

HB 53

2018

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to coral reefs; establishing the
3 Southeast Florida Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation
4 Area; providing an effective date.

5
6 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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8 Section 1. There is established the Southeast Florida
9 Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area. The conservation area
10 shall consist of the sovereignty submerged lands and state
11 waters offshore of Broward, Martin, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach
12 Counties from the St. Lucie Inlet to the northern boundary of
13 the Biscayne National Park.

14 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 53 Coral Reefs
SPONSOR(S): Jacobs & others
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 232

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Natural Resources & Public Lands Subcommittee	12 Y, 0 N	Gregory	Shugar
2) Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee	11 Y, 0 N	White	Pigott
3) Government Accountability Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Coral reefs in southeast Florida support a rich and diverse assemblage of stony corals, octocorals, macroalgae, sponges, and fishes. These ecological communities run parallel along the coast from the northern border of Biscayne National Park in Miami-Dade County north to the St. Lucie Inlet in Martin County. Coral reefs are valuable natural resources. They protect coastlines by reducing wave energy from storms and hurricanes. They serve as a source of food and shelter and provide critical habitat for over 6,000 species, including important commercial fisheries. Further, people use coral reefs as a resource for recreation, education, scientific research, and public inspiration. Millions of tourists and local residents enjoy scuba diving, snorkeling, and fishing on the coral reefs.

Coral reefs are vulnerable to harmful environmental changes, particularly those resulting from human activities. Globally, 10 percent of all coral reefs are degraded beyond recovery and 30 percent are in critical condition and may die within 10 to 20 years, particularly those near human populations.

The bill establishes the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area (conservation area). The conservation area includes the sovereign submerged lands and state waters offshore of Broward, Martin, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties from the St. Lucie Inlet in the north to the northern boundary of the Biscayne National Park in the south.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments.