

By Senator Bennett

21-1451-06

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to the Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers Corridor Advisory Council; creating the advisory council; providing a definition; providing for appointment of members, per diem and travel expenses, staff, and duties of the advisory council; exempting staff from pt. II of ch. 110, F.S., relating to the Career Service System; requiring recommendations to the Legislature; requiring a report to the Legislature and Governor by a specific date; providing for expiration of the advisory council; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the hydrologic basins of the Caloosahatchee River and its estuary and the St. Lucie River and its estuary, including Lake Okeechobee, constitute a single, hydrologically related system, and

WHEREAS, during climatic periods of high rainfall and tropical storms occurring within this system, the high rates of surface water discharge from Lake Okeechobee have significant adverse impacts on the receiving waters of the Caloosahatchee River and the St. Lucie River ecosystems and their estuaries, and

WHEREAS, high concentrations of nutrients and other pollutant-laden discharges that significantly degrade receiving waters have a demonstrable economic effect on the region's very substantial tourist and outdoor recreational economies, as well as the quality of life of the residents of Lee and Martin Counties, and

1 WHEREAS, while the Lake Okeechobee Protection Program
2 provides significant safeguards and strategies for protecting
3 and improving water quality discharges into Lake Okeechobee,
4 there is no comprehensive plan for the Caloosahatchee-St.
5 Lucie Rivers Corridor, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

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9 Section 1. Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers Corridor
10 Advisory Council; membership; meetings; staff.--

11 (1) For purposes of this act, the hydrologic basins of
12 the Caloosahatchee River and its estuary and the St. Lucie
13 River and its estuary, including Lake Okeechobee, shall be
14 known as the "Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers Corridor."

15 (2) There is created the Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie
16 Rivers Corridor Advisory Council under the Department of
17 Environmental Protection consisting of 17 members who shall be
18 appointed as follows:

19 (a) The Governor shall appoint:

20 1. One consumer member.

21 2. One member with hydrologic experience within the
22 Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers Corridor and expertise in
23 environmental engineering.

24 3. One member from the agriculture industry.

25 4. One member from an environmental group.

26 5. One member from the business or tourism community
27 in Okeechobee County, Martin County, or Palm Beach County.

28 (b) The President of the Senate shall appoint:

29 1. One member representing local government in Lee
30 County.

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1 2. One member with hydrologic experience within the
2 Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers Corridor and expertise in
3 hydrology.

4 3. One member from the agriculture industry.

5 4. One member from an environmental group.

6 5. One member from the business or tourism community
7 in Lee County or Charlotte County.

8 6. One member from the Senate.

9 (c) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
10 appoint:

11 1. One member representing local government in Martin
12 County.

13 2. One member with hydrologic experience within the
14 Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers Corridor and expertise in
15 biology.

16 3. One member from the agriculture industry.

17 4. One member from an environmental group.

18 5. One member from the business or tourism community
19 in Hendry County or Glades County.

20 6. One member from the House of Representatives.

21 (d) The Governor shall appoint the chair of the
22 advisory council from among its members.

23 (e) Appointments to the advisory council shall be made
24 no later than 30 days after the effective date of this act.

25 (f) Each member of the advisory council may receive
26 per diem and travel expenses as provided in s. 112.061,
27 Florida Statutes, while carrying out the business of the
28 advisory council.

29 (g) The first meeting of the advisory council shall be
30 held no later than 60 days after the effective date of this
31 act.

1 (h) The records and meetings of the advisory council
2 are subject to the provisions of chapter 119 and s. 286.011,
3 Florida Statutes.

4 (i) The advisory council shall be staffed by an
5 executive director and other personnel selected and hired by
6 the Department of Environmental Protection who shall be exempt
7 from part II of chapter 110, Florida Statutes, relating to the
8 Career Service System. The Department of Environmental
9 Protection may employ staff and consultants as necessary to
10 assist the advisory council in fulfilling its
11 responsibilities. The South Florida Water Management District
12 and the Department of Environmental Protection shall each
13 appoint a liaison for the respective agency to work directly
14 with the executive director of the advisory council and to
15 provide expertise and assistance to the advisory council.

16 (3) The duties of the Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers
17 Corridor Advisory Council are to:

18 (a) Meet at least five times after August 1, 2006.

19 (b) Hold a minimum of five public hearings within the
20 Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers Corridor for the purpose of
21 receiving public comments and information.

22 (c) Review the operation and management of Lake
23 Okeechobee and the associated discharges from the lake for the
24 purpose of formulating specific recommendations relating to,
25 but not limited to:

26 1. Scientifically viable, economically feasible
27 projects, programs, and regulations that address or mitigate
28 the impacts of high level discharges from Lake Okeechobee upon
29 the receiving waters of the Caloosahatchee River and the St.
30 Lucie Canal and St. Lucie River and their respective
31 estuaries.

1 2. Ongoing projects and plans authorized pursuant to
2 the Lake Okeechobee Protection Program and the Comprehensive
3 Everglades Restoration Plan under s. 373.4592, Florida
4 Statutes.

5 3. Environmentally and economically feasible projects
6 to remove accumulated sedimentation from Lake Okeechobee.

7 4. Alternative treatment strategies, projects, best
8 management practices, and funding sources to manage more
9 effectively the hydrology of the corridor to minimize adverse
10 ecological effects upon the receiving waters from Lake
11 Okeechobee discharge.

12 5. Long-term funding for implementation of the
13 projects and programs identified in the report.

14 (4) The advisory council shall prepare and submit a
15 report and recommendations to the President of the Senate and
16 the Speaker of the House of Representatives prior to the 2007
17 Regular Session of the Legislature for implementation of
18 projects and strategies to mitigate the present effects of
19 high discharges from Lake Okeechobee upon the described
20 basins.

21 (5) The advisory council shall submit to the Governor,
22 the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
23 Representatives by March 1, 2007, a report with specific
24 recommendations for implementation by the Legislature and the
25 Governor which will mitigate ecological effects upon the
26 Caloosahatchee-St. Lucie Rivers Corridor and stabilize the
27 effect of high discharges from Lake Okeechobee upon the
28 tourist economy of Southwest and Southeast Florida.

29 (6) The advisory council shall expire on April 1,
30 2007.

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1 Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
2 law.
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