

By Senator Bracy

11-00206C-19

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Little Wekiva River; providing
3 legislative intent; directing the St. Johns River
4 Water Management District to conduct a specified study
5 and submit a report to the Acquisition and Restoration
6 Council and the Board of Trustees of the Internal
7 Improvement Trust Fund by a specified date and to
8 develop a specified plan and submit the plan to the
9 Governor and Legislature by a specified date;
10 directing the council to make certain determinations;
11 prohibiting the approval and issuance of permits for
12 certain development projects and commencement of
13 certain permitted development projects until the
14 council makes certain determinations; providing an
15 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. (1) The wetlands located in the area south of
20 State Road 416, north of State Road 50, east of State Road 431,
21 and west of State Road 441 in the City of Orlando in Orange
22 County, Florida, are deemed headwaters of the Little Wekiva
23 River. It is the intent of the Legislature that these headwaters
24 be considered in the restoration efforts of the Wekiva River
25 System.

26 (2) (a) The St. Johns River Water Management District shall
27 conduct a study that identifies the impact of the Little Wekiva
28 River headwaters and the surrounding wetlands on the Wekiva
29 River System, the St. Johns River, and the Floridan Aquifer.

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30 (b) In conducting the study, the district must consider, at
31 a minimum:

32 1. The environmental significance of the headwaters and
33 wetlands related to the Little Wekiva River, the Wekiva River
34 System, the Wekiva Spring, the St. Johns River, and the Floridan
35 Aquifer.

36 2. The environmental impact of industrial development on
37 the Little Wekiva headwaters located at the intersection of
38 Princeton Street and John Young Parkway on the Wekiva River
39 System, the St. Johns River, and the Floridan Aquifer.

40 3. The importance of the Little Wekiva River headwaters and
41 related wetlands to overall water quality in the district and
42 the preservation of natural systems.

43 4. The risks of future development on the wetlands related
44 to the Little Wekiva River headwaters and other wetlands along
45 the Little Wekiva River.

46 5. The importance of preserving natural systems related to
47 the Little Wekiva River to prevent nutrient algae blooms in the
48 Wekiva River System and St. Johns River.

49 (c) The district shall submit a report detailing its
50 findings to the Acquisition and Restoration Council and the
51 Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund before
52 October 1, 2020.

53 (3) At the next scheduled meeting of the council after
54 receiving the report from the district, the council shall
55 determine if the lands related to the Little Wekiva headwaters
56 and other areas within the Wekiva River System should be
57 included in the existing Wekiva-Ocala Connector Project and if
58 any lands relating to the Little Wekiva River headwaters

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59 constitute a new project under the Florida Forever program.

60 (4) Any permit for development projects on wetlands related
61 to the Little Wekiva River headwaters and the Wekiva River
62 System may not be approved or issued, and permitted development
63 projects on wetlands related to the Little Wekiva River
64 headwaters and the Wekiva River System for which construction
65 has not begun may not begin, until the council makes a
66 determination pursuant to subsection (3).

67 (5) Based on their findings, the district must develop a
68 plan to purchase and restore wetlands related to the Little
69 Wekiva River headwaters and the Wekiva River System and must
70 submit the plan to the Governor, the President of the Senate,
71 and the Speaker of the House Representatives before January 1,
72 2021.

73 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2019.