



ST. LUCIE WORKS



St. Lucie County
2017 State Legislative Program

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Enterprise Florida/Economic Development

The County **supports** the creation and funding of an economic development fund and the state's economic development toolkit in a manner that supports increased economic growth and development by incentivizing businesses to relocate to or expand in all regions of the state of Florida.

SUPPORT ISSUES

Navy Seal Museum

The National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum & Memorial is a major tourism and education destination in Florida. Located on the Treasure Coast at the beach birthplace of UDT-SEALs, it is the only site worldwide where SEAL history and operations enlighten the public. Situated in St. Lucie County at Pepper Park, the current 4 acres and 13,500 sq. ft. of buildings have reached maximum capacity for exhibits, and special events to honor our active duty military and veterans. Installation of 13 new interactive exhibits, currently under construction, will raise annual attendance to more than 100,000.

Support any future funding requests by the Navy Seal Museum for a new facility to display artifacts in storage, accommodate items it receives daily, continue to show the SEAL evolving history and accommodate the number of tourists and students.

BUDGET & TAXATION POLICY

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Unfunded Mandates

The State Legislature has frequently passed legislation that compels local governments to provide a service, program, or benefit without providing the appropriate funding or a funding source. This compromises local governments' ability to provide services requested by their local communities by diverting resources to these state-directed, unfunded mandates or cost shifts. In addition, as more and more mandates are created, local governments are faced with the burden of using local tax dollars to finance functions that they have little control over.

The state must do a better job of truthfully identifying costs to local governments when passing new legislation and must provide funding or a funding source for every legislative initiative that imposes a cost on counties. St. Lucie County **opposes** new unfunded mandates and unfunded state to county cost shifts.

Aviation Fuel Tax

The aviation fuel tax contributes to the State Transportation Trust which in turn funds the Aviation Grant Program. The Aviation Grant Program provides financial assistance to Florida's airports in the areas of safety, security, preservation, capacity improvement, land acquisition, planning, and economic development. The program also provides funding to assist local governments and airport authorities in planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining public-use aviation facilities. For example, the new MRO hangar at the Treasure Coast International Airport is one of these projects funded through this program.

The County **opposes** legislation that would modify current aviation fuel taxes in a manner that would negatively impact counties or the state's ability to provide resources in support of aviation transportation related operations.

Millage Rates

The County **opposes** legislation that negatively changes the formula for calculating a local government's maximum millage rate and opposes legislation that prohibits local government from redeeming earned rolled back credits.

Communication Services Tax

The County **opposes** legislation which would revise current law in a manner that significantly reduces current local government related revenues.

Furthermore, the County does **support** amending and/or revising current law in a manner that is considered revenue neutral, simplifies administration and collection of the current tax, provides for a broad and equitable tax base, provides for enhanced stability and reliability as an important revenue source for local government and provides the opportunity for market-based growth.

Local Discretionary Revenue Flexibility

The County **supports** modifications to existing laws governing local discretionary sales tax revenue sources to provide greater simplification, flexibility and more efficient administration and management. As well as, expanding the eligibility to levy the Charter County Transportation Surtax to all counties.

Tourism Development Tax

The County **opposes** any legislation which will allow the use of tourism development tax for anything other than for the promotion of tourism.

Local Government Tax Referenda

The County **opposes** legislation that requires a 60% threshold for passage of a local tax referenda during a general election.

Expansion of Gaming at Pari-Mutuel Facilities

In 2004, voters of the state passed an amendment that paved the way for expansion of gambling at pari-mutuel facilities in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties. Since that time, gambling facilities at several locations throughout the state have sought to expand their operations, but been unable to do so, placing the St. Lucie County pari-mutuel and others at an unfair competitive disadvantage. Proposed gaming legislation may prevent St. Lucie County facilities from being able to expand gaming to compete with existing and future gambling facilities in Miami-Dade and Broward County.

In November 2016, the voters in St. Lucie County overwhelmingly supported a ballot initiative to authorize slot machine gaming at existing licensed pari-mutuel facilities within the County.

The County **supports** any legislation, including the Seminole Compact, which will allow for the inclusion of slot machine expansions at pari-mutuels in those counties which have held successful voter referenda. The County also **opposes** any legislation that would place the County's pari-mutuel facilities at an unfair competitive disadvantage as it relates to the expansion of gambling in the state.

ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURAL RESOURCES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2017 St. Lucie County Water Projects

Project	Project Description	Requested Amount	County Match
Culvert Replacement Project	CONSTRUCTION, The overall objective of this project is to replace three culverts which are old and in need of full replacement. This work is consistent with the SFWMD Strategic Priority.	\$900,000	\$900,000
Indian River Lagoon North Hutchinson Island Nutrient Pollution Reduction Project	CONSTRUCTION, The overall objective is to protect the health of the Indian River Lagoon by removing 578 current and future onsite treatment and disposal systems, including 340 directly on the IRL, on Hutchinson Island.	\$3,861,750	\$3,861,750
Teague Hammock Preserve	CONSTRUCTION, This project is an IRL-S C23/C24 CERP buffer project that will provide an additional 300-acres of groundwater recharge that will reclaim agriculture water discharge, restore priority wetland habitat for threatened and endangered species, and reduce State and local invasive exotic management costs. This project will directly benefit the future adjacent IRL-S C23/C24 CERP reservoir project by reclaiming and holding agriculture water before it reaches the C24 drainage basin.	\$400,000	\$1,000,000

Indian River Lagoon South – Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project

The County remains extremely interested in the completion of the entire Indian River Lagoon-South (IRL-S) project, particularly construction of the C-23 and C-24 reservoirs and associated storm water treatment area (STA). The IRL-S project is a component of CERP, and was first authorized by Congress in 2007. Under CERP, the federal government (through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior) is expected to fund half of the costs for restoration, with an array of state, tribal, and local agencies paying the other half. The County has already contributed \$1 million towards the project.

According to the Integrated Delivery Schedule (IDS), design will occur beginning in 2018 and 2019 for the two reservoirs, respectively. Due to the success of the work plan for the C44 project, the County respectfully requests funding from the State in order to expedite the design phase of the north reservoir component of the C-23/C-24 project, which is ready for this phase as well as construction.

Beach and Inlet Management Projects

The Beach Management Funding Assistance Program is a Long-Range Budget Plan administered through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to assist eligible local governments with their beach erosion control projects. Each application request must include a detailed project description, cost estimate, and supporting resolution from the governing body. Individual projects then receive a priority ranking based upon several criteria.

Project	Project Description	Requested Amount	County Match
Fort Pierce Shore Protection Project	2018 physical and biological monitoring	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00
Southern St. Lucie County Beach Restoration	2018 biological monitoring of mitigation reef	\$40,011.00	\$51,989.00
	2018 Physical monitoring-5th year beach profiles	\$16,526.00	\$21,474.00
Fort Pierce Inlet Management Plan	Fort Pierce Inlet Management Plan Update	\$150,000.00	\$50,000.00
	Inlet Sand Trap (Phase 1) Construction	\$2,250,000.00	\$750,000.00
	Inlet Sand Trap (Phase 1) Construction-Engineering	\$198,750.00	\$66,250.00
	Inlet Sand Trap (Phase 1) Construction-Monitoring	\$48,750.00	\$16,250.00
TOTAL		\$3,739,037.00	\$1,990,963.00

St. Lucie River Issues Team

The St. Lucie River Issue Team (SLRIT) was formed by the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force to document the existing condition of the SLE, describe the impacts of the discharge event, and develop an interim action plan with specific short term projects that could be implemented within five years to improve water quality in the SLE. The team is made up of a variety of federal, state and local governments in addition to agricultural and environmental interests.

For more than a decade, the SLRIT has solicited, ranked and submitted to the Florida Legislature local turn-dirt projects focused on the restoration of the SLE and the Indian River Lagoon (IRL). The County fully **supports** the funding of all ranked projects by the St. Lucie River Issues Team.

Zika/Mosquito Control

The control of disease-carrying mosquitoes is one of Florida's most pressing public health concerns. The sudden appearance of the Zika virus in our state over the past year demonstrates clearly the vulnerability of mosquito control in such a wet, warm environment where disease can spread quickly if not abated through efficient, effective mosquito management techniques. The St. Lucie Mosquito Control District depends on

multiple state and non-profit agencies that help provide regulatory supervision, training, public health and mosquito education – all needed to provide a concentrated, coordinated attack on public health threats such as the Zika virus. In recent years, these agencies and organizations have suffered budget cuts that have dramatically curtailed their services. This has had a negative impact on mosquito abatement in Florida at a time when we need it the most.

We look to the Florida Legislature and Governor to provide sufficient resources to:

- The Florida Department of Health, the primary agency responsible for enforcing the emergency public health order imposed by Gov. Scott in February.
- The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which is responsible for regulatory guidance and funding support as the threat from mosquito-borne diseases persists throughout the District and the state of Florida.
- The Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory, the mosquito biology “think tank” performing scientific research that mosquito control districts rely upon and cannot conduct themselves.
- The Florida Mosquito Control Association, a nonprofit agency with members from various fields including mosquito control professionals, scientists, engineers and public health specialists, and which represents the interests of those who promote effective and environmentally sound control of disease-transmitting and pestiferous mosquitoes and other arthropods of public health importance. FMCA’s staffing has been reduced, impacting its ability to serve its members.

Solid Waste

St. Lucie County **opposes** any legislation which would inhibit a local government’s ability to meet statutory requirements under Section 403.7032, Florida Statutes, to recycle 75% of its solid waste by the year 2020.

SUPPORT ISSUES

Department of Environmental Protection – Beach Funding & Permitting

St. Lucie County **supports** the creation of a new dedicated and recurring statutory funding source for beach renourishment projects which accurately reflects the increase in participating programs and future beach and inlet project funding needs. The previous statutory commitment of \$30 million created in 1998 was repealed during Amendment 1 implementation. Since that time, the beach program has received just over \$30 million each year between Land Acquisition Trust Funds and General Revenue.

This amount is no longer sufficient to meet Florida’s needs. A simple adjustment for inflation would require \$44 million in 2016 dollars annually. This does not account for the fact that, since 1998, the number of miles participating in the program has increased by 50 percent. Funding half of the project requests over the last few years would require nearly \$50 million annually, and annualizing beach and inlet project funding needs over the next 20 years would require roughly \$60 million.

Hydraulic Fracturing

Hydraulic fracturing is a technique that involves stimulating the well to extract oil and gas. Large amounts of fluid under pressure are injected into a wellbore to create and extend fractures in the rock formation. The fractures are held open by a slurry mixture which allows natural gas to flow from the fractures into the production well.

Oppose any legislation which would pre-empt County regulations when pertaining to the process of hydraulic fracturing.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Regional Transit Administration/Maintenance Facility **\$500,000**

St. Lucie County has received a FTA 5339 Grant for \$292,363 and will be requesting a match from the State for \$500,000 to create a conceptual design plan for a transit administration and maintenance facility which will serve the three county region. The facility is slated for Selvitz Road, just north of Midway Road and will be used to store

and maintain the fixed route, para-transit buses and support vehicles, as well as house staff and operational supports required for the success of the system.

Currently, transit operations, fixed route and paratransit buses are housed at three different locations, each with its associated maintenance and operating costs. Vehicle maintenance and service are outsourced. The proposed appropriation will assist in completion of the next step toward construction of the facility, allowing for internal maintenance and service work, storage, security and a centralized operational site.

Florida Seaport Transportation & Economic Development (FSTED)

The Florida Legislature created this on-port investment program in 1990, which is administered by the FSTED Council, consisting of the port directors of the 15 public seaports, the Secretary of the Department of Transportation, and the Director of the Department of Economic Opportunity. This state and local investment entity is statutorily charged with accomplishing the state's seaport development mission of implementing capital improvement projects at the local level.

The City of Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County have entered into an interlocal agreement to collaborate efforts in the development of the properties owned by both entities at the Port of Fort Pierce.

Project	Project Description	Requested Amount	County Match
Fisherman's Wharf Bulkhead Rehabilitation and Dredging Basin Design - Phase 1	The work will include the re-design of the Fisherman's Wharf Bulkhead and the study/investigation/permitting for the Fisherman's Wharf Basin Dredging.	\$225,000.00	\$75,000.00
Fisherman's Wharf Roadway Development - Construction - Phase 2	Total re-construction of the Fisherman's Wharf roadway with upgraded utilities and improved stormwater management.	\$700,000.00	\$700,000.00
Harbour Pointe Seagrass Study and Conceptual Development Plan for Bulkhead/Docks/Berths (Planning Study)	This is a seagrass study and conceptual plan for design of a bulkhead/docks/berths, and shore stabilization plan for the north side of the Harbour Pointe parcel, along Taylor Creek.	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00

Harbour Pointe

The county owns 20 acres at the port known as Harbour Pointe, adjacent to 67 acres owned privately, as well as 12 acres that house the privately owned Indian River Terminal. The county continues to work with private companies in an effort to develop its 20-acre Harbour Pointe, a waterfront property slated for tourism, recreational and marine commercial uses. New strategies are expected to address defining and optimizing the land-use mix, cargo opportunities, mega-yacht markets, and provision of

preliminary infrastructure for mixed marine uses. Listed below are the projects the County will be requesting during the 2017 Legislative Session:

Project	Project Description	Requested Amount
Avenue M Infrastructure and Roadway Improvements Design (Phase 1)	Design and realignment of the Avenue M extension from the intersection of North 2nd Street to the terminus at Taylor Creek, approximately 1 mile of urban-type roadway. The project shall include the design of all utilities underground including water and sanitary sewer, electrical power, gas, and communications, as well as any needed upgraded stormwater sewer design.	\$550,000.00
Bulkhead, Shore Stabilization, Dock & Berth Design, and Design and Permitting of Taylor Creek	Design the Bulkhead along Taylor Creek. Design docks, and berths along Taylor Creek and the eastern shoreline of the Harbour Pointe property. Design any revetment and shore stabilization, provide a mitigation plan for any and all protected plants/ species. Design and provide cross-section details of the dredging of Taylor Creek, a navigable waterway, and provide and submit permitting to all required agencies for the dredging of Taylor Creek.	\$750,000.00
TOTAL		\$1,300,000.00

SUPPORT ISSUES

Transportation Disadvantaged Programs

Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) funding is an important funding source to provide the most economically challenged customers with discounted rides on both our fixed route and CONNECTION services. St. Lucie County **supports** attempts to maintain funding to the TD program and to prevent diversion of these dollars for other purposes.

State Transportation Trust Fund

The Florida Transportation Trust Fund is made up of state fuel taxes, motor vehicle fees, tolls and federal grants, and was designed to fund critical road building projects. Transportation is the backbone of Florida's economy and it is important that these funds are used to pay for transportation projects that will put Floridians to work and improve the state's aging infrastructure.

St. Lucie County **opposes** any effort to divert revenues from the State Transportation Trust Fund for non-transportation purposes.

Growth Management & Infrastructure

Growth management laws should take careful consideration of and protect the distinct home rule authority of local governments. **Support** changes that 1) strengthen the intergovernmental review process, 2) ensure that the development impacts occurring

outside the approving jurisdiction are adequately mitigated, 3) eliminate unnecessary duplication and expenses, and 4) **Support** full funding of regional planning councils and **Oppose** legislation prohibiting or restricting the ability of a regional planning council to provide planning and technical service to its local governments. Efforts to strengthen intergovernmental coordination should be considered so that land use decisions of one jurisdiction do not negatively impact another.

Strategic Intermodal System (SIS)

St. Lucie County **supports** legislation allowing SIS funds to be used on roads and other transportation facilities not designated on the SIS network if the improvement relieves congestion on the SIS.

PUBLIC SAFETY

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Inmate Medical Costs

The County **supports** legislation that reduces jail expenses by setting a reimbursement amount paid by counties to medical providers for health care services for inmates and arrestees at no higher than the established Medicare rate plus 10%, the same rate as currently charged to the Department of Corrections, unless there is an existing contract in place or a business practice providing a lower rate. The County also **supports** continued efforts to work through the Medicaid reform initiative to ensure that persons with substance abuse and mental health treatment needs are appropriately served.

Pre-Trial Release

In 2012, legislation was filed that would have significantly hampered the ability of local governments to administer their pretrial release programs. According to estimates from the St. Lucie County Criminal Justice Commission, the restrictions that would have been created by this legislation would likely cause defendants each month who are on supervised release to be retained in custody. Current supervised release programs cost \$4 per day, whereas costs to house a defendant in jail are approximately \$123 per day. **Support** maintaining county ability to provide non-monetary pre-trial release services that ensure the safety and welfare of local communities and **oppose** legislation that would limit the discretion of first appearance judges to prescribe pre-trial options for defendants.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The County **supports** continued state funding for the county EOC to ensure it is able to meet the structural survivability and operational space criteria established by the state and federal government.

Mental Health Court

In the 2016 Legislative Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 439 which created the statutory authority for each county to fund and establish a mental health court program that provides pretrial intervention and postadjudicatory treatment-based programs. The legislation also requires each judicial circuit to establish at least one coordinator position for the Mental Health Court Program, however this position is contingent upon annual appropriation from the state.

The County **supports** the state appropriating the funds needed to establish the position of Mental Health Court Coordinator within the 19th Judicial Circuit.

SUPPORT ISSUES

Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation

St. Lucie County **supports** initiatives which reduce juvenile detention through prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services.

Juvenile Detention Facilities

The County **supports** the legislature appropriating state funds to the Department of Juvenile Justice to upgrade, renovate, or reconstruct detention centers across Florida that are in a state of despair. To **support** state investments in juvenile facilities to improve the conditions of secure confinement for detained youth without such costs being shifted to the counties. Also, the County **supports** measures that ensure that adequate safety, supervision, and facility maintenance is provided at juvenile residential assessment centers and secure detention facilities.

Medical Marijuana

If there is an effort to expand or modify the use of medical marijuana, the County **supports** legislation that provides a comprehensive health-based regulatory system where the Department of Health is responsible for licensing cultivation sites, dispensing facilities and manufacturers of marijuana for medicinal purposes subject to local ordinances, including but not limited to occupational licensing, regulation and zoning laws.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Serg. Ardie R. Copas Veterans Nursing Home

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs operates six veterans' nursing homes in Daytona Beach, Land O' Lakes, Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte and St. Augustine and one veterans' assisted living facility in Lake City. St. Lucie County was awarded the site for the seventh state veterans' nursing home following a unanimous vote at the Sept. 23, 2014 Cabinet Meeting.

Support all future funding for the construction and operation of the Sergeant Ardie R. Copas Veterans Nursing Home.

SUPPORT ISSUES

County Health Departments

Support preserving the ability of County Health Departments (CHD) to provide primary care and direct patient care services, particularly in communities without adequate substitutes or alternative providers for these services, maintaining state general revenue funding for County Health Departments, and maintaining a coordinated system of county health departments that is centrally housed within the Department of Health (DOH).

Oppose efforts to decentralize the public health system by transferring authority over CHDs from the DOH to the respective county governments, any state reductions to the County Health Department Trust Funds; and any efforts, legislative or otherwise, to limit or eliminate the provision of primary care services in CHDs.

County Share of Cost for Medicaid Services

St. Lucie County **supports** establishing a cap on growth in the individual county Medicaid costs under F.S. 409.915, to address the cost shifts that result from the transition to a Medicaid enrollee based cost-sharing system. The County **opposes** efforts to further shift state Medicaid costs to counties.

Homelessness

The County **supports** developing a dedicated state funding source for homeless programs. **Support** legislation that streamlines current state statutes relating to homelessness and associated programs. **Support** the implementation of discharge protocols and/or procedures for hospitals and correctional facilities when releasing homeless persons. **Support** the development of strategies that would allow local governments to work with the state and federal government to serve target populations: the chronically homeless, veterans, and families and children, with particular emphasis on children aging out of the foster care system.

Healthy Families

Support a continuation of funding for the Florida Healthy Families program.

Affordable Housing

The State of Florida established the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund to create a source of funding for affordable housing. Funding comes from a dedicated tax on housing transactions. Recently, the trust fund has been swept by the State Legislature for other uses.

The County **supports** allocating the full amount of dedicated documentary tax revenues for state and local affordable housing programs. As well as, **supports** investing in affordable housing to create jobs in home repair, hardening homes, retrofitting and constructing affordable rental units, and lowering energy costs to make housing more affordable.

Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services and Funding

In the last two years over \$30 million in mental health funding had been lost to Florida's communities. Increased community funding is required to meet the needs of persons residing in the Treasure Coast who are mentally ill and often also have severe substance use disorders.

Additionally, the human and economic costs of untreated mental illness in our state continue to rise. Those costs include the criminalization of people with untreated mental illness, family erosion, substance abuse, job loss, domestic violence, homelessness, medical problems, crime and suicide. Florida must do more to invest and fund community-based and integrated mental healthcare.

The County **supports** efforts to increase supportive housing, jail diversion, and employment and education initiatives for people with mental health or substance abuse issues. **Supports** diverting, medically assisting, or treating mentally ill outside of the criminal justice process through alternative programs, such as Crisis Intervention Teams. **Supports** continued efforts to work through Medicaid reform initiatives to ensure that persons with substance abuse and mental health treatment needs are appropriately served.

Furthermore, St. Lucie County **supports** appropriate funding for core mental health and substance abuse services. **Supports** increased funding of the Criminal Justice Mental Health and Substance Abuse Reinvestment Grant Program with recurring dollars in a trust fund. **Supports** sustainable matching state funds to counties that have received both planning and implementation Reinvestment Grant funds.

Early Steps Program

Treasure Coast Early Steps Program, within Children's Medical Services, serves families with infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months of age, who have developmental delays or an established condition likely to result in a developmental delay. Each child

receives an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) that meets his or her needs. Families and caregivers also receive support to develop the skills and confidence they need to help their children learn and develop. The County **supports** continued funding of the program.

Community Healthcare Clinics/HANDS

The County strongly **supports** the continuation or increase of funding for all Community Healthcare Clinics, such as the HANDS Clinic in Fort Pierce.

Medical Examiners

St. Lucie County **opposes** legislation that prohibits medical examiners from charging a fee for examination and autopsy services that a medical examiner is required to perform by law for cremation services.

EDUCATION

SUPPORT ISSUES

State Library Funding

Local governments receive State support for libraries through three different programs: the State Aid program, the Regional Multi-type Library Cooperative Grant program, and the Public Library Construction Grant program. Continuation of these funding sources will ensure that the State will play an appropriate role in enhancing public library service by matching local library expenditures, enhancing consortia services to area libraries, and providing needed dollars for the construction of new public libraries.

Indian River State College

Support Indian River State College (IRSC) with increased operational funding for workforce-related initiatives and enhancing the institutions capacity to serve the community; additionally, support revisions to the Florida College System Performance funding methodology which would more equitably evaluate its collective institutions and promote even greater success in the nation's best state and community college system.

Support IRSC's ability to serve the region with upper-division, baccalaureate programs that meet the current and future workforce needs of our communities. Conversely, **oppose** legislative measures which may potentially incapacitate growth in existing programs, or severely limit the institution's ability to implement new programs if a workforce need is demonstrated.

Support any IRSC College Improvement Plan (CIP) building construction projects that come forward for funding on the state's Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) prioritized list.

AGRICULTURE

SUPPORT ISSUES

Invasive Exotic Plant Research UF IFAS

The UF/IFAS quarantine facility, which opened in 2004 at the Treasure Coast Research Park, is a highly secure lab where scientists conduct research on biological controls for invasive species. Biological control uses natural enemies to control plant and insect pests. Scientists introduce, evaluate and release biological control agents to try to manage exotic weeds and insect pests in Florida.

UF/IFAS scientists at the quarantine facility are working on many projects, including:

- Trying to establish laboratory colonies of one or more promising insect herbivores that feed on cogongrass, one of the most invasive grasses in the Southeast.
- In collaboration with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, scientists have released more than 350,000 beetles for biological control of the air potato at more than 1,000 locations in Florida since 2012.
- Biological control of Brazilian peppertree using two insects from South America. In greenhouse trials, these insects have been shown to reduce growth of the invasive weed by as much as 89 percent. Release of the insects will begin as soon as federal approval is received.

The County **supports** continued funding which will benefit the *Invasive Exotic Plant Research* located at the University of Florida IFAS in Fort Pierce.