



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 report to be submitted annually to the
 11 Legislature, the Department of Environmental
 12 Protection, and the appropriate water management
 13 districts; requiring the inclusion of such report in
 14 the appropriate consolidated water management district
 15 annual report; providing an effective date.

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

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

21 Section 2. Section 373.462, Florida Statutes, is created
 22 to read:

23 373.462 Legislative findings and intent.—

24 (1) The Legislature recognizes that by law in 1979,
 25 portions of Lake and Polk Counties were designated as the Green



26 | Swamp Area of Critical State Concern in acknowledgment of its
27 | regional and statewide importance in maintaining the quality and
28 | quantity of Florida's water supply and water resources for the
29 | public and the environment.

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

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

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

48 | (5) The Legislature recognizes that the Central Florida
49 | Water Initiative Guiding Document dated January 30, 2015, and
50 | the Southern Water Use Caution Area Recovery Strategy dated



51 March 2006 recognized the fact that the surface water and
52 groundwater resources in the heartland counties of Hardee,
53 Highlands, and Polk are integral to the health, public safety,
54 and economic future of those regions.

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

64 Section 3. Section 373.463, Florida Statutes, is created
65 to read:

66 373.463 Heartland headwaters annual report.—

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

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

75 1. Drinking water supply.



76 2. Wastewater.

77 3. Stormwater and flood control.

78 4. Environmental restoration.

79 5. Conservation.

80 (b) A priority ranking for each listed project that will
81 be ready to proceed in the upcoming fiscal year, identified by
82 the categories specified in paragraph (a).

83 (c) The estimated cost of each listed project.

84 (d) The estimated completion date of each listed project.

85 (e) The source and amount of financial assistance to be
86 provided by the cooperative, the member county or municipal
87 governments, or other entities for each listed project.

88 (2) By December 1, 2017, and each year thereafter, the
89 cooperative shall submit the comprehensive annual report to the
90 Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House
91 of Representatives, the department, and the appropriate water
92 management districts.

93 (3) The cooperative shall also annually coordinate with
94 the appropriate water management district to submit a status
95 report on projects receiving priority state funding for
96 inclusion in the consolidated water management district annual
97 report required by s. 373.036(7).

98 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.