

By Senator Harrell

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to aquatic plant management; requiring
3 the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, in
4 consultation with the Institute of Food and
5 Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida and
6 the Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University, to
7 implement and study certain nutrient removal
8 technologies and mechanical aquatic plant management
9 techniques within the Lake Okeechobee watershed;
10 providing study requirements; authorizing the
11 commission to consult and contract with entities for
12 such implementation and study; directing the
13 commission to submit a report to the Governor and
14 Legislature by a specified date; providing report
15 requirements; providing an appropriation; providing an
16 effective date.

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18 WHEREAS, the health of the state's water bodies is
19 intricately connected to the well-being of our state, its
20 residents, wildlife, and economy, and

21 WHEREAS, legacy nutrients derived from the treatment of
22 invasive vegetation and unconsolidated biomass can contribute to
23 degraded water quality, and

24 WHEREAS, removing legacy nutrients by physically removing
25 invasive plants and biomass will improve water quality and help
26 combat algal blooms, and

27 WHEREAS, innovative pilot projects involving extraction of
28 nutrient-rich matter and biomass harvesting technologies have
29 demonstrated success in significantly reducing the amount of

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undesirable nutrients in the state's waters, and

WHEREAS, physically removing unwanted vegetation and the nutrients contained therein will improve the health and ecology of the state's waters, benefit anglers and other fishing enthusiasts, and encourage tourism, and

WHEREAS, repurposing legacy nutrients trapped in our waterways will improve local economies by allowing for a new, natural, and local source of soil amendments or compost for agricultural purposes that will also give way to innovation and job creation in the state, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. (1) The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, in consultation with the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida and the Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University, shall implement and study the strategic use of innovative biomass nutrient removal technologies and mechanical aquatic plant management techniques where ecologically and technically feasible within the Lake Okeechobee watershed.

(2) At a minimum, the study must:

(a) Document the reduction in chemical control for each aquatic plant acre mechanically harvested on an acre-for-acre basis.

(b) If hay has been applied, analyze the harvested hay to provide data on nutrient content and soil nutrient content.

(c) Provide traceability and accountability for total nutrient removal.

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59 (d) Determine the feasibility and sustainability of
60 increased scalability of biomass nutrient removal technologies
61 and mechanical aquatic plant management techniques statewide.

62 (3) The commission may consult and contract with entities
63 for the implementation and study of the strategic use of
64 innovative biomass nutrient removal technologies and mechanical
65 aquatic plant management techniques.

66 (4) The commission shall submit to the Governor, President
67 of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives by
68 February 1, 2023, a report on the implementation and study of
69 the strategic use of innovative biomass nutrient removal
70 technologies and mechanical aquatic plant management techniques,
71 including recommendations for statutory changes.

72 Section 2. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the sum of
73 \$500,000 in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
74 appropriated to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to
75 implement and study the strategic use of innovative biomass
76 nutrient removal technologies and mechanical aquatic plant
77 management techniques pursuant to this act.

78 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.