

## Senate Bill No. 1394

An act relating to water management; creating the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council; providing for membership, powers, and duties; providing for a report to the Legislature; providing for an advisory group to the council; requiring the St. Johns River Water Management District to provide staff for the council; providing for award of contracts subject to an appropriation of funds; providing for a Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program; providing for a demonstration restoration project; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the waterways of Lake County are of historic, hydrological, and ecological significance, and

WHEREAS, most of these Lake County waterways are Outstanding Florida Waterways, and

WHEREAS, the Lake County waterways are plagued by toxic algae sedimentation, and excessive growth of aquatic plants, which are degrading their water quality and recreational value, and

WHEREAS, despite their current problems, the Lake County waterways continue to provide wildlife habitat for fish, birds, and game and offer recreational opportunities for the residents of Lake County and visitors to the area, and

WHEREAS, the renewable economic potential of the Lake County waterways is significant, and

WHEREAS, the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Lake County Water Authority along with other state, regional, and local entities, have developed proposals to restore portions of the Harris Chain of Lakes, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. The Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council.—There is created within the St. Johns River Water Management District, with assistance from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Lake County Water Authority, the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council.

(1)(a) The council shall consist of nine voting members, which include: a representative of waterfront property owners, a representative of the sport fishing industry, an environmental engineer, a person with training in biology or another scientific discipline, a person with training as an attorney, a physician, a person with training as an engineer and two residents of the county who do not meet any of the other qualifications for membership enumerated in this paragraph, each to be appointed by the Lake County legislative delegation. No person serving on the council may be appointed to a council, board, or commission of any council advisory group agency. The council members shall serve as advisors to the governing board of the St.

Johns River Water Management District. The council is subject to the provisions of chapters 119 and 120, Florida Statutes.

(b) There shall be an advisory group to the council which shall consist of one representative each from the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Transportation, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Lake County Water Authority, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the University of Florida, each of whom shall be appointed by his or her respective agency, and each of whom, with the exception of the representatives from the Lake County Water Authority, and the University of Florida, shall have had training in biology or another scientific discipline.

(2) Immediately after appointment, the council shall meet and organize by electing a chair, a vice chair, and a secretary, whose terms shall be for 2 years each. Council officers shall not serve consecutive terms. Each council member shall be a voting member.

(3) The council shall meet at the call of its chair, at the request of six of its members, or at the request of the chair of the governing board of the St. Johns River Water Management District.

(4) The council shall have the powers and duties to:

(a) Review audits and all data specifically related to lake restoration techniques and sport fish population recovery strategies, including data and strategies for shoreline restoration, sediment control and removal, exotic species management, floating tussock management or removal, navigation, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat improvement, particularly as they may apply to the Harris Chain of Lakes.

(b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

(c) Explore all possible sources of funding to conduct the restoration activities.

(d) Report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives before November 25 of each year on the progress of the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program and any recommendations for the next fiscal year.

(5) The St. Johns River Water Management District shall provide staff to assist the council in carrying out the provisions of this act.

(6) Members of the council shall receive no compensation for their services, but are entitled to be reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses incurred during execution of their official duties, as provided in section 112.061, Florida Statutes. State and federal agencies shall be responsible for the per diem and travel expenses of their respective appointees to the council, and the St. Johns River Water Management District shall be responsible for per diem and travel expenses of other appointees to the council.

Section 2. The Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program.—

(1) The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the St. Johns River Water Management District, in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection, pertinent local governments, and the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council, shall review existing restoration proposals to determine which ones are the most environmentally sound and economically feasible methods of improving the fish and wildlife habitat and natural systems of the Harris Chain of Lakes.

(2) To initiate the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program recommended by the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with assistance from the St. Johns River Water Management District and in consultation and by agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection and pertinent local governments, shall develop tasks to be undertaken by those entities for the enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat. These agencies shall:

(a) Evaluate different methodologies for removing the extensive tussocks and buildup of organic matter along the shoreline and of the aquatic vegetation in the lake.

(b) Conduct any additional studies as recommended by the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council.

(3) Contingent on the Legislature's appropriating funds for the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program and in conjunction with financial participation by federal, other state, and local governments, the appropriate agencies shall, through competitive bid, award contracts to implement the activities of the Harris Chain of Lakes restoration program.

Section 3. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is authorized to conduct a demonstration restoration project on the Harris Chain of Lakes for the purpose of creating better habitat for fish and wildlife.

Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor June 15, 2001.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 15, 2001.