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## Kilroy funding in jeopardy if ORCA asks Legislature for more Indian River Lagoon monitors

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(Photo: FILE PHOTO)

ORCA isn't ready to gamble with its Kilroys.

The Ocean Research & Conservation Association needs more money to enhance its fleet of remote-controlled water-quality sensors, known as Kilroys, in the Indian River Lagoon and its tributaries.

But officials at the Fort Pierce-based nonprofit are reluctant to ask the Florida Legislature to increase its \$250,000 annual appropriation because of a rule the House approved last year.

"According to the new rule, if you ask for more money than your recurring funding and don't get it, you could also lose the recurring funding," said Warren Falls, ORCA's managing director. "It's just not worth the risk.

Keeping at least some Kilroys in the water is too important to risk losing them all."

### Go for a grant?

Instead, Falls said ORCA is "looking real hard" at applying for a grant under the [Legacy Florida 2.0](#) ([/story/news/local/indian-river-lagoon/2017/10/20/brian-mast-uses-saltwater-aquarium-demonstrate-lake-okeechobee-discharges-ill-effects/783558001/](#)) bill proposed by state Rep. Gayle Harrell, a Stuart Republican.

If the Legislature approves the bill during its January-to-March session, the state would be required to appropriate up to \$50 million for lagoon projects.

The legislation would build on Legacy Florida, which Harrell authored last year, requiring the state to set aside at least 25 percent of Amendment 1 funds — or \$200 million a year, whichever is less — each year to fund Everglades restoration projects over the next 20 years.

"ORCA could apply for a Legacy 2.0 grant without the risk of jeopardizing its recurring funding," said Karen Sweeney, Harrell's legislative aide. "In fact, ORCA is a perfect example of an agency that needs a little extra revenue for a lagoon-friendly project and could benefit from Rep. Harrell's bill."

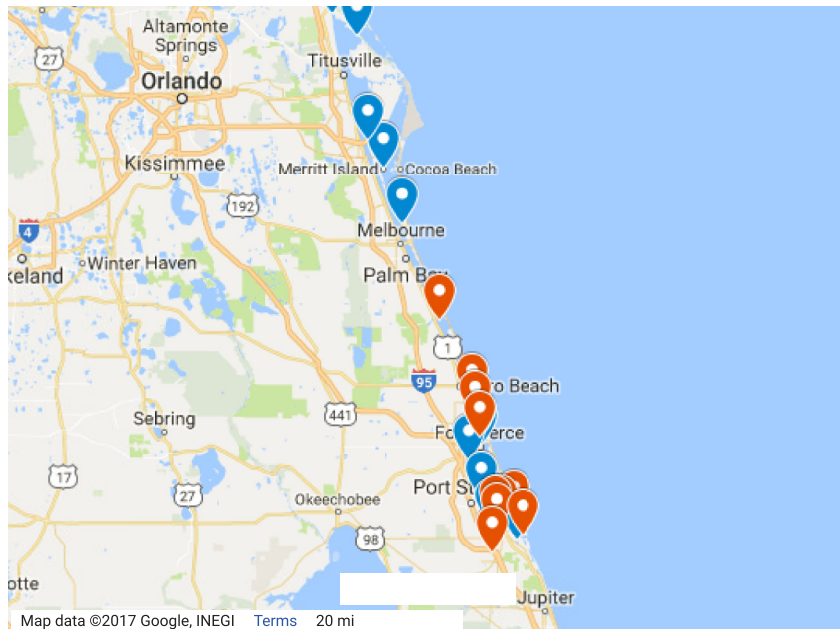
Of course, there's another risk involved, Falls said, "because it all hinges on whether Harrell's bill gets passed."

No senator has filed a companion bill, but Harrell expects one will.

### Along the lagoon

ORCA has 13 Kilroys in the lagoon and its tributaries in Martin, St. Lucie and Brevard counties. The state funds 10 of them. Extra money from the state would pay to install monitors in Indian River County.

### Watching the Water ☆



"I'd really like to see a Kilroy monitoring the water coming out of Indian River County's Main Relief Canal," Falls said. The canal runs from the western agricultural area to just south of the Merrill P. Barber Bridge by Riverside Park.

He'd also like to replace two Kilroys whose funding ran out: one at the Environmental Learning Center in Wabasso and one in the C-24 Canal in Port St. Lucie.

Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Fort Pierce has 10 water monitors in area waters.

Harbor Branch also gets \$250,000 a year from the state to maintain the Land/Ocean Biogeochemical Observatory sensors and doesn't plan to ask for more money, said Dennis Hanisak, a research professor and director of the school's Indian River Lagoon Observatory.

Kilroys and LOBOs measure water-quality indicators such as temperature, depth, clarity, salinity, dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll, nitrates, phosphates and acidity.

They don't measure harmful bacteria in the water. County offices of the state health department measure enteric bacteria, an indicator of fecal contamination, in the lagoon and the St. Lucie River. The state issues avoid-water advisories whenever high bacteria levels pose a possible health risk, [as it was earlier this week \(https://www.wftv.com/story/news/local/indian-river-lagoon/health/2017/11/01/enteric-bacteria-promflorida-issues-13-avoid-water-advisories-high-bacteria-hurricane-irma-stormwate/821750001/\)](https://www.wftv.com/story/news/local/indian-river-lagoon/health/2017/11/01/enteric-bacteria-promflorida-issues-13-avoid-water-advisories-high-bacteria-hurricane-irma-stormwate/821750001/).

**How's the Water?:** [Real-time bacteria test results from Brevard to Palm Beach \(https://www.wftv.com/story/news/local/indian-river-lagoon/health/2017/06/08/treasure-coast-water-quality-map/382272001/\)](https://www.wftv.com/story/news/local/indian-river-lagoon/health/2017/06/08/treasure-coast-water-quality-map/382272001/)

"We're looking at the water that's flowing into the [Indian River Lagoon \(https://www.wftv.com/news/indian-river-lagoon/\)](https://www.wftv.com/news/indian-river-lagoon/)," Falls said. "Levels of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, salinity and blue-green algae tell us how healthy the lagoon is. And we place the Kilroys where they can tell us which canals and creeks the pollutants are coming from."

Buildups of blue-green algae in canals leading to the St. Lucie River, for instance, can indicate an algae bloom could be coming.

Kilroys monitored water conditions before, during and after a [massive fish kill \(http://archive.tcpalm.com/news/indian-river-lagoon/health/sebastian-has-brown-tide-that-sparked-brevard-county-fish-kill--2f3231af-e29f-446b-e053-0100007f835b-373905301.html\)](http://archive.tcpalm.com/news/indian-river-lagoon/health/sebastian-has-brown-tide-that-sparked-brevard-county-fish-kill--2f3231af-e29f-446b-e053-0100007f835b-373905301.html) last March in the Banana River section of the lagoon.

"We've got the most complete set of real-time data ever for a fish kill event," Falls said. "It will help scientists better understand what causes a fish kill so we can do a better job of preventing them in the future."

Annual maintenance costs are \$30,000 for each Kilroy. Martin County pays for two — at Willoughby Creek and Manatee Pocket — and St. Lucie County pays for one Kilroy at Ten Mile Creek.

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