

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental issues have always been very important to AIF members. Florida's natural resources are a draw not only for tourists, but for businesses that want to grow or locate in our state. We must be good stewards of our land and water, and AIF and its members lead the way in protecting those resources. Water and waste management will continue to be priority issues in the coming legislative session.

Florida has experienced drought conditions for several years. To make matters worse, total water use is expected to grow to 9.3 billion gallons per day by 2025 — an increase of nearly 2 billion gallons per day. AIF will closely follow bills dealing with **water resources** this session. For example, the Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation & Conservation issued an interim report that considered the consolidation of all water supply-related sections currently spread throughout Chapter 373 into a new Part VII of that chapter. This kind of effort has merit, because centralizing water supply provisions into one location can lead to a more efficient management and administration of water law. AIF supports this recommendation.

Shifting gears to other sustainability issues, **recycling** will likely play a prominent role during the 2010 legislative session.

- In 2008, the Florida Legislature directed the DEP to develop a plan to increase the state's recycling rate to 75% by 2020.
- AIF created a Recycling Task Force to discuss ways to improve the reduction, reuse and recycling efforts in Florida, which will be presented to the Legislature this session. Many AIF members have already implemented innovative and effective programs to manage waste.

AIF will focus on the following areas relating to environmental sustainability issues:

Numeric Nutrient Criteria

AIF encourages the Florida Legislature to engage and support our Congressional delegation in their efforts to stop the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) imposition of unreasonably restrictive water quality standards only on the State of Florida. These proposed federal standards are unscientific and costly (some estimates show a price tag of \$50 billion) for businesses and consumers. Florida is currently facing the possibility of having to meet strict water



quality standards regarding numeric nutrient criteria (for nitrogen and phosphorous) in all water bodies as a result of a lawsuit by radical environmental organizations. The proposed criteria are technically and scientifically flawed, as well as economically unattainable by the business and public sectors. Although a federal action, state legislators have already held hearings on the issue and AIF will continue to vocally oppose the establishment of these flawed water quality standards. However, if these standards are so desirable, they must be implemented concurrently in all 49 other states.

Alternative Water Supply

AIF SUPPORTS state funding for alternative water supply programs. Without adequate water supply, there will be significantly less economic development, with fewer jobs and natural resources in the future. Unless we begin to fund and build adequate water systems now, Florida will have problems meeting future demands. The Water Protection and Sustainability Trust Fund (WPSTF) must be fully funded so alternative water supply projects such as reclaimed water projects, desalination efforts, and the collection and storage of rainwater can be built to produce additional and sustainable future water supplies.

Recycling

AIF believes that Florida can increase its recycling rate, but the management of waste is much more than just recycling. More can be done to reduce waste, reuse materials and divert waste from our landfills. Not only do these actions help extend the life of our landfills, they help companies' bottom lines. In many cases, sustainability is profitable. Florida has an opportunity to

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help create markets for recyclables and beneficial reuse of key materials. By creating markets for profitable materials, we can help create jobs.

AIF OPPOSES any attempts by the Legislature to enact or increase fees on tire or landfill disposals and water severance taxes in order to pay for recycling programs. The same goes for proposals comprising a bottle bill allowing portions of unredeemed deposits to be used as a funding source. These ideas have been included in a report by DEP on achieving Florida's 75 percent recycling goal. While they would increase revenue, there is no guarantee — given the state's current fiscal challenges — that these funds would be used to create a fund for recycling programs. Additionally, proposals like the passage of a bottle bill run contrary to comprehensive solid waste programs currently in place in Florida.

Springs Protection

AIF SUPPORTS efforts to protect Florida's springs with reasonable regulations that do not unfairly target or place undue burdens on citizens and businesses. Proposed legislation will be filed in 2010 dealing with the protection of more than 700 springs in Florida, several of which are located in the most popular state parks. The direct economic impact of the 18 state parks with springs was \$128 million in 2008. The geographic spread of Florida's springs spans approximately 30 counties. AIF recognizes the importance of Florida's springs to our state's natural beauty, wildlife, recreation, water quality and our overall quality of life and economic wellbeing. Reducing nitrogen released

into our springs and aquifers is a noble goal. Three guiding principles should apply in establishing state policy to reduce nitrogen in order to avoid economic costs to Florida that outweigh environmental benefits. First, any goals and standards that are established for nitrogen must be reasonable, economically achievable and scientifically justifiable. Second, the methods for achieving such standards must be grounded in practical, scientifically-proven and cost-effective solutions that are clearly understood by, and made available to, Florida's citizenry and businesses before mandates and standards are established. Third, because everyone in Florida benefits from healthy, vibrant springs, everyone also needs to share in the cost to clean-up our springs. A few taxpayers should not be targeted to fund springs protection.

Of particular concern in recent years is the ostensible focus of springs protection measures on onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems ("OSTDS" aka "septic tanks" or "onsite systems"). As noted by the EPA, conventional OSTDSs properly sited and located are an essential, viable and environmentally-sustainable component of the nation's sewage treatment system. In Florida, nearly one-third of all homes and businesses utilize conventional onsite systems as the method of sewage treatment. The potential economic impact of springs protection measures on citizens and businesses that use septic tanks as a legitimate form of waste disposal can be significant.

Alternatively, AIF supports and encourages the 2010 Florida Legislature to appropriate \$2 million to implement Phase 2 of the Florida Onsite Sewage Nitrogen Reduction Strategies Project, which will protect Floridians from unjustified and costly mandates. In 2008 and 2009, the Florida Legislature took the initiative to develop solutions to the nitrogen problem from onsite systems by directing the Florida Department of Health to contract with experts to develop and examine cost-effective strategies and passive technologies for nitrogen reduction from onsite systems.



House Agriculture & Natural Resources Policy Committee Rep. Chair Trudi Williams (R-Ft. Myers) addresses AIF members during a Power Lunch event.

AIF Lobby Team Member Assigned to the Area of Environmental Sustainability:

Keyna Cory