

STORAGE NAME: h1493.wrm
DATE: March 25, 1997

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON
Water and Resource Management
BILL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

BILL #: HB 1493
RELATING TO: Suwannee River Heritage Region
SPONSOR(S): Representative Mackey
STATUTE(S) AFFECTED: None.
COMPANION BILL(S): SB 1984 (i)

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) WATER AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
- (2) GENERAL GOVERNMENT (FISCAL)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)

I. SUMMARY:

HB 1493, an act relating to the Suwannee River Heritage Region, defines the area for which national designation will be requested. The region will encompass all of the counties of Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union. The region contains a rich natural, historical and cultural heritage reflected in the rural quality of life of the region. There is a need to preserve the water, air, fish, wildlife and historical, cultural and scenic resources of the region and the maintenance of a strong rural economy.

Additionally, the Suwannee River Water Management District will develop a voluntary framework for participation and cooperation in the planning and implementation of appropriate nature-based, history-based and culture-based tourism activities by all governmental entities, private property owners and citizens.

The Act directs the Suwannee River Water Management District, (SRWMD) to pursue national designation for the Suwannee River Heritage Region. The proposal requires the development of a management plan to specify the vision for the region and the strategies and action steps necessary to implement the vision which rely exclusively on the existing authority of all levels of government. There are no additional environmental regulations, land-use or zoning programs, or any additional rules, regulations, or ordinances by any subdivision of local, regional, or state government.

The SRWMD is required to submit a progress report to the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives annually, on or before December 1, of each year until designation by the Congress of the United States, and at least once every (3) years thereafter.

HB 1493 shall take effect upon becoming a law.

II. SUBSTANTIVE RESEARCH:

A. PRESENT SITUATION:

The public lands managed by the SRWMD are natural, unimproved areas open to the public for passive recreation activities such as fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, horseback riding, nature study and canoe camping. These forms of recreation are compatible with the SRWMD's environmental protection goals at the current level of public use.

Other states have received the designation of Heritage District, or Trail and have combined multiple sites within a given area as noteworthy of a visitor's time. Such states have found increased business investment by the private sector, new employment opportunities and more enjoyment by tourists and local citizens in the special features and history of a designated area. South Carolina has combined a region needing economic development with a representative cross-section of the state's history and culture plus the physical settings as they developed, into an exciting and enjoyable visit for many.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

The national designation of the Suwannee River Heritage Region will provide the opportunity for all segments of government, private organizations and the public to initiate a cooperative effort to provide additional recreational, historical, cultural and tourist based resources to highlight scenic resources of the region. The plan would provide hubs for direction of tourists and other citizens to locate specific facilities and services. In addition, culture-based tourism would be enhanced.

The SRWMD is required to file an annual progress report with the Governor, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House annually, by December 1 until designation by the Congress. Thereafter, reports are to be filed every (3) years.

C. APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES:

1. Less Government:

Not applicable.

2. Lower Taxes:

Not applicable.

3. Personal Responsibility:

Not applicable.

4. Individual Freedom:

Not applicable.

5. Family Empowerment:

Not applicable.

D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Defines the short title of HB 1493 as the "Suwannee River Heritage Region Act."

Section 2: Establishes the boundary of the "Suwannee River Heritage Region" to encompass all of the counties of Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union.

Section 3: States legislative findings relating to the above district boundaries as an area rich in natural, historical and cultural heritage evidenced by the rural quality of life found in the region. Further, the protection and preservation of the water, air, fish, wildlife and historical, cultural and scenic resources together with the maintenance of a strong rural economy are keys to the preservation of the quality of life of the region.

In addition, HB 1493 identifies an existing opportunity to maintain and enhance the economy of the region by encouraging appropriate nature-based, history-based and culture-based tourism in the region while at the same time preserving and protecting the water, air, fish and wildlife and other natural and scenic resources of the region.

The SRWMD proposes seeking national designation of the region as the Suwannee River Heritage Region by the Congress of the United States. The designation would allow the development of a framework of cooperation that will would assist the district and other local and regional government and state agencies to recognize the value of the natural, historical and cultural resources within the region.

The proposal of the district and national designation requires the development of a management plan to specify the vision for the region and the strategies and action steps necessary to implement the vision. The proposal will rely exclusively on the existing authority of all levels of government and will not require or solicit any additional environmental regulations, land use or zoning programs, or any other rules, regulations, or ordinances by any subdivision of local, regional or state government. Also, the proposal must not propose or require any land acquisition by other than voluntary sale by willing sellers.

All participation by local governments, private property owners and the public must be voluntary. The designation or the management plan may not

require or solicit any unit of local, regional government or any state agency to impose additional or more restrictive environmental, land use, or zoning regulations.

Section 4 The limitations on designation are outlined in this section. Among the limitations are the stipulation that the designation must adhere to the principles of ecosystem management and sustainable development and assure the protection and preservation of the water, air, fish and wildlife and other natural, historical, cultural, and scenic resources of the region. In addition, there must be a framework established for only voluntary participation by the citizens, individual private property owners and each unit of local government in the region.

The framework must assure interested citizens and each local government within the region of having a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the management plan for the Suwannee River Heritage Region. Also, the management plan must not prohibit or otherwise restrict the rights of owners of private property within the region, specifically including rights of access to private property.

Section 5: Provides direction to the SRWMD by the Legislature supporting and endorsing the proposal of the SRWMD to pursue national designation of the Suwannee River Heritage Region by the Congress of the United States pursuant to the provisions of this act and other applicable state and federal law.

Further, the district shall pursue national designation, and the district, or any entity to which the leadership role for implementation of the management plan is transferred, shall file a progress report with the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives annually, on or before December 1 of each year until designation by the Congress of the United States and at least once every (3) years thereafter.

Section 6: Provides that this act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

III. FISCAL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE AGENCIES/STATE FUNDS:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

None.

2. Recurring Effects:

The economy of the district should be enhanced by the designation.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

The economy of the district should reflect increased viability due to more tourism.

4. Total Revenues and Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS a WHOLE:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

None.

2. Recurring Effects:

Upon obtaining the designation of Suwannee River Heritage District, the area should show increased economic benefits from additional visitors to the district.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

Additional economic benefits should continue from increased visitors to the district.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

1. Direct Private Sector Costs:

Additional private investment in services for visitors is expected as a result of the designation.

2. Direct Private Sector Benefits:

The likely benefit will be seen in increased employment opportunities in the goods and services industries of the district.

3. Effects on Competition, Private Enterprise and Employment Markets:

Viable business opportunities may become available with the designation of the district.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

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IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

Not applicable.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

Not applicable.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

Not applicable.

V. COMMENTS:

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON Water and Resource Management:

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