

By Senator Cowin

11-37-01

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to water management; creating
 3 the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council;
 4 providing for membership, powers, and duties;
 5 providing for a report to the Legislature;
 6 providing for an advisory group to the council;
 7 requiring the St. Johns River Water Management
 8 District to provide staff for the council;
 9 providing for award of contracts subject to an
 10 appropriation of funds; providing for a Harris
 11 Chain of Lakes restoration program; providing
 12 for a demonstration restoration project;
 13 providing appropriations; providing an
 14 effective date.

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 16 WHEREAS, the waterways of Lake County are of historic,
 17 hydrological, and ecological significance, and

18 WHEREAS, most of these Lake County waterways are
 19 Outstanding Florida Waterways, and

20 WHEREAS, the Lake County waterways are plagued by toxic
 21 algae sedimentation, and excessive growth of aquatic plants,
 22 which are degrading their water quality and recreational
 23 value, and

24 WHEREAS, despite their current problems, the Lake
 25 County waterways continue to provide wildlife habitat for
 26 fish, birds, and game and offer recreational opportunities for
 27 the residents of Lake County and visitors to the area, and

28 WHEREAS, the renewable economic potential of the Lake
 29 County waterways is significant, and

30 WHEREAS, the St. Johns River Water Management District,
 31 the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Lake County

1 Water Authority along with other state, regional, and local
2 entities, have developed proposals to restore portions of the
3 Harris Chain of Lakes, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

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7 Section 1. The Harris chain of Lakes Restoration
8 Council.--There is created within the St. Johns Water
9 Management District, with assistance from the Fish and
10 Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Lake County Water
11 Authority, the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council.

12 (1)(a) The council shall consist of nine voting
13 members, which include: a representative of waterfront
14 property owners, a representative of the sport fishing
15 industry, an environmental engineer, a person with training in
16 biology or another scientific discipline, a person with
17 training as an attorney, a physician, a person with training
18 as an engineer and two residents of the county who do not meet
19 any of the other qualifications for membership enumerated in
20 this paragraph, each to be appointed by the Lake County
21 legislative delegation. No person serving on the council may
22 be appointed to a council, board, or commission of any council
23 advisory group agency. The council members shall serve as
24 advisors to the governing board of the St. Johns River Water
25 Management District. The council is subject to the provisions
26 of chapters 119 and 120, Florida Statutes.

27 (b) There shall be an advisory group to the council
28 which shall consist of one representative each from the St.
29 Johns River Water Management District, the Department of
30 Environmental Protection, the Department of Transportation,
31 the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Lake County

1 Water Authority, the United States Army Corps of Engineers,
2 and the University of Florida, each of whom shall be appointed
3 by his or her respective agency, and each of whom, with the
4 exception of the representatives from the Lake County Water
5 Authority, and the University of Florida, shall have had
6 training in biology or another scientific discipline.

7 (2) Immediately after appointment, the council shall
8 meet and organize by electing a chair, a vice chair, and a
9 secretary, whose terms shall be for 2 years each. Council
10 officers shall not serve consecutive terms. Each council
11 member shall be a voting member.

12 (3) The council shall meet at the call of its chair,
13 at the request of six of its members, or at the request of the
14 chair of the governing board of the St. Johns River Water
15 Management District.

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

17 (a) Review audits and all data specifically related to
18 lake restoration techniques and sport fish population recovery
19 strategies, including data and strategies for shoreline
20 restoration, sediment control and removal, exotic species
21 management, floating tussock management or removal,
22 navigation, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat
23 improvement, particularly as they may apply to the Harris
24 Chain of Lakes.

25 (b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

26 (c) Explore all possible sources of funding to conduct
27 the restoration activities.

28 (d) Report to the President of the Senate and the
29 Speaker of the House of Representatives before November 25 of
30 each year on the progress of the Harris Chain of Lakes
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1 restoration program and any recommendations for the next
2 fiscal year.

3 (5) The St. Johns River Water Management District
4 shall provide staff to assist the council in carrying out the
5 provisions of this act.

6 (6) Members of the council shall receive no
7 compensation for their services, but are entitled to be
8 reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses incurred during
9 execution of their official duties, as provided in section
10 112.061, Florida Statutes. State and federal agencies shall be
11 responsible for the per diem and travel expenses of their
12 respective appointees to the council, and the St. Johns River
13 Water Management District shall be responsible for per diem
14 and travel expenses of other appointees to the council.

15 Section 2. The Harris Chain of Lakes restoration
16 program.--

17 (1) The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and
18 the St. Johns River Water Management District, in conjunction
19 with the Department of Environmental Protection, pertinent
20 local governments, and the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration
21 Council, shall review existing restoration proposals to
22 determine which ones are the most environmentally sound and
23 economically feasible methods of improving the fish and
24 wildlife habitat and natural systems of the Harris Chain of
25 Lakes.

26 (2) To initiate the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration
27 program recommended by the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration
28 Council, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with
29 assistance from the St. Johns River Water Management District
30 and in consultation and by agreement with the Department of
31 Environmental Protection and pertinent local governments,

1 shall develop tasks to be undertaken by those entities for the
2 enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat. These agencies
3 shall:

4 (a) Evaluate different methodologies for removing the
5 extensive tussocks and buildup of organic matter along the
6 shoreline and of the aquatic vegetation in the lake.

7 (b) Conduct any additional studies as recommended by
8 the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council.

9 (3) Contingent on the Legislature's appropriating
10 funds for the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program and in
11 conjunction with financial participation by federal, other
12 state, and local governments, the appropriate agencies shall,
13 through competitive bid, award contracts to implement the
14 activities of the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program.

15 Section 3. The sum of \$45,000 is appropriated from the
16 General Revenue Fund to the St. Johns River Water Management
17 District for the purpose of paying administrative, per diem,
18 and travel expenses of the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration
19 Council.

20 Section 4. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation
21 Commission is authorized to conduct a demonstration
22 restoration project on the Harris Chain of Lakes for the
23 purpose of creating better habitat for fish and wildlife. The
24 sum of \$100,000 is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund
25 to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for the
26 purpose of conducting the demonstration restoration project.

27 Section 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
28 law.

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SENATE SUMMARY

Creates the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council and an advisory group to the council. Establishes the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program and authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with the assistance of the St. Johns River Water Management District and by agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection, to develop tasks necessary to initiate the program as recommended by the council. Authorizes a demonstration restoration project. Provides funding. (See bill for details.)