



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES COMMISSIONER NICOLE "NIKKI" FRIED

September 16, 2019

Mr. Chris Spencer, Policy Director
Office of Policy and Budget
Executive Office of the Governor
The Capitol, Room 1702
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Mr. Spencer:

The Agency Capital Improvements Program for Fiscal Year 2020-21 through Fiscal Year 2024-25 for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is submitted and has been posted to the Florida Fiscal Portal, following the instructions dated June 2019. The information provided electronically is a true and accurate presentation of our proposed Fixed Capital Outlay Legislative Budget Request of \$72,753,435 for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

This proposal reflects the department's commitment to foster continued growth and ensure the long-term sustainability of Florida's agriculture industry as well as serve as a good steward of the state's natural resources, help ensure the safety and wholesomeness of food and protect consumers from fraud and deceptive business practices.

Agricultural water policies are among the most critical issues facing the state. Recognizing the importance of this issue, the department's proposal includes \$25 million for nutrient reduction and water retention projects in the Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee River watersheds as well as other sensitive areas across the state. These projects have the potential to result in significant reductions in nutrient loads reaching sensitive water bodies.

Maintaining Florida's agricultural land base is another critically important issue within the state. Florida's agriculture industry is a pillar of the state's economy, generating \$132 billion in annual economic impact. This industry relies on available agricultural lands to grow and remain strong. The department's proposal includes \$32.6 million for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, which seeks to prevent development through the acquisition of perpetual conservation easements, thereby allowing agricultural operations to continue, protecting natural resources and providing critical wildlife habitat. To date, more than 47 partnerships with Florida families have preserved more than 53,500 acres of precious landscape from future development.

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In an effort to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy, the department's proposal includes \$1 million for a pilot program that would provide funding for municipal and/or cooperative utilities to install grid storage technologies on their electric grids to test and demonstrate its ability to increase resiliency and efficiency. Incentivizing storage technologies through the Municipal and Cooperative Utilities Grid Storage Pilot Program would allow utilities to operate the grid more efficiently while creating a more resilient electric grid. An additional request for \$850,000 is included for Grants and Aids to Local Governments for United States Department of Energy grants.

The department's proposal also includes several maintenance and repair and code correction projects totaling approximately \$10.3 million across the department's various divisions and offices, and \$3 million to address aging infrastructure and security improvements at the Florida State Fair. These projects include the proposed architectural and engineering design to replace the Shaw Building in Winter Haven as well as road and bridge repairs, maintenance and small construction at our state forests and state farmer's markets. These projects are important to ensure the safety of the department's employees as well as the individuals who access the department's facilities and state forests. The infrastructure improvements and security upgrades to the Florida State Fair will enhance the safety of its patrons and employees, as well as improve its ability to accommodate federal, state and local agencies during natural disasters.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. If you have any questions, feel free to call me or my staff at (850) 410-2280.

Sincerely,



Nicole Fried
Commissioner of Agriculture