



Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners 2022 Federal Legislative Program



Priorities

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

- **SUPPORT** a long-term extension to the program (set to expire September 30, 2022) that ensures financial sustainability, while not pricing out policy holders. This includes providing premium discounts for private and community-based mitigation efforts.
- **DELAY** the full implementation of Risk Rating 2.0 (went into full effect April 1, 2022) until further information is released about the methodology used to calculate new rates and maximum rate increases are lowered.

Beach Nourishment

- **REQUEST** the Army Corps of Engineers reevaluate its Perpetual Storm Damage Reduction Easement policy, which requires 100% of beachfront property owner easements in perpetuity for areas landward of the Erosion Control Line within the limits of the planned Sand Key nourishment project.
- **REQUEST** that Congress include in the 2022 Water Resources Development Act a 50-year reauthorization of the Treasure Island and Long Key sections of the Pinellas County beach construction program.

Transportation/Infrastructure

- **SUPPORT** strategies that address the Federal Highway Trust Fund's declining revenues in order to adequately fund future transportation needs.
- **IDENTIFY** federal funding opportunities for Pinellas County as a result of the enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Offshore Oil Drilling

- **SUPPORT** legislation to permanently ban oil drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico within 125 miles of Florida. Legislation providing for a temporary moratorium expires in 2022 and a Presidential Executive Order expires in 2032.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)



Issue:

Over a third of the County is in a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) where flood insurance is required by most lenders and federally backed loans. Additionally, over 10% of the area outside of the FEMA SFHA is a 100-year floodplain based on local studies, and over 40% of the county is within a category 2 hurricane storm surge inundation area. Without affordable flood insurance many of our residents and businesses may be priced out of their homes/businesses and high rates will negatively impact the real estate economy in the county, especially on non-waterfront building inventory in the floodplain. Homeowners and renter in these areas that are not required to purchase coverage may in fact choose to forego coverage and in turn will make recovery after an event more difficult. We have a proactive floodplain management program which serves to protect property owners from flood loss, which should also continue to be rewarded with rate discounts through the Community Rating System (CRS).

The intent of Risk Rating 2.0 is to use new technology and data to give more accurate risk ratings to properties, which will correspond with fairer rates. The new rating methodology will not use the FIRM, but will look at property specific information, such as foundation type, elevation, distance to water and type and size of water body, and a broader range of flood frequencies and sources. Floodplain regulations and flood insurance requirements, though, will still be based on the FIRM.

It is illogical for FEMA's minimum building requirements and actuary risk ratings for insurance purposes to be based on two separate methodologies and data sets, furthering the disconnect between floodplain management and insurance. The insurance, floodplain management, and mitigation branches of the NFIP need to better coordinate in advance of implementation or property owners may build to a standard that results in high flood insurance rates. If we know the equation for risk, then we can ensure we are requiring development standards that will not result in unsafe structures with unaffordable insurance rates.

Recommendation:

SUPPORT a long-term extension to the NFIP (set to expire September 30, 2022) that ensures financial sustainability, while not pricing out policy holders. This includes providing premium discounts for private and community-based mitigation efforts.

DELAY the implementation of Risk 2.0 (went into full effect April 1, 2022) until further details of the program are released and maximum annual rate increases are lowered.

Additional Support:

Florida Association of Counties

Beach Nourishment



Issue:

Pinellas County has partnered with the Army Corps of Engineers to nourish Sand Key since 1987 when it was first constructed. Since then, Sand Key has been nourished four additional times, every 6 years. We are now thirty years into the project and this much needed cyclical nourishment is in jeopardy.

The Army Corps of Engineers' overly broad interpretation of WRDA 1986 has left the County struggling to obtain public access easements where in many places sand is not intended to be placed. If left unchecked this overly burdensome public access requirement may cause wide public beaches to erode limiting the available space for the public to enjoy and the protection these projects afford.

Recommendation:

REQUEST the Army Corps of Engineers reevaluate its Perpetual Storm Damage Reduction Easement policy, which requires 100% of beachfront property owner easements in perpetuity for areas landward of the Erosion Control Line within the limits of the planned Sand Key nourishment project.

REQUEST that Congress include in the 2022 Water Resources Development Act a 50-year reauthorization of the Treasure Island and Long Key sections of the Pinellas County beach construction program.

Additional Support:

Barrier Island Government Council

Transportation/Infrastructure



Issue:

In 2021 the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) was signed into law. This historic legislation included over \$550 billion in new funding for transportation, water, energy, the environment, broadband, sustainability, and resiliency. These funds are advanced appropriations for five years of competitive grant programs and will be available to local governments. It will be important to strategically identify county projects that align with the priorities of these new grant programs to ensure the county is positioned to access these funds. Guidance for these programs will be released in the coming year.

For years the federal government, like state and local governments, has funded surface transportation through taxes placed on motor vehicle fuel, commonly known as gas taxes. These fixed rates are tied to per gallon fuel consumption and have not been increased at the federal level since 1993. Due to factors including increased fuel efficiency and increased use of electric vehicles, gas tax revenues have and will continue to decline. This has led to insufficient federal funding for aging transportation infrastructure.

Recommendation:

SUPPORT strategies that address the Federal Highway Trust Fund's declining revenues in order to adequately fund future transportation needs.

IDENTIFY federal funding opportunities for Pinellas County as a result of the enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Offshore Oil Drilling

Issue:

Since 2006, the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act has included a moratorium on oil and gas leasing in portions of the Gulf of Mexico. The moratorium covers a portion of the Central Gulf of Mexico Planning Area, and most of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Area. The specific locations restricted from leasing activities include the portion of the Eastern Planning Area within 125 miles of Florida, all areas in the Gulf of Mexico east of the Military Mission Line, and the area within the Central Planning Area that is within 100 miles of Florida.

The current moratorium on lands in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico is set to expire in 2022. Senators Marco Rubio and Rick Scott have introduced legislation that would extend the moratorium through 2032.

Recommendation:

SUPPORT an extension to the current moratorium on oil drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico within 125 miles of Florida, set to expire in 2022.

Additional Support:

Florida Association of Counties

