

By Senator Constantine

22-02967-08

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1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to the restoration of Lake Jesup;
3 requiring the Department of Environmental Protection, the
4 St. Johns River Water Management District, the Fish and
5 Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the City of Sanford
6 to develop a plan concerning the progress of the
7 commission's project to restore aquatic habitats in Lake
8 Jesup; requiring the commission to report to the
9 Legislature concerning the development of the plan;
10 providing that the acquisition of a site to dispose of
11 muck from the project is a conservation and restoration
12 acquisition under the Florida Forever program; encouraging
13 state agencies to help fund the removal of muck from Lake
14 Jesup; providing an effective date.

15
16 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes the importance of
17 improving water quality in surface waters having regional or
18 statewide significance, and

19 WHEREAS, Lake Jesup, a lake that fluctuates with the St.
20 Johns River system and encompasses between 9,150 acres at low
21 water and 13,034 acres at high water, is an important natural
22 resource of regional and statewide significance, an important
23 economic resource, and a habitat for resident and migratory fish
24 and waterfowl, and

25 WHEREAS, historically, Lake Jesup has been a primary
26 destination of sport fishers, a navigable waterway, and a
27 waterway capable of supporting commerce, travel, and recreation,
28 and

29 WHEREAS, endangered species, such as the manatee and bald

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30 eagle, and species of special concern, such as the ibis, wood
31 stork, and sandhill crane, use this lake and basin as habitat,
32 and

33 WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of visitors are drawn to the
34 area around Lake Jesup each year, and

35 WHEREAS, the water quality, fisheries, and other biological
36 communities of Lake Jesup have deteriorated, and

37 WHEREAS, various state, federal, and local governmental
38 agencies have been engaged in a coordinated, scientifically
39 developed, approach to the restoration of Lake Jesup for some
40 years, and

41 WHEREAS, governmental agencies have purchased over 8,500
42 acres around the lake for purposes that include conservation and
43 recreation as well as restoration of Lake Jesup, and

44 WHEREAS, a mitigation project of the Department of
45 Transportation removed a 2-mile berm from Lake Jesup which
46 returned a substantial amount of navigability to the lake and
47 allowed an additional 300 acres of the lake's floodplain to again
48 help filter particulates from the lake and absorb the lake's
49 nutrient pollution while increasing the lake's ability to store
50 floodwater and provide valuable habitat for plants and animals,
51 and

52 WHEREAS, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has
53 embarked on a plan to restore aquatic habitat in the lake in
54 order to rehabilitate the lake's fishery resources, and a
55 significant component of that plan requires removal of the large
56 amount of muck that is now lying on the bottom of the lake and
57 that is more than 9 1/2 feet thick in some areas, and

58 WHEREAS, while significant progress has been made toward

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59 restoring Lake Jesup by the government agencies involved in this
60 restoration project, the progress of the project is stymied by
61 challenges associated with obtaining necessary permits for the
62 muck-removal phase of the restoration, and

63 WHEREAS, a parcel of land that the City of Sanford has
64 used as a sprayfield for effluent from its wastewater treatment
65 plant may be highly suitable as a muck-disposal site, NOW,
66 THEREFORE,

67

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

69

70 Section 1. The Department of Environmental Protection, the
71 St. Johns River Water Management District, the Fish and Wildlife
72 Conservation Commission, and the City of Sanford shall work with
73 diligence to develop a plan that will allow the muck removal to
74 proceed which is contemplated by the commission's project for the
75 restoration of the aquatic habitat in Lake Jesup. The commission
76 shall report to the Legislature concerning the group's progress
77 toward this goal on October 1, 2008, and on the first day of each
78 3rd month thereafter until any site needed to dispose of muck has
79 received all necessary state permits or it is determined that
80 muck removal can proceed without a site at which to dispose of
81 the muck. The acquisition of a muck-disposal site is a
82 conservation and restoration acquisition under the Florida
83 Forever program created in s. 259.105, Florida Statutes, the goal
84 of which is to improve and sustain the ecological integrity of
85 Lake Jesup. Each state agency is encouraged to expend funds to
86 assist in the removal of muck from the bottom of Lake Jesup in
87 Seminole County, and to employ such funds as are at its disposal

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88 | for such purpose.

89 | Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008.