



## 2025 Mid-Session Overview

**by Pepper Uchino, President**

The 2025 Regular Session is nearing the halfway mark. This one may be one for the annals. It started well behind schedule due to the multiple special sessions and a week canceled by snow during the lead-in committee weeks. So now the chambers are playing catchup. As we expected, the frenetic pace started Week 1 and has not let up. Given the midpoint comes on April 2nd, it is a good time to step back and take stock of what has happened and how it might finish on time, May 2nd.

The chambers' budgets were released in Week 4 and may indicate an extremely bumpy ride to close out Session. In my 18th year of working in and around the Legislature, this is the furthest apart I have seen – \$4.4 billion separates the two. The Senate budget stands at \$117.36 billion, while the House comes in at a very lean \$112.95 billion. Both are under the current year's budget when adjusted for inflation. The Senate has indicated it is returning to a more normal and conservative spending plan after several years of big increases, while the House has aggressively cut discretionary and recurring funding in anticipation of significant tax cuts.

In a year when local government funding requests and the hurricane recovery plan from DEP run into the several hundred of millions, I am relieved to not have the recurring programmatic funding cut. Nonetheless, beaches are the most important economic driver in the state, and I continue to tout these facts while asking for increases in non-recurring dollars to supplement the ask this year. It is a message that continues to resonate, as both chairs of the environmental budget subcommittees mentioned beach spending in their budget presentations. Parlaying it into additional spending this year will be challenging.

There are two substantial differences between the budgets for our interests. The Senate put in an additional \$2.5M but directed all spending (\$52.5M) in proviso for beach and inlet projects in priority rank. The statutory split between the beach and inlet projects this year will



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be nearly 50/50, so the Senate's proviso means more funding will go to the beach list. The House put in the \$50M but did not direct it for specific projects in proviso, so that budget will adhere to the statutory distribution for now. Additionally, the House extended the hurricane restoration reimbursement grant program until 2026. The program is still underutilized by property owners and unallocated funds remain that could be used for local government beach projects.

Regarding substantive legislation, we are tracking two priority bills – one we are actively opposing, and the other we are actively supporting. Ironically, in the Senate at least, they were both filed by Senator Trumbull.

[SB 1664 \(Trumbull\)/HB 1221 \(Miller\) – Local Option Taxes](#) has moved in both chambers but is currently stalled. I expect to see them start moving again in Week 6.

The bill requires that any local discretionary sales surtax, tourist development tax, or local option food and beverage tax which is subject to approval in a referendum and is in effect on June 30, 2025, be renewed by referendum on or before January 1, 2033. The bill generally creates a new 8-year duration for those taxes; however, for any tax that is pledged for debt service, the 2033 renewal is delayed until the retirement of the debt. Future levies that will be pledged for debt service are subject to a maximum 30-year duration and must be specified in the referendum in which they are passed. These changes do not revise which taxes are subject to referendum, and do not apply to the Pension Liability Surtax.

Our major objection is limiting the duration of the tourist development tax when those revenues are used as matching funds for state and federal projects. If the TDTs must be renewed every eight years, I do not know if the partnering agencies will deem that length sufficient as “dedicated” matching funds for federal authorizations. Additionally, there is already a process by which 15 percent of the electorate where the taxes are being collected can sign a petition and have the tax put to the ballot again. The accountability measures contained in the bill for TDTs appear to be unnecessary.

On the other hand, we are supporting [SB 1622 \(Trumbull\)/HB 6043 \(Andrade\) – Customary Use of Beaches](#).

The bill repeals the changes to customary use that were passed by the Legislature in 2018, which flipped the burden of proving customary use from the property owner to the local government trying to pass an ordinance, and set the procedures that must be used to do so. This law caused more litigation under the new provisions than in the decades prior. FSBPA supports return to the previous legal standard.

There are a handful of other bills we are tracking and monitoring. If you would like details, let me know. Otherwise, if you have contacts with any coastal legislative members or those in leadership positions, please impress upon them how important beach and storm damage recovery funding are.

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# Adapting Today; Powering Tomorrow

## Announcing the 2025 Florida Resilience Conference



### 4TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2025  
SUNSEEKER RESORT  
CHARLOTTE HARBOR, FLORIDA



We are excited to host the 2025 Florida Resilience Conference at the beautiful [Sunseeker Resort](#) located in the heart of Florida's charming Gulf coast. Mark your calendars, September 17-19, for an insightful and engaging event that follows our traditional annual conference format.

- ❖ Plenary sessions will kick off and close the conference program, with concurrent sessions on Beach Management, Gray/Green Infrastructure, Energy, and Planning to take place in-between.
- ❖ FSBPA Awards Banquet: Join us on Thursday, September 18, for a special evening recognizing outstanding contributions to Florida's beaches. [Award Nominations](#) are open through June 30.
- ❖ Registration is now open: Visit our website for a [schedule-at-a-glance](#) to assist with travel planning.

### The Call for Abstracts is now open

**Submission Deadline: June 2, 2025**

We invite you to submit abstracts for consideration by the Planning Committee. Abstracts must be submitted via our online form by the deadline to be considered. A comprehensive list of abstract topics is available on our [conference website](#), with beach-related topics outlined on the next page.

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**Call for  
Abstracts**

We are looking for dedicated and motivated experts to share their insights at the 2025 Florida Resilience Conference!

### Beach Management Track – Suggested Topics

- **Calling all Projects** - Beach, dune, and inlet management case studies, including funding strategies, design challenges, environmental considerations, post-construction monitoring, and lessons learned
- Funding strategies - Mechanisms for funding beach and coastal resilience projects
- Sand Resources - Borrow area studies, regional sand management, and beneficial use of dredged materials
- Monitoring and Compliance - Physical and environmental monitoring requirements, protocols, and performance outcomes, including nesting sea turtles, hardbottom, mitigation reefs
- Post-storm response - Emergency recovery efforts and lessons from past storm events
- Economic impact -The value of maintaining a healthy beach and dune system
- Coastal resilience and adaptation - Strategies for strengthening the resilience of coastal communities and ecosystems

### Sponsorship Opportunities

[Sponsorship opportunities](#) are available on our conference website. Don't miss your chance to be part of Florida's premier beach management and coastal resilience event – become a sponsor today!

For more information about the conference, email [mail@fsbpa.com](mailto:mail@fsbpa.com).

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## Sunseeker Resort Charlotte Harbor



## Protecting Manasota Key: USACE Launches Coastal Storm Risk Management Study in Charlotte County



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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Savannah District, and the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners kicked off the Charlotte County Coastal Storm Risk Management (CSRSM) Study with the signing of the Feasibility Cost Share Agreement in June 2024.

Manasota Key, the area of focus for the Charlotte County CSRSM study, has seen increasing vulnerability to the devastating impacts of coastal storms and changing conditions; most recent and notable were the damages received this past hurricane season from Hurricanes Helene and Milton in September and October 2024. These storms have caused significant structural damage and shoreline erosion. The damages from storm systems such as Hurricanes Helene and Milton cause negative impacts to the economy, including disruptions to tourism and recreation, which are integral to the local economy. The worsening erosion, compounded by changing sea level conditions, increases the threat of storm impacts to the residential and commercial properties along the shoreline, and has lasting negative impacts to the community.



*Image of the Manasota Key shoreline pre-Helene and Milton.  
Photo credit: Summer Wright, Savannah District, USACE.*

In response to these ongoing challenges, Charlotte County and USACE, in partnership with many other federal, state, and local agencies, is working to identify and develop comprehensive plans that will manage future risks and improve overall community resilience in the face of coastal storms and changing conditions. The study is expected to take approximately three years to complete, with the expectation of a signed Chief of Engineers Report in June 2027, signaling the end of the study phase and the initiation of the process of seeking Congressional approval and funding for the design and construction of the Recommended Plan that will reduce negative impacts to the national and local economy.

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Currently, USACE is in the process of conducting engineering and economic modeling, which will indicate the level of damages over the next 50 years if no Federal action is implemented. This will allow for an informed selection of an action alternative that will benefit the national economy, the environment, and the local community. Options currently being evaluated include construction of a beach berm and dune, nearshore placement, improvement of existing rock revetment, and elevation of structures. USACE is evaluating these options and combining them in different ways to get the most benefits while protecting important environmental habitats.



USACE has held multiple agency and public engagements, including a planning charette in September 2024 and a local public meeting in January 2025. More public meetings are planned to keep the community engaged with the decision-making process. USACE's collaboration with the public, agencies, and other stakeholders is vital in the development of comprehensive plans and an informed documentation of the study process. USACE, Savannah District, is excited continue to partner with Charlotte County, and to work closely with the community as we move forward to the identification of a Recommended Plan that will benefit Manasota Key.

*Images of the Manasota Key shoreline post Helene and Milton.  
Photo credit: Summer Wright.*

## Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection

### April 2025 Update



#### Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton Recovery Plan

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) authored a [Hurricanes Debby Helene and Milton Recovery Plan for Florida's Beach and Dune System](#) (Plan) as a preliminary planning document to estimate the amount of non-federal dollars needed to repair impacts to beaches caused by all three hurricanes. Estimates contained in the Plan are based on information provided



by local governments, their coastal engineering consultants, the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and DEP staff. The Plan identified approximately 242.5 million non-federal dollars needed to restore 35 beaches in 15 counties. These were funds needed in addition to those already allocated in agreements with local governments through previous hurricane funding (Ian and Nicole, the Hurricane Restoration and Reimbursement Grant Program and the Local Government Funding Request process). The Plan has been provided to the Florida Legislature for consideration of funding during the 2025 Legislative Session.

It is important to note that the comparatively high funding amount (as compared to the [Hurricanes Ian and Nicole Recovery Plan for Florida's Beach and Dune System](#)) is likely due to several factors. First, the Gulf Coast Region has seen an extremely active hurricane season for the previous three years, with some areas being impacted by four storms in two seasons. Second, federal funding can be slow to materialize, and the delay in securing funds to begin beach and dune restoration projects may leave communities vulnerable for several hurricane seasons. Last, high construction mobilization costs are being noted throughout Florida. This is likely a result of the increased demand for dredge equipment along the U.S. East Coast, driven by a high volume of construction activities and a particularly strong demand for dredging work in Florida.

All but one of the 35 project areas have a prior history of sand placement or management activities to some extent. Comparatively, the [Hurricanes Ian and Nicole Recovery Plan](#) identified 48 project areas, but approximately 68% of the total funds were applied to previously unmanaged stretches of shoreline.



DEP's Debby, Helen and Milton Coastal Impact Reports can be found on the [Coastal Engineering Geology Group Technical Reports](#) webpage under the Hurricane and Tropical Post-Storm Reports section.

### **Beaches Management Funding Assistance Program (BMFA)**

The Legislative Reports from the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Local Government Funding Request are now published on the BMFA's [Beaches Funding Documents](#) webpage. The Local Government Funding Request, Long Range Budget Plan and Annual Financial Summary and Accountability Reports can all be found at the [Beaches Funding Documents](#) webpage.

The BMFA Program has had several position changes during the beginning of 2025. Updated contact information can be found at the [Beaches Funding Contacts](#) webpage. Two new grant managers for the Southwest Region and the Panhandle/Northeast Region are scheduled to join the BMFA team on March 28 and April 4, 2025.

BMFA will be hosting a reimbursement request training for grantees on Thursday, April 24, 2025, from 1-2:30 p.m. An email to grantees with the Microsoft Teams invite has been sent.

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**Shoreline**

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS****FSBPA Events**

**September 17-19, 2025**

**4th Annual Florida Resilience Conference**

**Sunseeker Resort, Charlotte Harbor, FL**



**February 4-6, 2026**

**39th Annual National Conference on Beach Preservation Technology**

**Embassy Suites by Hilton St. Augustine Beach, Florida**