

CS/SB 54-A — Environmental and Conservation Lands

by Natural Resources Committee and Senator Dockery

The bill simplifies land acquisition and land management responsibilities for state and water management district lands purchased and managed under the state's land acquisition programs. Revisions are made to appraisal requirements when the value of a proposed acquisition exceeds \$1 million. A 10-year land management planning process for conservation lands and a 10-year land use planning process for nonconservation lands are established. The Division of State Lands at the Department of Environmental Protection is authorized to determine the sale price of surplus lands, and requirements that surplus lands be sold to other units of government for no more than the original amount paid by the state or a water management district are eliminated.

The bill requires that the Division of State Lands, with assistance from counties, begin preparing a state inventory identifying all federal lands and all lands titled in the name of the state, a state agency, a water management district, or a local government on a county-by-county basis. In certain small counties with populations of 75,000 or fewer, lands titled in the name of the state, a state agency, or a water management district may be made available for purchase under certain conditions. A new process to expedite surplus land requests made by local governments is created. The bill also creates a new process for the exchange of donated state lands to local governments, including a requirement that the exchange provide an equal or greater conservation benefit to the state. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund is directed to complete two land exchanges under certain conditions.

The bill reaffirms the state's commitment to funding Everglades restoration by reenacting provisions of law enacted during the 2002 Regular Session that created a bond program to fund the state's Everglades restoration efforts. The Everglades Forever Act, which was amended during the 2003 Regular Session by the enactment of Chapter 2003-12, L.O.F., is revised to remove all references to the phrases "earliest practicable date" and "maximum extent practicable." Finally, the bill provides that if moderating provisions are adopted in the state water quality standard rule establishing a numeric phosphorus criterion, the moderating provisions may not extend beyond 2016 without legislative authorization.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2003, except as otherwise expressly provided.

Vote: Senate 34-4; House 96-18

