



2018 SAINT LUCIE COUNTY
**Legislative
Program**

St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Treasure Coast International Airport Scrub-Jay Habitat - \$600,000

St. Lucie County is requesting \$600,000 to assist with the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to address impacts to the federally listed Florida Scrub-Jay relating to development within the vicinity of the Treasure Coast International Airport (TCIA). The County-wide HCP will provide projects consistent with its standards, reduced permitting time frames, providing a direct economic benefit to St. Lucie County, landowners, developers and businesses.

This is a full-scale project with immediate job opportunities for all phases including modeling, surveys, permitting, and monitoring. Furthermore, it will enable the TCIA to provide more opportunities to expand high wage jobs. Expedited federal permitting made possible by the HCP will allow new and expanding businesses to offer additional job opportunities.

Alcohol Licensing

In 1967, the Legislature enacted ch.67-1190, Laws of Florida, to provide specific requirements regarding the issuance of Special Restaurant Beverage (SRX) licenses in St. Lucie County. Under the special act, in St. Lucie County SRX licenses may be issued to any bona fide hotel, motel, motor court, or to any bona fide restaurant with service for 200 or more patrons at tables and occupying more than 4,000 square feet of floor space. The County supports the repeal of ch.67-1190 Laws of Florida, to allow for service of 150 or more patrons and occupying more than 2,500 square feet of floor space.

Visit Florida

Over the past five years, St. Lucie County has seen tremendous tourism growth in with three consecutive record years in tourist tax collections. Since 2012, tourist tax revenues have increased 37.8%.

This kind of growth does not happen by accident. It is the direct result of tourism marketing. The St. Lucie County Tourism Office works closely with Visit Florida, the State's tourism marketing organization, on a variety of cooperative programs, initiatives and marketing efforts to extend our message into key markets that would otherwise be unattainable due to our limited budget. Without Visit Florida's support, exposure and global buying power, SLC's message would be otherwise unheard in the markets we target for visitors.

A reduction in state funding to Visit Florida would result in a reduction in the cooperative marketing opportunities St. Lucie County currently utilizes. The travel industry has become increasingly competitive and other states are outspending Florida to market their destinations and therefore gain more market share. The County supports continued funding of the program at a level which is productive for the organization and for the growth of tourism marketing on behalf of the County.

SUPPORT ISSUES

Enterprise Florida/Job Growth Grant Fund

The County supports the continued funding of the Florida Job Growth Grant and the state's economic development toolkit in a manner that supports increased economic growth and development by incentivizing businesses to relocate to or expand in all regions of the state of Florida.

Economic Development Transportation Fund

The Economic Development Transportation Fund, commonly referred to as the "Road Fund," is an incentive tool designed to alleviate transportation problems that adversely impact a specific company's location or expansion decision. The elimination of the problem must serve as inducement for a specific company's location, retention or expansion project in Florida, and create or retain job opportunities for Floridians. The County supports continued funding of the program.

BUDGET & TAXATION POLICY

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Unfunded Mandates/Home Rule

The State Legislature has frequently passed legislation that compels local governments to provide a service, program, or benefit without providing the appropriate funding or a funding source. This compromises local governments' ability to provide services requested by their local communities by diverting resources to these state-directed, unfunded mandates or cost shifts. In addition, as more and more mandates are created, local governments are faced with the burden of using local tax dollars to finance functions that they have little control over.

The state must do a better job of truthfully identifying costs to local governments when passing new legislation and must provide funding or a funding source for every legislative initiative that imposes a cost on counties. St. Lucie County opposes new unfunded mandates and unfunded state to county cost shifts.

During the 2017 Legislative Session, there were a significant number of legislative bills filed that proposed to preempt the Home Rule Authority of local governments thereby preventing the ability of local governments to respond in a timely manner to matters of local importance. It is imperative and critical that decisions and legislation regarding local government services be left to the form of government closest to the citizens. Therefore, the County opposes any legislation which would preempt their Home Rule Authority.

Aviation Fuel Tax

The aviation fuel tax contributes to the State Transportation Trust which in turn funds the Aviation Grant Program. The Aviation Grant Program provides financial assistance to Florida's airports in the areas of safety, security, preservation, capacity improvement, land acquisition, planning, and economic development. The program also provides funding to assist local governments and airport authorities in planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining public-use aviation facilities. For example, the new MRO hangar at the Treasure Coast International Airport is one of these projects funded through this program.

The County opposes legislation that would modify current aviation fuel taxes in a manner that would negatively impact counties or the state's ability to provide resources in support of aviation transportation related operations.

Communication Services Tax

The County opposes legislation which would revise current law in a manner that significantly reduces current local government related revenues.

Furthermore, the County does support amending and/or revising current law in a manner that is considered revenue neutral, simplifies administration and collection of the current tax, provides for a broad and equitable tax base, provides for enhanced stability and reliability as an important revenue source for local government and provides the opportunity for market-based growth.

Local Discretionary Revenue Flexibility

The County supports modifications to existing laws governing local discretionary sales tax revenue sources to provide greater simplification, flexibility and more efficient administration and management. As well as, expanding the eligibility to levy the Charter County Transportation Surtax and the Documentary Surtax to all counties.

Tourism Development Tax

The County opposes any legislation which will allow the use of tourism development tax for anything other than for the promotion of tourism.

Local Government Tax Referenda

The County opposes legislation that requires a 60% threshold for passage of a local tax referenda during a general election.

SUPPORT ISSUES

Expansion of Gaming at Pari-Mutuel Facilities

In 2004, voters of the state passed an amendment that paved the way for expansion of gambling at pari-mutuel facilities in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties. Since that time, gambling facilities at several locations throughout the state have sought to expand their operations, but been unable to do so, placing the St. Lucie County pari-mutuel and others at an unfair competitive disadvantage. Proposed gaming legislation may prevent St. Lucie County facilities from being able to expand gaming to compete with existing and future gambling facilities in Miami-Dade and Broward County.

In November 2016, the voters in St. Lucie County overwhelmingly supported a ballot initiative to authorize slot machine gaming at existing licensed pari-mutuel facilities within the County.

The County supports any legislation, including the Seminole Compact, which will allow for the inclusion of slot machine expansions at pari-mutuels in those counties which have held successful voter referenda. The County also opposes any legislation that would place the County's pari-mutuel facilities at an unfair competitive disadvantage as it relates to the expansion of gambling in the state.

ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL RESOURCES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2017 St. Lucie County Water Projects

Project	Project Description	Requested Amount	County Match
Stormwater Infrastructure Replacement Project	The overall objective of this project is to replace three culverts which are old and in need of full replacement. This work is consistent with the SFWMD Strategic Priority.	\$900,000	\$900,000
Cypress Creek Restoration	The Cypress Creek Restoration Project is a natural area storage component to the IRL-S C23/C24 CERP project in St. Lucie County. The project will restore impacted wetlands and watershed resources identified as a need in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan to reduce pressures on the St. Lucie Estuary.	\$400,000	\$3,368,822
St. Lucie River North Fork Floodplain Restoration	The project will restore the North Fork St. Lucie River, including improving living shorelines, reconnecting oxbows and historic river flow ways, and enhancing the floodplain wetlands. The project will benefit the recovery of both the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon Estuaries. The project is modeled from similar restoration projects underway on the Kissimmee River where efforts are focused repairing ecological damage associated with dredging and channelizing.	\$2,000,000	\$7,000,000

Beach and Inlet Management Projects

The Beach Management Funding Assistance Program is a Long-Range Budget Plan administered through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to assist eligible local governments with their beach erosion control projects. Each application request must include a detailed project description, cost estimate, and supporting resolution from the governing body. Individual projects then receive a priority ranking based upon several criteria.

Project	Project Description	Requested Amount	County Match
Ft. Pierce Inlet Management Plan	FY 2017/18 includes partial State funding (\$1,818,315) of the Erosion District's original request of \$2,459,500 for the inlet sand trap. The current request of \$679,185 will fulfill the remaining amount.	\$679,185	\$130,000
Ft. Pierce Shore Protection Project	2018 Physical and biological monitoring	\$130,000	\$130,000
	2015 Federal Nourishment - State Reimbursement	\$52,820	\$52,820
Totals		\$862,005.00	\$312,820.00

St. Lucie River Issues Team

The St. Lucie River Issue Team (SLRIT) was formed by the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force to document the existing condition of the SLE, describe the impacts of the discharge event, and develop an interim action plan with specific short term projects that could be implemented within five years to improve water quality in the SLE. The team is made up of a variety of federal, state and local governments in addition to agricultural and environmental interests.

For more than a decade, the SLRIT has solicited, ranked and submitted to the Florida Legislature local turn-dirt projects focused on the restoration of the SLE and the Indian River Lagoon (IRL). The County fully supports the funding of all ranked projects by the St. Lucie River Issues Team.

Project	Project Description	Requested Amount	County Match
Harmony Heights Stormwater Improvements Phase 1	The project will notably reduce storm water runoff from Harmony Heights subdivision into the SFWMD Canal 25 and FPFWCD Canal 1, both of which border the subdivision. Both of these canals discharge to the Indian River Lagoon by means of Taylor Creek.	\$500,000	\$500,000

Indian River Lagoon South – Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project

The County remains extremely interested in the completion of the entire Indian River Lagoon-South (IRL-S) project, particularly construction of the C-23 and C-24 reservoirs and associated storm water treatment area (STA). The IRL-S project is a component of CERP, and was first authorized by Congress in 2007. Under CERP, the federal government (through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior) is expected to fund half of the costs for restoration, with an array of state, tribal, and local agencies paying the other half. The County has already contributed \$1 million towards the project.

According to the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS), design will occur beginning in 2018 and 2019 for the two reservoirs, respectively. Due to the success of the work plan for the C44 project, the County respectfully requests funding from the State in order to expedite the design phase of the north reservoir component of the C-23/C-24 project, which is ready for this phase as well as construction.

Zika/Mosquito Control

The control of disease-carrying mosquitoes is one of Florida's most pressing public health concerns. The sudden appearance of the Zika virus in our state over the past year demonstrates clearly the vulnerability of mosquito control in such a wet, warm environment where disease can spread quickly if not abated through efficient, effective mosquito management techniques. The St. Lucie Mosquito Control District depends on multiple state and non-profit agencies that help provide regulatory supervision, training, public health and mosquito education – all needed to provide a concentrated, coordinated attack on public health threats such as the Zika virus. In recent years, these agencies and organizations have suffered budget cuts that have dramatically curtailed their services. This has had a negative impact on mosquito abatement in Florida at a time when we need it the most.

We look to the Florida Legislature and Governor to provide sufficient resources to:

- The Florida Department of Health, the primary agency responsible for enforcing the emergency public health order imposed by Gov. Scott in February.
- The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which is responsible for regulatory guidance and funding support as the threat from mosquito-borne diseases persists throughout the District and the state of Florida.
- The Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory, the mosquito biology “think tank” performing scientific research that mosquito control districts rely upon and cannot conduct themselves.
- The Florida Mosquito Control Association, a nonprofit agency with members from various fields including mosquito control professionals, scientists, engineers and public health specialists, and which represents the interests of those who promote effective and environmentally sound control of disease-transmitting and pestiferous mosquitoes and other arthropods of public health importance. FMCA's staffing has been reduced, impacting its ability to serve its members.

SUPPORT ISSUES

Department of Environmental Protection – Beach Funding & Permitting

St. Lucie County supports the creation of a new dedicated and recurring statutory funding source for beach renourishment projects which accurately reflects the increase in participating programs and future beach and inlet project funding needs. The previous statutory commitment of \$30 million created in 1998 was repealed during Amendment 1 implementation. Since that time, the beach program has received just over \$30 million each year between Land Acquisition Trust Funds and General Revenue.

This amount is no longer sufficient to meet Florida's needs. A simple adjustment for inflation would require \$54 million in 2017 dollars annually. This does not account for the fact that, since 1998, the number of miles participating in the program has increased by 50 percent. Funding half of the project requests over the last few years would require nearly \$50 million annually, and annualizing beach and inlet project funding needs over the next 20 years would require roughly \$60 million.

Hydraulic Fracturing

Hydraulic fracturing is a technique that involves stimulating the well to extract oil and gas. Large amounts of fluid under pressure are injected into a wellbore to create and extend fractures in the rock formation. The fractures are held open by a slurry mixture which allows natural gas to flow from the fractures into the production well.

Oppose any legislation which would pre-empt County regulations when pertaining to the process of hydraulic fracturing.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Florida Seaport Transportation & Economic Development (FSTED)

The Florida Legislature created this on-port investment program in 1990, which is administered by the FSTED Council, consisting of the port directors of the 15 public seaports, the Secretary of the Department of Transportation, and the Director of the Department of Economic Opportunity. This state and local investment entity is statutorily charged with accomplishing the state’s seaport development mission of implementing capital improvement projects at the local level.

The City of Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County have entered into an interlocal agreement to collaborate efforts in the development of the properties owned by both entities at the Port of Fort Pierce.

Project	Project Description	Requested Amount	County Match
Fisherman’s Wharf Roadway Improvements	Total re-construction of the Fisherman’s Wharf roadway with upgraded utilities and improved stormwater management.	\$750,000	\$750,000
Fisherman’s Wharf Bulkhead Construction	To construct and rehabilitate the insufficient and seriously deteriorated bulkhead at Fisherman’s Wharf	\$1,380,000	\$460,000

SUPPORT ISSUES

Transportation Disadvantaged Programs

Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) funding is an important funding source to provide the most economically challenged customers with discounted rides on both our fixed route and CONNECTION services. St. Lucie County supports attempts to maintain funding to the TD program and to prevent diversion of these dollars for other purposes.

State Transportation Trust Fund

The Florida Transportation Trust Fund is made up of state fuel taxes, motor vehicle fees, tolls and federal grants, and was designed to fund critical road building projects. Transportation is the backbone of Florida’s economy and it is important that these funds are used to pay for transportation projects that will put Floridians to work and improve the state’s aging infrastructure.

St. Lucie County opposes any effort to divert revenues from the State Transportation Trust Fund for non-transportation purposes.

Growth Management & Infrastructure

Growth management laws should take careful consideration of and protect the distinct home rule authority of local governments. Support changes that 1) strengthen the intergovernmental review process, 2) ensure that the development impacts occurring outside the approving jurisdiction are adequately mitigated, 3) eliminate unnecessary duplication and expenses, and 4) Support full funding of regional planning councils and Oppose legislation prohibiting or restricting the ability of a regional planning council to provide planning and technical service to its local governments. Efforts to strengthen intergovernmental coordination should be considered so that land use decisions of one jurisdiction do not negatively impact another.

Strategic Intermodal System (SIS)

St. Lucie County supports legislation allowing SIS funds to be used on roads and other transportation facilities not designated on the SIS network if the improvement relieves congestion on the SIS.

PUBLIC SAFETY

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Inmate Medical Costs

The County supports legislation that reduces jail expenses by setting a reimbursement amount paid by counties to medical providers for health care services for inmates and arrestees at no higher than the established Medicare rate plus 10%, the same rate as currently charged to the Department of Corrections, unless there is an existing contract in place or a business practice providing a lower rate. The County also supports continued efforts to work through the Medicaid reform initiative to ensure that persons with substance abuse and mental health treatment needs are appropriately served.

Pre-Trial Release

The County supports maintaining county ability to provide non-monetary pre-trial release services that ensure the safety and welfare of local communities and oppose legislation that would limit the discretion of first appearance judges to prescribe pre-trial options for defendants. Also, the County supports the expansion of state resources to assist treatment-based drug court programs. Eligible drug-addicted persons may be sent to Drug Court in lieu of traditional justice system case processing. Drug Courts keep individuals in treatment long enough for it to work, while supervising them closely.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The County supports continued state funding for the county EOC to ensure it is able to meet the structural survivability and operational space criteria established by the state and federal government.

Mental Health Court

In the 2016 Legislative Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 439 which created the statutory authority for each county to fund and establish a mental health court program that provides pretrial intervention and postadjudicatory treatment-based programs. The legislation also requires each judicial circuit to establish at least one coordinator position for the Mental Health Court Program, however this position is contingent upon annual appropriation from the state.

The County supports the state appropriating the funds needed to establish the position of Mental Health Court Coordinator within the 19th Judicial Circuit.

SUPPORT ISSUES

Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation

St. Lucie County supports initiatives which reduce juvenile detention through prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services.

Juvenile Detention Facilities

The County supports the legislature appropriating state funds to the Department of Juvenile Justice to upgrade, renovate, or reconstruct detention centers across Florida that are in a state of despair. To support state investments in juvenile facilities to improve the conditions of secure confinement for detained youth without such costs being shifted to the counties. Also, the County supports measures that ensure that adequate safety, supervision, and facility maintenance is provided at juvenile residential assessment centers and secure detention facilities.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

County Share of Cost for Medicaid Services

St. Lucie County supports establishing a cap on growth in the individual county Medicaid costs under F.S. 409.915, to address the cost shifts that result from the transition to a Medicaid enrollee based cost-sharing system. The County opposes efforts to further shift state Medicaid costs to counties.

Opioid Abuse

St. Lucie County supports policy changes on opioid abuse to support providing life-saving interventions, medically-assisted detoxification programs, and diversions from the criminal justice system for those suffering from opioid addiction.

Mental Health/Substance Abuse Funding

Increased community funding is required to meet the needs of persons residing in the St. Lucie County area who are mentally ill and who often additionally have severe substance use disorders. The human and economic costs of untreated mental illness in our state continue to rise. Those costs include the criminalization of people with untreated mental illness, family erosion, substance abuse, job loss, domestic violence, homelessness, medical problems, crime and suicide. Florida must do more to invest and fund community-based and integrated mental healthcare. The County supports funding efforts by the legislature for additional beds to treat mental health and substance abuse issues.

Marchman Act Revisions

The Marchman Act is a civil process established in Chapter 397, Florida Statutes that provides for the involuntary or voluntary assessment, stabilization, and treatment of a person abusing or addicted to drugs or alcohol.

The Marchman Act involves a two-step process of assessment and then treatment. The most common way Marchman cases are initiated is with the filing of a petition for involuntary assessment in the county where the substance abuser is located. The criteria for the Marchman Act petition requires a demonstration that the individual has lost the power of self-control with respect to substance use and either (a) the individual is in need of substance abuse services and is incapable of making a rational decision in regard to receiving services or (b) is likely to suffer from neglect or has inflicted or threatened or attempted to inflict physical harm on oneself or another, or is likely to do so unless admitted.

The County supports the amendment of the Marchman Act to:

- Clarify the definitions of access center, designated receiving facility, and triage center to define functionality and the ability to receive and hold involuntary patients
- Provide flexibility for courts to retain jurisdiction over an individual who fails to complete involuntary treatment or relapses within 12 months, and to order individuals to be transferred to state certified recovery residences upon completion of treatment if recommended by a service provider and if additional funding is available
- Provide for circumstances under which an individual may be held in protective custody to allow for additional petitions to be filed in state court, and to allow minors to be held in treatment facilities until a petition for involuntary treatment is heard in court

The County additionally supports increased and appropriate funding for crisis mental health and substance abuse beds statewide. The County supports increased funding for public receiving facilities and maintaining funding for public facilities if new state general revenue is provided to private receiving facilities. The County also supports coordinated efforts to increase access to acute care behavioral health services for individuals and families. In addition, the County supports legislation to apply confidentiality to Marchman Act filings in the same manner they are applied to other health related record confidentiality under Section 392.65, Florida Statutes.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES (cont.)

Nalaxone/Narcan

Every 15 hours last year, someone died of an opioid overdose in St. Lucie County, nearly double the rate of murders and fatal car crashes. Nalaxone, otherwise known as Narcan, is a medicine used for the treatment of an opioid emergency such as an overdose or a possible opioid overdose with signs of breathing problems and severe sleepiness or not being able to respond. The County supports state efforts to reduce the financial burden on entities that must purchase Narcan for public safety. For example, changing state law to allow Nalaxone to be available as an over the counter (OTC) drug.

Needle Exchange Pilot Program

In 2016, the Florida Legislature amended Chapter 381, Florida Statutes, to provide for the “Miami-Dade Infectious Disease Elimination Act (IDEA).” IDEA provided for a sterile needle and syringe exchange pilot program in Miami-Dade County, subject to reports to the Department of Health detailing the performance and outcomes of the program. The program was established due to the increase in newly diagnosed HIV and Hepatitis C cases in Florida, which are transmitted through sharing of dirty needles and syringes by intravenous drug users. The University of Miami is assisting in the administration of the program and the program is seeing success in limiting the spread of infectious disease.

The County supports the expansion or creation of the sterile needle and syringe exchange pilot program to include St. Lucie County, which has been impacted by the ongoing opioid epidemic and anticipates the associated increase in newly diagnosed HIV and Hepatitis C cases.

SUPPORT ISSUES

County Health Departments

Support preserving the ability of County Health Departments (CHD) to provide primary care and direct patient care services, particularly in communities without adequate substitutes or alternative providers for these services, maintaining state general revenue funding for County Health Departments, and maintaining a coordinated system of county health departments that is centrally housed within the Department of Health (DOH).

Oppose efforts to decentralize the public health system by transferring authority over CHDs from the DOH to the respective county governments, any state reductions to the County Health Department Trust Funds; and any efforts, legislative or otherwise, to limit or eliminate the provision of primary care services in CHDs.

Homelessness

The County supports developing a dedicated state funding source for homeless programs. Support legislation that streamlines current state statutes relating to homelessness and associated programs. Support the implementation of discharge protocols and/or procedures for hospitals and correctional facilities when releasing homeless persons. Support the development of strategies that would allow local governments to work with the state and federal government to serve target populations: the chronically homeless, veterans, and families and children, with particular emphasis on children aging out of the foster care system.

Healthy Families

Support a continuation of funding for the Florida Healthy Families program.

Affordable Housing

The State of Florida established the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund to create a source of funding for affordable housing. Funding comes from a dedicated tax on housing transactions. Recently, the trust fund has been swept by the State Legislature for other uses.

The County supports allocating the full amount of dedicated documentary tax revenues for state and local affordable housing programs. As well as, supports investing in affordable housing to create jobs in home repair, hardening homes, retrofitting and constructing affordable rental units, and lowering energy costs to make housing more affordable.

Early Steps Program

Treasure Coast Early Steps Program, within Children’s Medical Services, serves families with infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months of age, who have developmental delays or an established condition likely to result in a developmental delay. Each child receives an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) that meets his or her needs. Families and caregivers also receive support to develop the skills and confidence they need to help their children learn and develop. The County supports continued funding of the program.

Community Healthcare Clinics/HANDS

The County strongly supports the continuation or increase of funding for all Community Healthcare Clinics, such as the HANDS Clinic in Fort Pierce.

EDUCATION

SUPPORT ISSUES

State Library Funding

Local governments receive State support for libraries through three different programs: the State Aid program, the Regional Multi-type Library Cooperative Grant program, and the Public Library Construction Grant program. Continuation of these funding sources will ensure that the State will play an appropriate role in enhancing public library service by matching local library expenditures, enhancing consortia services to area libraries, and providing needed dollars for the construction of new public libraries.

Indian River State College

Support Indian River State College (IRSC) with increased operational funding for workforce-related initiatives and enhancing the institutions capacity to serve the community; additionally, support revisions to the Florida College System Performance funding methodology which would more equitably evaluate its collective institutions and promote even greater success in the nation's best state and community college system.

Support IRSC's ability to serve the region with upper-division, baccalaureate programs that meet the current and future workforce needs of our communities. Conversely, oppose legislative measures which may potentially incapacitate growth in existing programs, or severely limit the institution's ability to implement new programs if a workforce need is demonstrated.

Support any IRSC College Improvement Plan (CIP) building construction projects that come forward for funding on the state's Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) prioritized list.

AGRICULTURE

SUPPORT ISSUES

Invasive Exotic Plant Research UF IFAS

The UF/IFAS Biological Control Research & Containment Laboratory is a quarantine facility that opened in 2004 at the Indian River Research & Education Center. The facility is a highly secure lab where scientists conduct research on exotic biological control agents for invasive species. Biological control uses natural enemies to control plant and insect pests. Scientists introduce, evaluate, and release biological control agents to try to manage exotic weeds and insect pests in Florida.

UF/IFAS scientists at the quarantine facility are working on many projects, including:

- Releasing more than 350,000 beetles for biological control of the air potato at more than 1,000 locations in Florida since 2012 in collaboration with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Biological control of Brazilian peppertree using two insects from South America. In greenhouse trials, these insects reduce growth of the invasive weed by as much as 89 percent. Release of the insects will begin as soon as Federal approval is received.
- Laboratory and field bioassays of insect-killing fungi for biological control of the Sri Lankan weevil, a polyphagous beetle that causes damage in nurseries and residential and commercial landscapes.
- Laboratory bioassays of insect-killing fungi to determine compatibility with fungicides and insecticides used by South Florida avocado growers to manage ambrosia beetles that vector the fungal pathogen that causes laurel wilt disease.

The County supports continued funding which will benefit the Invasive Exotic Plant Research located at the University of Florida IFAS in Fort Pierce.

