

By Senators Cowin and Brown-Waite

11-663-01

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

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11 WHEREAS, Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes is a waterbody of
12 historic, hydrologic, and ecological significance, and

13 WHEREAS, Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes is a major
14 tributary to the Withlacoochee River, and

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

20 WHEREAS, Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes continues to
21 provide wildlife habitat for fish, birds, and game, and offers
22 recreational opportunities for the residents of Citrus County
23 and Central Florida and visitors to the area, despite its
24 current problems, and

25 WHEREAS, the economic potential of Tsala Apopka Chain
26 of Lakes has yet to be tapped, NOW, THEREFORE,

27

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

29

30 Section 1. Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes Restoration
31 Council.--There is created within the Southwest Florida Water

1 Management District the Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes
2 Restoration Council.

3 (1)(a) The council shall consist of seven voting
4 members: two representatives of lakefront property owners, one
5 environmental engineer, one person with training in biology or
6 another scientific discipline, one person with training as an
7 attorney, one person with training as an engineer, and one
8 representative of the sport fishing industry, all to be
9 appointed by the Citrus County Commission. A person serving
10 on the council may not be appointed to any of the council
11 advisory group agencies' councils, board, or commission. The
12 council members shall serve as advisors to the governing board
13 of the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The
14 council is subject to the provisions of chapter 119 and
15 chapter 120, Florida Statutes.

16 (b) The council advisory group to the council shall
17 consist of: one representative each from the Southwest Florida
18 Water Management District, the Florida Department of
19 Environmental Protection, the Florida Department of
20 Transportation, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
21 Commission, the Withlacoochee River Basin Board, and the
22 United States Army Corps of Engineers, to be appointed by
23 their respective agencies, all of whom must have training in
24 biology or another scientific discipline.

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

30 (3) The council shall meet at the call of its chair,
31 at the request of six of its members, or at the request of the

1 chair of the governing board of the Southwest Florida Water
2 Management District.

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

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

11 (b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

12 (c) Explore all possible sources of funding to conduct
13 the restoration activities.

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

23 (e) Report to the Legislature before November 25 of
24 each year on the progress of the Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes
25 restoration plan and any recommendations for the next fiscal
26 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. Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes Restoration
9 Program.--

10 (1) The Southwest Florida Water Management District,
11 in conjunction with the Department of Environmental
12 Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
13 Commission, the Citrus County Commission, and the Tsala Apopka
14 Chain of Lakes Restoration Council, shall review existing
15 restoration proposals to determine which ones are the most
16 environmentally sound and economically feasible methods of
17 improving the fisheries and natural systems of Tsala Apopka
18 Chain of Lakes.

19 (2) The Southwest Florida Water Management District,
20 in consultation and by agreement with the Department of
21 Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife
22 Conservation Commission, and pertinent local governments,
23 shall develop tasks to be undertaken by those entities
24 necessary to initiate the Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes
25 Restoration Program recommended by the Tsala Apopka Chain of
26 Lakes Restoration Council. These agencies shall:

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

30 (b) Conduct any additional studies as recommended by
31 the Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes Restoration Council.

