

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 an effective date.

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

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

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

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

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

29 WHEREAS, the St. Johns River Water Management District,
30 the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Lake
31 County Water Authority, along with other state, regional, and

1 local entities, have developed proposals to restore portions
2 of the Harris Chain of Lakes, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 (b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

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

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

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

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

13 Section 2. The Harris Chain of Lakes restoration
14 program.--

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

24 (2) To initiate the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration
25 program recommended by the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration
26 Council, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with
27 assistance from the St. Johns River Water Management District
28 and in consultation and by agreement with the Department of
29 Environmental Protection and pertinent local governments,
30 shall develop tasks to be undertaken by those entities for the
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1 enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat. These agencies
2 shall:

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

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

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

14 Section 3. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation
15 Commission is authorized to conduct a demonstration
16 restoration project on the Harris Chain of Lakes for the
17 purpose of creating better habitat for fish and wildlife.

18 Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
19 law.