

Item. 9.e.
News Articles

Water district: Demand to exceed supply by 2035

By Fred Hiers

Staff writer

Published: Friday, December 27, 2013 at 4:00 p.m.

Last Modified: Friday, December 27, 2013 at 4:00 p.m.

There will not be enough groundwater to meet the predicted demand in the Marion County area of the St. Johns River Water Management District.

That was the conclusion of the district's proposed long-range plan to address water needs to 2035. It estimated Region 2, which includes east Marion and north Lake and Volusia counties, will see a 33 percent increase in population and a 31 percent hike in water demand.

The district's proposed plan predicts that by 2035, Region 2's groundwater demand will reach 212 million gallons per day and exceed available fresh groundwater by 64 million gallons per day.

As such, the water district will hold public meetings to seek input in January and February. The district also invites input through its website and makes the plan available at floridaswater.com/DWSP2013.

The grim Region 2 prediction is mirrored in the district's prediction for all the area it oversees, according to the plan.

The district's population is expected to increase by nearly 1.8 million people by 2035, and total water demand is expected to increase by 314 million gallons per day, or mgd.

The district in its preliminary report estimates the water demand in the St. Johns Water Management District will exceed groundwater availability by 256 million gallons per day. But the district is proposing conservation and alternative sources to make up for the difference.

"The plan provides water users with a clear plan to meet water-supply needs through the year 2035. Water conservation can partially offset the projected increase in water demand, and the plan identifies sufficient alternative water supply development options and management techniques to supply the needed water," the district noted in a news release.

In its water use plan released this month, the district noted water conservation alone could reduce 2035 water demand by 84 to 214 mgd depending on the level of implementation, but "a conservation-only strategy will not meet the 2035 projected increase in water demand."

Instead, the district will encourage such strategies as aquifer recharge and storage for

later use and adding fresh water to wetlands.

The district was created by the Florida Legislature as one of the state's water management districts in 1972. It oversees water resources in about 8 million acres — or about 21 percent of Florida's water and land area.

Region 2's water use has relied mostly on groundwater, said the district.

"(But) groundwater alone cannot supply the 2035 projected increase in water demand without unacceptable impacts to wetlands ... and spring flows," according to the district's plan.

The district estimates there is still 148 mgd of fresh groundwater available for sustainable withdrawals in Region 2. But the 2035 groundwater demand projection for Region 2 is 212 mgd, creating a 64 mgd shortfall.

The district thinks alternative supplies can make up the difference, including brackish groundwater from coastal areas and surface waters from the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers, as well as the desalination of saltwater.

Many environmentalists contend there is not nearly that amount of groundwater available, nor can the St. Johns and Ocklawaha safely provide the water the district wants.

Public input on the issue can be made online, by mail or email. Details are available on the web page. The comment period will close Feb. 20.

Public meetings and a technical-methods workshop will be held to discuss the plan and to obtain public input. The public meetings will include a presentation and district staff will be available to answer questions.

Contact Fred Hiers at 867-4157 or fred.hiers@starbanner.com.

Adena Springs Ranch gets more time to answer water district's request

By **Fred Hiers**

Staff writer

Published: Wednesday, December 25, 2013 at 7:43 p.m.

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Adena Springs Ranch's request for permission to pump groundwater for its Marion County cattle operation and meat processing plant will enter its third year in the permitting process in 2014.

This month, the St. Johns River Water Management District granted Adena another extension in collecting information the district says it needs in deciding whether the ranch should be allowed to pump 5.3 million gallons of water per day for its Fort McCoy operation.

The ranch is being developed by Canadian-based billionaire Frank Stronach, who owns at least 30,000 acres of land in Marion County and more than 30,000 acres in Levy County.

Adena Springs Ranch now has until March 12, 2014, to give the district the information it wants or ask for another extension.

Adena's initial water request for 13.3 million gallons was submitted in December 2011. The withdrawal would have exceeded the amount all of Ocala is permitted to pump from the aquifer.

A year later, Adena reduced its request to 5.3 million gallons per day.

Many environmentalists and scientists have warned that allowing such a withdrawal would damage the springs in Marion County and dangerously reduce the groundwater level.

Under the permit request, Adena would still be allowed a potential maximum daily irrigation use of 21.57 mgd for its operation of more than 15,000 grass-fed cows.

If Adena supplies the district the information it wants, and staffers are satisfied, the staff would make a recommendation to the district board. The board would have 90 days to make a decision.

The board could approve or deny the request, or could approve the request but with a lower allocation, district spokeswoman Teresa Monson said.

Monson said the district's repeated requests for information, and Adena's requests for additional time to respond, are not unusual for a water request this size.

The district analyzes the effects of proposed water withdrawals using complex computer models.

Adena engineers predict their proposed withdrawal would lower the water level at Silver Springs in Marion County by no more than about 0.3 inches. Opponents argue, however, that the springs and river have already seen a reduction in flow of about 30 percent due to over withdrawal.

As for the new March deadline, Adena Springs Ranch spokeswoman Honey Rand said, "While it's true that longer processing time costs more, the more important question is, does the district have the information it needs to make a decision?"

"Adena Springs Ranch has fully cooperated with the district throughout the process, making modifications, improving operational systems and changing management tactics. The result will be a permit that protects the environment and still allows economic development," she added.

Contact Fred Hiers at 867-4157.

DEP survey on permitting costs concerns environmentalists



Craig Pittman, Times Staff Writer

Wednesday, December 25, 2013 8:51pm

For four months, Florida's environmental regulators have been asking businesses and local governments how much their rules are costing.

The state Department of Environmental Protection has been sending out surveys asking questions like, "What kinds of costs did you incur applying for your industrial wastewater permit?" and, "Would you be required to incur the costs ... if not for the permit application and compliance requirements?"

"I've never seen a survey like this before," said Vicki Tschinkel, who ran the DEP's predecessor, the Department of Environmental Regulation, from 1981 to 1987 and now is on the board of 1,000 Friends of Florida.

Florida environmentalists are alarmed by the survey's focus on tabulating the cost of 15 permits that are supposed to protect the environment.

"It looks over the top, like they're saying, 'Give us reasons to reduce regulations in Florida,' " said Charles Lee, director of advocacy for Audubon Florida.

The survey says the DEP is asking these questions because the agency "wishes to better understand the economic impacts our regulations have on permit and license holders."

Actually, the goal is aimed more toward the future, explained DEP press secretary Patrick Gillespie. Under state law, he said, "any time any agency proposes a rule change, it has to calculate whether the proposed rule would have a cost attached to it."

But it can be hard to calculate the cost without knowing the price tag of the current rules, he said.

"The department sent out the survey to regulated businesses to try to collect data for any future proposed rule changes," Gillespie said.

A *Tampa Bay Times* request to see the results of the survey so far did not yield the names of respondents, but the DEP spreadsheet did show the numbers in various categories.

Since the surveys began going out in August, 72 responses have come back to the DEP. Twenty-five replies came from businesses, 14 from individuals, 17 from counties, seven from cities and nine from other government agencies.

Fifty of them reported that they had obtained permits from the DEP, 43 had gotten state permits from one of the five water management districts, and 16 had gotten permits from city or county governments.

Three types of permits were the most common: Eleven said they had gotten consumptive-use permits for pumping water from the aquifer; 23 said they had received environmental resource permits, issued for filling in wetlands or building docks; and 23 got permits for dealing with stormwater runoff.

Of the 11 that got consumptive-use permits, three identified themselves as power plant owners, and eight said they had spent more than \$10,000 fulfilling all the requirements for the permit.

Of the 23 that obtained an environmental resource permit, 17 said they had spent more than \$10,000 and five said they had spent more than \$5,000. A majority of those who responded to the survey said they wouldn't have spent that much money — on consultants, engineering, biological monitoring and other expenses — if it hadn't been for the permit.

The survey does not ask any questions about the results of those permits, prompting Lee to say, "It suggests a fixation on something that's not part of keeping Florida green."

Craig Pittman can be reached at craig@tampabay.com. Follow him on Twitter @craigtimes.

DEP survey on permitting costs concerns environmentalists 12/25/13 [Last modified: Wednesday, December 25, 2013 8:48pm]

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Monday, December 23, 2013

FROM [THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA](#):

THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, December 18, 2013 A bipartisan group of senators is poised to introduce legislation to protect Florida's natural springs in what they expect to be the first in a series of measures aimed at improving lake, river and aquifer conditions statewide. Sen. David Simmons, R-Altamonte Springs, one of the authors of the pending legislation, said a focus of the measure would set goals for the reduction of nutrients that pour into the springs.

The proposal, still being finalized, comes as an equally ambitious proposal has already started to advance in the Senate that would focus on South Florida waterways and as the next House and Senate leaders have declared the state's water supply to be a key issue of their terms.

"I think it's a realization by senators, particularly the incoming leadership of the House and Senate, that our environment is a tremendous asset and one that is jeopardized right now," Simmons said. "Not to say we didn't realize it previously. I think everyone did. But the time to act is now. If we don't act now the cost of cleanup is going to far transcend the cost of prevention."

Simmons said the proposal will encourage the use of recycled water and water storage for farmers and developers, limit how much water can be withdrawn from the spring sheds, and create protection zones intended to reduce pollutants from entering the water bodies.

The funding needed and the revenue sources have yet to be set, Simmons said.

Audubon of Florida estimates that the work needed to increase the flow of water into the natural springs that run throughout central and northern Florida, while reducing pollutants entering the springs, could cost in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The biggest expense would be the need to purchase land around the springs.

Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon of Florida, called the growing attention from state lawmakers on the need to address water issues "exciting," but added that he's still waiting to see what measures are actually proposed.

"I think the test will be whether these legislators have the stomach to actually regulate the pollution that is going into the springs," Draper said. "The Legislature will eventually need to go to the source of the problem."

Draper considers land acquisition the top priority, followed by managing the recharge areas that ensure rainfall goes into the ground to help re-supply the springs.

Other key areas to address are the minimum flow levels that can determine if a spring is facing harm and the expensive proposition of replacing septic tanks with centralized sewage systems, Draper said.

Will Abberger, the chairman of the Florida's Water and Land Legacy constitutional amendment campaign and director of conservation finance for The Trust for Public Land, was equally hopeful that lawmakers will take meaningful action on water quality and quantity issues.

"I don't know what their motivation is, I hope they're beginning to understand what a huge need this is for the state," Abberger said.

Abberger's group is proposing a constitutional amendment that would funnel \$10 billion over 20 years into land-conservation and environmental efforts.

The pending springs legislation is the joint effort of Sens. Simmons, Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, Alan Hays, R-Umatilla, Wilton Simpson, R-Trilby, and Bill Montford, D-Tallahassee.

"We've sat down and have gone over it line by line, making sure everybody is satisfied with the language," Simmons said of the pending legislation.

Simpson on Monday introduced a separate measure (SB 536) that would require the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the five water-management districts to study the factors that prohibit or complicate the expansion of reclaimed — recycled or irrigation quality — water in Florida.

The study, which would be due before the 2016 legislative session, would also seek recommendations on how to eliminate those impediments.

The springs proposal is being floated as the next Senate president, Orlando Republican Andy Gardiner, pitched a "workable" statewide policy for protecting Florida's natural resources on Dec. 10 during his speech accepting the leadership position for the 2015 and 2016 sessions.

"We all know that Florida's economy is tied to tourism, but there is no reason why it can't be tied to ecotourism," Gardiner said.

Gardiner is expected to partner on water issues with Rep. Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, who is slated to become the next House Speaker. Crisafulli had earlier announced he wanted lawmakers to take a broader approach to the vast water problems that confront Florida.

The springs proposal will run alongside an ambitious \$220 million plan to redirect water and reduce pollutants out of Lake Okeechobee and through the Florida Everglades by Sen. Joe Negron, R-Stuart, the chairman of the powerful Appropriations Committee.

Simmons said the springs proposal shouldn't conflict with Negron's plan, which has already started to move through the Senate.

"We all benefit from Indian River Lagoon being cleaned up as well as the springs," Simmons said.

Because of the attention given to the problems confronted throughout the summer by South

Florida's waterways, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam has said lawmakers needed to remain focused on water quality and quantity issues statewide.

Besides the springs and issues with Lake Okeechobee, Florida has filed a federal lawsuit against Georgia about a shortage of freshwater flowing into Apalachicola Bay. Florida argues that heavy water consumption in the metro Atlanta area has reduced downstream flows into the bay, endangering Apalachicola's oyster industry.

For the 2014 session, Putnam's department has proposed \$10 million to address nutrient reduction practices and water retention efforts in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, \$8.2 million for best management practices in the northern Everglades, and \$5.2 million to reduce agricultural nutrients from reaching the state's northern springs.

The Department of Environmental Protection, which has included \$15 million for springs restoration in its budget proposal, is also requesting \$75 million that Gov. Rick Scott proposed for Everglades restoration efforts and \$40 million for environmental land acquisition.

On Monday, December 23, 2013 8:24 AM, Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com> wrote:

Controversial plan for pumping water from sinkhole gets state permit

Tuesday, December 17, 2013 5:00pm

A controversial plan to pump water out of a Tampa sinkhole to supplement the flow of the Hills-borough River won unanimous support Tuesday from the Southwest Florida Water Management District board.

The city's \$11 million plan calls for pumping up to 2 million gallons a day from Blue Sink, a complex of sinkholes in Sulphur Springs, then piping that water to the base of the dam on the river and pouring it out.

The water from Blue Sink is supposed to help replace the river flow that was lost when the city built the dam in 1897 to create a reservoir that provides Tampa's drinking water. The restored freshwater flow will help hold the salinity of Tampa Bay in check, which is important for the health of the snook and other fish living there.

However, people who live around Blue Sink fear pumping water from the sinkholes will create even more sinkholes, not to mention draining their lakes and sucking their private wells dry.

"We're just concerned about what might happen," Jim Wilson of the North Forest Hills Neighborhood Association told the board of the agency commonly called Swiftmud.

Tampa Water Department chief Brad Baird said that the neighbors have nothing to worry about. He pointed out that the permit requires regular monitoring of Blue Sink, as well as a promise by the city to fix any problems that the pumping might cause.

The city's engineers, in their application for a 30-year pumping permit, estimated that at most the city would need to pump water from the sink just 287 to 318 days out of a year. Some years, Baird said, they might not need any water from the sink at all.

The city's studies say none of the 800 wells within a 1-mile radius "is expected to be significantly impacted" by that amount of pumping. At most they might drop two-tenths of a foot, the city's engineers predict.

But those conclusions are based on a pair of 30-day pumping tests and a computer model, and the neighbors are not buying the test results.

Hydrologists have repeatedly pointed out that the computer model commonly used for

Florida water permitting assumes that what is underground is sand. It's actually karst, a Swiss cheese arrangement of crumbling limestone, which alters both the speed and the direction of the flow of the aquifer.

Not all the neighbors felt the same way. Barbara Ewanowski, whose family has long owned Ewanowski Spring, pointed out that her spring provides the water that flows through Blue Sink. But since the sinkhole was plugged with trash and other debris, the water has repeatedly backed up and flooded her property, killing dozens of oak trees.

Pumping water out of Blue Sink would help restore her property, she said, so she's supporting the project.

So is Friends of the River, the group that has pushed hardest for restoring the Hillsborough's historic flow into Tampa Bay.

"I am confident the use of Blue Sink will not endanger the environment," John Ovink of the Friends of the River told the Swiftmud board.

Swiftmud is more than just the regulator issuing the permit for the Blue Sink pumping.

It's also Tampa's partner on the Blue Sink project, paying half of the tab. Swiftmud also happens to be the regulator that pushed for restoring the river's flow into Tampa Bay and is now overseeing how Tampa carries out that order.

Now that Swiftmud has approved the permit, construction is likely to begin next year and finish in 2015.

Controversial plan for pumping water from sinkhole gets state permit 12/17/13

[Last modified: Tuesday, December 17, 2013 11:26pm]

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Subject: Daily Commercial: SJRWMD allowing Niagara to draw from LFA...
Date: Monday, December 23, 2013 8:15:46 AM Eastern Standard Time
From: Diane Salz
To: WRWSA
CC:

Water Management staff to recommend that Niagara be allowed to pump more

Posted: Wednesday, December 18, 2013 6:00 am

Roxanne Brown | Staff Writer roxanne.brown@dailycommercial.com | [0 comments](#)

The St. Johns River Water Management staff will recommend that the district's Governing Board approve a 20-year permit for Niagara Bottling Company of Groveland at its Jan. 14 meeting.

The announcement by the water management staff Tuesday follows a move by Niagara to change its consumptive use permit (CUP) application, allowing the company to draw from the Lower Floridan aquifer for its water bottling operation.

By utilizing the Lower Floridan aquifer, and reducing its Upper Floridan withdrawal, the request meets one of the goals of the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI.)

SJWMD staff have determined that the application meets District permitting criteria.

"On permits, we basically look at, 'Is it reasonably beneficial, is it in the public's best interest and will it not harm existing water users?'" Water Management Spokesman Hank Largin said. "Our staff says this application meets that criteria."

Niagara is asking to pump between 484,000 to 910,000 gallons per day (gpd). During the permitting process, Niagara said that by 2024, all 910,000 gpd would be withdrawn from the Lower Floridan aquifer.

The Lower Floridan aquifer is separated from the Upper Floridan aquifer and subsequently from the land surface by a semi-confining unit. Officials believe withdrawing from the lower aquifer creates less impact than the current permitted withdrawal from the Upper Floridan, Largin said in a press release.

"I know 910,000 gallons of water per day sounds like a huge amount of water, but it's not as large of an amount as some businesses that use water to produce a product to sell may be using. It's larger than some but not as large as others," Largin said.

"When Niagara first applied to pump 484,000 gallons per day, not all people agreed with decisions made to allow it. The administrative law judge was challenged in the decision and the courts ruled that the decision to allow the permit was the right one," Largin said. "People may want to consider that yes, water use is going up (not yet approved officially), but because they (Niagara) are going lower or deeper, the small impact that occurred from the original withdrawal per day usage will be even smaller."

"That's what Niagara said and our staff is agreeing with it."

Joe Kilsheimer, public relations consultant for Niagara, has provided documents showing that Niagara is one of seven bottled water operations permitted in the 18-county St. Johns River Water Management District.

Those seven bottled water companies are allocated a combined 2 million gallons a day from the Floridan aquifer,

less than three-tenth's of 1 percent of the water used in the district on a daily basis, according to district officials.

A list of the biggest potential users of permitted water from the Floridan aquifer in Lake County show that the city of Clermont is No. 1 since it is allowed to pump up to 2,887 million gallons per year. Clermont is followed by The Village Center Community Development District (up to 1,782 million gallons for public consumption and irrigation), the city of Tavares (up to 1,547 million gallons), the city of Fruitland Park (up to 445 million gallons) and the city of Mascotte (up to 444 million gallons.)

Next on the list are a half-dozen commercial water users with the potential to pump more than Niagara does now, Kilsheimer's information shows.

Subject: Hernando study shows filtering devices...

Date: Monday, December 23, 2013 8:11:03 AM Eastern Standard Time

From: Diane Salz

To: WRWSA

CC:

BROOKSVILLE — A months-long study of residents in southeastern Hernando County showed no significant differences in the level of arsenic in the bodies of people whose private wells are known to be contaminated with the element, but where faucets are equipped with filtering devices, compared with those whose wells contain safe levels of arsenic.

A report released by the Hernando County Health Department last week showed that urine samples collected from adults and children participating in the study showed only a marginal difference between the two groups. Further testing showed that 94.4 percent of the total arsenic levels likely came from a nontoxic organic source. Organic arsenic is typically found in food.

A total of 360 individuals from 166 households participated in the \$60,000 study, which was funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and authored by the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Epidemiology. Testing was done between April and July, and included homes where a point-of-use filter had been installed on the kitchen tap as well as homes where higher levels of arsenic are not found.

County environmental health manager Al Gray said the study helped his department learn how well filter systems protect the bodies of adults and children.

"The numbers show that they are definitely doing what they are designed to do," Gray said. "As long as people use them, it appears that the danger of arsenic contamination is minimal."

County health officials have long had concerns over high arsenic levels in groundwater in some rural areas where the chemical was once used as an agricultural pesticide. Tests conducted between 2007 and 2012 identified 312 Hernando properties where samples showed higher concentrations of the element than both the state and federal governments deem safe. As a result, those residences qualified for help from the state Department of Environmental Protection, which provided affected homes with a small filter that could be installed next to the kitchen sink to provide water for drinking and cooking.

Participants in the Health Department study were asked to provide regular urine samples to test for accumulated arsenic levels. In addition, they completed a questionnaire on individual daily water consumption and exposure patterns, dietary history and other possible sources of arsenic exposure.

Nearly 50 percent of the participants were from "control" households with well water that had arsenic levels below 8 micrograms per liter, while the other half were classified as "case" households with arsenic levels exceeding 10 micrograms per liter of water.

Gray said that Hernando County was selected to participate in the study because it is known to have a large number of wells with arsenic levels above the normal limit, and that the data collected will be used in a peer review study that will eventually be published.

Loqan Neill can be reached at lnNeill@tampabay.com or (352) 848-1435.

Subject: Orlando Sentinel Editorial

Date: Sunday, December 22, 2013 11:33:42 AM Eastern Standard Time

From: Diane Salz

To: WRWSA

CC:

Water problems demand action statewide: Editorial

December 22, 2013

After years of official neglect, Florida's precious but imperiled waterways are finally starting to draw the attention they badly need from the state's leaders. It's about time.

The two lawmakers in line to be Senate president and House speaker after the 2014 elections, both Central Florida Republicans, have declared that dealing with water problems will be among their priorities. State Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam has been active and outspoken on the issue, too.

But talk, as the saying goes, is cheap. The Legislature and Gov. [Rick Scott](#) will need to put some serious money and regulatory muscle into protecting and restoring Florida's waterways.

Those waterways are not only the source of the state's drinking water, but the lifeblood of its agricultural industry, the foundation of its rich and diverse ecosystems and wildlife, and a critical component of its tourism-driven economy. Florida has no future without clean water.

Federal and state lawmakers launched a multibillion-dollar effort years ago to restore the [Everglades](#), but other Florida waterways in distress — including the state's iconic natural springs and the [Indian River Lagoon](#) — demand action, too.

State lawmakers, until now, haven't been up to the challenge. Earlier this year, for example, they set aside only \$15.5 million for springs restoration in the \$74 billion state budget. And that was after the state's regional water-management districts estimated that \$120 million would be needed for the job.

The tide could be turning. Last month a state Senate committee recommended a \$220 million plan to rescue the Indian River Lagoon and other badly degraded waterways.

Now a bipartisan group of state senators, led by [Altamonte Springs](#) Republican [David Simmons](#), has drafted a comprehensive plan to restore and protect springs. Other lawmakers, including Orlando Democrats Darren Soto and Linda Stewart, also have been working on springs legislation.

Simmons' plan includes measures aimed at reducing pollution from fertilizer runoff from farms and lawns, and from septic tanks. It also includes provisions to increase water recycling and storage, and limit pumping. Such steps would address the two sides of the water problem in Florida: quality and quantity. Simmons says these efforts could be funded with a portion of documentary-stamp revenue, a \$2 billion-a-year pot of money.

Environmentalists are rightly skeptical of any plans from the Legislature. Lawmakers have underfunded efforts before, and been too timid in taking on polluters. They'll need to follow through this time with decisive, effective action.

The multibillion-dollar cost of restoring the Everglades is a stark lesson for lawmakers in the economics of neglecting

water problems. As expensive as steps to solve those problems might seem now, they'll be peanuts compared to the bill in the future if nothing is done.

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Subject: Herald-Tribune: FL's springs under siege

Date: Sunday, December 22, 2013 11:30:51 AM Eastern Standard Time

From: Diane Salz

To: WRWSA

CC:

Florida's bubbling springs. Beautiful. Beloved. And under siege.

Cindy Swirko, Halifax Media Group

Published: Sunday, December 22, 2013 at 1:00 a.m.

On U.S. 27 in Lafayette County between Branford and Mayo, numerous signs point the way and the distance to Troy and Convict springs, two bubbling holes where the chilled water provides adventure for scuba divers and a refreshing dip for everyone.

That stretch of U.S. 27 is also dairy alley — Lafayette County is one of Florida's biggest milk producers. People making their way to the cavernous blue springs can see — and smell — brown goop shooting out of large, powerful sprinklers.

Scientists with the state Department of Environmental Protection, the Suwannee River Water Management District, the University of Florida and other agencies have blamed cow manure, the nutrient-rich waste, as a primary culprit, along with fertilizer overuse, in the degradation of the region's springs.

Springs and the aquifer from which their water boils up are under severe stress, and water experts say the consequences could be considerable to the economy, the cost of water and the health of springs that have been drawing humans to the natural fountains for eons.

Scientists say it is not too late. But the potential solutions are costly and politically difficult.

Read this special report at fragilesprings.com

Editorial: Ignoring the causes

Published: Friday, December 20, 2013 at 6:01 a.m.

Last Modified: Wednesday, December 18, 2013 at 11:38 p.m.

How many times do we Floridians have to be told what is ailing our spectacular freshwater springs? Frankly, it takes little more than a glance into any spring to identify the problems. The algae-covered bottom and the low water lines are telltale — and it is a story that is told over and over from Ichetucknee Springs to Manatee Springs to Silver Springs.

Nitrate pollution and overpumping are slowly but surely destroying our springs.

In this paper's series "Fragile Springs," virtually every article has identified nitrate pollution, sometimes 10 times normal levels, and declining spring flows, sometimes by up to half, as the primary causes of the degradation and diminishment of Florida's 700 natural springs.

Neither is a big revelation. Nitrate pollution and declining water flows have been cited by environmentalists and state water managers for years as detrimental to our springs' health. Yet the problems not only persist but worsen.

Springs degradation is inarguably a state crisis, yet our lawmakers in Tallahassee refuse to have serious discussions about saving our springs, let alone taking serious steps. Oh, there have been attempts to begin reversing the destructive practices that are destroying our springs, but they have been short-lived.

Former Sen. Lee Constantine pushed through legislation in 2010 that would have required Florida's 2.7 million septic tanks to undergo inspections to make sure they were working properly. But that bill was repealed just two years later under pressure from special-interest groups.

Even the original water management bill, passed in 1972, recognized that overpumping could imperil our springs and demanded that the water districts determine the minimum flows and levels of the state's waterways, including its springs, and monitor them. Now more than 40 years later, we still await that mandate to be carried out.

Water tables and water flows continue to fall. Nitrate and stormwater pollution continue to increase. Yet we see no concentrated efforts in the Legislature to curb the use of fertilizers for either agricultural or domestic use or stem continued expansion of septic tanks.

As for water flow, consumptive use permits not only are not being curbed, the administration of Gov. Rick Scott is working feverishly to make it even easier for large

water users to get and keep permits.

Maybe most inexplicable in the whole springs' crisis is that the people who live around and love Florida's springs not only are cognizant, but impassioned over these natural gems that are slowly dying, yet our government officials are not.

At some point the Florida Legislature has to make some tough decisions and enact some tough laws that will severely curb nitrate pollution and slow the drawdown of the aquifer if we are to save our springs. As State Sen. Charlie Dean of Inverness said recently, we have enough studies; we know what is killing our springs.

We can see it. Now it is time to do something substantive to save them.

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Subject: Fw: NEW WATER PERMITTING PORTAL PROVIDES ONE-STOP ACCESS TO ALL WATER RESOURCE PERMITTING INFORMATION
From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Date: Tue, Dec 17, 2013 9:04 am
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

On Tuesday, December 17, 2013 10:41 AM, Florida Department of Environmental Protection <FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com> wrote:



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 17, 2013

CONTACT: DEP Press Office, 850.245.2112, DEPNews@dep.state.fl.us

NEW WATER PERMITTING PORTAL PROVIDES ONE-STOP ACCESS TO ALL WATER RESOURCE PERMITTING INFORMATION

~Access and education key to helping Florida residents and businesses~

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, along with the state's five water management districts, recently launched [Florida's Water Permitting Portal](#). This portal provides information about all water resource permitting in Florida in one place. The agencies have integrated existing online services with the portal, providing one place for residents and businesses to go to determine what permits may be needed and from which agency. The website will continue to add new features to enhance and simplify online access and make the work more transparent.

Governor Rick Scott said, "Our number one priority is growing more jobs and opportunities for Florida families, and DEP's portal will help streamline the permitting process for businesses so we can create more jobs and be better stewards of our natural resources."

This new online system is an open door for residents, local governments and the private sector to find information and assistance from the Department and water management districts. The water permitting portal enables users to apply for commonly issued authorizations, permits, certifications and renewals, pay fees and submit monitoring reports and other compliance documentation. It's also a great place to get information about compliance and other water program information.

"The Department of Environmental Protection and the water management districts are focused on creating an effective regulatory process for all Florida citizens," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "Educating Floridians on the regulatory process is key to the success of these efforts."

The portal allows visitors to electronically apply for permits and other authorizations including:

- Environmental Resource Permits (and authorizations to use state-owned submerged lands, where applicable).
- Consumptive and Water Use Permits.
- Well Construction Permits.
- Works of the District Permits.

"By helping Florida's businesses and residents understand when and how to apply for permits, the Water Permitting Portal serves as a great tool for continually providing excellent customer service—which is an important priority of the District," said Jon Steverson, Executive Director of the Northwest Florida Water Management District. "Through our continued focus on improving service and efficiencies, the District has reduced our processing time by more than 40 percent for consumptive use and 80 percent for environmental resource permits over the last two years."

"The website provides easy format for the public to determine basic permitting information," said Ann Shortelle, Executive Director of the Suwannee River Water Management District. "This website is very helpful and allows anyone with a computer to search a single website for consumptive use and environmental resource permit information."

"Online access to permitting provides an important benefit to citizens looking to manage different types of applications from the comfort of their business or home," said Robert Beltran, Executive Director for the Southwest Florida Water Management District. "It's important to provide citizens efficient and effective access to these services to make it easier for the public to interact with water management districts."

"The statewide E-permitting site makes accessing water resources permitting information far more convenient for the public," said Hans Tanzler III, Executive Director of the St. Johns River Water Management District. "This is one more step in our work to add transparency to our permits and data."

"The new permitting portal exemplifies our shared focus on excellent customer service," said Blake Guillory, Executive Director of the South Florida Water Management District. "It also supports the significant progress we've made in achieving statewide consistencies in the entire regulatory process. The process recognizes regional technical differences while streamlining and simplifying the administrative application and process."

This new service is provided in keeping with efforts to conduct more paperless business. Applicants are able to apply for permits by submitting the application and associated materials online instead of having to submit paper copies to the Department. This will save time and money for applicants as well as staff. In addition to eliminating the cost of printing and mailing permit application documents, application fees for online submittals are reduced, and are entirely eliminated for self-certifications.

Editorials

Putting water on the front burner

Published: December 15, 2013

It's too early to say whether the 2014 session of the Florida Legislature will be the "Year of Water," but momentum is building in that direction. And if correct policy decisions are made, the state will be in a stronger position to protect the environment, including Florida's wondrous natural springs, strengthen the economy, and bolster agriculture.

Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam recently noted that the environmental "devastation" on both sides of the state caused by the release of high volumes of polluted water from Lake Okeechobee this year has created "momentum" among lawmakers to fund water resource projects and discuss water policy next session.

In addition, Rep. Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, who has been chosen by colleagues to succeed House Speaker Will Weatherford of Wesley Chapel after the 2014 session, has said that water issues will be a top priority during his two-year term overseeing the House.

Putting water on the front burner is essential to Florida's future. Water shortages are common in the Tampa Bay area and other parts of the state, as are water use restrictions. And too often, piecemeal approaches are taken that fail to address the challenges the state has in meeting the water needs of the public, agricultural interests and businesses, especially in times of drought.

The Legislature hurt matters by gutting the state's Growth Management Act, which required a statewide planning perspective in addition to local and regional reviews.

This renewed attention to water issues comes as the state Senate considers a \$220 million plan to reduce pollution and redirect water in South Florida. But Crisafulli, in comments to reporters recently, was right to caution that officials shouldn't get "too laser-focused" on one region — that water issues need to be looked at "from the standpoint of the overall needs of the state."

Those needs, he noted, include agriculture, drinking water, cleaning up Florida's polluted natural springs, and helping the troubled Apalachicola River region.

Putnam also has stressed that other areas need help as well. "There is an extraordinary bias to the south at the expense of the springs and Apalachicola Bay," he said last month.

The South Florida water improvement plan includes \$20 million to clean up Indian River Lagoon, and proposals to clean water that flows into Lake Okeechobee from the Orlando area. Meanwhile, Putnam's proposed 2014 budget includes \$10 million to target "nutrient reduction practices" and \$5.2 million to address farming nutrient runoff into

freshwater springs in North Florida — a major problem.

The Department of Environmental Protection is requesting \$75 million for Everglades' restoration, \$15 million for springs cleanup and \$40 million to purchase environmental lands, among other projects.

Locally of note, Sen. Wilton Simpson, R-Trilby, whose businesses include a large chicken farming operation in east Pasco County, is drafting legislation calling for a comprehensive study on expanding “the beneficial use of reclaimed water, storm water and excess surface water ...”

The study would include evaluating the feasibility of building “regional storage features” on public or private land that could store such water for use in agricultural irrigation, public water supply and wetland restoration, among other uses.

Although building regional facilities may be cost prohibitive, it only makes sense to put to use the tens of millions of gallons of treated wastewater and other water that is dumped into Florida waters. Doing so could reduce groundwater pumping and greatly help farmers and ranchers.

Crisafulli also says the state needs to return to investing in local water projects — a worthwhile endeavor that was severely curtailed during the state's economic downturn. Alternative water supply projects in the Tampa Bay area have resulted in a huge decrease in groundwater pumping that had damaged the environment.

We cannot afford to return to the days of groundwater overpumping, which is why the state needs to help communities develop water projects. Nor should lawmakers fall for a water-supply scheme that surfaces every few years in Florida — tapping water-rich areas, such as North Florida, to satisfy the thirst of regions that have poorly managed growth. The local-sources first law must be followed.

This new emphasis on water issues and the environment will greatly benefit Florida. Though surrounded by water, Florida has major water challenges. Comprehensive water policies that include all facets of water use are needed instead of the reactionary approach of the past.

Subject: Fwd: Landmark Water Proposals Coming in 2014 Legislative Session
Date: Friday, December 13, 2013 10:59:51 PM Eastern Standard Time
From: Diane Salz
To: WRWSA
CC:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Dec 13, 2013 at 10:58 PM
Subject: Landmark Water Proposals Coming in 2014 Legislative Session
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

12/13 Tallahassee Democrat

Florida lawmakers say they plan to take major steps to protect the state's springs and freshwater supply during the next legislative session.

In recent weeks, the incoming leaders of the state House and Senate have signaled that they intend to make water issues a priority when they take the helm after the 2014 elections.

But a bipartisan group of state senators plan to get started before then. They are working on a proposal to protect Florida's springs.

Sen. Bill Montford, D-Tallahassee, chairs the Senate Agriculture Committee and has been taking part in regular meetings with four Republican colleagues. He said they are working on "landmark" legislation intended to serve as "the opening play ... for a tremendous and significant approach to addressing water issues" over the next few years.

"I think you're going to see that this spring, this session, there is going to be a concerted effort to take a first major step in a comprehensive solution to preserving both quantity and quality of water resources in the state of Florida — something not only for our children but our children's children," said Sen. David Simmons, R-Altamonte Springs.

Simmons said Sen. Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, is the leader of the quintet, which also includes Sens. Wilton Simpson, R-Trilby, and Alan Hays, R-Umatilla. All three chair key committees overseeing environmental issues.

They are working on proposals intended to:

- Require regulators to create protection zones and curb pollution around the state's major springs.
- Limit water withdrawals that could harm flow levels in those springs.
- Encourage the use of reclaimed water and water-storage systems that would give businesses and farmers alternative water sources while reducing pumping from the aquifer.
- Ensure property owners are not stuck with the bills for connecting their homes to municipal sewer systems or cleaning up runoff from their septic tanks.

The legislation aims to attach deadlines to the state's water-quality and water-quantity requirements, make them stronger around dozens of Florida's most prized springs, and provide substantial state funding to help meet them, Simmons said.

He said the senators will likely revise their proposal as they hear from state agencies, local governments, industry groups and farmers. But he said he has advice for anyone who denies there's a problem: "Get a reality check. Go

down to one of our endangered springs and take a swim.”

“Doing nothing is not a solution, and that is unacceptable to us,” Simmons said. “Compromise is acceptable.”

Montford and Simmons said they hope to encourage those compromises by tackling a range of issues in a single bill, from water supplies to water-quality threats from septic tanks to wastewater treatment to agricultural runoff. By providing state funding, they intend to reduce, and in some cases eliminate, the costs to local governments, farmers and homeowners.

Eric Draper, the executive director of Audubon of Florida, said any effort to curb pollution affecting rivers and springs is going to face pushback from developers and agricultural interests. But with the economy rebounding and concerns about the health of Florida’s environment mounting across the state, he said he senses a growing appetite for springs legislation.

“I think we’re seeing the pendulum swinging back toward the legislators recognizing that Floridians want environmental protection,” he said.

Future legislative leaders have indicated they plan to wrestle with water-quality issues in the coming years. After his colleagues voted to designate him as the next Senate president, state Sen. Andy Gardiner, R-Orlando, said protecting the state’s natural resources, including water — and promoting them to boost tourism — would be one of his three main priorities leading the Senate.

His counterpart in the house, Rep. Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, has sent a similar message. In a recent newspaper guest column, he called for statewide water planning.

“If there’s one issue that I’ve identified, having the opportunity to become speaker (after the 2014 elections), this is the one,” he said.

Last session, lawmakers approved \$10 million for springs protection, and Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel Vinyard said the state was able to turn that into \$36 million in projects by working with local governments and water management districts.

Crisafulli said he expects the House to take a “project-based approach” in the upcoming session, and lay the groundwork for an overhaul of the state’s water policies in the years that follow, noting that lawmakers are not going to untangle Florida’s complex water issues in a single 60-day session.

Montford said he agrees it will take a multi-year effort.

“We did not get into the position we’re in overnight, and we will not get out overnight,” he said. “We’ll make a tremendous start on it this year.”

St. Johns River again eyed as water source for Central Florida

By **Meredith Rutland** Wed, Dec 11, 2013 @ 7:15 pm | updated Thu, Dec 12, 2013 @ 7:59 am

A new plan to provide Central Florida with water for drinking and agriculture could tap into the St. Johns River, revamping a years-long debate about taking water from the river for city use.

SEE ALSO: [Former St. Johns Riverkeeper named new Riverkeeper for St. Johns County's Matanzas River](#)

Central Florida is growing faster than its water supply, the Floridan aquifer, can support. The area uses 800 million gallons a day, according to a 2010 estimate provided in a multi-agency water supply plan. However, it's estimated that by 2035, Central Florida will grow by 1.4 million people — a 49 percent jump to 4.1 million people — and will need 1.1 billion gallons a day of water to support residents, agriculture and the region's tourism industry.

The aquifer can't keep up with that growth, so the region's water management experts are looking at other options, including as much as 155 million gallons a day from the St. Johns River.

This isn't the first time the St. Johns River has been eyed for a large-scale water project.

In 2009, a collection of Central Florida cities proposed withdrawing 262 million gallons a day from the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers. That proposal was put on the back burner due to public pressure.

Now that the issue has cooled, river advocates are concerned large withdrawals could be possible.

The plan is still a draft and contains 139 suggestions for how to meet Central Florida's water needs. Most of the suggested options contain small solutions — between .01 million gallons a day and 10 million gallons a day. Only seven of the proposed plans could provide more than 10 million gallons of water a day.

Three of those involve the St. Johns River, but there isn't a guarantee all three, or even any of the three, of those options will be chosen, said Tom Bartol, assistant director of the Division of Regulatory, Engineering and Environmental Services for the St. Johns River Water Management District.

At this point, it's too soon to say which projects will be chosen as water supplies, said Mark Middlebrook, head of the St. Johns River Alliance. While that makes it difficult to determine the potential impact to the river, he said it's important to keep a close eye on the issue.

"They're still numbers that are going to make people in North Florida stand up and pay attention," he said.

If any of the suggestions involving the St. Johns River are chosen, the river would be impacted, said St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman.

Taking more water from the river could cause more toxic algae blooms because it would condense pollution, she said. It could also draw in more salt water from the neck of the river in Duval County which could kill sea grasses that filter out contaminants harmful to marine populations.

"It's a recipe for disaster when it comes to the St. Johns River," Rinaman said.

To meet Central Florida's water needs, the draft plan suggests taking a maximum of 155 million gallons of water a day from the river at several points, in addition to 36.55 million gallons a day currently being withdrawn from the river and connecting bodies of water.

A maximum of 50 million gallons a day could be taken from the Taylor Creek Reservoir in Cocoa and a nearby section of the St. Johns River. The plan estimates the amount will be closer to 42 million gallons a day.

Another 55 million gallons a day could be pulled from the St. Johns River near Florida 46 in Sanford.

A maximum of 50 million gallons a day could be taken from the river near Yankee Lake in Seminole County, with the estimate of use closer to 30 million gallons a day.

Right now, 27.75 million gallons a day are taken from the St. Johns River for five projects. Another project withdraws 8.8 million gallons a day from the Taylor Creek Reservoir, which holds excess flood water from the St. Johns River. The current withdrawals are used from Melbourne to DeLand for needs that range from consumption to watering for landscaping and golf courses.

A four-year-long study completed in 2012 found the St. Johns River can be used as an alternative water source without serious harm to the river. The St. Johns River Water Supply Impact Study stated the river could sustain removing up to 155 million gallons a day with minor effects, a conclusion the St. Johns Riverkeeper organization questioned.

Bartol said the more likely solution is that water management districts will focus on conserving water, which he estimated could add about 45 million gallons a day back into Central Florida's water supply. The various agencies will then choose suggested options to fill the remaining 255 million gallons a day needed.

The draft plan does not provide funding for the projects. That is handled by state and local governments, water management agencies and utility companies, said John Fitzgerald, North Florida Water Initiative Leader for the St. Johns Water Management District.

Rinaman said since most of the suggested options are for small amounts, she's concerned the projects involving the St. Johns River will be chosen because it provides the "bigger bang for their buck."

The project to take water from the river near the Taylor Creek Reservoir is expected to cost \$628.7 million. The project near Florida 46 is expected to cost \$548.26 million. The project near Yankee Lake is expected to cost between \$53.2 million and \$217.9 million, according to the Central Florida water supply draft plan.

Meredith Rutland: (904) 359-4161

A Big Shift at the State's Water Management Districts

By Chris Curry

Halifax Media Services

Published: Saturday, December 7, 2013 at 10:06 p.m.

Last Modified: Saturday, December 7, 2013 at 10:15 p.m.

As springs across the region struggle with declining flow and rising pollution, environmental activists worry that they have no strong voice left on the water management district boards charged with protecting the state's springs, rivers, lakes and aquifer.

Groups such as the Florida Conservation Coalition, a partnership of several statewide environmental organizations, say they lost their last advocate in May, when Gov. Rick Scott decided not to reappoint Richard Hamann — a water and environmental law expert at the University of Florida and past president of the Florida Defenders of the Environment — to a second term on the board of the St. Johns River Water Management District.

Environmentalists say the state's five water management district boards are now stacked with representatives of industry and business and lack members with a primary focus on environmental protection.

They argue that the makeup of the water boards, along with the budget-slashing of Scott's first year in office and Tallahassee's ongoing process to “streamline” water withdrawal permitting across the state, combine to hamper springs protection efforts and weaken the water management districts.

Today, the composition of the district boards leans far more heavily toward business than 10 to 15 years ago, says Pat Harden, the vice president of the Howard T. Odum Springs Institute.

MORE BALANCED

A member of the St. Johns board in the 1990s, Harden would be a rarity today — an environmental activist serving on a water management board.

A founding member of the environmental group Friends of the Wekiva River, which formed in the midst of Florida's growth boom to advocate for the protection of the river, Harden served on the St. Johns board from 1991 to 1999, including time as chairman.

“I think we had a more balanced board between people who worried about the environment and conservation and business and professionals,” Harden, now a Gainesville resident, said.

The state Department of Environmental Protection “had oversight, but they let the boards do their work because the boards, by and large, had the staff with the expertise, and they knew the area.”

The tilt toward business interests has picked up steam under Gov. Rick Scott, whose term has included new directors of all five water management districts and major staff changes in the leadership of the DEP, environmentalists say.

Water management district officials say that, whether they are affiliated with an environmental group or not, board members take protection of the resource seriously.

"When you speak to our board members, you will find that, while they are businessmen and women, they are good stewards of the environment. ... I think that just because someone is not president of an environmental group, it does not mean they are not an environmental steward," Suwannee River Water Management District Executive Director Ann Shortelle said.

Hamann was appointed by former Gov. Charlie Crist in 2009.

In May 2011, he was the lone board member of the St. Johns board to vote against a 20-year permit for Jacksonville's utility that consolidated more than two dozen existing permits and eventually could allow groundwater pumping of as much as 162.5 million gallons per day.

That permit was approved over concerns that groundwater pumping in the Jacksonville area had contributed to historically low levels on the lakes in the Keystone Heights area as well as lower aquifer levels and river and spring flows in the Suwannee district's jurisdiction.

Hamann, a faculty member at the Levin College of Law Center for Government Responsibility, said even when he was not on the prevailing side of a vote, it was important to have the environmentalists' point of view represented on the board.

"I think there has been more representation from an environmental perspective in the past," he said. "Even if you do not have a majority, I think it is good to have a voice in the discussions — and that is now lacking."

In May, Scott gave Hamann's seat to Douglas Burnett, a consultant to defense contractors, retired major general with the Florida National Guard and a former commercial airline pilot.

Other members of the St. Johns board include the president of an Orlando environmental consulting firm for developers, the president of a transportation and civil engineering firm, a citrus industry representative, the president of a defense contractor consulting firm, the past president of a Jacksonville manufacturing industry association and executives with forestry and environmental engineering consulting firms.

Marion County's representative is Ocala attorney Fred Roberts Jr.

The Suwannee board includes a cattle rancher, farmers, a road builder, a real estate appraiser for an agricultural credit union, an engineer and land surveyor, an attorney and an accountant.

DIVERSE GROUP

Roberts, an Ocala native, said the St. Johns board reflects a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints.

"I feel we have a relatively diverse group from several different disciplines," he said. "Me personally, I am a sixth-generation Floridian, and I certainly recognize first and foremost that water is a scarce resource that has to be protected. I grew up in Florida. I want to see my children grow up in Florida. I hope to see my

grandchildren grow up in Florida.

"It is critical that we protect such a valuable resource. But there must be a balance between protecting that resource and making good use of that resource," he said.

Merillee Malwitz-Jipson, president of the environmental group Our Santa Fe River, said what is lacking now on the Suwannee board is an advocate to say no to new permits to pump water as springs struggle with declining flow and rising pollution.

"I think it's heavily stacked toward agriculture and business," Malwitz-Jipson said of the Suwannee board. "They say we can't stop issuing permits because it's going to stop growth."

Malwitz-Jipson wants the Suwannee district to stop issuing permits until minimum flows and levels are set for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee rivers and several priority springs along the rivers, including Poe.

That argument to turn down permits until more work was done setting minimum flows also was made by the environmental group Save Our Suwannee and member of the Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District in late 2011, when the Suwannee board unanimously approved a series of groundwater pumping permits for dairy farms that totaled about 5.5 million gallons per day.

Still, an ongoing situation in the St. Johns district has stirred up some skepticism about the effect minimum flows will have on permitting and pumping.

In the Keystone Heights area, drying Lake Geneva, Lake Brooklyn and Cowpen Lake are all below adopted minimum flows and levels, and the St. Johns district is moving toward lowering the adopted levels, a process that's not yet final.

University of Florida political science assistant professor Katrina Schwartz, who teaches a course in the politics of water, said that while the state DEP always had oversight over the water management districts, Tallahassee has been more "heavy-handed" in recent years.

SLASHED BUDGETS

In his first budget cycle after election, Scott slashed water management district budgets by a combined \$700 million in 2011, leading to hundreds of layoffs.

Some of the rule changes during his tenure largely restrict water management districts from reducing allowable permitted water withdrawal levels on a permit because of changes in the economy or population growth rates.

After the last legislative session, Scott signed into law a measure that forbids districts from reducing groundwater pumping of a utility that builds a desalination plant.

The state is in the process of putting in place uniform criteria that all water management districts need to follow when considering an application for a consumptive-use permit.

State Sen. David Simmons, R-Altamonte Springs, said the water management districts do not have the

funding or enforcement tools needed to make significant strides in saving the springs. Round after round of scientific studies, he said, were just delaying the necessary actions with “analysis paralysis.”

Simmons has drafted but not filed a bill that would identify 21 “outstanding” Florida springs that the state and water management districts have to protect. The bill, in its first draft, would tie not just water quantity but water quality to consumptive-use permitting. Districts could not issue new permits that reduce the flow of a spring or affect a spring polluted by nitrates. Tougher fertilizer regulations and wastewater treatment plant upgrades would be required. On lots one acre or smaller, homes on septic would, at no cost to a residential homeowner, have to hook up to municipal sewage.

The first draft of Simmons' bill was circulated for comments and received a letter of objection signed by 30 organizations over costs and other issues. The organizations included the Associated Industries of Florida, the Florida Cattlemen's Association, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers Association of Florida and the Florida Rural Water Association.

Simmons said a second draft is being prepared.

“If we don't do it now, I think we will be so far behind, it will be many generations before we catch up, and it will be a lot of economic pain on all of us,” Simmons said.

“People come to Florida because of our pristine water. And if someone would suggest to you we are not degrading that water now, I would suggest that person needs a reality check.”

— *Chris Curry writes for The Gainesville Sun.*

Subject: Fwd: FL's Water Issues...by Pam McVety

Date: Friday, December 6, 2013 9:40:34 AM Eastern Standard Time

From: Diane Salz

To: WRWSA

CC:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Diane Salz** <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Dec 6, 2013 at 9:39 AM

Subject: FL's Water Issues...by Pam McVety

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Re: "We need commitment on Florida's water issues" (My View, Dec. 5).

I am pleased that Rep. Steve Crisafulli wants to lead on water issues, but dismayed that he is calling for the development of a state water policy. We have one. Check out Chapter 373 Florida Statutes and Chapter 62-40 Florida Administrative Code. Together they are our state water policy. It is one of the best in the nation, according to legal experts.

Yes, water management in Florida is a mess. Republicans have hired nonprofessionals and fired professional water managers, cut the water budget in the five water management districts, cut land acquisition, tried to weaken dredge-and-fill rules, and further politicized water management. I would say that it is a perfect storm of mismanagement that has helped fuel the current crisis. Mind you, the crisis has been building for decades because of population growth, but the good news is that the structure and law are in place to make sure water is properly managed. It just needs to be implemented properly, and that will take leadership and money.

We can get out of this mess, but our leaders need to consult the professionals who know what needs to be done. Here are a few that I recommend because they have much to offer:

Contact Jim Stevenson for springs. He chaired the two spring task forces that wrote excellent recommendations on what is needed to protect and restore our treasured springs. To understand how water law works, contact Richard Hamann, a lawyer at the University of Florida. He is a legal expert on Chapter 373 and a former board member of the St. Johns Water Management District.

For practical expertise on how a water management district should be run, contact Sonny Vergara. He was the executive director of the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the St. Johns River Water Management District, and general manager of the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority. For what needs doing to restore the Everglades, contact Estus Whitfield, former environmental adviser to several governors and a leader on Everglades restoration.

No one knows more than Steve Leitman about the ACF conflict and how to resolve it. There also are plenty of staff in the DEP who know and understand water law and policy but do not feel that they can speak out. Consult them. Finally, read Tom Swihart's water blog. He has his finger on the pulse of water issues and its history.

These people and many other good professionals can help put water management on a sustainable course and get Florida out of its current water mess.

Two more points to those who want to solve our water mess: First we have a state water management plan. Use it and keep it updated. Second, natural systems also need water in the right amount at the right time, not just agriculture and the public for drinking. The needs of natural systems have to be met if Florida is to be a vital

productive state.

Our leaders shouldn't mess with water policy, because it is not broken. They should use it wisely and humbly acknowledge that those that came before them knew what they were doing.

Subject: Fwd: St. Johns River Water Management District Water News
From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Date: Tue, Dec 10, 2013 3:28 pm
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Water News <waternews@sjrwmd.com>
Date: December 10, 2013 at 5:22:59 PM EST
To: <disalz@yahoo.com>
Subject: St. Johns River Water Management District Water News

Email not displaying correctly? [Click to view online.](#)

St. Johns River Water Management District Water News

News, meetings
and notices

December 10, 2013

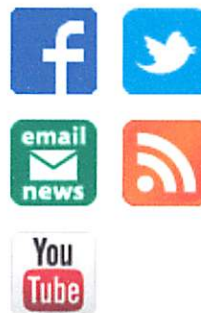
District funds two additional cost-share projects to protect springs, reduce groundwater dependency

The St. Johns River Water Management District has added **two reclaimed water projects** to its \$22 million commitment for this fiscal year's cooperative funding projects. These new projects will provide springs protection and reduced groundwater dependency in central Florida.

Earlier this year, the District identified 22 projects for funding, representing nine counties and \$59 million in construction projects. The District's Governing Board announced on Dec. 10 that an additional \$800,000 was identified in the District's budget to allow the inclusion of a reuse project for the city of Ocala and a city of Winter Garden reclaimed water project expansion.

The Ocala project is an expansion of the city's existing reclaimed water system that will allow the delivery of 800,000 gallons per month of reuse water to two city parks for irrigation. The Winter Garden project will save 148,000 gallons of water per day by expanding the city's reclaimed water systems into three residential subdivisions.

Connect with us



Upcoming meetings

For a listing of upcoming meeting dates, times and locations, visit:

- [Governing Board meetings and agendas](#)
- [Other District meetings and notices](#)

Contacts

District staff contacts for:

- [Local governments](#)
- [Public and media](#)

[How to contact your local government](#)

Process under way to set minimum flows and levels for Lower Ocklawaha River and six central Florida lakes

Also on Dec. 10, the District's Governing Board voted to begin the process to set minimum flows and levels (MFLs) for the [Lower Ocklawaha River and six lakes in Lake and Orange counties](#) to help prevent significant harm to those important water resources.

When the rulemaking is completed, MFLs would be established for the Lower Ocklawaha River at State Road 40 in Marion County and for lakes Apopka, Beauclair, Dora, Eustis, Griffin and Harris in the Upper Ocklawaha River chain.

Workshops will be held in 2014 to obtain public input. The public will also have opportunities to provide input throughout the process and when the Governing Board considers adopting the MFLs.

About us

The St. Johns River Water Management District is a regional agency of the state of Florida whose mission is to protect and ensure the sustainable use of water resources. The District is responsible for managing groundwater and surface water resources in all or part of 18 counties in northeast and east-central Florida.

floridaswater.com

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Subject: Fw: Speaker Designate 2014-15 Steve Crisafulli on Water Issue

From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Date: Thu, Dec 05, 2013 9:25 am

To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>

Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

Source: Tallahassee Democrat By: Steve Crisafulli

On Thursday, December 5, 2013 11:23 AM, Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com> wrote:

One of Florida's most precious resources is water. Our state is world renowned for our 1,200 miles of beaches, our springs and more than 7,700 large lakes.

Yet Florida's water supply is more than just a tourist attraction — it's also the heart of our agriculture industry and the source of drinking water we all depend upon to live our lives. Water is so essential to our existence, yet water policy is often overlooked or tackled in a parochial manner. Neither approach is right.

To ignore the growing demand for and the quality of our supply leaves our state incredibly vulnerable. Focusing on one community at a time in a piecemeal approach can lead to new problems in another down the road.

As an example, look no further than South Florida's recent challenges. This year, the region faced one of the rainiest summers on record. To reduce the chance of flooding, excess fresh water from Lake Okeechobee was pumped into South Florida estuaries. While this addressed the immediate problem of relieving pressure on the dike maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, it also upset fragile coastal ecosystems downstream and negatively impacted the local economies.

Rightly, local public officials at every level mobilized to address the problem. Many of the ideas that have come out of the task force spearheaded by state Sen. Joe Negron, R-Stuart, correctly consider the state as a whole and the connectivity of our waterways. But, with emotions high and attention so focused on one region, there is a need to guard against tunnel vision and focusing exclusively on one problem to the detriment of others.

It is why I am calling on policymakers on every level to embrace three principles as we look for water policy solutions and establish water funding priorities.

First, as we deliberate on water issues, we must do so through the lens of a comprehensive, statewide approach to protect the long-term health of Florida's water ecosystems. Water has no boundaries, and it is imperative that policymakers, opinion leaders and the public reject a limited parochial view.

There are issues across the state, from the Northern Indian River Lagoon, located in the legislative district I represent, to the Apalachicola River, to our freshwater springs, and I intend to see that each of them gets attention in Tallahassee.

Second, Florida's water management policy must be flexible so that water managers can adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. In a state that is annually in the path of hurricanes and tropical storms, where the average doorstep is only 100 feet above sea level, and where the decisions of neighboring states can harm our water supply, having an effective water management strategy is critical for our survival.

Third, we must attack our water needs with long-term and short-term strategies. Water management strategy is not enough. We must also continue to invest in proactive measures to effectively deal with our immediate water quality issues.

During the prolonged economic downturn, our state pulled back on funding local water projects. As the fiscal outlook improves, I believe it is critical that we re-engage our partnership with local governments to strategically invest in projects that will improve our overall water supply and quality, such as the Everglades restoration bill we passed this year.

The 2014 legislative session is approaching, and the Legislature must work with Gov. Rick Scott, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel Vinyard, and the water management districts to craft a smart, comprehensive water policy for our state.

As a growing population, weather events and even decisions by neighboring states strain our water resources, it is imperative we have a comprehensive plan in place to protect water quality and access for all Floridians, not just today, but for generations to come.

Subject: Fwd: Water - Resource Sustainability Requires Planning & Action
Date: Thursday, December 5, 2013 2:39:32 PM Eastern Standard Time
From: Diane Salz
To: WRWSA
CC:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Dec 5, 2013 at 2:39 PM
Subject: Water - Resource Sustainability Requires Planning & Action
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Bright Ideas for Florida in 2014

*From: Gainesville Sun
Editorial*

Water - Resource sustainability requires planning and action

12/5/2013

Florida's population is predicted to break 20 million by the end of 2015. Nowhere will the strain on the state's natural resources be more pronounced than on its water supply, making 2014 a good year to start managing water resources more assertively.

Some Florida communities have taken noteworthy steps toward water sustainability. When Gainesville Regional Utilities, which serves the city and surrounding area, began seeking a 20-year groundwater pumping permit from the St. Johns River Water Management District last year, it decided it would ask to withdraw no more water than it is allowed to take now — saying essentially it can accommodate an expected 24% increase in customers over the next 20 years with conservation measures and increased use of reclaimed water. The Gainesville region has a strong, well-planned growth agenda, so its approach isn't some tree-hugger anti-business tactic.

A number of regions in Florida, including central Florida, have overdrawn their groundwater accounts, with additional pumping from aquifers likely to cause major environmental harm. Already, groundwater pumping and pollution have done significant damage to Florida's springs — environmental jewels with economic heft as major tourist attractions.

Short-term, the state's water management districts would do well to turn Gainesville's approach into policy and begin to manage water resources in the black, allowing no net increase in groundwater pumping as they renew consumptive use permits by utilities, businesses, farms and others.

Longer term, the state may want to review a measure advocated in 1989 by a task force-type group, the Water Resource Commission, convened by Gov. Bob Martinez. That group recommended collecting a fee from all users based on water used, with credits given for aquifer recharge, use of reclaimed water, reverse osmosis and other technologies. Funds from the fee were to go into development of alternative sources of water, reuse systems, protection of recharge areas and incentives for conservation. Agriculture and utilities don't like the idea, but there are many ways to structure fees to be fair.

The state needs to act. As Florida sues Georgia for consuming river water, including water from the Apalachee River,

that our state needs for the shellfish beds in Appalachicola Bay and the Gulf, there's no small awkwardness in the fact that in the last decade, the metro Atlanta region has marshaled a large group of water agencies and local governments behind water conservation efforts that now include a rainwater harvesting program. Per-capita usage in the Atlanta region fell 15% from 2006 to 2009 while the population has increased 6%.

Florida's beef with Atlanta is real, but so is our own failure so far to aggressively take the kind of steps we need to in our own back yard

NEWS SERVICE FLORIDA



NEXT HOUSE SPEAKER WANTS STATEWIDE WATER PLANNING

By JIM TURNER

THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

Contact news@newsserviceflorida.com

THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, December 2, 2013

As the Senate pursues an ambitious \$220 million plan to redirect water and reduce pollutants in South Florida, the next House speaker wants lawmakers to consider a broader approach to the vast water problems confronting the entire state.

Rep. Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, wants lawmakers to factor in water issues faced by the agriculture industry and drinking-water sources, as well as problems facing Florida's freshwater springs, the Apalachicola River region in Florida's Panhandle and the northern Indian River Lagoon, as they prepare to allocate money for water-resource projects in next year's budget. "The water issues need to be approached in a comprehensive fashion," Crisafulli said Monday. "It's important we don't get too laser-focused on one region of the state, but look at it from the standpoint of the overall needs of the state."

The directive from Crisafulli, who is in line to become House speaker in November 2014, sets up expected political horse-trading over funding for water issues between the House and Senate at a time when the Legislature has the prospects of a budget surplus entering the session.

The Senate plan was crafted by Sen. Joe Negron, R-Stuart, who chairs the budget-writing Appropriations Committee. Negron's plan was initially conceived with a focus on improving water quality in the St. Lucie estuary, which during the summer was inundated with nutrient-heavy waters released from nearby Lake Okeechobee under the direction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As the plan advanced out of Negron's Select Committee on Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee Basin, it included proposals by Gov. Rick Scott to increase the flow of water to the south, and by Senate Majority Leader Lizbeth Benacquisto, R-Ft. Myers, to assist the Caloosahatchee Estuary on the west side of the state.

"It's exciting to see state leaders competing over who will do the most for the environment," said Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon of Florida. "This is something we haven't seen in a long time." Draper, who has complimented Negron for being able to quickly put together a plan, agreed Monday with most of the general approach pitched by Crisafulli.

Negron said doesn't believe a proposed statewide approach will impact the Lake Okeechobee and Everglades improvement plan. "The more focus we have on water

policies the better," Negron said. "We can do more than one thing at one time." Negron noted that more than \$10 million was budgeted for freshwater springs in the 2013 session and he expects more will be done next year. Also, the South Florida plan includes proposals to clean water that enters the lake from the Orlando region and \$20 million to remove muck from the northern Indian River Lagoon that stretches into Crisafulli's area of the Space Coast.

Crisafulli's general proposal is intended to "reject a limited parochial view" and provide flexible policies that water managers can adapt to rapidly changing circumstances that range from the pending impact of hurricanes to decisions of neighboring states on Florida's water supply. Crisafulli said putting a premium on water issues that benefit the state will be a priority of his term as House speaker.

In an opinion piece for the Orlando Sentinel on Sunday, Crisafulli wrote that "focusing on one community at a time in a piecemeal approach can lead to new problems down the road." His focus will be primarily getting "tangible" projects in place rather than instituting new policies.

Crisafulli's comments echo sentiments from Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam that lawmakers need to remember that South Florida isn't the only part of the state where water quality and quantity have become dire issues. "There is an extraordinary bias to the south at the expense of the springs and Apalachicola Bay," Putnam told reporters on Nov. 18.

Florida has filed a federal lawsuit against Georgia about a shortage of freshwater flowing into Apalachicola Bay. Florida argues that heavy water consumption in the metro Atlanta area has reduced downstream flows into the bay, endangering Apalachicola's oyster industry.

The budget proposal from Putnam's department for the 2014 session includes \$10 million to address nutrient reduction practices and water retention efforts in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, \$8.2 million for best management practices in the northern Everglades, and \$5.2 million to reduce agricultural nutrients from reaching the state's northern freshwater springs.

The Department of Environmental Protection has included in its budget proposals \$75 million that Gov. Rick Scott proposed for Everglades restoration efforts, \$40 million for environmental land acquisition, and \$15 million for springs restoration, up from the \$10 million designated during the 2013 session.

The proposals are being considered by Scott, who will offer a budget plan before the 2014 legislative session. The governor has a couple of items among Negron's list, including \$90 million that would be spread over three years to bridge a 2.6-mile section of the Tamiami Trail west of Miami.

Other provisions in the Senate plan include \$40 million to speed construction of the state's portion of a C-44 reservoir and stormwater treatment area for the Indian River Lagoon-South Restoration Project; \$32 million for projects tied to ensuring that all surface-water discharges into the Everglades Protection Area meet water quality standards; and a request for the Army Corps to give DEP authority to regulate releases when the risk of dike failure around Lake Okeechobee is less than 10 percent. -END-

Fragile Springs

Diving into history of Florida's springs

By Bill Thompson

Halifax Media Services

Published: Sunday, December 1, 2013 at 8:33 p.m.

Throughout this year, the state of Florida has been celebrating the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Juan Ponce de Leon, the Spanish explorer credited with discovering and christening the state.

While the myth that de Leon's quest was tied to the hunt for a fountain of youth has been thoroughly debunked, the myth endures, with Florida's history closely associated with the history and usage of its unique springs.

Harley Means, assistant state geologist for the Florida Geological Survey's geological investigative section, said most Florida springs developed 20 million to 25 million years ago.

They are, essentially, large sinkholes.

Millions of years ago, once the seas had sufficiently receded to expose the Florida peninsula to rainfall, the slightly acidic rainwater ate away at the limestone landscape, Means said.

The voids created by that action subsequently reached a depth where the groundwater beneath pushed through the Earth's surface.

Almost all of the state's springs are located north of Interstate 4, Means said, because that part of Florida is richest in the karst terrain that holds limestone.

And the history of the springs continues to evolve, Means noted.

Much like new sinkholes continue to open, the chasms from which existing springs sprang continue to grow with each new rain.

"It's imperceptible on a human scale," Means said, "but in geologic time, it's a constant process."

What also has been constant, for at least the past 12,000 years, is human reliance on the springs, said Scott Mitchell, executive director of the Silver River Museum in Silver Springs.

'MAGNETS FOR HUMANS'

Archaeologists have uncovered tools and weapons around springs across North Florida that date to the end of the last Ice Age, he said.

"As long as there have been people in Florida, they've been hanging around the springs," Mitchell said.

"Springs have always been magnets for human habitation. If you live out in the woods and have to make a living, they are the place to be."

Freshwater springs, he pointed out, were not just a source of water for the earliest Floridians, but also food and transportation.

Besides tools, weapons and pottery, scientists have found remains of turtles, alligators, white-tail deer, otters and other critters that pre-historic people captured and ate as the animals ventured near the water, Mitchell said.

And in a distant age when wetlands were a lot wetter, Native Americans in dug-out canoes could travel far from home by launching from a springhead, Mitchell noted.

“From Silver Springs you could float down to Orlando or up to Jacksonville, and never have to get out of the boat,” he said.

The arrival of the Spaniards continued the process. Mitchell said 16th-century Spanish missionaries following in de Leon's wake migrated to the areas inhabited by the Native Americans for the same reasons the Indians lived there.

Dale Cox, a retired journalist writing at the website exploresouthernhistory.com, notes that the most significant historical feature at Ichetucknee Springs, for example, is the Mission San Martin de Timucua, founded in 1608.

That mission, Cox writes, like others in Florida, was home to Catholic friars sent to convert Native Americans to Christianity. The site included a church, cemetery and a home for the priest.

“Springs were very clearly draws for early settlers and explorers,” Cox said in an email. “Almost all Florida springs, including Silver there in Ocala, are associated with a wide variety of prehistoric and historic sites.”

'BOWLS OF LIQUID LIGHT'

The march of time, and of new settlers to the Sunshine State, eventually meant tourists.

And springs were — and still are — a key destination.

Silver Springs is often credited as Florida's first major tourist attraction, drawing as many as 50,000 visitors a year by the 1870s.

The journalist Edward King, who in 1874 published an account of his tour through the defeated Confederacy, called attention to Silver Springs during a steamboat journey down the Ocklawaha River.

“Silver Springs is certainly one of the wonders of the world,” King wrote. “The tradition that it is the 'Fountain of Youth,' of which the aborigines spoke so enthusiastically to Ponce de Leon, seems firmly founded.”

The city of White Springs, however, disputes Silver Springs' claim to be Florida's first tourist trap.

The Library of Congress has in its collection a picture of a four-story bathhouse built in the early 20th century around White Springs, in Hamilton County near the Georgia state line.

The caption for the artwork recalls that the spring was “recognized for its medicinal qualities by Indians, settlers and subsequent developers of this locale.” The building featured examination and treatment rooms, a concessions area and dressing rooms.

On its website, the city of White Springs maintains that the “healing powers” of the spring water, which was bordered by rocks covered with sulfur crystals, attracted visitors from as far away as

Philadelphia as early as 1832.

That, in essence, made White Springs the first tourist destination in Florida, city officials claim.

Today, White Springs is more renowned as the home of the Stephen Foster Memorial Museum and the annual Florida Folk Festival. That's because the springs went dry in 1990.

Today, although tourists — divers, canoeists, swimmers and tubers — are still a key audience, it is the state of Florida that's doing the beckoning.

Many of Florida's best known springs — including in this region Blue, DeLeon, Rainbow, Ichetucknee, Manatee and Peacock — are in state hands, incorporated into the state park system.

The state has been acquiring them since 1949 and now owns 17 major springs, the Tampa Bay Times reported last year.

Silver Springs joined them as part of the park system on Oct. 1.

Florida's environmental regulators are doing so because the future of the state's springs does not appear as glorious as their past.

Pumping to feed a thirsty populace has depleted the flow of many springs, while pollution has robbed them of their clarity.

In 2000, a special task force appointed by then-Gov. Jeb Bush noted that threatened springs were places where children were baptized, where towns were born and tourists came for healing.

Preserving them was vital for ecological and economic reasons, the panel concluded, in recommending a series of steps to reverse their decline.

"Each is a special place to someone, and each has a story," the report said of Florida's springs. "The implementation of the recommendations contained in this report will help ensure that Florida's 'bowls of liquid light' will sparkle for the grandchildren of the children who play in Florida's springs today."

Bill Thompson writes for the Gainesville Sun. Read more about the series at fragilesprings.com.

Subject: Fwd: Beruff won't finish term on SWFWMD board

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Nov 25, 2013 8:36 am

To: WRWSA <richardowen@wrwsa.org>

Cc: "<nsmith@wrwsa.org>" <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Nov 25, 2013 at 10:35 AM

Subject: Beruff won't finish term on SWFWMD board

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Beruff won't finish term on water board

By [Jeremy Wallace](#), Herald-Tribune

Manatee County developer Carlos Beruff told the Lakewood Ranch Republican Club on Friday that he expects to cut short his tenure on the [Southwest Florida Water Management District Board](#), which oversees regional water policy.

Beruff was appointed for a term that runs until March 1, 2017. In May he was elected to a 1-year term as the 13-member board's chairman.

But Beruff told 30 people at a lunch meeting on Friday that when his tenure as chairman of the water district ends, he's intends to resign from the board, feeling he's accomplished what he set out to do - which is bring a business approach to the agency's spending.

Beruff pushed back at the criticism that he got on the board to help him with his development projects. He said if anything he feels SWFMD officials have been tougher on him because they want to avoid any appearance of looking like he is getting special treatment.

Beruff used most of his hour-long presentation at the Republican Club meeting to highlight the reforms he's pursued since he was appointed to SWFMD in July 2009 by then Gov. Charlie Crist.

When he first got there, Beruff said the agency had almost 900 employees. Even though the state was in a recession and permit requests were way down, Beruff said the agency was spending money and hiring employees like the economy was booming. He said as a businessman that didn't make any sense to him.

"Even though permits were dropping, they were still hiring staff and not cutting any overhead," Beruff said.

But during the last four years, the agency has slashed budgets, reduced staff and changed leadership. The agency now has less than 600 employees.

While some critics argue that has all made the agency less capable of enforcing environmental rules to protect water resources, Beruff said the agency is providing services even better than it was before and is managing taxpayer dollars better.

The SWFMD board is one of just three boards Beruff serves on. He is also a member of the State College of Florida board of trustees and the Sarasota-Bradenton Airport Authority.

Beruff told the Republican club that his message to any group he talks to now is more of a public service message to convince more regular people to join boards and commissions to bring fresh eyes to agencies that can be otherwise be slow to change. When he first was getting involved he did so because he wanted to find out how tax dollars are really being handled by the government, he said..

"Is there as much waste in government as I think there is?" Beruff said of his motivation.

Beruff said despite what some critics say he's not into joining the boards just for a title or perceived power. Beruff said he only wants to be on the boards and commissions if there is something that really needs to be done. He said he doesn't want to be just sitting in some meeting to hold a title.

"I don't want a badge, I want to do something," Beruff said in an interview after the meeting.

Asked about the problems Florida's open government laws present for public officials by someone in the audience, Beruff said he's fully supportive of the laws and says there should be transparency in government.

"The good outweighs the bad by a thousand times," Beruff said.

Subject: Silver Springs Labeled by NPS as Threatened

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Nov 25, 2013 8:16 am

To: WRWSA <richardowen@wrwsa.org>

Cc: "<nsmith@wrwsa.org>" <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

SILVER SPRINGS — The National Park Service plans to label Florida's iconic Silver Springs as threatened in an upcoming report because of its elevated level of contaminants and depleted water flow, officials said.

A federal monitor visited the springs earlier this year as part of the government's National Natural Landmarks program.

Silver Springs' downgraded status will be reflected in the next program update, and it will be the first time the park service has needed to call attention to the springs' decline, said Mike Litterst, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Carolyn Davis, the landmarks program regional coordinator who visited Silver Springs in February, tells the Ocala Star-Banner that the downgraded status was no surprise.

Davis reported findings that are well known to local and state environmental regulators, water managers, geologists and engineers: Water quality has decreased as nitrate levels increased over the decades, and the drop-off in water quantity is likely linked to a combination of over-pumping and an extended drought.

The designation as threatened "says you've got something very important, so let's see if we can turn this around," said Davis.

"It's a nationally significant landmark, and I've got my fingers crossed," Davis said.

Parks officials release the reports about the country's natural landmarks every two years.

Davis said that because of budget cuts, inspections have become less frequent.

They are supposed to come every two or three years, but Silver Springs had not been inspected since the early 1990s, she said.

Subject: Officials fear future water shortages
From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Nov 25, 2013 7:50 am
To: WRWSA <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: "<nsmith@wrwsa.org>" <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

Officials fear future water shortages

Livi Stanford | Staff Writer livi.stanford@dailycommercial.com | Posted: Sunday, November 24, 2013 6:00 pm

Water experts and county officials sounded the alarm Thursday, stating an alternative water source to groundwater use must be found in the next five years to avoid a direct effect on lake levels and the quality of life in South Lake.

"We shouldn't be afraid of planning," Commissioner Sean Parks said. "If we don't plan for water, it could get expensive for you and for all of us. If we lose our water resources, you are losing a lot of sales tax and tourist development dollars. These things fund infrastructure, roads and schools."

A panel of experts from the Lake County Water Authority and the St. Johns River Water Management District weighed in on the problem of dwindling reserves in the Floridan Aquifer at the first annual South Lake Water Summit.

The three-hour summit held at Clermont City Hall drew a large crowd, including public officials and state representatives.

New growth and development have resulted in more water being withdrawn from the Floridan Aquifer, they said especially with the increase in demand only expected to rise.

But finding alternative water sources is an expensive proposition, especially considering the high demand for reclaimed water and astronomical costs for other sources such as surface bodies of water.

Parks said the issue weighed heavily on him after a conversation he had a few years ago with Fred Sommer, who organized the first triathlon event in Clermont.

"If you lose the lakes and water resources, you will lose my business and many other businesses, and the quality of life," Parks said of Sommer's cautionary words.

Parks stressed there is an action plan to address the issue.

"We will follow up with action," he said. "You can in a sense hold us accountable to that."

Between now and 2025 the population is expected to increase 56 percent, according to county officials.

While the lack of rainfall is a major factor affecting low lake levels, groundwater withdrawals, and human impacts, such as surface water diversions and irrigation, are also contributors, the panelists said.

"There is a demand of 300 million gallons of water by 2035 and we only have 50 million gallons that can be met by our traditional source," said Alan Oyler, consultant for St. Johns River Water Management District, who is assisting the South Lake Regional Water Initiative. "All of the utilities are going to have to find 250 million gallons of water. For us to meet project demands, we are going to have to import water from someplace else."

Groveland Mayor Tim Loucks, who founded the South Lake Regional Water Initiative with Parks, said there is not one specific cause of the declining lake levels.

"Rainfall does affect the lake levels and does affect the Floridan Aquifer," he said. "Once the aquifer goes down, the lakes begin to seep."

Officials said the most feasible and cost effective alternative water source is reclaimed water from Water Conserv II, the largest world reuse project in Orange County, which "combines agricultural irrigation with aquifer recharge via rapid infiltration basins," according to information from Conserv II.

But, there are challenges to overcome in this area, as Conserv II officials previously said the demand for reclaimed water is only growing; and they must also meet their own regional needs.

Otherwise, Oyler said the only alternative sources are Yankee Lake, Taylor Creek, Water Co-op, and OUC/Orlando, with the closest alternative resource nine miles away.

Officials said residents would pay \$1.62 per 1,000 gallons to withdraw the water from Conserv II compared with \$11.22 per 1,000 gallons to acquire it from Yankee Lake.

"That is why planning is important, and I don't want to be on the hook for being responsible for doing a project like that," Parks said referring to the alternatives to Conserv II.

Mike Perry, executive director of the Lake County Water Authority, said the cumulative rainfall deficit since 2004 is 62.35 inches, equivalent to 5.2 feet.

"We are 10 inches below the annual average just for this year," he said.

The panelists gave presentations on low lake levels, the Central Florida Water Initiative, and the South Lake Regional Water Initiative.

The South Lake Regional Water Initiative, consisting of the South Lake Chamber of Commerce, the county and the municipalities of Clermont, Groveland, Minneola, Mascotte and Montverde, have come together to address "regional solutions in the critical areas of reclaimed water distribution, minimum flows and levels of the region's lakes and rivers, and alternative water supplies and conservation"

They are working parallel to the Central Florida Water Initiative, to find a cost effective and alternative water source.

For more than an hour, residents addressed to the members of the panel questions and concerns. Numerous residents expressed frustration about Niagara Bottling LLC withdrawing 484,000 gallons per day from the aquifer, with a pending permit to withdraw more water.

Meanwhile, others said sand mines, water diversions and irrigation are affecting lake levels.

Ginger D'Amico, angrily spoke out against Niagara's use of the aquifer.

"I don't understand the St. Johns River Water Management District in allowing a company as big as Niagara to withdraw 484,000 gallons a day out of the aquifer while we have to potentially pay \$11.22 per 1,000 gallons," she said.

In response, Tom Bartol, water supply bureau chief for the St. Johns River Water Management District, said: "There is this notion that bottled water is an important part of water from the aquifer. It amounts to less than half a percent."

Even so, Darrell Reeves was still not convinced, expressing his worries about continued withdrawals by the company.

"All you people say our lakes are going down and saying we should conserve," he said. "We can't turn around and let a private for profit company suck the water out. I don't want to tell my kids they can't go on the lake because some profit company is taking our water and shipping it out."

Parks said he agreed that the company should contribute if they are going to commercially benefit from it.

But, he said, in order to prevent such a company from receiving a permit, the state statute must change.

Peter Brown said he lives in the heart of the aquifer and said "there is a massive amount of water being destroyed by the sand mines of Lake County."

While mentioning that he could not speak on a pending case before the county commission concerning a proposed sand mine in the heart of the Wellness Way Sector Plan, Parks said "there are absolutely serious issues (with sand mines) on water resources and traffic, which also affect adjacent lands."

In an interview Friday, Oyler said it is hard to judge what impact sand mines might have on lake levels.

"It will depend on how the sand mine is using water or diverting (it) for their use," he said.

One resident questioned the sector plan and whether it would simply bring 44,000 additional people, amounting to urban sprawl.

The sector plan would transform 16,000 acres in the southeast corner of the county into a hub for high-tech health care jobs and other industries. It is expected to attract people who like to bike, walk and enjoy an active, healthy lifestyle.

"Despite whether the sector plan was in the place, 48,000 people could live in that area," Parks said. "If we did nothing the population growth would occur in piecemeal growth fashion, along with the same issues. Unless we plan."

There are plans for future summits to address the issues.

Subject: Nation-wide Cow Shortage & Adena Springs...

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Nov 22, 2013 7:27 am

To: WRWSA <richardowen@wrwsa.org>

Cc: "<nsmith@wrwsa.org>" <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

Florida cattle industry is poised to grow to help offset a nationwide shortage of cows (11/21/13)

The Florida cattle industry is poised to grow to help offset a nationwide shortage of cows because of drought and as land for other uses becomes less in demand, said **Jim Handley**, executive vice president of the **Florida Cattlemen's Association**, according to [The Gainesville Sun](#).

Handley was keynote speaker at the Farm-City Week luncheon Wednesday sponsored by two local **Kiwanis** clubs, the **Alachua County Cattlemen's Association**, the **Alachua County Farm Bureau** and the **University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences**.

Recent droughts in the West and Midwest have led to a 61-year low in cattle population, and economists predict record profits over the next three to five years, Handley said.

An affiliate of the **Mormon Church** that recently bought 383,000 acres from **The St. Joe Co.** in the Florida Panhandle will convert some of the timberland to cattle pasture, he said. The church already owns the largest cow-calf operation in the nation with 44,000 head at **Deseret Ranches** in Central Florida.

Demand for local and grass-fed beef is leading to expanded operations for finished cattle, a small but growing sector of the Florida cattle industry, Handley said.

That includes plans to expand **Adena Springs Ranch** in Marion County, as well as cattle farms in Suwannee and Sumter counties.

Subject: Fwd: Adam Putnam continues to push for statewide water policy

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Nov 21, 2013 1:06 pm

To: WRWSA <richardowen@wrwsa.org>

Cc: "<nsmith@wrwsa.org>" <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Nov 21, 2013 at 3:05 PM

Subject: Adam Putnam continues to push for statewide water policy

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Adam Putnam Continues Push for Statewide Water Policy

By: [Jim Turner News Service of Florida](#) | Posted: November 21, 2013 3:55 AM

"There is an extraordinary bias to the south at the expense of the springs and Apalachicola Bay," Putnam told reporters in the Capitol this week.

As the Florida Legislature is being asked to consider a \$220 million package to redirect water and reduce pollutants flowing from Lake Okeechobee, Putnam wants lawmakers to consider other issues. That includes the challenges of pollutants entering the state's springs, the St. Johns River and Tampa Bay, reducing pollution entering Lake Okeechobee from the north and the declining conditions of Apalachicola Bay in the Panhandle.

Florida has filed a federal lawsuit against Georgia about a shortage of fresh water flowing into Apalachicola Bay. Florida argues that heavy water consumption in the metro Atlanta area has reduced downstream flows into the bay, endangering Apalachicola's oyster industry.

"If the Everglades were suffering from inadequate freshwater flows coming from Georgia, the whole state would have a level of interest, and a level of decibels, much higher than what they seem to have for Franklin County, and that's not right," Putnam said.

Putnam addressed his concerns about the need for a statewide water-management plan in October to members of the House and Senate.

The appearances before House and Senate committees came before the Senate Select Committee on Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee Basin proposed a \$220 million package that stems from pollutants being discharged from the lake into waterways such as the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers.

The Senate's package includes a wide range of projects, such as \$90 million that would be spread over three years to bridge a 2.6-mile section of the Tamiami Trail west of Miami. Groups such as the Everglades Foundation have called the highway "one of the most prominent dams" blocking the natural flow of the River of Grass from the lake to the southern Everglades.

Putnam said he would increase focus on the northern Everglades and areas north of Lake Okeechobee. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers discharges water from the lake to ease pressure on a dike that surrounds the massive water body.

"If you can slow the water down from getting into the lake, or treat it before it gets into the lake, then you're having an impact on what the potential harm is to the dike and what the storage capacity of the lake is," Putnam said.

The department's budget proposal for the 2013 session includes \$10 million to address nutrient reduction practices and water retention efforts in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, \$8.2 million for best management practices in the northern Everglades, and \$5.2 million to reduce agricultural nutrients from reaching the state's northern freshwater springs.

The Department of Environmental Protection has included in its budget proposals \$75 million that Gov. Rick Scott has proposed for Everglades restoration efforts, \$40 million for environmental land acquisition, and \$15 million for springs restoration, up from the \$10 million designated during the 2013 session.

The proposals are being considered by Scott, who will offer a budget plan before the 2014 legislative session.

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