



Pinellas County

Staff Report

File #: 24-0190A, Version: 1

Subject:

Resolution supporting a State Legislative proposal prepared collaboratively to consider changes to the Derelict Vessel Removal program.

Recommended Action:

Adoption of the resolution which supports a legislative proposal to amend the Derelict Vessel (DV) Removal program.

- Requiring recreational vessel registration fees diverted to the State of Florida (State) Grant Fund for DV Removal be returned to counties where collected.
- Making pre-award DV removal costs eligible for State grant funds.
- Requiring State grant fund applications for DV removal be processed in fifteen days.

Strategic Plan:

Practice Superior Environmental Stewardship

3.3 Protect and improve the quality of our water, air, and other natural resources

Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality

4.5 Provide safe and effective transportation systems to support the efficient flow of motorists, commerce, and regional connectivity

Deliver First Class Services to the Public and Our Customers

5.2 Be responsible stewards of the public's resources

Summary:

The Resolution supports a legislative proposal (the "Proposal") collaboratively written by County staff and representatives from seven (7) other counties to address DV Removal Program challenges. If adopted, the Proposal would return recreational vessel registration fees to the County and other counties that were diverted into a separate State Grant Fund for DV Removal by the State Legislature in 2019.

Given that County collects the second-most recreational vessel registration fees in the State, funding impacts to the County from this Legislation has been significant. The Legislation also has not expedited or otherwise improved DV removal in the County and other Counties. Rather, the State Grant Program has had the unintended effect of hindering DV removal.

Although Counties and Cities are eligible to apply for State Grant Funds, there is no guarantee that an application will be approved. The application process is cumbersome and pre-award costs are ineligible for reimbursement. Furthermore, recreational vessel fees collected by counties may already be used for DV removal.

It follows that funding DV removal directly with these fees, rather than awaiting a State grant award, would result in faster DV removal. To the extent that the County wishes to continue to seek State Grant Funds for DV removal, the Proposal requires the State to process Grant applications in fifteen (15) days and makes pre-award costs eligible for Grant reimbursement. These mandates will result in faster DV removal.

Background Information:

DVs continue to be a persistent issue in the County. Due to approval of 2019 Legislation, the County has limited funds from recreational vessel registration fees to address the problem. The County may seek State reimbursement for DV removal; however, the DV may not be removed until the County has undergone a lengthy State application and award process. This delay exacerbates the navigational, safety, and environmental concerns presented by the DVs. The Proposal addresses these concerns by returning diverted recreational vessel registration fees to the County, expediting the State Grant Application Process, and permitting reimbursement of pre-award (removal) costs.

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Staff Member Responsible:

Kelli Hammer Levy, Director, Public Works
Brendan Mackesey, Senior Assistant County Attorney

Partners:

N/A

Attachments:

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