



**Florida Shore and Beach Preservation Association Monthly Newsletter**  
JANUARY 2026 EDITION



## **2026 Pre-Session Overview**

The six committee weeks leading up to the start of the 2026 Regular Session were unusually slow with no significant beach issues to track. Hearings for substantive bills were scarce and even the number of bills filed compared to years past is significantly lower. Maybe Bill Drafting is backed up and a flurry of bills will be released before session starts, but currently less than 1200 bills are in the system. Not only that, but the deadline for final approval of drafts is January 9th.

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A week before session last year, bill filings hit about the average of 1900. There may be several issues at play like the governor's race, competing chamber priorities, and fatigue from what felt like a never ending 2025 Session. Above all else, however, is the property tax discussion. The House has blazed a trail releasing eight property tax bills, while the Senate is evaluating the issue but has not released its own proposal(s). For beaches though, as we turn the page to 2026, focusing on funding is paramount this Session, which runs from January 13 to March 13.

If you have been tracking the association's efforts recently, you will notice an increased focus on federal advocacy, and we expect more of the same this year. FSBPA's agenda is in line with the past couple years. Along with our traditional advocacy for programmatic funding and beneficial policies in the Florida Legislature,

we continue to advocate to resolve the federal easement issue, especially with a new Water Resources Development Act bill expected late this year. In addition, for our Florida Legislative Program, we are pushing to increase recurring funding and for a refresh of the 2015 OPPAGA beach study. As always, we keep close tabs on all policy and appropriations bills affecting beaches – positive or negative.

## [The 2026/27 Appropriations Process and Budget Outlook](#)

FSBPA's agenda for the 2026 Legislative Session is aggressive – increase recurring funding to \$75 million, advocate for full funding of the LGFR list from non-recurring trust fund or general revenue, provide additional supplemental funding for hurricane recovery, refresh the OPPAGA study, and allow the HRRGP to finally sunset. While it will be a heavy lift, we are mindful that these discussions must take place against the backdrop of what is anticipated to be a major debate between the chambers on property taxes and continuation of the budget tensions from last session.

Speaking of budgeting, during the 1st committee week, Amy Baker, the state's lead economist, gave an update on the state's long-range economic outlook, which continues to tighten. The state was expected to be in a budget deficit this upcoming fiscal year, 2026-27, with a worsening outlook in FY27-28. Because of the reductions in the current year budget, that looming budget deficit was postponed one year. For FY26-27, the state is expected to have a budget surplus of \$3.8B, with 70% coming from non-recurring sources. The outlook for FYs 27-28 and 28-29 is decidedly worse, with budget deficits estimated at \$1.5B and \$6.6B, respectively. Ms. Baker stated, unequivocally, the revenue forecast will not support current levels of spending with expected growth in costs. Further, to resolve the budget deficits in all three years, she estimated cuts of \$674M from recurring and \$1.4B from non-recurring each year would be sufficient. When this is added on top of the property tax discussion and the potential that the state back fills tax revenue losses for fiscally constrained counties, the entire budgetary process in the near term is tight.

If you are looking for a bright spot, there is one. Doc stamp collections, which fund our programs, snapped a steep 2-year decline and are inching higher again. They are estimated to close out this fiscal year up 1.5 percent over FY24-25 to \$3.76B. Stronger growth is expected through 2031 of approximately 3 percent per year, with an exception for FY26-27 at 3.8 percent growth. Given the Legislature sweeps much of this revenue into the General Revenue Fund each year, I expect the same result this year and every year they deal with budget shortfalls. Nevertheless, the funding source for our program is projected to grow, which is good news.

## [Governor's Budget](#)

On December 10, 2025, Governor DeSantis released his proposed FY2026-27 budget. The \$117.4B budget has several bright spots related to beaches and coasts. The first is an increase for beaches to \$75M for programmatic funding for the statewide beach program. In addition, the governor proposes an additional \$208M in resilience funding, with \$58M of that to protect and restore coral reefs. He also proposed increased funding of \$65M to address harmful algal blooms. For a complete breakdown of the budget, visit [The Floridians First budget link](#). If you have any questions regarding the budget, please contact me.

## [Substantive Legislation](#)

We are actively tracking several bills, but FSBPA is only pursuing the HRRGP and OPPAGA issues as substantive policy this legislative session in Florida. As mentioned above, we are also pushing for clarification and more flexibility in WRDA 2026 in Congress. In addition, we are keeping an eye out for TDT funding bills especially vis-à-vis the property

tax bills released by the House. As always, we continue to monitor any bills seeking direct statutory allocations of limited recurring LATF dollars and new climate change/coastal resilience initiatives. If there are substantive bills or issues you would like to discuss in depth, please contact me.

We look forward to again serving the needs of Florida's beaches in 2026.

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## Happy New Year!



We are excited to kick off 2026 with the 39th National Conference on Beach Preservation Technology at the Embassy Suites in St. Augustine Beach. There is always a great turnout at this venue, and based on early feedback, we expect an even larger turnout this year. Please make plans to join us. Lisa Armbruster and the Conference Planning Committee prepared an exceptional program for you featuring timely coastal project updates, construction innovations, and research advancements. A big thanks to the Committee Members for sharing your time and expertise on preparing the program.

Early bird registration rates end today! Be sure to register for next month's conference now to save early. For more information, visit [this link](#).

### **Meet the Tech Conference Planning Committee Members**

#### **Chair**

Lisa Armbruster

#### **Executive Members**

Ken Craig, P.E., Taylor Engineering, Inc.

Chris Creed, P.E., Foth Infrastructure & Environment, LLC

Lauren Floyd, Coastal Protection Engineering

Michael Poff, P.E., Coastal Engineering Consultants, Inc.

#### **Committee Members**

Jennifer Bistyga

Mike Dombrowski

Bob Glassen

Scott Hardaway

James Houston  
Mike Jenkins  
John Ramsey  
Will Reilly  
Angela Schedel  
Nicole Sharp  
Lee Weisher

### Conference Highlights and Presentations to Watch

- Pre-conference workshop: Outlook on Florida Coastal Dredging
- Post-Milton Midnight Pass Inlet Evolution and Management
- Development of a County Coastal Management Plan: St. Johns County
- Designing Turtle Friendly Beaches: Engineering, Ecology, and Regulatory Perspectives
- FDEP's Regional Offshore Sand Source Inventory (ROSSI) Project Submittal Challenges and Updates
- Quantifying the Benefits of Engineering Adaptations and Nature-Based Solutions on Barrier Island Community Resilience
- A Journey from Easements to Storms to Construction: A Joint Discussion with Pinellas County and APTIM on the County's Beach Nourishment Project

FSBPA is further pleased to share that our student scholarship program remains strong with many new students attending. Please be sure to take time to visit these up-and-coming professionals and learn about their exciting work. Special thanks to our scholarship sponsors - Michael Poff, James Gray, and Justin McBride - for helping make this program a big success!

## Thank you to our Conference Sponsors!



Sponsorships are still available! For more information on available

## FSBPA Officers and Directors for 2026

FSBPA's Officers for the coming year, as recommended by the Board of Directors and voted upon by the members at the 2025 general membership meeting are:

- Andy Studt (Palm Beach County): Chair
- Mike McGarry (Brevard County): Vice-Chair
- James Gray (Sebastian Inlet District): Secretary/Treasurer

These officers and the past chair, Janet Zimmerman (Florida Inland Navigation District), will serve as the Executive Committee for 2026.

We are pleased to welcome Damon Douglas, Charlie Hunsicker, and Nik Patel as our incoming 2026 Board Members. Retired board members include Steve Boutelle and Joshua Revord. Thank you both for your dedicated service to the association. Your time and expertise for the past six years are greatly appreciated!



### Meet our Incoming Chair

#### **Andy Studt, Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management, Coastal Resources Program Supervisor**

FSBPA is pleased to welcome **Andy Studt** as its incoming Chair. Andy brings over 20 years of experience with Palm Beach County's Department of Environmental Resources Management, where he currently serves as Environmental Program Supervisor for the Coastal Resources Program. In this role, he oversees a diverse portfolio of regional shore protection projects along the County's 47-mile

Atlantic coastline, including inlet management, beach nourishment, dune restoration, and estuarine shoreline stabilization.

A native of Palm Beach County, Andy began his environmental career as an intern with the County and has steadily advanced through dedication, technical expertise, and an extensive understanding of county's shorelines. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from the University of Florida before returning home to apply his knowledge to the beaches, waterways, and communities he grew up enjoying.

Andy is respected by his colleagues for his clear communication and collaborative approach to balancing coastal development with the protection of sensitive natural resources. Working closely with local governments and stakeholders, Andy brings a thoughtful, long-term perspective to coastal management and construction projects and was awarded the FSBPA's 2021 Environmental Award in recognition of his commitment to preserving Palm Beach County's natural resources.

FSBPA looks forward to Andy's leadership as Chair and the insight, experience, and dedication he brings to advancing sound coastal management across Florida.



**Meet our newest Board Members:**

**Charlie Hunsicker, Manatee County Natural Resources Department, Director**

**Charlie Hunsicker**, Manatee County Natural Resources Department, Director  
Charlie first joined the FSBPA Board of Directors in 2011, and we applaud his enthusiasm to serve again. Beginning his career with Manatee County in 1977, Charlie has been involved in a wide variety of environmental initiatives, from conserving lands to beach renourishment. He oversees five divisions which

touch the lives of every citizen in Manatee County, including the Ecological & Marine Services Division, which is responsible for beach restoration and other land restoration programs, maintaining channel markers and aids to navigation on County waterways, and improving Manatee County's boat ramps and artificial reefs.

Additional Divisions Charlie manages include Resource Management - oversees 30,000 acres of conservation lands; Environmental Protection - monitors air and water resources and phosphate mining; Volunteer/Education - oversees over 30 monthly outreach and education programs; Agriculture and Extension - offers educational materials and programs on commercial agriculture, several other services. Charlie also supports the Property Management Department with the acquisition or easement acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands and directs the beach nourishment program for Anna Maria Island.

Charlie holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Florida State University. A longstanding advocate for Florida's environmental, cultural, and recreational resources, we are pleased to welcome Charlie back to the board.

**Nikesh ("Nik") Patel, Public Works Director – City of Sarasota**

Nik Patel serves as the Public Works Director for the City of Sarasota, overseeing capital project delivery, multimodal transportation, stormwater management, solid waste operations, and coastal infrastructure. Since joining the city in 2021, he has led key resiliency initiatives including the Lido Beach Nourishment Project and the Sarasota Bay Resiliency Initiative, advancing long-term shoreline protection and flood mitigation.



Before joining Sarasota, Nik spent 17 years with the Florida Department of Transportation, where he managed complex infrastructure

programs and introduced innovative design solutions statewide.

A licensed Professional Engineer, General Contractor, and Certified Planner, Nik holds a master's degree in engineering management and dual bachelor's degrees in civil and mechanical engineering from the University of South Florida. He is passionate about sustainable coastal management and strengthening Florida's communities through collaboration and science-based resilience planning.

## 2026 Ocean's Day



*Save the Date*

From Shoreline to Statehouse:  
Advancing Florida's Ocean Prosperity

*Join Us in Tallahassee for*

# FLORIDA OCEANS DAY 2026

Feb. 18 2026	Member Exhibits & Fish Fry, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM Hosted by Florida Institute of Oceanography The Florida Capitol, South Plaza Contact: Chris Sharp, <a href="mailto:cssharp@usf.edu">cssharp@usf.edu</a>
Feb. 18 2026	Mote Annual Legislative Reception, 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM Hosted by Mote Marine Laboratory The Florida Historic Capitol Museum Contact: Kevin Claridge, <a href="mailto:kclaridge@mote.org">kclaridge@mote.org</a>

*Florida Oceans Day is hosted by:*



***A monthly electronic  
publication of the Florida  
Shore & Beach  
Preservation Association.***

**Officers  
Chair**

Andy Studt, Palm Beach County

**Vice-Chair**

Mike McGarry, Brevard County

**Secretary-Treasurer**

James Gray, Sebastian Inlet  
District

**Past-Chair**

Janet Zimmerman, FIND

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Alan Dodd, City of Wilton Manors

Damon Douglas, St. Johns  
County

Jessica Fentress, Volusia County

Jessica Garland, Martin County

Charlie Hunsicker, Manatee  
County

Charlie Mopps, Town of Longboat  
Key

Nikesh Patel, City of Sarasota

Dan Rowe, Bay County

Matthew Spoor, Pinellas County

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Deborah Flack

**Ex Officio**

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Milan Mora

USACE Mobile District, Jenny  
Jacobson

FDEP, Lainie Edwards

Cheryl Miller, Coastal Eco-Group

Brett Moore, Humiston & Moore

Lynn Nietfeld, Great Lakes  
Dredge & Dock

**FSBPA Staff**

**President:** Pepper Uchino

**Executive Director:** Jackie  
Larson

## Calendar of Events

**FSBPA Events:**

**February 4:** 2026 Outlook on  
Florida Coastal Dredging Projects  
Workshop

**February 4-6:** 2026 National  
Tech Conference

**February 17-18:** 2026 Ocean's  
Day

**Other Events:**

**January 13:** Florida Legislative  
Session begins

**September 23-25 2026:** Florida  
Resilience Conference at  
Sunseeker Resort, Charlotte  
Harbor

**Technical Director:** Lisa  
Armbruster  
**Office/Conference Manager:**  
Teri Besse  
**Communications/Events  
Specialist:** Alexis Brown



**FLORIDA SHORE & BEACH  
PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION**  
A League of Cities and Counties on Beach and Coastal Issues

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**Visit our Website!**



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