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2 An act relating to water management; creating  
3 the Lake Panasoffkee Restoration Council;  
4 providing for its membership, powers, and  
5 duties; requiring the Southwest Florida Water  
6 Management District to provide staff for the  
7 council and to award contracts subject to an  
8 appropriation of funds; providing an  
9 appropriation; providing an effective date.

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11 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee is a waterbody of historic,  
12 hydrologic, and ecological significance, and

13 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee is a major tributary to the  
14 Withlacoochee River, and

15 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee is plagued by fluctuating  
16 water levels and sedimentation and excessive growth of aquatic  
17 plants, which are degrading its water quality and recreational  
18 values and adversely affecting the Withlacoochee River, and

19 WHEREAS, Lake Panasoffkee continues to provide wildlife  
20 habitat for fish, birds, and game, and offers recreational  
21 opportunities for the residents of Sumter County and Central  
22 Florida and visitors to the area, despite its current  
23 problems, and

24 WHEREAS, the economic potential of Lake Panasoffkee has  
25 yet to be tapped, and

26 WHEREAS, the Southwest Water Management District, in  
27 cooperation with several state, regional, and local entities,  
28 has developed proposals to restore Lake Panasoffkee, NOW,

29 THEREFORE,

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

1           Section 1. Lake Panasoffkee Restoration Council--There  
2 is created within the Southwest Florida Water Management  
3 District the Lake Panasoffkee Restoration Council.

4           (1)(a) The council shall consist of seven voting  
5 members: two representatives of lakefront property owners, one  
6 environmental engineer, one person with training in biology or  
7 another scientific discipline, one person with training as an  
8 attorney, one person with training as an engineer, and one  
9 representative of the sport fishing industry, all to be  
10 appointed by the Sumter County Commission. No person serving  
11 on the council may be appointed to any of the council advisory  
12 group agencies' councils, board, or commission. The council  
13 members shall serve as advisors to the governing board of the  
14 Southwest Florida Water Management District. The council is  
15 subject to the provisions of chapter 119 and chapter 120,  
16 Florida Statutes.

17           (b) The council advisory group to the council shall  
18 consist of: 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, the Withlacoochee River Basin Board, and the  
23 United States Army Corps of Engineers, to be appointed by  
24 their respective agencies, all of whom must have training in  
25 biology or another scientific discipline.

26           (2) Immediately after their appointment, the council  
27 shall meet and organize by electing a chair, a vice chair, and  
28 a secretary, whose terms shall be for 2 years each. Council  
29 officers shall not serve consecutive terms. Each council  
30 member shall be a voting member.

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1           (3) The council shall meet at the call of its chair,  
2 at the request of six of its members, or at the request of the  
3 chair of the governing board of the Southwest Florida Water  
4 Management District.

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

6           (a) Review audits and all data specifically related to  
7 lake restoration techniques and sport fish population recovery  
8 strategies, including data and strategies for shoreline  
9 restoration, sediment control and removal, exotic species  
10 management, floating tussock management or removal,  
11 navigation, water quality, and fisheries habitat improvement,  
12 particularly as they may apply to Lake Panasoffkee.

13           (b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

14           (c) Explore all possible sources of funding to conduct  
15 the restoration activities.

16           (d) Advise the governing board of the Southwest  
17 Florida Water management District regarding the best approach  
18 to restoring Lake Panasoffkee, and make a recommendation as to  
19 which techniques should be part of the restoration program.  
20 The governing board of the Southwest Florida Water Management  
21 District shall respond in writing to the council if any  
22 recommendations from the council require re-evaluation. The  
23 response shall detail reasons for re-evaluation.

24           (e) Report to the Legislature before November 25 of  
25 each year on the progress of the Lake Panasoffkee restoration  
26 plan and any recommendations for the next fiscal year.

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

30           (6) Members of the council shall receive no  
31 compensation for their services, but are entitled to be

1 reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses incurred during  
2 execution of their official duties, as provided in section  
3 112.061, Florida Statutes. State and federal agencies shall be  
4 responsible for the per diem and travel expenses of their  
5 respective appointees to the council and the Southwest Florida  
6 Water Management District shall be responsible for per diem  
7 and travel expenses of other appointees to the council.

8 Section 2. Lake Panasoffkee restoration program.--

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

17 (2) The Southwest Florida Water Management District,  
18 in consultation and by agreement with the Department of  
19 Environmental Protection, the Game and Fresh Water Fish  
20 Commission, and pertinent local governments, shall develop  
21 tasks to be undertaken by those entities necessary to initiate  
22 the Lake Panasoffkee restoration program recommended by the  
23 Lake Panasoffkee Restoration Council. These agencies shall:

24 (a) Evaluate different methodologies for removing the  
25 extensive tussocks and build up of organic matter along the  
26 shoreline and of the aquatic vegetation in the lake; and

27 (b) Conduct any additional studies as recommended by  
28 the Lake Panasoffkee Restoration Council.

29 (3) Contingent on the Legislature appropriating funds  
30 for the Lake Panasoffkee restoration program and in  
31 conjunction with financial participation by federal, other

1 state, and local governments, the appropriate agencies shall  
2 through competitive bid award contracts to implement the  
3 activities of the Lake Panasoffkee restoration program.

4           Section 3. The sum of \$45,000 is appropriated from the  
5 General Revenue Fund to the Southwest Florida Water Management  
6 District for the purpose of paying administrative, per diem,  
7 and travel expenses of the Lake Panasoffkee Restoration  
8 Council.

9           Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a  
10 law.

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