

By Representative Kelly

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to Lake Panasoffkee; creating
3 the Lake Panasoffkee Restoration Council within
4 the Southwest Florida Water Management
5 District; providing for membership and
6 organization; providing for meetings; providing
7 powers and duties; requiring a report;
8 providing for district staff assistance;
9 providing for members' per diem and travel
10 expenses; providing for a Lake Panasoffkee
11 restoration program; providing for tasks of the
12 district, council, Department of Environmental
13 Protection, Game and Fresh Water Fish
14 Commission, and pertinent local governments;
15 directing the district to award restoration
16 contracts contingent on certain funding;
17 providing an effective date.

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19 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee is a water body of
20 historical, ecological, and hydrologic significance, and

21 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee is a major tributary to the
22 Withlacoochee River, and

23 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee has been negatively impacted
24 by extended periods of low water levels, and accumulated
25 sediment and excessive growth of aquatic plants are degrading
26 its recreational values and natural systems, as well as
27 negatively impacting the Withlacoochee River, and

28 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee continues to provide wildlife
29 habitat for fish, birds, and game and to offer recreational
30 opportunities for the residents of Sumter County and Central
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1 Florida, and visitors to the area, despite its current
2 problems, and

3 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee has experienced a decline in
4 its sports fisheries, and

5 WHEREAS, the economic potential of Lake Panasoffkee has
6 yet to be tapped, and

7 WHEREAS, the Southwest Florida Water Management
8 District, in cooperation with a number of state, regional, and
9 local entities, has developed proposals to restore Lake
10 Panasoffkee, NOW, THEREFORE,

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12 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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14 Section 1. Lake Panasoffkee Restoration
15 Council.--There is created within the Southwest Florida Water
16 Management District the Lake Panasoffkee Restoration Council.

17 (1) The council shall consist of 11 members as
18 follows: one representative each from the Southwest Florida
19 Water Management District, the Florida Department of
20 Environmental Protection, the Florida Department of
21 Transportation, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish
22 Commission, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers, to
23 be appointed by their respective agencies, all of whom must
24 have training in biology or another scientific discipline; and
25 two representatives of lakefront property owners, one
26 environmental engineer, one person with training in biology or
27 another scientific discipline, one representative of a local
28 municipality in the vicinity of the lake, and one
29 representative of the sport fishing industry, all to be
30 appointed by the Sumter County Commission. The council members
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1 shall serve as advisors to the governing board of the
2 Southwest Florida Water Management District.

3 (2) Immediately after their appointment, the council
4 members shall meet and organize by electing a chair, a vice
5 chair, and a secretary, whose terms shall be for 2 years each.
6 Council officers shall not serve consecutive terms. Each
7 council member shall be a voting member.

8 (3) The council shall meet at the call of its chair,
9 at the request of six of its members, or at the request of the
10 chair of the governing board of the Southwest Florida Water
11 Management District.

12 (4) The council shall have the powers and duties to:

13 (a) Review audits and all data specifically related to
14 lake restoration techniques and sport fish population recovery
15 strategies, particularly as they may apply to Lake
16 Panasoffkee.

17 (b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

18 (c) Explore all possible sources of funding to conduct
19 the restoration activities.

20 (d) Advise the governing board of the Southwest
21 Florida Water Management District regarding the best approach
22 to restoring Lake Panasoffkee, and make a recommendation as to
23 which techniques should be part of the restoration program.

24 (e) Report to the Legislature by January 15, 1999, any
25 recommendations for fiscal year 1999-2000.

26 (5) The Southwest Florida Water Management District
27 shall provide staff to assist the council in carrying out the
28 provisions of this act.

29 (6) Members of the council shall receive no
30 compensation for their services, but are entitled to be
31 reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses incurred during

1 execution of their official duties, as provided in s. 112.061,
2 Florida Statutes.

3 Section 2. Lake Panasoffkee restoration program.--

4 (1) The Southwest Florida Water Management District,
5 in conjunction with the Department of Environmental
6 Protection, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission,
7 the Sumter County Commission, and the Lake Panasoffkee
8 Restoration Council, shall review existing restoration
9 proposals to determine which ones are the most environmentally
10 sound and economically feasible methods of improving the
11 fisheries and natural systems of Lake Panasoffkee.

12 (2) The district governing board shall specify the
13 tasks to be undertaken by the district, the Department of
14 Environmental Protection, the Game and Fresh Water Fish
15 Commission, and pertinent local governments in order to
16 initiate the Lake Panasoffkee restoration program. These tasks
17 shall include, but not be limited to:

18 (a) Reviewing the existing extensive water sampling
19 data of the lake and associated tributaries to determine water
20 quality.

21 (b) Evaluating different methodologies for removing
22 the extensive tussocks and build-up of organic matter along
23 the shoreline, and of the aquatic vegetation in the lake.

24 (c) Conducting any additional studies as recommended
25 by the Lake Panasoffkee Restoration Council.

26 (3) Contingent on the Legislature appropriating funds
27 for a Lake Panasoffkee restoration program, in conjunction
28 with financial participation by federal, other state, and
29 local governments, the district shall, through competitive
30 bid, award contracts to implement the activities of the Lake
31 Panasoffkee restoration program.

