

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to water protection and
 3 sustainability; creating the "Heartland Headwaters
 4 Protection and Sustainability Act"; creating s.
 5 373.462, F.S.; providing legislative findings and
 6 intent; creating s. 373.463, F.S.; requiring the Polk
 7 Regional Water Cooperative to prepare an annual report
 8 concerning water resource projects within a specified
 9 area; specifying requirements for such report;
 10 requiring the inclusion of such report in the
 11 appropriate consolidated water management district
 12 annual report; providing an effective date.

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

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 16 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Heartland
 17 Headwaters Protection and Sustainability Act."

18 Section 2. Section 373.462, Florida Statutes, is created
 19 to read:

20 373.462 Legislative findings and intent.—

21 (1) The Legislature recognizes that by law in 1979,
 22 portions of Lake and Polk Counties were designated as the Green
 23 Swamp Area of Critical State Concern in acknowledgment of its
 24 regional and statewide importance in maintaining the quality and
 25 quantity of Florida's water supply and water resources for the

26 | public and the environment.

27 | (2) The Legislature also recognizes the Green Swamp, which
28 | encompasses approximately 560,000 acres, is located in a
29 | regionally significant high recharge area of the Floridan
30 | Aquifer system, and it helps protect coastal communities from
31 | saltwater intrusion.

32 | (3) The Legislature finds that the Green Swamp or Polk
33 | County make up the headwaters or portions of the headwaters of
34 | six major river systems in the state, which are the Alafia,
35 | Hillsborough, Kissimmee, Ocklawaha, Peace, and Withlacoochee
36 | Rivers. In addition, due to the area's unique topography and
37 | geology which receives no other water inputs other than
38 | rainfall, the area is essential in maintaining the
39 | potentiometric head of the Floridan Aquifer system that directly
40 | influences the aquifer's productivity for water supply.

41 | (4) The Legislature also finds that the Green Swamp and
42 | the surrounding areas are economically, environmentally, and
43 | socially defined by some of the most important and vulnerable
44 | water resources in the state.

45 | (5) The Legislature recognizes that the Central Florida
46 | Water Initiative Guiding Document dated January 30, 2015, and
47 | the Southern Water Use Caution Area Recovery Strategy dated
48 | March 2006 recognized the fact that the surface water and
49 | groundwater resources in the heartland counties of Hardee,
50 | Highlands, and Polk are integral to the health, public safety,

51 and economic future of those regions.

52 (6) The Legislature declares that there is an important
53 state interest in partnering with regional water supply
54 authorities and local governments, in accordance with s.
55 373.705, to protect the water resources of the headwaters of the
56 Alafia, Hillsborough, Kissimmee, Ocklawaha, Peace, and
57 Withlacoochee Rivers and the surrounding areas. The Legislature
58 further declares that funding consideration be given to regional
59 collaborative solutions, including, but not limited to, the
60 heartland counties, to manage the water resources of the state.

61 Section 3. Section 373.463, Florida Statutes, is created
62 to read:

63 373.463 Heartland headwaters annual report.—

64 (1) The Polk Regional Water Cooperative, in coordination
65 with all of its member county and municipal governments, shall
66 prepare a comprehensive annual report for water resource
67 projects identified for state funding consideration within its
68 members' jurisdictions. The report must include, at a minimum:

69 (a) A list of projects identified by the cooperative for
70 state funding consideration for each of the following
71 categories. A project may be listed in more than one category.

72 1. Drinking water supply.

73 2. Wastewater.

74 3. Stormwater and flood control.

75 4. Environmental restoration.

76 5. Conservation.
 77 (b) A priority ranking for each listed project that will
 78 be ready to proceed in the upcoming fiscal year within each
 79 category.
 80 (c) The estimated cost of each listed project.
 81 (d) The estimated completion date of each listed project.
 82 (e) The source and amount of financial assistance to be
 83 provided by the cooperative, the member county or municipal
 84 governments, or other entity for each listed project.
 85 (2) The cooperative shall coordinate with the appropriate
 86 water management district to ensure that the report is included
 87 in the consolidated water management district annual report
 88 required by s. 373.036(7).
 89 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.