

## House Bill No. 221

An act relating to water management; creating the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council; providing for membership, powers, and duties; providing for separate county task forces; providing for a report to the Legislature; providing for an advisory group to the council; requiring the Southwest Florida Water Management District to act as lead entity for the purpose of providing staff and administrative support for the council; providing for a Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the waterways of Citrus and Hernando Counties are of historic, hydrological, and ecological significance, and

WHEREAS, most of these Citrus/Hernando waterways are Outstanding Florida Waterways or are in the application process, and

WHEREAS, the Citrus/Hernando waterways are plagued by fluctuating water levels and sedimentation increasing nitrate levels and sand movement causing blockage of natural springs and excessive growth of aquatic plants, which are degrading their water quality and recreational value, and

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

WHEREAS, the renewable economic potential of the Citrus/Hernando waterways is significant, and

WHEREAS, the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, along with other state, regional, and local entities, have developed proposals to restore portions of the Citrus/Hernando waterways, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. (1) The Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council.—~~There is created within the Withlacoochee and Coastal Rivers Basin Boards of the Southwest Florida Water Management District a council to be known as the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council. The council shall be coordinated by representatives of the following agencies: the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The council is subject to the provisions of chapters 119 and 120, Florida Statutes.~~

(2) Members of the council shall consist of 12 voting members with 6 appointed by the President of the Senate and 6 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The council shall consist of representatives as follows:

- (a) A waterfront property owner from each county.
- (b) An attorney from each county.
- (c) A member of the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce from each county.
- (d) An environmental engineer from each county.
- (e) An engineer from each county.
- (f) A person from each county with training in biology or another scientific discipline.

(3) The council members from each county are to form two separate county task forces from the council to review and make recommendations on specific waterways. The Hernando County Task Force shall develop plans for the restoration of the Weeki Wachee River and Springs. The Citrus County Task Force shall develop plans for the restoration of the Tsala-Apopka Chain of Lakes.

(4) There shall be a technical advisory group to the council and the two county task forces which shall consist of one representative each from the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Transportation, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Coastal Rivers Basin Board, the Withlacoochee River Basin Board, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers, each of whom shall be appointed by his or her respective agency and each of whom, with the exception of the representatives from the Withlacoochee River Basin Board and Coastal Rivers Basin Board, shall have had training in biology or another scientific discipline.

(5) 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. Additionally, the two county task forces shall elect a chair and a secretary, whose terms shall be for 2 years each.

(6) The council or the county task forces shall meet at the call of their respective chairs, at the request of six members of the council or of the respective task force, or at the request of the chair of the governing board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

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

(a) Review audits and all data specifically related to lake and river restoration techniques and sport fish population recovery strategies, including data and strategies for shoreline restoration, sand and other 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 Citrus/Hernando waterways.

(b) Evaluate whether additional studies are needed.

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

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

(8) The Southwest Florida Water Management District shall act as lead entity for the purpose of providing staff and administrative support to assist the council in carrying out the provisions of this act.

(9) 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 Southwest Florida Water Management District shall be responsible for per diem and travel expenses of other appointees to the council.

Section 2. The Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program.—

(1) The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Southwest Florida Water Management District, in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection, pertinent local governments, and the Citrus/Hernando Waterways 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 Citrus/Hernando waterways.

(2) To initiate the Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program recommended by the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, with assistance from the Southwest Florida Water Management District and in consultation and by agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection and pertinent local governments, shall develop tasks to be considered by those entities for the enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat. These tasks shall include the following:

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

(b) The conduct of any additional studies as required by the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council.

(3) Contingent on the Legislature's appropriating funds for the Citrus/Hernando Waterways 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 Citrus/Hernando Waterways restoration program.

Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor July 14, 2003.

Filed in Office Secretary of State July 14, 2003.