

# 2024 FLERA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

FLERA **SUPPORTS** legislation that provides flexibility for local control of environmental protection. FLERA opposes legislation that contains unfunded mandates or preemption of home rule authority relating to environmental regulations or programs.

## LAND ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT

FLERA **SUPPORTS** full funding of the Florida Forever program for the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands. FLERA supports an allocation from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF) for local government land management activities on environmentally sensitive state lands.

## SEA LEVEL RISE AND RESILIENCY

FLERA **SUPPORTS** legislation that would provide funding for local government flood mitigation and resiliency projects.

FLERA **SUPPORTS** legislation and funding that enhances local governments' ability to advance floodplain management initiatives and become more resilient and prepared to adapt to the existential threats of sea-level rise and climate change at the community level. FLERA **ENCOURAGES** the Legislature to consider these needs in the adoption of legislation regarding resiliency and affordable housing. There is a critical need for affordable housing in Florida. However, new initiatives to provide housing should be consistent with existing statutes and programs regarding the Coastal Zone Management Program, the Community Rating System of the National Flood Insurance Program, and other statutory programs and requirements.

As the Legislature continues to make resiliency an important priority, FLERA **ENCOURAGES** the Legislature to ensure that the solutions it funds do not conflict with one another. Florida's beach program is a model in utilizing natural solutions to protect people and property. Data shows that natural solutions are often higher quality, lower cost, and more beneficial than hardened infrastructure. It is important to get the balance right and ensure that new programs to fund hardened infrastructure do not impair or impede existing or new programs to utilize natural solutions for resiliency and storm preparedness.

FLERA **OPPOSES** legislation that would make it more difficult for state or local agencies to protect Florida's tree canopy, which combats urban heat island effect and mitigates wind and flood damage from extreme weather events. Adequate tree canopies also reduce urban water use for landscape irrigation.

## **PETROLEUM STORAGE TANKS**

**FLERA SUPPORTS** full funding for Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) local government cleanup contracting. **FLERA** also supports full funding of local government storage tank compliance verification programs through contracts that provide commensurate compensation for the increased level of effort and expertise required to evaluate large and complex tank systems.

## **AIR QUALITY**

**FLERA SUPPORTS** full funding of local air quality programs, as well as full delegation of the ambient air quality monitoring programs and industrial air pollution source permitting and compliance assurance activities from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and DEP. **FLERA** also supports local program delegation of open burning authorizations and compliance assurance activities from the Division of Forestry (DOF) and DEP.

## **WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY**

**FLERA SUPPORTS** funding for improvements to wastewater and stormwater infrastructure that encourage the use of regional, nature-based solutions for wastewater and stormwater treatment, as these projects not only provide better treatment, but also increase property values, create habitat and enhances economic growth in the surrounding areas.

**FLERA SUPPORTS** legislation to expedite water quality improvements; improvements to agricultural best management practices, including improved monitoring and verification; **FLERA OPPOSES** legislation that would weaken the agricultural best management practices program. **FLERA OPPOSES** the revision of agricultural fertilizer recommendations that result in an increase in fertilizer use.

**FLERA SUPPORTS** increased regulatory oversight of onsite wastewater treatment systems and their contribution to nutrient enrichment of surface and groundwater, including restrictions on the placement of new onsite wastewater treatment systems in coastal high hazard areas.

Additionally, **FLERA SUPPORTS** a statewide stormwater rule that requires use of the most current precipitation data and sets requirements for nutrient reduction when designing stormwater management systems for both flood control and water quality. To achieve this, **FLERA SUPPORTS** ratification of the current DEP rulemaking. **FLERA** also **SUPPORTS** updated numeric nutrient criteria to better protect water quality.

**FLERA SUPPORTS** legislation and funding mechanisms to improve water conservation programs. **FLERA SUPPORTS** removing preemptions that prevent local governments from regulating wells and implementing irrigation restrictions that are more protective than water management district rules.

Finally, FLERA **SUPPORTS** the reduction of pollution from landscape fertilizers, including the elimination of the preemption of local ordinances that limit the sale of fertilizer products, contained in s. 570.07(41)(a), F.S. FLERA recognizes the importance of promoting landscaping choices and behaviors that are protective of water quality and water quantity and **SUPPORTS** revising the state funded Florida Friendly Landscaping (FFL) program to further discourage the use of fertilizers and permanent irrigation.

FLERA **SUPPORTS** legislation that would improve water quality and reduce negative impacts on seagrasses. FLERA **OPPOSES** legislation that would allow for new impacts to pristine seagrasses. FLERA **OPPOSES** legislation that would threaten existing aquatic preserves.

FLERA **SUPPORTS** legislation and funding mechanisms to ensure long-term maintenance of existing infrastructure and stormwater treatment areas (STAs).

FLERA **SUPPORTS** recurring, dedicated funding for Florida's National Estuary Programs and locally based Estuary Programs.

### **ENERGY/NET METERING**

FLERA **OPPOSES** legislation that would allow electric utilities to pay solar customers less than the retail rate.