

CHAPTER 2025-157

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 56

An act relating to geoengineering and weather modification activities; repealing ss. 403.281, 403.291, 403.301, 403.311, 403.321, 403.331, 403.341, 403.351, 403.361, 403.371, 403.381, 403.391, and 403.401, F.S., relating to the definitions, purpose, licensing requirements, applications, proof of financial responsibility requirements, license issuance and discipline provisions, publication of notice of intention to operate requirements, required contents of the notice of intention, publication of the notice of intention requirements, proof of publication requirements, record and reports of operations requirements, provision of emergency licenses, and suspension or revocation of licenses, respectively, of the weather modification law; amending s. 403.411, F.S.; prohibiting certain acts intended to affect the temperature, the weather, or the intensity of sunlight within the atmosphere of this state; increasing civil penalties for violations of the geoengineering and weather modification law; requiring that specified moneys be deposited in the Air Pollution Control Trust Fund and used only for specified purposes; authorizing a person who observes a geoengineering or weather modification activity to report such activity; providing construction; requiring the Department of Environmental Protection to establish a method for the intake and screening of such reports; requiring the department to investigate certain reports; requiring the department to refer reports of observed violations to the Department of Health or the Division of Emergency Management, under certain circumstances; requiring the department to adopt rules; creating s. 403.4115, F.S.; defining terms; requiring an operator of public infrastructure to report certain information monthly to the Department of Transportation; prohibiting the department from expending funds to support certain projects or programs; requiring the department to submit a report to specified entities; requiring the department to incorporate reporting guidelines in certain grant agreements; authorizing the department to adopt rules; amending ss. 253.002, 373.026, 373.1501, 373.4598, and 373.470, F.S.; conforming cross-references and provisions to changes made by the act; making technical changes; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Sections 403.281, 403.291, 403.301, 403.311, 403.321, 403.331, 403.341, 403.351, 403.361, 403.371, 403.381, 403.391, and 403.401, Florida Statutes, are repealed.

Section 2. Section 403.411, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

403.411 Geoengineering and weather modification activities prohibited; penalty.—

(1) The injection, release, or dispersion, by any means, of a chemical, a chemical compound, a substance, or an apparatus into the atmosphere within the borders of this state for the express purpose of affecting the temperature, weather, climate, or intensity of sunlight is prohibited.

(2) Any person, including any public or private corporation, who conducts ~~conducting~~ a geoengineering or weather modification activity in violation of this section commits operation without first having procured a license, or who shall make a false statement in his or her application for license, or who shall fail to file any report or reports as required by this act, or who shall conduct any weather modification operation after revocation or suspension of his or her license, or who shall violate any other provision of this act, shall be guilty of a felony misdemeanor of the ~~third~~ second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 and by a fine not exceeding \$100,000; ~~or s. 775.083; and, if a corporation, the officers, directors, or employees of the corporation commit shall be guilty of a felony misdemeanor of the third~~ second degree, punishable by a fine not exceeding \$100,000; and, if an aircraft operator or controller, such person commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 and by a fine not exceeding \$5,000 and up to 5 years in prison as provided in s. 775.083. Each such violation is shall be a separate offense.

(3) All moneys collected pursuant to this section must be deposited in the Air Pollution Control Trust Fund and used only for purposes of air pollution control pursuant to this chapter.

(4)(a) Any person who observes a geoengineering or weather modification activity conducted in violation of this section may report the observed violation to the department online or by telephone, mail, or e-mail.

(b) The department shall establish an e-mail address and an online form for persons to report observed violations pursuant to this subsection. The department shall make the e-mail address and online form publicly accessible on its website.

(c) The department shall establish a method for intake and screening of the reports made pursuant to this subsection. The department shall investigate any report that warrants further review to determine whether there are violations of this section.

(d) The department shall refer reports of observed violations made pursuant to this subsection to the Department of Health or the Division of Emergency Management, if appropriate.

(e) The department shall adopt any rules that are necessary to implement this subsection.

Section 3. Section 403.4115, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

403.4115 Reporting on geoengineering and weather modification activities on public infrastructure; penalty.—

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

(a) “Aircraft” means a powered or unpowered machine or device capable of atmospheric flight, except a parachute or other such device used primarily as safety equipment.

(b) “Department” means the Department of Transportation.

(c) “Public infrastructure” means any public-use airport as that term is defined in s. 332.004.

(2) Beginning on October 1, 2025, all operators of public infrastructure shall report monthly to the department, using a method determined by the department:

(a) The physical presence of any aircraft on public property, including any public infrastructure, equipped with any part, component, device, or the like which may be used to support the intentional emission, injection, release, or dispersion of air contaminants into the atmosphere within the borders of this state when such emissions occur for the express purpose of affecting temperature, weather, climate, or the intensity of sunlight.

(b) The landing, takeoff, stopover, or refueling of an aircraft equipped with the components outlined in paragraph (a) on the physical location of the public infrastructure.

(3) The department may not expend any state funds as described in s. 215.31 to support a project or program located on or in support of public infrastructure which is not in compliance with this section until such time as the entity becomes compliant with this section.

(4) Upon receipt of the reports required in subsection (2), the department shall submit aggregated reports to the Department of Environmental Protection and the applicable state law enforcement agency in support of the enforcement of s. 403.411.

(5) The department shall incorporate reporting guidelines in all grant agreements for public use airports which receive state funds as described in s. 215.31.

(6) The department may adopt rules necessary to implement this section.

Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 253.002, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

253.002 Department of Environmental Protection, water management districts, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; duties with respect to state lands.—

(1) The Department of Environmental Protection shall perform all staff duties and functions related to the acquisition, administration, and disposition of state lands, title to which is or will be vested in the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund. However, upon the effective date of rules adopted pursuant to s. 373.427, a water management district created under s. 373.069 shall perform the staff duties and functions related to the review of any application for authorization to use board of trustees-owned submerged lands necessary for an activity regulated under part IV of chapter 373 for which the water management district has permitting responsibility as set forth in an operating agreement adopted pursuant to s. 373.046(4). The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall perform the staff duties and functions related to the review of applications and compliance with conditions for use of board of trustees-owned submerged lands under authorizations or leases issued pursuant to ss. 253.67-253.75 and 597.010 and the acquisition, administration, and disposition of conservation easements pursuant to s. 570.71. Unless expressly prohibited by law, the board of trustees may delegate to the department any statutory duty or obligation relating to the acquisition, administration, or disposition of lands, title to which is or will be vested in the board of trustees. The board of trustees may also delegate to any water management district created under s. 373.069 the authority to take final agency action, without any action on behalf of the board, on applications for authorization to use board of trustees-owned submerged lands for any activity regulated under part IV of chapter 373 for which the water management district has permitting responsibility as set forth in an operating agreement adopted pursuant to s. 373.046(4). This water management district responsibility under this subsection ~~is~~ shall be subject to the department's general supervisory authority pursuant to ~~s. 373.026(6) s. 373.026(7)~~. The board of trustees may also delegate to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services the authority to take final agency action on behalf of the board on applications to use board of trustees-owned submerged lands for any activity for which that department has responsibility pursuant to ss. 253.67-253.75, 369.25, 369.251, and 597.010. However, the board of trustees shall retain the authority to take final agency action on establishing any areas for leasing, new leases, expanding existing lease areas, or changing the type of lease activity in existing leases. Upon issuance of an aquaculture lease or other real property transaction relating to aquaculture, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services must send a copy of the document and the accompanying survey to the Department of Environmental Protection. The board of trustees may also delegate to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission the authority to take final agency action, without any action on behalf of the board, on applications for authorization to use board of trustees-owned submerged lands for any activity regulated under ss. 369.20 and 369.22.

Section 5. Subsection (6) of section 373.026, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

373.026 General powers and duties of the department.—The department, or its successor agency, shall be responsible for the administration of this chapter at the state level. However, it is the policy of the state that, to the greatest extent possible, the department may enter into interagency or interlocal agreements with any other state agency, any water management district, or any local government conducting programs related to or materially affecting the water resources of the state. All such agreements shall be subject to the provisions of s. 373.046. In addition to its other powers and duties, the department shall, to the greatest extent possible:

~~(6) Conduct, either independently or in cooperation with any person or governmental agency, a program of study, research, and experimentation and evaluation in the field of weather modification.~~

Section 6. Subsections (1) and (9) of section 373.1501, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

373.1501 South Florida Water Management District as local sponsor.

(1) As used in this section and s. 373.026(7) ~~s. 373.026(8)~~, the term:

(a) “C-111 Project” means the project identified in the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control Project, Real Estate Design Memorandum, Canal 111, South Miami-Dade County, Florida.

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

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

(d) “Kissimmee River Restoration Project” means the project identified in the Project Cooperation Agreement between the United States Department of the Army and the South Florida Water Management District dated March 22, 1994.

(e) “Pal-Mar Project” means the Pal-Mar (West Jupiter Wetlands) lands identified in the Save Our Rivers 2000 Land Acquisition and Management Plan approved by the South Florida Water Management District on September 9, 1999 (Resolution 99-94).

(f) “Project” means the Central and Southern Florida Project.

(g) “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.

(h) “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 this section. 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.

(i) “Southern Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed Project” means the area described in the Critical Restoration Project Contract C-9906 Southern Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed Project Addition/Imperial River Flowway and approved by the South Florida Water Management District on August 12, 1999.

(j) “Water Preserve Areas” means those areas located only within Palm Beach and Broward counties that are designated as Water Preserve Areas, as approved by the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board on September 11, 1997, and shall also include all of those lands within Cell II of the East Coast Buffer in Broward County as delineated in the boundary survey prepared by Stoner and Associates, Inc., dated January 31, 2000, SWFWMD #10953.

(k) “Ten Mile Creek Project” means the Ten Mile Creek Water Preserve Area identified in the Central and Southern Florida Ecosystem Critical Project Letter Report dated April 13, 1998.

(9) Final agency action with regard to any project component subject to s. 373.026(7)(b) ~~s. 373.026(8)(b)~~ shall be taken by the department. Actions taken by the district pursuant to subsection (5) ~~may~~ shall not be considered final agency action. A ~~Any~~ petition for formal proceedings filed pursuant to ss. 120.569 and 120.57 ~~requires~~ shall ~~require~~ a hearing under the summary hearing provisions of s. 120.574, which ~~is~~ shall be mandatory. The final hearing under this section must ~~shall~~ be held within 30 days after receipt of the petition by the Division of Administrative Hearings.

Section 7. Paragraph (c) of subsection (10) of section 373.4598, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

373.4598 Water storage reservoirs.—

(10) FUNDING.—

(c) Notwithstanding s. 373.026(7)(b) ~~s. 373.026(8)(b)~~ or any other provision of law, the use of state funds is authorized for the EAA reservoir project.

Section 8. Paragraph (a) of subsection (6) of section 373.470, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

373.470 Everglades restoration.—

(6) DISTRIBUTIONS FROM SAVE OUR EVERGLADES TRUST FUND.—

(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (d) and (e) and for funds appropriated for debt service, the department shall distribute funds in

the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund to the district in accordance with a legislative appropriation and s. 373.026(7)(b) ~~s. 373.026(8)(b)~~. Distribution of funds to the district from the Save Our Everglades Trust Fund shall be equally matched by the cumulative contributions from the district by fiscal year 2019-2020 by providing funding or credits toward project components. The dollar value of in-kind project design and construction work by the district in furtherance of the comprehensive plan and existing interest in public lands needed for a project component are credits towards the district's contributions.

Section 9. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

Approved by the Governor June 20, 2025.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 20, 2025.