

**Legislative Issue**  
**FY 24/25**  
**Hernando County Canal Management Feasibility Study**

**Funding Request: \$200,000**

**County Match: \$100,000**

**Action**

Hernando County Aquatic Services and Waterways Department seeks to develop a comprehensive canal feasibility study to evaluate known areas of concern within residential navigable canals West of US 19 in Hernando County along with developing a plan to assess the potential canal dredging needs. The study will identify areas to improve overall conditions of the canal systems for water flow, water quality, and public accessibility for the commercial fishing trade, recreational fishing and boating, and tourism development.

**Background**

During the 1950s and 1960s, there was a statewide construction boom to create manmade residential canals for waterfront homes. In the past 60 years, these canals have had minimal maintenance and have accumulated layers of fine-grained sediments with decaying organic material. Most canals were designed as long, multi-segmented, dead-end canal networks which maximize waterfront property but provide little or no tidal flushing and accumulate nutrients and decomposing organic material. Hernando County contains numerous canal systems which provide access for many users to freshwater lakes, river systems, and the Gulf of Mexico. The recreational and commercial opportunities provided by the waterfront areas are contributing to this area of Hernando County growing so quickly.

**State Interest**

Hernando County is a coastal community with numerous canals that are directly connected to the Gulf of Mexico. Canal maintenance would provide several benefits to State waters such as allowing for increased boating access and recreation, increased water quality by removing organic and fine-grained sediment accumulation that may contain contaminants, spurs economic development along underutilized corridors, increases livability and property values along the waterways, and may even increase jobs depending upon location.

The potential cost associated with dredging may vary significantly depending on the type of dredging and amount of volume of material removed. The Southwest Florida Water Management District is currently hand-dredging sediments from the Weeki Wachee River. The total cost of this restoration dredge is 2.1 million dollars.



