



WES-PP-04: WATER BASIN BOUNDARIES

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: DEFER TO LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

PROPOSED POLICY: FAC encourages the Legislature to 1) determine hydrological boundaries of water basins, and 2) develop appropriate policies to ensure that taxpayers are contributing to the sub-district that best serves them and that water management districts are providing equitable service to all basins.

BACKGROUND: As just one example, the Florida Legislature commissioned a Boundary Delineation study in 2020 for the Big Cypress Basin. It was determined that the scientific, watershed delineated boundary departs significantly from the current boundary lines. This situation is likely replicated within water management districts elsewhere throughout the state.

ANALYSIS: In Southwest Florida, this means taxpayers send money to another coast for flood control and mitigation projects that do not benefit them directly (or even at all). Meanwhile, these same taxpayers either do not get the flood control measures they need or have to double-pay for such benefits.

FISCAL IMPACT: Around \$6-7 million annually in Lee County. Statewide impacts for this policy implementation are currently unknown.

FAC STAFF NOTES:

- FAC 2022 Policy Conference
 - The Committee recommended to defer WES-PP-04 for further discussion at Legislative Conference.
 - The scope of this issue appears to be limited to the Big Cypress Basin. Commissioners expressed concern that the proposal could impact Everglades restoration funding.

- Bills:
 - SB 406/HB 209 (2021) – Big Cypress Basin by Sen. Rodrigues and Rep. Botana – Failed
 - The bills contained provisions concerning the boundaries and administration of the Big Cypress Basin.
 - Under the status quo, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) may revise the official boundaries of the Big Cypress Basin with a resolution by the SFWMD governing board.
 - In 2020, the SFWMD conducted a study, at the direction of the Legislature, to determine the verifiable hydrological boundaries of the Big Cypress Basin.



- The bills sought to require that the SFWMD's official boundaries coincide with the scientific boundaries as determined by the study.
 - Required that funds from SFWMD ad valorem taxes must be used proportionally for projects and maintenance within the county in which they were levied.
 - Required that the composition of the Big Cypress Basin governing board include 4 members from Collier County and one member from Lee County.
- Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee:
 - Conversations with committee staff indicate that water boundary delineation issues have only occurred with respect to the Big Cypress Basin
 - DEP Guidance:
 - [delineationmanual.pdf \(floridadep.gov\)](https://www.floridadep.gov/delineationmanual.pdf)

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ASSIGNED COMMITTEE: WES

BOARD SUPPORT: No position

UNFUNDED MANDATE: No

PROTECTIVE OF HOME RULE: Yes