

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to water management; creating
3 the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration
4 Council; providing for membership, powers, and
5 duties; providing for separate county task
6 forces; providing for an advisory group to the
7 council; providing for a report to the
8 Legislature; requiring the Southwest Florida
9 Water Management District to provide staff for
10 the council; providing for a Citrus/Hernando
11 Waterways restoration program; providing
12 program tasks; providing for award of contracts
13 subject to an appropriation of funds; providing
14 for demonstration restoration projects;
15 providing effective dates.

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17 WHEREAS, the waterways of Citrus and Hernando Counties
18 are of historic, hydrological, and ecological significance,
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20 WHEREAS, most of these Citrus/Hernando waterways are
21 Outstanding Florida Waterways or are in the application
22 process to become Outstanding Florida Waterways, and

23 WHEREAS, the Citrus/Hernando waterways are plagued by
24 fluctuating water levels and sedimentation, increasing nitrate
25 levels, and sand movement, causing blockage of natural springs
26 and excessive growth of aquatic plants, which are degrading
27 their water quality and recreational value, and

28 WHEREAS, despite their current problems, the
29 Citrus/Hernando waterways continue to provide wildlife habitat
30 for fish, birds, and game and offer recreational opportunities
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1 for the residents of Citrus and Hernando Counties and visitors
2 to the area, and

3 WHEREAS, the renewable economic potential of the
4 Citrus/Hernando waterways is significant, and

5 WHEREAS, the Southwest Florida Water Management
6 District and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission,
7 along with other state, regional, and local entities, have
8 developed proposals to restore portions of the Citrus/Hernando
9 waterways, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

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13 Section 1. (1) Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration
14 Council.--There is created within the Withlacoochee and
15 Coastal Rivers Basins of the Southwest Florida Water
16 Management District the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration
17 Council. The council shall be coordinated by representatives
18 of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the
19 Department of Environmental Protection, and the Southwest
20 Florida Water Management District. The council is subject to
21 the provisions of chapters 119 and 120, Florida Statutes.

22 (2) The council shall consist of 12 voting members,
23 six of whom shall be appointed by the President of the Senate
24 and six of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House
25 of Representatives.

26 (a) The President of the Senate shall appoint council
27 members as follows:

- 28 1. An attorney from each county.
29 2. A member of the board of directors of the chamber
30 of commerce from each county.
31 3. An environmental engineer from each county.

1 (b) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
2 appoint council members as follows:

3 1. A waterfront property owner from each county.

4 2. An engineer from each county.

5 3. A person from each county with training in biology
6 or another scientific discipline.

7 (3) The council members from each county shall form
8 two separate county task forces from the council to review and
9 make recommendations on specific waterways within their
10 respective counties.

11 (4) There shall be a technical advisory group to the
12 council and the two county task forces which shall consist of
13 one representative each from the Southwest Florida Water
14 Management District, the Department of Environmental
15 Protection, the Department of Transportation, the Fish and
16 Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Coastal Rivers Basin
17 Board, the Withlacoochee River Basin Board, and the United
18 States Army Corps of Engineers, each of whom shall be
19 appointed by his or her respective agency and each of whom,
20 with the exception of the representatives from the
21 Withlacoochee River Basin Board and the Coastal Rivers Basin
22 Board, shall have had training in biology or another
23 scientific discipline.

24 (5) Immediately after appointment, the council shall
25 meet and organize by electing a chair, a vice chair, and a
26 secretary, whose terms shall be for 2 years each. Council
27 officers shall not serve consecutive terms. Each council
28 member shall be a voting member. Additionally, the two county
29 task forces shall each elect a chair and a secretary, whose
30 terms shall be for 2 years each.

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1 (6) The council or a county task force shall meet at
2 the call of its chair or at the request of six of its members.

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

4 (a) Review audits and all data specifically related to
5 lake and river restoration techniques and sport fish
6 population recovery strategies, including data and strategies
7 for shoreline restoration, sand and other sediment control and
8 removal, exotic species management, floating tussock
9 management or removal, navigation, water quality, and fish and
10 wildlife habitat improvement, particularly as they may apply
11 to the Citrus/Hernando waterways.

12 (b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

13 (c) Explore all possible sources of funding to conduct
14 the restoration activities, including funds provided to any
15 advisory group agency for restoration purposes.

16 (d) Report to the Speaker of the House of
17 Representatives and the President of the Senate before
18 November 25 of each year on the progress of the
19 Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program and any
20 recommendations for the next fiscal year.

21 (8) The Southwest Florida Water Management District
22 shall provide staff to assist the council in carrying out the
23 provisions of this act.

24 (9) Members of the council shall receive no
25 compensation for their services but are entitled to be
26 reimbursed for the per diem and travel expenses incurred
27 during execution of their official duties, as provided in s.
28 112.061, Florida Statutes. State and federal agencies shall be
29 responsible for the per diem and travel expenses of their
30 representatives on the technical advisory group, and the
31 Southwest Florida Water Management District shall be

1 responsible for per diem and travel expenses of council
2 members.

3 Section 2. Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration
4 program.--

5 (1) The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and
6 the Southwest Florida Water Management District, in
7 conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection,
8 pertinent local governments, and the Citrus/Hernando Waterways
9 Restoration Council, shall review existing restoration
10 proposals to determine which provide the most environmentally
11 sound and economically feasible methods of improving the fish
12 and wildlife habitat and natural systems of the
13 Citrus/Hernando waterways.

14 (2) To initiate the Citrus/Hernando Waterways
15 restoration program recommended by the Citrus/Hernando
16 Waterways Restoration Council, the Fish and Wildlife
17 Conservation Commission, with assistance from the Southwest
18 Florida Water Management District and in consultation and by
19 agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection and
20 pertinent local governments, shall develop tasks to be
21 considered by those entities for the enhancement of fish and
22 wildlife habitat. These agencies shall:

23 (a) Evaluate different methodologies for removing the
24 extensive tussocks and buildup of organic matter along the
25 shoreline and of the aquatic vegetation in the lake.

26 (b) Conduct any additional studies as recommended by
27 the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council.

28 (3) Contingent upon the Legislature's appropriating
29 funds for the Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program
30 and in conjunction with financial participation by federal,
31 other state, and local governments, the appropriate agencies

1 shall, through competitive bid, award contracts to implement
2 the activities of the Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration
3 program.

4 Section 3. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation
5 Commission is authorized to conduct a demonstration
6 restoration project on the Tsala-Apopka Chain of Lakes for the
7 purpose of removing, with proper permits, overlying
8 undesirable vegetation and associated organic material down to
9 mineralized soils, thus allowing for the establishment of a
10 more desirable aquatic plant community on hard, sandy
11 substrate and creating better habitat for fish and wildlife.

12 Section 4. The Southwest Florida Water Management
13 District is authorized to conduct a demonstration restoration
14 project on the Weeki Wachee River with proper permits to
15 improve water flow by implementing a sand containment and
16 erosion control project. The project may include other
17 restoration activities related to improving water flow.

18 Section 5. Except as otherwise provided herein, this
19 act shall take effect upon becoming a law.
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