



**House Ports, Waterways and Intermodal Transit
Reported Substitute for HB38**

SYNOPSIS:

This bill would create the Alabama Seagrass Restoration Task Force to address and remediate the loss of seagrass within state marine waters.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to state marine waters; to create the Alabama Seagrass Restoration Task Force; and to provide for its membership and duties.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. It is the intent of the Legislature to establish a collaborative and coordinated effort among public and private research entities to develop restoration technologies and approaches to address the loss of seagrass within state marine waters and the cascading ecological and economic impacts of that loss to this state.

Section 2. (a) The Alabama Seagrass Restoration Task Force is established to lead and expedite formulating, testing, and developing innovative, effective, cost-efficient, and environmentally sustainable technologies to restore coastal seagrass ecosystems by building upon research and



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efforts within the public and private sectors.

(b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

(1) The executive director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab to serve as a cochair.

(2) The President of the University of South Alabama, or his or her designee, to serve as a cochair.

(3) The Chair of the House of Representatives Ports, Waterways, and Intermodal Transit Committee.

(4) The Commissioner of Conservation and Natural Resources, or his or her designee who has expertise in seagrass ecosystems.

(5) The Director of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program.

(6) A member from a private commercial enterprise appointed by the Governor.

(7) A member from a public or private university in this state other than the University of South Alabama appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

(8) Two members from a non-university public or private marine environmental organization with one member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and one member appointed by the Lieutenant Governor.

(c) The task force shall develop a 10-year Alabama Seagrass and Sea Oats Restoration Plan to recommend the tools, approaches, and technologies developed pursuant to this act.

(d) If a vacancy occurs for any appointed member, the respective appointing authority shall appoint a new member.



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(e) The appointing authorities shall coordinate their appointments to assure the task force membership is inclusive and reflects the racial, gender, geographic, urban, rural, and economic diversity of this state.

(f) (1) The legislative members of the task force shall be entitled to their legislative compensation, per diem, and travel expenses for each day they attend a meeting of the task force pursuant to Section 49 of the Constitution of Alabama of 2022.

(2) The nonlegislative members of the task force shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses in attending meetings of the task force pursuant to the policies of their respective appointing authority.

(g) The initial meeting of the task force shall be called by the cochairs and shall be held by January 1, 2027. Thereafter the task force shall meet no less than twice per year.

(h) The Dauphin Island Sea Lab shall provide all necessary staff and support, including meeting space, to the task force for the performance of its duties.

(i) Not later than the first day of each regular session of the Legislature, the task force shall provide a report of its progress made in developing and administering the 10-year Alabama Seagrass and Sea Oats Restoration Plan and its findings, conclusions, accomplishments, priorities for subsequent years, and recommendations for proposed legislation, if any, to the Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the



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Commissioner of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Section 3. (a) The Dauphin Island Sea Lab shall be the fiscal agent for all funds appropriated to the task force to achieve the goals of the task force.

(b) The Dauphin Island Sea Lab, with the consent of the task force, may use funds appropriated to the task force to facilitate engagement with other relevant marine science and technology development organizations in this state, nation, and around the world to pursue applied research and technology for the successful restoration of seagrass ecosystems.

(c) The Dauphin Island Sea Lab may retain funds appropriated to the task force for administrative costs expended by the sea lab pursuant to this act.

(d) In addition to any state-appropriated funds, the task force may accept gifts, grants, and donations from private and federal sources.

Section 4. This act shall become effective on October 1, 2026.