

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 a report to the
7 Legislature; providing for an advisory group to
8 the council; requiring the Southwest Florida
9 Water Management District to act as lead entity
10 for the purpose of providing staff and
11 administrative support for the council;
12 providing for a Citrus/Hernando Waterways
13 restoration program; providing an effective
14 date.

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16 WHEREAS, the waterways of Citrus and Hernando Counties
17 are of historic, hydrological, and ecological significance,
18 and

19 WHEREAS, most of these Citrus/Hernando waterways are
20 Outstanding Florida Waterways or in the application process,
21 and

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

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

1 WHEREAS, the renewable economic potential of the
2 Citrus/Hernando waterways is significant, and

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

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

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

22 (2) Members of the council shall consist of twelve
23 voting members with six appointed by the President of the
24 Senate and six appointed by the Speaker of the House of
25 Representatives. The council shall consist of representatives
26 as follows:

- 27 a. Waterfront property owners from each county,
28 b. An attorney from each county,
29 c. A member of the Board of Directors of the Chamber
30 of Commerce from each county,
31 d. An environmental engineer from each county,

1 e. An engineer from each county, and

2 f. A person from each county with training in biology
3 or another scientific discipline.

4 (3) The council members from each county are to form
5 two separate county task forces from the council to review and
6 make recommendations on specific waterways. The Hernando
7 County Task Force shall develop plans for the restoration of
8 the Weeki Wachee River and Springs. The Citrus County Task
9 Force shall develop plans for the restoration of the
10 Tsala-Apopka Chain of Lakes.

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 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 elect a chair and a secretary whose terms
30 shall be for 2 years each.

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

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

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

14 (b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

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

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

22 (8) The Southwest Florida Water Management District
23 shall act as lead entity for the purpose of providing staff
24 and administrative support to assist the council in carrying
25 out the provisions of this act.

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

1 respective appointees to the council, and the Southwest
2 Florida Water Management District shall be responsible for per
3 diem and travel expenses of other appointees to the council.

4 Section 2. The Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration
5 program.--

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

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

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

27 (b) The conduct of any additional studies as required
28 by the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council.

29 (3) Contingent on the Legislature's appropriating
30 funds for the Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program
31 and in conjunction with financial participation by federal,

1 other state, and local governments, the appropriate agencies
2 shall, through competitive bid, award contracts to implement
3 the activities of the Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration
4 program.

5 Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
6 law.

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