Executive Session - 3rd Discussion Topic:

FY19 appropriations language proposal

NOAA has proposed the principals have a short discussion on the proposed FY19 appropriations language to see if there are opportunities and/or a need for the Steering Committee to discuss how we might be able to do some joint planning, identify priorities, or even make joint recommendations on the use of some of these funds, keeping in mind that some of these are "earmarks" and have intended destinations/uses.

**In the FY19 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill (passed out of Committee on June 14):**

* Up to $5 million in the Coral Reef Program for the agency to work with academic institutions and non-governmental research organizations to establish innovative restoration projects to restore degraded coral reefs along the Florida Reef Tract and elsewhere.
* $1 million increase for the NOAA’s Marine Debris Program and report language directing marine debris funding to the Florida Keys and other 2017 hurricane impacted areas.
* An additional $1 million for endangered Species Recovery Grants that could assist the implementation of Staghorn and Elkhorn Coral recovery plans.

**In the FY19 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill (passed out of Committee on June 14):**

* $3.204 million (nearly double FY18 levels) for the South Florida Geographic Program with dedicated funding of at least—
  + $500,000 to monitor coral health in South Florida;
  + $500,000 to enhance water quality and seagrass monitoring in the Caloosahatchee Estuary and Indian River Lagoon especially with respect to assessing the impact of Lake Okeechobee discharges, including their impacts on the northernmost coral reefs in the Florida Reef Tract; and
  + $500,000 to enhance water quality and seagrass monitoring in Florida Bay and Biscayne Bay especially with respect to assessing the impact of Everglades Restoration projects, including their impacts on coral reefs in Biscayne National Park and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.
* Up to $1.5 million provided under the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) for coral disease research, detection, and response.
* Report language highlighting the coral disease outbreak on the Florida Reef Tract and encouraging the Department of the Interior and all of its applicable agencies to cooperate with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency and the State of Florida to support coral monitoring, research, and restoration in highly impacted and high priority coral reef habitats including in Biscayne National Park and Dry Tortugas National Park.
* $63 million for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) to help support state and local projects to improve wastewater collection, treatment, and reuse like Miami-Dade County’s efforts to eliminate its ocean sewer outfall discharges.
* $1.694 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) to help support state and local projects to improve wastewater collection and treatment like septic to sewer conversions to improve coastal water quality across Florida.
* Roughly $600,000 for the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program, whose efforts to improve water quality in the Lagoon positively impact the northernmost sections of the Florida Reef Tract.
* Restores budget cuts for Everglades restoration, including $83,000 for Everglades restoration under the National Park Services’ Resource Stewardship account, more than $3 million under the U..S. Fish and Wildlife Service budget, and more than $6 million under the U.S. Geological Survey budget.
* $2 million for land acquisition for Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge that may help reduce nutrient pollution in Lake Okeechobee, and ultimately the Indian River Lagoon and northernmost section of the Florida Reef Tract.

**In the FY19 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill (passed out of Committee on May 24th):**

* Support for Everglades Restoration:
  + Full funding of the President’s Budget request ($67.5 million) and up to an additional $50 million in additional funding for use at the Corps’ discretion to advance critical construction for the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration project to restore freshwater flows to historical patterns across South Florida.
  + Support for the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project and consideration for the use of reclaimed water to augment the project’s ecosystem restoration benefits to coastal wetlands and Biscayne National Park’s hard bottom, seagrass, and coral reef habitats.
  + Support for the Indian River Lagoon-South Project and expediting design work on critical reservoirs to collect and clean Lake Okeechobee discharges and local runoff before release into the Indian River Lagoon, reducing impacts to the northernmost sections of the Florida Reef Tract.
* Makes available up to$75 million in additional funding for use at the Corps’ discretion for improving wastewater collection and treatment through the Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program to reduce impacts on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary’s nearshore and offshore coral reefs.

**Rubio co-led a Senate resolution with Sen. Hirono (D-HI) celebrating June 11th, 2018 as the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. S. Res. 544 passed the Senate on June 12th, and:**

* Highlights the importance of the coral reefs of the United States;
* Acknowledges the important research and management accomplishments of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force; and
* Encourages a continued focus on efforts to protect and restore coral reef ecosystems in U.S. waters.