



Springs Lovers and Water Advocates, Listen Up!

Week 3 was the week of water at the Florida Legislature, with springs champion Senator Lee Constantine (R-Altamonte Springs) debuting his sweeping proposed committee bill in Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation on Wednesday. At the same time, amendments to a jobs bill in the Senate and the House's stormwater bill would move Florida wetlands protections in the other direction.

Read on for details, opportunities to weigh in with your legislators, and join us in Tallahassee next week for renewable energy lobby day and April 7th for Florida Forever Day! ~ Audubon of Florida Policy Team

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House and Senate Take Different Approaches on Water Quality

Senator Lee Constantine Unveils Major Water Protection Bill

In a move that may finally gain significant protection for Florida's springs, Senator Lee Constantine released his long awaited bill that reflects the ideas presented by the public in a series of meetings of the Senate Select Committee on Inland Waters. The bill is a collection of solutions to many of the state's water quality and water supply issues. Among the most important issues are controlling sources of pollution that are harming springs, the Everglades and coastal waters.

Audubon strongly supports Senator Constantine's efforts and will call on you to help Senator Constantine pass water legislation to help springs and end many of the practices that are harming water quality. A detailed review of the water bill will be published here next week.



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Bill Undermining Wetlands and Stormwater Protection Bypasses Environment Review

SB 1752, a bill to help unemployed workers has provisions sponsored by Sen. Mike Bennett (R-Bradenton) and Sen. Don Gaetz (R-Ft. Walton Beach) that undermine environmental protection by cutting to just 30 days the time an agency has to review and approve permits to fill wetlands and release stormwater. The bill also forces local governments to handle environmental resource permits or risk preemption of hard-won fertilizer ordinances and local spring protections. Another provision grants a general permit for surface water systems of up to 40 acres, allowing agency review to be bypassed if the project has been signed and sealed by an engineer. The bill provides no remedy for mistakes or misconduct. Despite the addition of these bad water provisions to a bill otherwise focused on jobs creation, this legislation has not been referred to the Senate's Environment committee and instead will head directly to the Senate floor.

Stormwater Rule Picks Up Baggage

SB 1748/House ANR PBC 10-11 - In a surprise move, the House Committee chair who had pledged to move along a bill to implement the new proposed Statewide Stormwater Rule amended the bill with a developer lobbyist-drafted alternative. The amendment significantly constrains the long-sought stormwater rule. Florida's existing stormwater rules are obsolete and allow new developments to release polluted water with minimal treatment. Audubon and others have been working with DEP for years to get a new stormwater rule in place. A new rule is considered critical to protecting the Everglades, recovering Lake Okeechobee and protecting water quality throughout the state. Developers shamelessly declared at the House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee meeting that they were seeking to hold the new stormwater bill hostage to numeric nutrient criteria.

Be An Advocate!

[Join Audubon and our partners next Monday and Tuesday to lobby your legislators on clean energy](#)



[issues](#). We'll host you for a reception with legislators Monday night, train you in the issues and art of lobbying, and schedule your Tuesday appointments for you. [Today is the last day to register](#)—don't

Nearshore Oil and Gas Exploration, and Renewable Alternatives

delay!



Today in the House, Speaker-elect Dean Cannon's committee reviewed the stakeholder responses to policy questions key to drafting a bill to open Florida's nearshore waters to oil and gas exploration. Cannon debuted a new clearinghouse [website](#) cataloguing the expert testimony received to-date by the committee. He also suggested that this issue and further discussion of bill components would not be revisited until week 6 of Session. It is Audubon's position that instead of drilling, Florida needs robust renewable energy policy that sets a target for clean energy supply and creates rules for a robust renewable energy market in Florida. This will benefit Florida's economy and our environment. Audubon will continue to work towards

these goals this session.

Florida Forever and Everglades Restoration

This week in appropriations, neither the House nor the Senate included funding for Florida Forever and Everglades Restoration in their preliminary natural resources budgets. Nevertheless, when asked by Rep. Mark Pafford (D-West Palm Beach), House Natural Resources Appropriations Chair Ralph Poppell (R-Titusville) indicated both land conservation programs were still in play, should an allocation become available from leadership. Similarly, Senate General Government Appropriations Chair Carey Baker (R-Eustis) expressed in no uncertain terms today that both issues are priorities and appropriators are actively working to find continuation funding for both. Additionally, in House Natural Resource Appropriations, South Florida Water Management District Executive Director Carol Wehle presented information on the district's Everglades Restoration activities, fielding questions on the River of Grass acquisition and district land surplus from Reps. Trudi Williams (R-Ft. Myers) and Mary Brandenburg (D-Lake Worth).

Keep Florida Forever



Join the Florida Forever Coalition at the Capitol April 7 from 10AM-3PM to celebrate Florida Forever Day in Waller Park! For more information or to sign your Florida Forever Coalition-member organization up for a table at the event, visit [Support Florida Forever](#). Join us in waving the flag for Florida Forever and land conservation at the Capitol!

Other Appropriations—Office of Greenways and Trails, Florida Springs Initiative, and Florida Natural Areas Inventory



Public concern regarding early Senate proposals to merge the Office of Greenways and Trails with the Florida Park Service resulted in this cut being removed from the Senate General Government Appropriations bill; however, the Senate budget still eliminates the Florida Springs Initiative and significantly reduces funding to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (funding for both is present in the House version). These issues will go to conference, and Audubon will be watching. The Florida Springs Initiative is an important DEP program that monitors the health of some of Florida's most important springs, and also runs springs partnerships working to find nonregulatory solutions to nutrient and water quantity issues facing springs. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory is a nonprofit affiliated with Florida State University whose scientists, GIS analysts, and

conservation planners work closely with government agencies and non-governmental conservation organizations to inform conservation and land management decisions. The state contracts much of its evaluation of state land management and acquisition proposals to FNAI, which is a more cost-effective and impartial means of accomplishing these goals than conducting these activities in-house.

DCA Reenactment

SB 282 by Sen. Mike Bennett (R-Bradenton) reenacting the Department of Community Affairs passed out of Senate Community Affairs on Thursday with only one "nay" vote—Sen. Ronda Storms (R-Brandon). The bill will head next to Senate Government Oversight and Accountability. Reenactment of DCA has not yet moved on the House side.