

By Representative Argenziano

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 a report to the
6 Legislature; providing for two task forces to
7 review and make recommendations related to
8 specific waterways; providing for a technical
9 advisory group to the council and the two
10 county task forces; providing for membership;
11 requiring the Southwest Florida Water
12 Management District to provide staff for the
13 council; providing for a Citrus/Hernando
14 Waterways restoration program; providing for
15 award of contracts subject to an appropriation
16 of funds; providing an appropriation; providing
17 for two demonstration restoration projects;
18 providing an effective date.
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20 WHEREAS, the waterways of Citrus and Hernando Counties
21 are of historic, hydrological, and ecological significance,
22 and
23 WHEREAS, most of these Citrus/Hernando waterways are
24 Outstanding Florida Waterways, and
25 WHEREAS, the Citrus/Hernando waterways are plagued by
26 fluctuating water levels and sedimentation and excessive
27 growth of aquatic plants, which are degrading their water
28 quality and recreational value, and
29 WHEREAS, despite their current problems, the
30 Citrus/Hernando waterways continue to provide wildlife habitat
31 for fish, birds, and game and offer recreational opportunities

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

25 (2) The council shall consist of 12 voting members
26 with 6 appointed by the President of the Senate and 6
27 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The
28 council shall consist of representatives as follows:

- 29 (a) A waterfront property owner from each county.
30 (b) An attorney from each county.

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1 (c) A member of the board of directors of the chamber
2 of commerce from each county.

3 (d) An environmental engineer from each county.

4 (e) An engineer from each county.

5 (f) 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. The Hernando
10 County Task Force shall develop plans for the restoration of
11 the Weeki Wachee River and Springs. The Citrus County Task
12 Force shall develop plans for the restoration of the
13 Tsala-Apopka Chain of Lakes.

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

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

1 task forces shall elect a chair and a secretary whose terms
2 shall be for 2 years each.

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

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

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

17 (b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

18 (c) Explore all possible sources of funding to conduct
19 the restoration activities.

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

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

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

1 Florida Statutes. State and federal agencies shall be
2 responsible for the per diem and travel expenses of their
3 respective appointees to the council, and the Southwest
4 Florida Water Management District shall be responsible for per
5 diem and travel expenses of other appointees to the council.

6 Section 2. The Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration
7 program.--

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

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

26 (a) Evaluate different methodologies for removing the
27 extensive tussocks and buildup of organic matter along the
28 shoreline and of the aquatic vegetation in the lake.

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

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1 (3) Contingent upon the Legislature's appropriating
2 funds for the Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program
3 and in conjunction with financial participation by federal,
4 other state, and local governments, the appropriate agencies
5 shall, through competitive bid, award contracts to implement
6 the activities of the Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration
7 program.

8 Section 3. The sum of \$45,000 is appropriated from the
9 General Revenue Fund to the Southwest Florida Water Management
10 District for the purpose of paying administrative, per diem,
11 and travel expenses of the Citrus/Hernando Waterways
12 Restoration Council.

13 Section 4. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation
14 Commission is authorized to conduct a demonstration
15 restoration project on the Tsala-Apopka Chain of Lakes for the
16 purpose of removing, with proper permits, overlying
17 undesirable vegetation and associated organic material down to
18 mineralized soils, thus allowing for the establishment of a
19 more desirable aquatic plant community on hard, sandy
20 substrate and creating better habitat for fish and wildlife.

21 Section 5. The Southwest Florida Water Management
22 District is authorized to conduct a demonstration restoration
23 project on the Weeki Wachee River, with proper permits, to
24 improve the water flow by a sand containment and erosion
25 control project, including other restoration activities
26 related to this problem.

27 Section 6. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
28 law.

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HOUSE SUMMARY

Creates the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council and a technical advisory group to the council. Provides for two task forces. Establishes the Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program and authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with the assistance of the Southwest Florida Water Management District and in consultation and by agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection and pertinent local governments, to develop tasks to be considered for the program. Authorizes two demonstration restoration projects. Provides funding. See bill for details.