

1                                   A bill to be entitled

2           An act relating to aquatic plant management; directing  
3           the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, in  
4           partnership 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           study certain nutrient removal technologies and  
8           mechanical aquatic plant management techniques within  
9           the Lake Okeechobee watershed; directing the institute  
10          to submit a report to the commission; directing the  
11          commission to submit a report to the Governor and  
12          Legislature by a specified date; providing  
13          requirements for such reports; providing an effective  
14          date.

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16           WHEREAS, the health of the state's waterbodies is  
17          intricately connected to the wellbeing of our state, its  
18          residents, wildlife, and economy, and

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

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

25           WHEREAS, innovative pilot projects involving extraction of

26 | nutrient rich matter and biomass harvesting technologies have  
 27 | demonstrated success in significantly reducing the amount of  
 28 | undesirable nutrients in the state's waters, and

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

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

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

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

49 |       (2) The institute shall submit to the commission a report  
 50 | documenting the results of the nutrient removal technologies and

51 mechanical aquatic plant management techniques through soil and  
52 water samples.

53 (3) The commission shall submit to the Governor, President  
54 of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives by  
55 February 1, 2023, a report on the study of the strategic use of  
56 innovative biomass nutrient removal technologies and mechanical  
57 aquatic plant management techniques, including recommendations  
58 for statutory changes.

59 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.