

2019

STATE LEGISLATIVE
PROGRAM

ST. LUCIE
COUNTY
FLORIDA



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	4
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES	4
Treasure Coast International Airport Scrub-Jay Habitat - \$600,000	4
Visit Florida	4
SUPPORT ISSUES	4
Enterprise Florida/Job Growth Grant Fund	4
Economic Development Transportation Fund	4
BUDGET & TAXATION POLICY	5
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES	5
Unfunded Mandates/Home Rule	5
Aviation Fuel Tax	5
Communication Services Tax	5
Local Discretionary Revenue Flexibility	5
Tourism Development Tax	5
Local Government Tax Referenda	5
ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL RESOURCES	6
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES	6
Harmony Heights North Drainage Improvements - \$1,000,000	6
Cypress Creek Restoration - \$520,000	6
St. Lucie River North Fork Floodplain Restoration - \$2,000,000	6
Beach and Inlet Management Projects	6
Indian River Lagoon South - Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project	6
Zika/Mosquito Control	7
Land Application of Biosolids	7
SUPPORT ISSUES	7
Department of Environmental Protection - Beach Funding & Permitting	7
Hydraulic Fracturing	9
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE	8
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES	8
Port of Fort Pierce	8
Taylor Creek Restoration Dredging - \$3,500,000	8
SUPPORT ISSUES	9
Transportation Disadvantaged Programs	9
State Transportation Trust Fund	9
Growth Management & Infrastructure	9
Strategic Intermodal System (SIS)	9

PUBLIC SAFETY	10
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES	10
School Safety and School Resource Officers	10
Inmate Medical Costs	10
Pre-Trial Release	10
Emergency Operations Center (EOC)	11
Mental Health Court	11
SUPPORT ISSUES	11
Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation	11
Juvenile Detention Facilities	11
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	12
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES	12
County Share of Cost for Medicaid Services	12
Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services and Funding	12
Veterans Assistance Center - \$500,000	12
SUPPORT ISSUES	13
County Health Departments	13
Homelessness	13
Healthy Families	13
Affordable Housing	13
Early Steps Program	13
Community Healthcare Clinics/HANDS	13
EDUCATION	14
SUPPORT ISSUES	14
State Library Funding	14
Indian River State College	14
AGRICULTURE	15
SUPPORT ISSUES	15
Invasive Exotic Plant Research UF IFAS	15

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.

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.

Fort Pierce • Port St. Lucie • Hutchinson Island



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.

ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL RESOURCES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Harmony Heights North Drainage Improvements

\$1,000,000

Harmony Heights is a 300+ acre subdivision located in unincorporated St. Lucie County northwest of the City of Ft. Pierce. The subdivision is bounded to the north by the Ft. Pierce Farms Water Control District (FPFWCD) Canal No. 1, by 41st Street to the east, by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Canal No. 25 to the south and by Keen Road to the west. The subdivision is located in T34S,R40E, Section 31.

The Phase 1-B portion of the project includes approximately 20 acres and is bounded by Juanita Avenue to the South, Fort Pierce Farms Canal 1 to the North, N 43rd Street to the west, and N 41st Street to the east. New dry detention areas and stormwater infrastructure will be installed, and approximately 1.5 miles of roadway will be constructed.

Cypress Creek Restoration

\$520,000

The Cypress Creek Restoration Project is a natural area storage component to the Indian River Lagoon-South C23/C24 Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) project in St. Lucie County. The project will restore impacted wetlands and watershed resources identified as a need in the CERP to reduce pressures on the St. Lucie Estuary. St. Lucie County purchased the property for conservation purposes in 2016 and is seeking funding to design, permit, and restore the natural hydrology onsite.

St. Lucie River North Fork Floodplain Restoration

\$2,000,000

The project will restore the North Fork St. Lucie River, including improving living shorelines, reconnecting oxbows and historic river flowways, 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 scope and methodology is modeled from similar restoration projects underway on the Kissimmee River where efforts are focused repairing ecological damage associated with dredging and channelizing. The project also increases storage capacity of the 100-year floodplain.



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.

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) of 2018, design will occur beginning in 2018 and 2019 for the North reservoir, and 2021 and 2022 for the South reservoir, respectively. Due to the success of the work plan for the C44 project, the County respectfully requests funding from the State to assist in expediting this component of CERP as dictated by the Integrated Delivery Schedule.

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.

Land Application of Biosolids

St. Lucie County supports the efforts of the state and local government to prioritize the reduction and eventual elimination of the land application of Class AA and B biosolids. This includes efforts to immediately establish standard protocols and funding for the identification, quarterly tracking and monitoring of non-residential biosolid application and explore new wastewater treatment technologies to improve biosolids resource recovery and management options.

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 \$55 million in 2018 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 \$70 to 80 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

Port of Fort Pierce

In 2017, the County invested in the purchase of a 12 acre site, known as the King Maritime Terminal, at the Port of Fort Pierce. Although the Port of Fort Pierce lies physically within the City of Fort Pierce limits, management falls under the jurisdiction of St. Lucie County, which comprised of the St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners. Currently, there is an interlocal agreement between the City of Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County which clarifies roles and responsibilities and sets the framework for future collaboration and partnership in port development.

In 1990, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Seaport Transportation & Economic Development (FSTED), an on-port investment program, 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.

St. Lucie County supports the full funding of all projects within the Florida Department of Transportation's Seaport Program and the Florida Seaport Transportation & Economic Development (FSTED),

Taylor Creek Restoration Dredging

\$3,500,000

St. Lucie County Public Works Department is requesting funding to assist in the dredging of Taylor Creek located just north of the Port of Fort Pierce to eliminate muck sediments within the estuary in an effort to enhance the water quality in the Indian River Lagoon. This project will not only provide restoration to our environment, it will also support the County's efforts to enhance economic development utilizing various tools and incentives to induce business expansion, targeted industry retention, and revitalization of economically depressed areas.



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



School Safety and School Resource Officers

St. Lucie County supports the creation of a new dedicated and recurring statutory funding source to fully fund the mandated positions of School Resource Officers (SRO) in all public schools. This mandate has placed a heavy burden on local agencies to fund additional SRO's through ad valorem taxes. Funding of the recurring cost of SRO's through the requirement of this mandate is unsustainable, resulting in the necessity of cutting other public services and having a direct negative impact on the welfare and public safety of all counties in the state.

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

In 2012, legislation was filed that would have significantly hampered the ability of local governments to administer their pretrial release programs. According to estimates from the St. Lucie County Criminal Justice Commission, the restrictions that would have been created by this legislation would likely cause defendants each month who are on supervised release to be retained in custody. Current supervised release programs cost \$4 per day, whereas costs to house a defendant in jail are approximately \$123 per day. Support 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.

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.

Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services and Funding

In the last two years over \$30 million in mental health funding had been lost to Florida's communities. Increased community funding is required to meet the needs of persons residing in the Treasure Coast who are mentally ill and often also have severe substance use disorders.

Additionally, 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 efforts to increase supportive housing, jail diversion, and employment and education initiatives for people with mental health or substance abuse issues. Supports diverting, medically assisting, or treating mentally ill outside of the criminal justice process through alternative programs, such as Crisis Intervention Teams. Supports continued efforts to work through Medicaid reform initiatives to ensure that persons with substance abuse and mental health treatment needs are appropriately served.

Furthermore, St. Lucie County supports appropriate funding for core mental health and substance abuse services. Supports increased funding of the Criminal Justice Mental Health and Substance Abuse Reinvestment Grant Program with recurring dollars in a trust fund. Supports sustainable matching state funds to counties that have received both planning and implementation Reinvestment Grant funds.

Veterans Assistance Center

\$500,000

St. Lucie County's Veterans Services Department is requesting funding to assist in establishing a Veteran's Assistance Center, which will serve our veterans who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless or unable to obtain safe, affordable housing in the Treasure Coast area. This central location will assist them in opportunities to return to employment, safe housing, health care and mental health services, as well as assistance in Veterans Administration (VA) record recover and benefit claims processing.



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.





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