



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

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

September 15, 2021

Chris Spencer, Director
Office of Policy and Budget
Executive Office of the Governor
The Capitol, Room 1603
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Mr. Spencer:

The Agency Capital Improvements Program for Fiscal Year 2022-23 through Fiscal Year 2026-27 for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is submitted and has been posted to the Florida Fiscal Portal, following the instructions dated July 2021. The information provided electronically is a true and accurate presentation of our proposed Fixed Capital Outlay Legislative Budget Request of \$61,735,964 for Fiscal Year 2022-23.

Agricultural water policies continue to be among the most critical issues facing the state. Recognizing the importance of this issue, the department's proposal includes \$15 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 \$137 billion in annual economic impact. This industry relies on available agricultural lands to grow and remain strong. The department's proposal includes \$20 million for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, which seeks to prevent development through the acquisition of perpetual conservation easements, thereby allowing the continuation of agricultural operations, and the protection of natural resources and critical wildlife habitat. To date, 52 partnerships with Florida families have preserved more than 59,650 acres of precious landscape from future development.

Capitalizing on the efforts of the department and legislature from last Session to secure additional innovative grant awards from the federal government by providing additional matching funding, the department's proposal includes \$3.5 million for Grants and Aids to Local Governments for United States Department of Energy grants.

The department's proposal also includes numerous maintenance and repair and code correction projects totaling approximately \$16 million across the department's various divisions and offices, \$4 million to renovate the Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory Necropsy Building to implement new animal Bio-Safety Level 3 necropsy laboratory protocols, and \$3 million to address facility infrastructure issues at the Florida State Fair. The maintenance and repair projects include critical repairs related to the Mayo Building Roof and Exterior as well as road and bridge repairs, maintenance and small construction at our state forests and state farmers 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.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. If you have any questions, feel free to call me or my staff at (850) 617-7700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "nicole fried". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

Nicole Fried
Commissioner of Agriculture