

By Senator Constantine

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A bill to be entitled
An act relating to the Wekiva River Basin;
creating s. 163.3247, F.S.; providing a short
title; providing legislative intent with
respect to protecting the Wekiva River Basin
and implementing the findings and
recommendations of the Wekiva River Basin
Coordinating Committee; providing an effective
date.

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

Section 1. Section 163.3247, Florida Statutes, is
created to read:

163.3247 Wekiva River Basin Parkway and Protection
Act.--

(1) SHORT TITLE.--This section may be cited as the
"Wekiva River Basin Parkway and Protection Act."

(2) LEGISLATIVE INTENT.--

(a) The Legislature recognizes the Wekiva River and
its tributaries, along with the St. Johns River and associated
lands in central Florida, as one of the most valuable natural
assets of the state. The Wekiva River and its tributaries have
been designated an Outstanding Florida Water, a National Wild
and Scenic River, a Florida Wild and Scenic River, and a
Florida Aquatic Preserve.

(b) In 1988, the Legislature enacted the Wekiva River
Protection Act, codified in part II of chapter 369, to protect
the resources of the Wekiva River Basin. The Wekiva River
Protection Act delineates an area comprising portions of Lake,

1 Orange, and Seminole Counties as the Wekiva River Protection
2 Area.

3 (c) The Wekiva River is a spring-fed system associated
4 with 19 second-magnitude and third-magnitude springs and
5 numerous smaller springs. The Legislature recognizes that a
6 spring is only as healthy as its groundwater recharge basin.
7 The groundwater that feeds springs is recharged by seepage
8 from the surface and through direct conduits, such as
9 sinkholes. Because of this, the health of the spring system is
10 directly influenced by activities and land uses within the
11 spring recharge basin.

12 (d) Protection of groundwater that recharges the
13 springs connected to the Wekiva River is crucial to the
14 long-term viability of the Wekiva River ecosystem and the
15 region's water supply. The volume of groundwater moving toward
16 discharge to form the Wekiva River spring system has
17 diminished over time, given withdrawals of water for
18 consumptive use and loss of recharge due to land development.
19 The Water Needs and Sources Assessment indicates that the
20 Wekiva Basin is located in a Priority Water Resource Caution
21 Area, indicating that water supply problems are projected to
22 become critical by 2010 and projected water use may result in
23 unacceptable impacts to natural systems and groundwater
24 quality, including a decline in the water table affecting
25 wetland vegetation and reduced spring flows. The St. Johns
26 Water Management District projects a 20-percent reduction in
27 spring flows by the year 2020.

28 (e) Because the majority of the groundwater recharge
29 basin of the Wekiva River is located outside the Wekiva River
30 Protection Area as delineated in part II of chapter 369, no
31 special protection currently exists for critical groundwater

1 recharge lands. The Wekiva River Springs Protection Area shall
2 consist of the study area, as determined by the Wekiva River
3 Basin Coordinating Committee, which was created by Executive
4 Order Number 03-112.

5 (f) It is the intent of the Legislature to implement
6 those findings and recommendations of the committee.

7 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2004.

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SENATE SUMMARY

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Creates the "Wekiva River Basin Parkway and Protection Act." Provides legislative intent with respect to protecting the basin and implementing the findings and recommendations of the Wekiva River Basin Coordinating Committee.

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