c. Identify the size and location of all such facilities.

d. Provide a construction schedule for all such facilities, including the sequencing and specific timeframe for construction of each facility.

e. Provide a schedule for the acquisition of lands or sufficient interests necessary to achieve the construction schedule.

f. Provide a schedule of costs and benefits associated with each construction project and identify funding sources.

g. To ensure timely implementation, coordinate the design, scheduling, and sequencing of project facilities with the coordinating agencies, Lee County, other affected counties and municipalities, and other affected parties.

2. Caloosahatchee River Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program.—The district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies and local governments, shall implement a Caloosahatchee River Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program that builds upon the district's existing research program and that is sufficient to carry out, comply with, or assess the plans, programs, and other responsibilities created by this subsection. The program shall also conduct an assessment of the water volumes and timing from Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee River watershed and their relative contributions to the timing and volume of water delivered to the estuary.

(b) *Caloosahatchee River Watershed Basin Management Action Plans.* The basin management action plans adopted pursuant to s. 403.067 for the Caloosahatchee River watershed shall be the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Pollutant Control Program. The plans shall be designed to be a

multifaceted approach to reducing pollutant loads by improving the management of pollutant sources within the Caloosahatchee River watershed through implementation of regulations and best management practices, development and implementation of improved best management practices, improvement and restoration of the hydrologic function of natural and managed systems, and utilization of alternative technologies for pollutant reduction, such as cost-effective biologically based, hybrid wetland/chemical and other innovative nutrient control technologies. As provided in s. 403.067(7)(a)6., the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Basin Management Action Plans must include milestones for implementation and water quality improvement, and an associated water quality monitoring component sufficient to evaluate whether reasonable progress in pollutant load reductions is being achieved over time. An assessment of progress toward these milestones shall be conducted every 5 years and shall be provided to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Revisions to the plans shall be made, as appropriate, as a result of each 5-year review. Revisions to the basin management action plans shall be made by the department in cooperation with the basin stakeholders. Revisions to best management practices or other measures must follow the procedures set forth in s. 403.067(7)(c)4. Revised basin management action plans must be adopted pursuant to s. 403.067(7)(a)5. The department shall develop an implementation schedule establishing 5-year, 10-year, and 15-year measurable milestones and targets to achieve the total maximum daily load no more than 20 years after adoption of the plan. The initial implementation schedule shall be used to provide guidance for planning and funding purposes and is exempt from chapter 120. Upon the first 5-year review, the implementation schedule shall be adopted as part of the plans. If achieving the total maximum daily load within 20 years is not practicable, the implementation schedule must contain an explanation of the constraints that prevent achievement of the total maximum daily load within 20 years, an estimate of the time needed to achieve the total maximum daily load, and additional 5-year measurable milestones, as necessary. The coordinating agencies shall facilitate the use of federal programs that offer opportunities for water quality treatment, including preservation, restoration, or creation of wetlands on agricultural lands.

1. Nonpoint source best management practices consistent with s. 403.067, designed to achieve the objectives of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Program, shall be implemented on an expedited basis. The coordinating agencies may develop an intergovernmental agreement with local governments to implement the nonagricultural, nonpoint source best management practices within their respective geographic boundaries.

2. This subsection does not preclude the department or the district from requiring compliance with water quality standards, adopted total maximum daily loads, or current best management practices requirements set forth in any applicable regulatory program authorized by law for the purpose of protecting water quality. This subsection applies only to the extent that it

does not conflict with any rules adopted by the department or district which are necessary to maintain a federally delegated or approved program.

3. Projects that make use of private lands, or lands held in trust for Indian tribes, to reduce pollutant loadings or concentrations within a basin, or that reduce the volume of harmful discharges by one or more of the following methods: restoring the natural hydrology of the basin, restoring wildlife habitat or impacted wetlands, reducing peak flows after storm events, or increasing aquifer recharge, are eligible for grants available under this section from the coordinating agencies.

4. The Caloosahatchee River Watershed Basin Management Action Plans shall require assessment of current water management practices within the watershed and shall require development of recommendations for structural, nonstructural, and operational improvements. Such recommendations shall consider and balance water supply, flood control, estuarine salinity, aquatic habitat, and water quality considerations.

5. The department may not authorize the disposal of domestic wastewater biosolids within the Caloosahatchee River watershed unless the applicant can affirmatively demonstrate that the nutrients in the biosolids will not add to nutrient loadings in the watershed. This demonstration shall be based on achieving a net balance between nutrient imports relative to exports on the permitted application site. Exports shall include only nutrients removed from the watershed through products generated on the permitted application site. This prohibition does not apply to Class AA biosolids that are marketed and distributed as fertilizer products in accordance with department rule.

6. The Department of Health shall require all entities disposing of septage within the Caloosahatchee River watershed to develop and submit to that agency an agricultural use plan that limits applications based upon nutrient loading consistent with any basin management action plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067.

7. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall require entities within the Caloosahatchee River watershed which land-apply animal manure to develop a resource management system level conservation plan, according to United States Department of Agriculture criteria, which limit such application. Such rules shall include criteria and thresholds for the requirement to develop a conservation or nutrient management plan, requirements for plan approval, site inspection requirements, and recordkeeping requirements.

8. The district shall initiate rulemaking to provide for a monitoring program for nonpoint source dischargers required to monitor water quality pursuant to s. 403.067(7)(b)2.g. or (c)3. The results of such monitoring must be reported to the coordinating agencies.

(c) *St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plan.*—The district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, Martin County, and affected counties and municipalities shall complete a plan in accordance with this subsection. The St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plan shall identify the geographic extent of the watershed, be coordinated as needed with the plans developed pursuant to paragraph (3)(a) and paragraph (a) of this subsection, and include the St. Lucie River Watershed Construction Project and St. Lucie River Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program.

1. *St. Lucie River Watershed Construction Project.*—To improve the hydrology, water quality, and aquatic habitats within the watershed, the district shall, no later than January 1, 2012, plan, design, and construct the initial phase of the Watershed Construction Project. In doing so, the district shall:

a. Develop and designate the facilities to be constructed to achieve stated goals and objectives of the St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Plan.

b. Identify the size and location of all such facilities.

c. Provide a construction schedule for all such facilities, including the sequencing and specific timeframe for construction of each facility.

d. Provide a schedule for the acquisition of lands or sufficient interests necessary to achieve the construction schedule.

e. Provide a schedule of costs and benefits associated with each construction project and identify funding sources.

f. To ensure timely implementation, coordinate the design, scheduling, and sequencing of project facilities with the coordinating agencies, Martin County, St. Lucie County, other interested parties, and other affected local governments.

2. *St. Lucie River Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program.*—The district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies and local governments, shall establish a St. Lucie River Watershed Research and Water Quality Monitoring Program that builds upon the district's existing research program and that is sufficient to carry out, comply with, or assess the plans, programs, and other responsibilities created by this subsection. The district shall also conduct an assessment of the water volumes and timing from Lake Okechobee and the St. Lucie River watershed and their relative contributions to the timing and volume of water delivered to the estuary.

(d) *St. Lucie River Watershed Basin Management Action Plan.*—The basin management action plan for the St. Lucie River watershed adopted pursuant to s. 403.067 shall be the St. Lucie River Watershed Pollutant Control Program and shall be designed to be a multifaceted approach to reducing pollutant loads by improving the management of pollutant sources within the St. Lucie River watershed through implementation of regulations

and best management practices, development and implementation of improved best management practices, improvement and restoration of the hydrologic function of natural and managed systems, and use of alternative technologies for pollutant reduction, such as cost-effective biologically based, hybrid wetland/chemical and other innovative nutrient control technologies. As provided in s. 403.067(7)(a)6., the St. Lucie River Watershed Basin Management Action Plan must include milestones for implementation and water quality improvement, and an associated water quality monitoring component sufficient to evaluate whether reasonable progress in pollutant load reductions is being achieved over time. An assessment of progress toward these milestones shall be conducted every 5 years and shall be provided to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Revisions to the plan shall be made, as appropriate, as a result of each 5-year review. Revisions to the basin management action plan shall be made by the department in cooperation with the basin stakeholders. Revisions to best management practices or other measures must follow the procedures set forth in s. 403.067(7)(c)4. Revised basin management action plans must be adopted pursuant to s. 403.067(7)(a)5. The department shall develop an implementation schedule establishing 5-year, 10-year, and 15-year measurable milestones and targets to achieve the total maximum daily load no more than 20 years after adoption of the plan. The initial implementation schedule shall be used to provide guidance for planning and funding purposes and is exempt from chapter 120. Upon the first 5-year review, the implementation schedule shall be adopted as part of the plan. If achieving the total maximum daily load within 20 years is not practicable, the implementation schedule must contain an explanation of the constraints that prevent achievement of the total maximum daily load within 20 years, an estimate of the time needed to achieve the total maximum daily load, and additional 5-year measurable milestones, as necessary. The coordinating agencies shall facilitate the use of federal programs that offer opportunities for water quality treatment, including preservation, restoration, or creation of wetlands on agricultural lands.

1. Nonpoint source best management practices consistent with s. 403.067, designed to achieve the objectives of the St. Lucie River Watershed Protection Program, shall be implemented on an expedited basis. The coordinating agencies may develop an intergovernmental agreement with local governments to implement the nonagricultural nonpoint source best management practices within their respective geographic boundaries.

2. This subsection does not preclude the department or the district from requiring compliance with water quality standards, adopted total maximum daily loads, or current best management practices requirements set forth in any applicable regulatory program authorized by law for the purpose of protecting water quality. This subsection applies only to the extent that it does not conflict with any rules adopted by the department or district which are necessary to maintain a federally delegated or approved program.

3. Projects that make use of private lands, or lands held in trust for Indian tribes, to reduce pollutant loadings or concentrations within a basin, or that reduce the volume of harmful discharges by one or more of the following methods: restoring the natural hydrology of the basin, restoring wildlife habitat or impacted wetlands, reducing peak flows after storm events, or increasing aquifer recharge, are eligible for grants available under this section from the coordinating agencies.

4. The St. Lucie River Watershed Basin Management Action Plan shall require assessment of current water management practices within the watershed and shall require development of recommendations for structural, nonstructural, and operational improvements. Such recommendations shall consider and balance water supply, flood control, estuarine salinity, aquatic habitat, and water quality considerations.

5. The department may not authorize the disposal of domestic wastewater biosolids within the St. Lucie River watershed unless the applicant can affirmatively demonstrate that the nutrients in the biosolids will not add to nutrient loadings in the watershed. This demonstration shall be based on achieving a net balance between nutrient imports relative to exports on the permitted application site. Exports shall include only nutrients removed from the St. Lucie River watershed through products generated on the permitted application site. This prohibition does not apply to Class AA biosolids that are marketed and distributed as fertilizer products in accordance with department rule.

6. The Department of Health shall require all entities disposing of septage within the St. Lucie River watershed to develop and submit to that agency an agricultural use plan that limits applications based upon nutrient loading consistent with any basin management action plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067.

7. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall initiate rulemaking requiring entities within the St. Lucie River watershed which land-apply animal manure to develop a resource management system level conservation plan, according to United States Department of Agriculture criteria, which limit such application. Such rules shall include criteria and thresholds for the requirement to develop a conservation or nutrient management plan, requirements for plan approval, site inspection requirements, and recordkeeping requirements.

8. The district shall initiate rulemaking to provide for a monitoring program for nonpoint source dischargers required to monitor water quality pursuant to s. 403.067(7)(b)2.g. or (c)3. The results of such monitoring must be reported to the coordinating agencies.

(e) *River Watershed Protection Plan implementation.*—The coordinating agencies shall be jointly responsible for implementing the River Watershed Protection Plans, consistent with the statutory authority and responsibility of each agency. Annual funding priorities shall be jointly established, and

the highest priority shall be assigned to programs and projects that have the greatest potential for achieving the goals and objectives of the plans. In determining funding priorities, the coordinating agencies shall also consider the need for regulatory compliance, the extent to which the program or project is ready to proceed, and the availability of federal or local government matching funds. Federal and other nonstate funding shall be maximized to the greatest extent practicable.

(f) *Evaluation.*—Beginning March 1, 2020, and every 5 years thereafter, concurrent with the updates of the basin management action plans adopted pursuant to s. 403.067, the department, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, shall conduct an evaluation of any pollutant load reduction goals, as well as any other specific objectives and goals, as stated in the River Watershed Protection Programs. The district shall identify modifications to facilities of the River Watershed Construction Projects, as appropriate, or any other elements of the River Watershed Protection Programs. The evaluation shall be included in the annual progress report submitted pursuant to this section.

(g) *Priorities and implementation schedules.*—The coordinating agencies are authorized and directed to establish priorities and implementation schedules for the achievement of total maximum daily loads, the requirements of s. 403.067, and compliance with applicable water quality standards within the waters and watersheds subject to this section.

(5) **ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS AND DEVELOPMENT OF BASIN MANAGEMENT ACTION PLANS.**—The department is directed to expedite development and adoption of total maximum daily loads for the Caloosahatchee River and estuary. The department is further directed to propose for final agency action total maximum daily loads for nutrients in the tidal portions of the Caloosahatchee River and estuary. The department shall initiate development of basin management action plans for Lake Okeechobee, the Caloosahatchee River watershed and estuary, and the St. Lucie River watershed and estuary as provided in s. 403.067 as follows:

(a) Basin management action plans shall be developed as soon as practicable as determined necessary by the department to achieve the total maximum daily loads established for the Lake Okeechobee watershed and the estuaries.

(b) The Phase II technical plan development pursuant to paragraph (3)(a), and the River Watershed Protection Plans developed pursuant to paragraphs (4)(a) and (c), shall provide the basis for basin management action plans developed by the department.

(c) As determined necessary by the department to achieve the total maximum daily loads, additional or modified projects or programs that complement those in the legislatively ratified plans may be included during the development of the basin management action plan.

(d) As provided in s. 403.067, management strategies and pollution reduction requirements set forth in a basin management action plan subject to permitting by the department under subsection (7) must be completed pursuant to the schedule set forth in the basin management action plan, as amended. The implementation schedule may extend beyond the 5-year permit term.

(e) As provided in s. 403.067, management strategies and pollution reduction requirements set forth in a basin management action plan for a specific pollutant of concern are not subject to challenge under chapter 120 at the time they are incorporated, in an identical form, into a department or district issued permit or a permit modification issued in accordance with subsection (7).

(6) ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT.—Each March 1, the district, in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies, shall report on implementation of this section as part of the consolidated annual report required in s. 373.036(7). The annual report shall include a summary of the conditions of the hydrology, water quality, and aquatic habitat in the northern Everglades based on the results of the Research and Water Quality Monitoring Programs, the status of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project, the status of the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Construction Project, and the status of the St. Lucie River Watershed Construction Project. In addition, the report shall contain an annual accounting of the expenditure of funds from the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund. At a minimum, the annual report shall provide detail by program and plan, including specific information concerning the amount and use of funds from federal, state, or local government sources. In detailing the use of these funds, the district shall indicate those designated to meet requirements for matching funds. The district shall prepare the report in cooperation with the other coordinating agencies and affected local governments. The department shall report on the status of the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan, the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Basin Management Action Plan, and the St. Lucie River Watershed Basin Management Action Plan. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall report on the status of the implementation of the agricultural nonpoint source best management practices, including an implementation assurance report summarizing survey responses and response rates, site inspections, and other methods used to verify implementation of and compliance with best management practices in the Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee River, and St. Lucie River watersheds.

(7) LAKE OKEECHOBEE PROTECTION PERMITS.—

(a) The Legislature finds that the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Protection Program will benefit Lake Okeechobee and downstream receiving waters and is in the public interest. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project and structures discharging into or from Lake Okeechobee shall be constructed, operated, and maintained in accordance with this section.

(b) Permits obtained pursuant to this section are in lieu of all other permits under this chapter or chapter 403, except those issued under s. 403.0885, if applicable. Additional permits are not required for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project, or structures discharging into or from Lake Okeechobee, if such project or structures are permitted under this section. Construction activities related to implementation of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project may be initiated before final agency action, or notice of intended agency action, on any permit from the department under this section.

(c)1. Owners or operators of existing structures which discharge into or from Lake Okeechobee that were subject to Department Consent Orders 91-0694, 91-0705, 91-0706, 91-0707, and RT50-205564 and that are subject to s. 373.4592(4)(a) do not require a permit under this section and shall be governed by permits issued under ss. 373.413 and 373.416 and the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067.

2. For the purposes of this paragraph, owners and operators of existing structures which are subject to s. 373.4592(4)(a) and which discharge into or from Lake Okeechobee shall be deemed in compliance with this paragraph if they are in full compliance with the conditions of permits under chapter 40E-63, Florida Administrative Code.

3. By January 1, 2017, the district shall submit to the department a complete application for a permit modification to the Lake Okeechobee structure permits to incorporate proposed changes necessary to ensure that discharges through the structures covered by this permit are consistent with the basin management action plan adopted pursuant to s. 403.067.

(d) The department shall require permits for district regional projects that are part of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project. However, projects that qualify as exempt pursuant to s. 373.406 do not require permits under this section. Such permits shall be issued for a term of 5 years upon the demonstration of reasonable assurances that:

1. District regional projects that are part of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Construction Project shall achieve the design objectives for phosphorus required in subparagraph (3)(a)1.;

2. For water quality standards other than phosphorus, the quality of water discharged from the facility is of equal or better quality than the inflows;

3. Discharges from the facility do not pose a serious danger to public health, safety, or welfare; and

4. Any impacts on wetlands or state-listed species resulting from implementation of that facility of the Lake Okeechobee Construction Project are minimized and mitigated, as appropriate.

(e) At least 60 days before the expiration of any permit issued under this section, the permittee may apply for a renewal thereof for a period of 5 years.

(f) Permits issued under this section may include any standard conditions provided by department rule which are appropriate and consistent with this section.

(g) Permits issued under this section may be modified, as appropriate, upon review and approval by the department.

(8) RESTRICTIONS ON WATER DIVERSIONS.—The South Florida Water Management District shall not divert waters to the St. Lucie River, the Indian River estuary, the Caloosahatchee River or its estuary, or the Everglades National Park, in such a way that the state water quality standards are violated, that the nutrients in such diverted waters adversely affect indigenous vegetation communities or wildlife, or that fresh waters diverted to the St. Lucie River or the Caloosahatchee or Indian River estuaries adversely affect the estuarine vegetation or wildlife, unless the receiving waters will biologically benefit by the diversion. However, diversion is permitted when an emergency is declared by the water management district, if the Secretary of Environmental Protection concurs.

(9) PRESERVATION OF PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE EVERGLADES.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to modify any provision of s. 373.4592.

(10) RIGHTS OF SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA.—Nothing in this section is intended to diminish or alter the governmental authority and powers of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, or diminish or alter the rights of that tribe, including, but not limited to, rights under the water rights compact among the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the state, and the South Florida Water Management District as enacted by Pub. L. No. 100-228, 101 Stat. 1556, and chapter 87-292, Laws of Florida, and codified in s. 285.165, and rights under any other agreement between the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the state or its agencies. No land of the Seminole Tribe of Florida shall be used for water storage or stormwater treatment without the consent of the tribe.

(11) RELATIONSHIP TO STATE WATER QUALITY STANDARDS.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to modify any existing state water quality standard or to modify the provisions of s. 403.067(6) and (7)(a).

(12) RULES.—The governing board of the district is authorized to adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement the provisions of this section.

(13) PRESERVATION OF AUTHORITY.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict the authority otherwise granted to agencies pursuant to this chapter and chapter 403, and provisions of this section

shall be deemed supplemental to the authority granted to agencies pursuant to this chapter and chapter 403.

Section 24. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 403.0872, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, section 403.0873, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

403.0873 Florida Air-Operation License Fee Account.—The “Florida Air-Operation License Fee Account” is established as a nonlapsing account within the Department of Environmental Protection’s Air Pollution Control Trust Fund. All license fees paid pursuant to s. 403.0872(11) shall be deposited in such account and must be used solely by the department and approved local programs under the advice and consent of the Legislature to pay the direct and indirect costs required to develop and administer the major stationary source air-operation permit program. Any approved local pollution control program that accepts funds from the department as reimbursement for services it performs in the implementation of the major source air-operation permit program, receives delegation from the department or the United States Environmental Protection Agency for implementation of the major source air-operation permit program, or performs functions, duties, or activities substantially similar to or duplicative of the services performed by the department or the United States Environmental Protection Agency in the implementation of the major source air-operation permit program is prohibited from collecting additional fees attributable to such services from any source permitted under s. 403.0872.

Section 25. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 403.1838, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (d) of subsection (3) of section 403.1835, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

403.1835 Water pollution control financial assistance.—

(3) The department may provide financial assistance through any program authorized under 33 U.S.C. s. 1383, as amended, including, but not limited to, making grants and loans, providing loan guarantees, purchasing loan insurance or other credit enhancements, and buying or refinancing local debt. This financial assistance must be administered in accordance with this section and applicable federal authorities.

(d) The department may make grants to financially disadvantaged small communities, as defined in s. 403.1838, using funds made available from grant allocations on loans authorized under subsection (4). The grants must be administered in accordance with s. 403.1838.

Section 26. (1) The following rules are ratified for the sole and exclusive purpose of satisfying any condition on the effectiveness imposed under s. 120.541(3), Florida Statutes:

Rules 62-42.200 and 62-42.300, Florida Administrative Code, titled “Definitions” and “The Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Priority Springs,” respectively, as filed for adoption with the Department of State pursuant to the certification package dated December 31, 2025.

(2) This section serves no other purpose and may not be codified in the Florida Statutes. After this act becomes a law, the enactment and effective dates of this section must be noted in the Florida Administrative Code, the Florida Administrative Register, or both, as appropriate. This section does not alter rulemaking authority delegated by prior law, does not constitute legislative preemption of or exception to any provision of law governing adoption or enforcement of the rule cited, and is intended to preserve the status of any cited rule as a rule under chapter 120, Florida Statutes. This section does not cure any rulemaking defect or preempt any challenge based on a lack of authority or a violation of the legal requirements governing the adoption of any rule cited.

Section 27. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor March 19, 2026.

Filed in Office Secretary of State March 19, 2026.