



Martin County Board of County Commissioners

Committee Week Report 2-3

January 7, 2019 – January 24, 2019

The past two committee weeks were centered around presentations that indicated the senate and the house's budget and policy priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

Water Quality

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Environment and General Government, led by Chairwoman Debbie Mayfield, has focused heavily on wastewater's contribution to nutrient loads and its negative impact on Florida's environment, specifically Florida's estuaries and the Indian River Lagoon. Dr. Brian Lapointe presented "[Nutrient Loads from Septic Systems Support Harmful Algal Blooms in Florida's Springs, Rivers, and Coastal Waters](#)" to the committee, emphasizing the impact pollutants from septic systems have on our waterways. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) presented "Wastewater Incident Reporting, Compliance, and Enforcement by the Department of Environmental Protection, '[Sanitary Sewer Overflows \(SSOs\)](#).'" SSOs occur when there is an obstruction, system failure or capacity exceedance at a wastewater facility. The discussion centered on where and how wastewater facilities fail to follow operating parameters and how DEP has addressed these issues. These discussions lay the foundation for how the state is looking to address critical utilities infrastructure challenges.

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee heard a presentation on "[Harmful Algal Bloom Response](#)" by DEP. DEP reviewed how they addressed both blue green algae and red tide in the summer of 2018. The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee received a review and update of the [Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan \(CERP\) by DEP](#) and a presentation by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that provided an overview of [Best Management Practices \(BMPs\)](#). BMPs are agriculture's guide for water quality and water quantity. They discussed what the department has done to ensure compliance of BMPs.

Recently, the new Florida Commissioner of Agriculture, Nikki Fried, announced her department is going to begin sending inspectors to farms to take water quality samples. She insists that farmers need to have the science to back up their practices involving water and fertilizer use amid concerns about water quality.

The Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee heard a presentation on the [“Environmental Impacts of Hurricane Michael.”](#) Hurricane Michael’s damages are unprecedented. Preliminary agricultural losses are \$1.5 billion, and there is no commercial fisheries data available yet. In addition, 2.8 million acres of forests were severely affected with timber losses estimated at \$1.3 billion.

Senator Mayfield and Representative LaMarca have filed a bill titled, “Coastal Management” (SB 446 and HB 325), which would provide reoccurring funding for beach and inlet nourishment.

On Tuesday, January 29, [Governor DeSantis began announcing portions of his budget proposal.](#) He is requesting a "historic" \$625 million for water resources projects, including Everglades restoration. Highlights of DeSantis’ 2019-20 budget proposal include:

- \$360 million for Everglades restoration including funding for the C-43 and C-44 reservoirs and other projects to provide 672,000 acre-feet of water storage.
- \$107 million for the proposed Everglades Agricultural Area reservoir (\$43 million more than current).
- \$50 million for springs.
- \$25 million to improve water quality and combat harmful algal blooms.
- \$40 million for alternative water supply development.
- Transfer 19 positions in the environmental crimes enforcement unit at the state wildlife agency to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Education

Both the Senate and House Education Committees heard a presentation on the [recommendations from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Initial Report.](#) The recommendations were to implement active shooter training, establish threat assessment teams that are trained to identify students that pose potential threats, continue to invest in school resource officers, and continue enrolling more teachers and staff in the guardian program.

The next committee week will take place February 4 – February 8.