

# STATE OF FLORIDA

## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 23-06

(Achieving *Even More* Now for Florida's Environment)

**WHEREAS**, on January 10, 2019, I signed Executive Order 19-12, which laid out a bold plan to achieve more now for Florida's environment, and in the last four years, we have made incredible progress, entering into a golden era for conservation and protection of our treasured natural resources; and

**WHEREAS**, we secured unprecedented funding for the protection of our natural resources, including over \$3.3 billion in state funding for Everglades restoration and protection of our water resources, far surpassing our goal of \$2.5 billion; and

**WHEREAS**, we expedited Everglades restoration to reduce harmful discharges and send more water south, with more than 50 Everglades restoration projects being completed, breaking ground, or hitting a major milestone, and helped Florida Bay reach salinity goals for the first time in decades; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2020, I signed into law Senate Bill 712, which was the most consequential environmental legislation in decades and included a wide range of water quality protections aimed at minimizing the impact of known nutrient pollution sources, realigning the State's resources to better protect Florida's environment, and strengthening our environmental regulatory requirements; and

**WHEREAS**, we invested \$1.6 billion in water quality improvements, created the Wastewater Grant Program to construct, upgrade, or expand wastewater facilities, provide

advanced wastewater treatment, and convert septic-to-sewer, and dedicated historic funding to increase alternative water supply and restore and protect Florida's springs; and

**WHEREAS**, we dedicated funding to enhance our state's water quality monitoring and identify new and innovative ways to treat, predict, and respond to blue-green algal blooms, including more than \$45 million to the Innovative Technology Grant Program and funding 20 different innovative technology projects to date; and

**WHEREAS**, the State, with the coordination of the Chief Science Officer, ensured that science is at the forefront of environmental protection and policy, with enhanced monitoring, innovative research, and modern data analytics to support water quality restoration and ensure that high quality, scientific data are readily available to citizens and state agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, we provided support to local governments for red tide cleanup efforts and established the Center for Red Tide Research within the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, which brings together state and local governments, universities, private sector partners, and community scientists to enhance statewide red tide monitoring and conduct applied research associated with tracking, predicting, and mitigating the effects of red tide; and

**WHEREAS**, the State, with the coordination of the Chief Resilience Officer, invested more than \$1.1 billion in resilience projects to protect our communities from flooding and sea level rise; and

**WHEREAS**, we established the Florida Wildlife Corridor and committed more than \$600 million to the Florida Forever Program and acquired more than 170,000 acres for conservation, nearly four times that acquired in the previous four years; and

**WHEREAS**, while the achievements of the first four years are historic, protecting our water resources, investing to make our communities more resilient, and preserving our conservation lands are essential to our economy and way of life, and we must continue the momentum of the last four years to achieve *even more* now for Florida’s environment and ensure that we leave Florida to God better than we found it.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, RON DESANTIS**, as Governor of Florida, by virtue of the authority vested in me by article IV, section (1)(a) of the Florida Constitution, and all other applicable laws, do hereby issue the following Executive Order, to take immediate effect:

Section 1: Continuing Historic Investments in Everglades Restoration, Water Quality, and Water Supply

I hereby direct the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to take the following actions to build on our momentum and further protect Florida’s water resources:

- A. Secure \$3.5 billion over the next four years for Everglades restoration and protection of our water resources, including water quality and water supply.
- B. Work with the Legislature to expand the existing Wastewater Grant Program, which is currently limited to funding septic-to-sewer conversions, advanced septic system upgrades, and upgrades to advanced wastewater treatment projects, by broadening project eligibility to also address impacts from nonpoint sources such as stormwater and agricultural runoff and address aging wastewater infrastructure that increases nutrient loading to surface and groundwater.
  - i) Strategically engage with local governments and stakeholders to identify the most effective and beneficial water quality improvement projects.
  - ii) Instruct all water management districts to annually identify regional projects to improve water quality.

- iii) Continue to prioritize grants to local governments for septic-to-sewer conversions and identify ways to minimize the installation of new septic systems in areas with impaired waterways.
  - iv) Ensure that all wastewater facilities discharging to waterbodies within a basin management action plan (BMAP) area or discharging to a waterbody not attaining water quality standards upgrade to advanced wastewater treatment by 2033.
- C. Partner with the Department of Economic Opportunity and local governments to improve local government long-term comprehensive planning that ensures sustainable growth while protecting our natural resources, including prioritizing sewer connections and advanced wastewater systems that can sustain increased population demands and protecting taxpayer investments in Everglades restoration projects and major land conservation and water quality protection programs.
- D. Direct the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to:
- i) Continue expediting Everglades restoration projects, including Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program (CERP) projects and projects that minimize the risk of harmful discharges and send water south.
  - ii) Make every effort to advance Everglades restoration projects undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to ensure meaningful progress over the next four years, including any component of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir Project, all CERP storage components within the Lake Okeechobee watershed, and any component of the Indian River Lagoon-South project reservoirs.

- iii) Hold the Corps accountable by reporting on the Corps' progress on CERP construction projects and CERP planning efforts for the restoration of the Greater Everglades at every SFWMD Board meeting.
  - iv) Work with the Corps to ensure the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM) is implemented in a manner that reduces harmful discharges into our estuaries by holding water in the lake during the wet season and sending more water south to benefit the environment and meet the needs of our communities.
- E. Continue progressing toward reducing the frequency and severity of harmful algal blooms, including blue-green algae and red tide, in our state's inland and coastal waters by:
- i) Directing the Blue-Green Algae Task Force to continue examining the sources of and solutions for addressing and mitigating blue-green algae and to provide additional recommendations for further state action.
  - ii) Coordinating with FWC, the Florida Department of Health, and the Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force to continue providing technical expertise and recommendations for supporting investigations into harmful algal bloom causes, impacts, management responses, and mitigation strategies.
  - iii) Continuing the red tide emergency grant program and creating a similar blue-green algal bloom emergency grant program to provide targeted funding supporting state and local government response efforts to minimize the harmful effects of blue-green algae blooms on our citizens and visitors.
- F. For nutrient-impaired waterbodies, strengthen BMAPs, which provide a roadmap to restoring water quality and reducing pollutants, by:

- i) Updating all BMAPs to include the specific projects necessary to meet the requisite water quality standards to achieve restoration goals. The projects most likely to yield maximum pollutant reductions should be prioritized.
- ii) Requiring local governments to identify and expedite high priority projects to meet the nutrient load allocations required under a BMAP.
- iii) Working with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) to identify and seek funding for regional projects that address excess nutrient impacts from agricultural nonpoint sources in BMAP areas where agriculture has been identified as a significant source of nutrient pollution.

G. Work with DACS to improve Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP), which are important measures agricultural producers utilize to reduce nutrients from entering our waterways, by:

- i) Working with DACS to ensure a comprehensive data-driven review of all agricultural BMP manuals and completion of updates, as needed.
- ii) Obtaining and reviewing site-specific data on BMP implementation, including parcel-level reporting of commodity and fertilizer application.
- iii) Working with DACS to achieve 100 percent BMP enrollment and implementation in BMAP areas.

#### Section 2: Protecting and Restoring the Indian River Lagoon

I hereby direct DEP to identify and prioritize strategies and projects to expedite water quality restoration in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL), one of our state's most unique and diverse ecosystems, by:

- A. Working with the Legislature to establish the Indian River Lagoon Protection Program and secure at least \$100 million annually for priority projects to improve water quality in the IRL.
- B. Coordinating with stakeholders, including federal agencies, local governments, water management districts, and the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program to expand partnerships to identify and prioritize projects for water quality restoration.
- C. Undertaking enhanced water quality monitoring in the IRL to better identify sources of nutrient loading to inform project prioritization and improve water quality in the IRL.
- D. Taking actions to reduce nutrient contributions to the IRL from septic tanks and wastewater facilities, stormwater discharges, and agriculture non-point sources, including:
  - i) Ensuring the utilization of sewer when available to reduce the density of septic systems, and the proper siting of septic tanks to reduce nutrient contributions, as well as the use of advanced nutrient reducing septic systems.
  - ii) Ensuring that all wastewater facilities discharging to the IRL upgrade to advanced wastewater treatment by July 1, 2025.
  - iii) Prioritizing state investments for the conversion of all traditional septic tanks adjacent to the IRL to sewer, while also investing in the expansion of wastewater capacity and advanced treatment.
- E. Supporting innovative nature-based solutions including living shorelines, freshwater and coastal wetland restoration, and seagrass recovery utilizing strategic propagation and planting efforts.

### Section 3: Protecting Our Coasts and Making Florida Communities More Resilient

I hereby direct the Chief Resilience Officer and DEP to build upon our efforts protecting Florida communities from flooding, sea level rise, and future storm events by undertaking the following:

- A. Continuing to provide expedited hurricane recovery support to the communities across the state that were impacted by Hurricanes Ian and Nicole, including seeking continued funding to nourish and restore our beaches.
- B. Ensuring continued funding for statewide resilience projects through the Resilient Florida Program.
- C. Supporting the completion of comprehensive vulnerability assessments for all of Florida's counties and municipalities by 2026 to better inform flood risk planning and adaptation solutions.
- D. Establishing a Coral Reef Restoration and Recovery Initiative to increase the State's coral propagation and deployment capacity to restore the natural infrastructure that will enhance coastal flood and storm surge protections.
- E. Coordinating with the Florida Department of Transportation to ensure it identifies and considers water quality and flood mitigation benefits when developing and implementing its resilience planning.

### Section 4: Preserving and Restoring Conservation Lands for Future Generations

I hereby direct DEP to take the following actions to preserve and protect natural lands for generations to come:

- A. Continue to seek consistent and meaningful annual funding for the Florida Forever Program, the state's premier conservation and recreation land acquisition program.



B. Take all necessary steps to expedite the state's land conservation efforts, including a strategic focus on acquisitions within the Wildlife Corridor and acquisitions that benefit vulnerable ecosystems, water quality, and resilience.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed, at Tallahassee, on this 10th day of January, 2023.

  
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RON DESANTIS, GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

  
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SECRETARY OF STATE

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TALLAHASSEE, FL  
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