

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/CS/SB 976 — Protection of Ecological Systems

by Appropriations Committee; Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and Senator Brodeur

The bill creates the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, which encourages support, incentives, and funding of the Florida Wildlife Corridor to preserve and protect green infrastructure and wildlife habitat. The bill sets out the duties of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with respect to the wildlife corridor. The act does not authorize or affect the use of private property.

The bill requires the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), in consultation with DEP, Seminole County, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Department of Transportation, to issue a report by December 31, 2021, on the implementation of recommendations from the Little Wekiva Watershed Management Plan Final Report from November 2005.

The bill requires DEP and SJRWMD to review any permits which SJRWMD has determined may have contributed to sediment buildup north of State Road 436 to assess whether a permittee is in violation of permit conditions. Appropriate action to resolve compliance issues must be taken if a violation is discovered.

DEP and SJRWMD shall review known permit violations that have occurred since 2018 and attempt to determine what effects such violations may have had on sediment accumulation in the Little Wekiva River.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2021.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 115-0