

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

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

Date: Wed, Mar 4, 2015 at 9:55 PM

Subject: Despite protests from environmentalists, its easy sailing for House water bill

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Despite protests from environmentalist, it's easy sailing for House water bill

@mikevansickler

Times Herald/Tallahassee Bureau

Environmental groups sent alerts marked "URGENT" warning members about HB 7003 minutes before it was taken up Wednesday afternoon on the House floor.

"With this bill, Florida legislators are protecting developers and Big Ag at the expense of the public," said an e-mail blast from David Guest, managing attorney at the Florida office of Earthjustice.

"HB 7003 falls short on protecting Florida's water," said a flier by Audubon Florida.

"Please call your State House Representative and ask him or her to VOTE NO ON HB 7003 because it falls short on springs protection, conservation and Lake Okeechobee cleanup," said an e-mail from 1000 Friends of Florida.

Yet for all the fuss, the bill is expected to easily pass Thursday in a chamber where Republicans hold a 80-39 advantage over Democrats. After a day of polite questioning from his caucus members, Minority Leader Mark Pafford, D-West Palm Beach, acknowledged that it's possible a majority of Democrats will end up supporting the legislation, making it the first bill to clear the House in 2015.

"Thank goodness for the Senate," Pafford said.

Whatever role the Senate has in tempering HB 7003 will be decided in the next 58 days. But for now, with the support of House Republicans and Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam, the 94-page bill has momentum.

Its sponsor, bow-tie bedecked Rep. Matthew Caldwell, R-Lehigh Acres, touts the bill as science-based overhaul of a system that will strengthen water planning, modernize the restoration of the northern Everglades region, expand the protections of natural springs and reduce needless regulation of agribusinesses and developers.

"What you see here is a product that meets the expectations of the stakeholders and I think it's a good product," Caldwell told reporters on Wednesday.

On Thursday, he deftly handled questioning from Democrats who asked if the bill eliminated a deadline to clean-up Lake Okeechobee. On page 66, in fact, a Jan. 1, 2015 deadline to establish water quality to clean up the lake is taken out of statute.

Caldwell said the bill creates basin management plans and “best management practices” that will govern, and improve, the water quality of Lake Okeechobee.

It’s up to state lawmakers to fund the subsequent projects those plans determine would be necessary to do that, Caldwell said.

He said that even though the state was adopting a new approach in its oversight of agribusinesses that dump waste into water, it was still going to be under the control of the Department of Environmental Protection.

But the Department of Agriculture, which promotes those same agribusinesses, clearly is expanding its role. It adopts the “best management practices” that farmers would follow. It’s not clear how the state will enforce the land management guidelines to make sure anyone actually follows them.

For instance, the Department of Agriculture has eight inspectors to patrol the 3.5 million acres north of Lake Okeechobee that would replace the permitting system, which is enforced by fines, with the best management practices. How do eight inspectors patrol such a large area to make sure the practices are being implemented correctly or at all?

“At the end of the day, it’s on DEP to make sure the water quality standards are being met,” Caldwell said.

But how many state workers does it take to inspect the properties?

“When it comes to all of the agencies, I’m going to look to the executive branch to let us know whether they think they’re able to adequately meet the goals that we set,” Caldwell said.

Pafford said the bill was “a lot of words without anything to back it up.” There’s no price tag attached to how much any of this will cost or a clear understanding of how the new system will work, he said.

“This is a very complex bill that missed a very important set of committees,” Pafford said. “That’s not a great way to establish comprehensive water policy.”

Yet it’s a cinch to pass Thursday, thanks to it being the top priority of House Speaker Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island.

Crisafulli likes to say his proposed overhaul of the state’s water management system represents a modern, scientific approach.

But the University of Florida released a study this week that provides ammo to environmentalists who argue that the best way to the state to divert pollution is to purchase land south of Lake Okeechobee. Florida has an option to buy 46,000 acres of U.S. Sugar land that was part of a deal struck by former Gov. Charlie Crist. It allows the state to buy the land at market value, but the option expires in October.

U.S. Sugar has development plans on that land, which, if approved, would make the land more valuable. Crisafulli, who is tight with U.S. Sugar lobbyists, opposes the purchase of the land, saying it isn’t necessary. If farmers follow “best management practices” and action plans they can reduce enough pollution to make a difference, Crisafulli says.

The study states otherwise.

“Achieving substantial reduction in lake-triggered discharges to the estuaries and substantial improvement toward the dry season Everglades demand target will require additional land between the lake and the EPA, e.g., the current U.S. Sugar land purchase option,” the study states. “The particular 46,000 acres at issue may be useful for additional storage and treatment or may serve as lands that the state could trade with other agricultural interests in the area if land in different locations are needed.”

Caldwell said the U.S. Sugar land isn’t the best option. He said it would make more sense for the state upgrade the A1 Reservoir could be upgraded to store “far more water” than the U.S. Sugar land could. He said it would be cheaper because it wouldn’t need as much remediation as the U.S. Sugar land.

Both Caldwell and Crisafulli are seemingly unconcerned about how far apart the House is right now from the Senate. SB 918, sponsored by Sen. Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, provides bigger protection zones for natural springs, an advisory board on Amendment 1 spending, and doesn’t tinker with the northern Everglades protection area like Caldwell’s bill does.

The Senate is expected to pass that bill next week, when the negotiations between the two chambers can begin.

“Water is an issue that’s important to the House,” Crisafulli told reporters Tuesday. “I know it’s important to the Senate as well. The sooner we start the conversations on it the better off we are. It’s not a very easy issue to work out.”

The Senate is the last best hope for environmentalists like Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon Florida.

“Our goal for today was just to get enough debate on the bill so that the Senate actually says, ‘Wait a minute, this is not just a kumbaya bill, this is something we really need to be the mature body and seriously look at this.’”

Posted by Michael Van Sickler on Wednesday, Mar. 4, 2015 at 7:34 PM

Read more here: <http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2015/03/despite-protests-from-environmentalist-its-easy-sailing-for-house-water-bill.html#storylink=cpy>

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

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

Date: Wed, Mar 4, 2015 at 9:45 PM

Subject: HOUSE POISED TO APPROVE WATER PLAN

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

HOUSE POISED TO APPROVE WATER PLAN

By JIM TURNER

THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

TALLAHASSEE, March 4, 2015.....The House is set Thursday to approve a measure that would alter water policies across the state, implementing changes that have been backed by business groups and drawn the ire of environmentalists.

House members Wednesday reviewed the wide-ranging measure (HB 7003), which was rushed through the committee process as lawmakers work to implement a number of changes needed to match a voter-approved constitutional amendment about land and water conservation.

The House's water policy focuses on the state's natural springs, management of water across Central Florida and the flow of water out of Lake Okeechobee.

The plan was crafted separately from measures that are expected to address the increased funding that voters approved in the November constitutional amendment for water and land projects. How the money is eventually used isn't expected to be settled until late in the 60-day legislative session, which began Tuesday.

House State Affairs Chairman Matt Caldwell, a North Fort Myers Republican who has spearheaded the water bill, dismissed concerns about opposition.

"By and large the detractors, I find, just think there are other things we should be doing in addition to this," Caldwell said after Wednesday's floor session. "Here is a product that meets the expectations of most stakeholders, and I think it's a good product."

House Minority Leader Mark Pafford, D-West Palm Beach, argued there is little regulatory "teeth" to the changes, which have no dollars attached and received little committee oversight.

"What you had is a (proposed committee bill) pop up in State Affairs, hit Appropriations without a dollar, and then end up on the floor," Pafford said. "I don't think that is a great way to establish a comprehensive water policy when the bill misses Apalachicola (Bay) and everything south of Lake Okeechobee."

Despite his concerns, Pafford said he couldn't say that all Democrats will vote in opposition.

The policy changes, which differ from several key parts of a Senate proposal (SB 918), in part would impose what are known as "best management practices" for natural springs, the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee. Also, water-management districts would be directed to implement a water-management plan across Central Florida.

Environmentalists contend that "best management practices" are simply guidelines that fail to mandate needed improvements.

David Guest, managing attorney for Earthjustice in Florida, released a statement after the floor session saying the House measure protects "developers and Big Ag at the expense of the public."

Audubon Florida Executive Director Eric Draper, a lobbyist on environmental issues, said supporters of the constitutional amendment, known as Amendment 1, are more focused on the Senate's water policy approach.

"Our goal for today was just to try and get enough debate so the Senate says, 'Wait a minute this is not a kumbaya bill,' " Draper said after the House session.

The Senate version is heavily focused on protecting the state's natural springs, which were among Florida's first tourist attractions and now also are used as sources for bottled water.

Unlike in the Senate approach, the House does not include springs-protection zones, which would regulate the impact of septic tanks and the flow of storm water and agricultural runoff into springs.

The House plan also doesn't address the declining status of the dike around Lake Okeechobee or the Panhandle's Apalachicola Bay, which continues to be enmeshed in a legal battle between Florida, Georgia and Alabama over upstream waters.

Caldwell said those are issues that need to be addressed by the federal government.

-END-

3/4/15



Dunedin loses best-water crown to Hernando

By [Eric Horchy](#)



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

According to a five-judge panel, Hernando County Utilities produces the best water in the seven-county area of the Florida Section of the American Water Works Association Region IV. Dunedin was the top finisher in 2014.

DUNEDIN — In an era of bottled water obsession, Friday's event at Honeymoon Island State Park aimed to promote the tap.

Seventeen municipal water producers came to Dunedin for the 2015 Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest, hosted by the Florida Section of the American Water Works Association Region IV. The region brings together utilities from a seven-county region that encompasses Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sumter.

According to the region contest chairperson Pamela London-Exner, entrants bring water samples to be inspected by a panel of five judges.

"It's mainly judged by the taste, the odor and also the color and clarity of the water," London-Exner said.

Judges this year included Oldsmar Mayor Doug Bevis and Pinellas County Commissioner Dave Eggers, a former mayor of Dunedin.

Once all samples were thoroughly inspected Friday afternoon, a new champion was officially crowned. Hernando County Utilities Department unseated last year's winner, Dunedin.

As the champion, Hernando received an engraved plaque and gets to display the FSAWWA Region IV trophy for a year. The county will also represent the region at the state contest in May at the Florida Water Resources Conference in Orlando.

The American Water Works Association has functioned nationally since 1881 and the Florida Section was established in 1926 with a mission of protecting public health by providing safe and sufficient water supplies.

Subject: Fw: Lagoon seagrass, projects report, and permitting tip
From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Date: Mon, Mar 02, 2015 11:49 am
To: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Water News <waternews@sjrwmd.com>
To: disalz@yahoo.com
Sent: Monday, March 2, 2015 11:03 AM
Subject: Lagoon seagrass, projects report, and permitting tip

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

St. Johns River Water Management District

Water News

News, meetings
and notices

March 2, 2015

Lagoon seagrass mapping shows gain in acreage

The 2013 mapping of Indian River Lagoon seagrasses provides some good news. The mapping reveals a 12 percent gain in seagrass acreage compared to 2011, which is an encouraging, initial sign of recovery.

Between the summers of 2013 and 2014, St. Johns River Water Management District scientists also recorded moderate increases or no loss of seagrass at 52 out of 69 study sites. The remaining 17 sites either lost seagrass or have not recovered from the 100 percent loss that occurred between 2011 and 2012 following the massive bloom of phytoplankton known as the "superbloom" in the fall of 2011.

Recovery has been slowest in the central Banana River Lagoon and in the Indian River Lagoon between Cocoa and Wabasso, which both exhibited large losses from 2011 to 2012. Future trends will depend on the combination of conditions, such as water temperatures, salinity levels and human impacts.

Seagrasses in the lagoon are mapped using aerial photography every two to three years, and they are surveyed visually twice a year.

Updates on lagoon conditions and lagoon-related events and projects are available on the District's [Indian River Lagoon news page](#).

Annual report on District projects

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](#)

Lobbyist registration requirements

Contacts

District staff contacts for:

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

[How to contact your local government](#)

About us

The St. Johns River Water

available online

A progress report on dozens of District projects is now available on the District's website. The [2015 Annual Consolidated Report](#) includes the:

- Strategic Plan Annual Report
- Minimum Flows and Levels Priority List and Schedule
- Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan
- Water Resource Development Work Program and Alternative Water Supplies Annual Report
- Florida Forever Work Plan Annual Report
- Mitigation Donation Annual Report

The report provides a detailed look at District accomplishments in fiscal year 2013-2014, including the status of 20 strategic priorities; upcoming plans for developing minimum flows and levels, anticipated capital expenditures on projects; and water supply development projects that are under way.

Permitting tip

Save time and money with electronic submittals

Save time and money by submitting permit applications, responses to requests for additional information or compliance submittals electronically either through e-Permitting or by email. There is no need to follow up with a duplicate paper submittal.

In addition, pay fees and electronically sign and seal documents through the [District's e-Permitting site](#). For more information, contact customer support at (386) 329-4570 or [e-permit@sjrwmd.com](mailto:permit@sjrwmd.com).

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: Fwd: Tampa Bay Times Column: House speaker responds to Times editorial on water resources bill
From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Date: Fri, Feb 27, 2015 12:37 pm
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>
Attach: image001.jpg

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ryan Duffy <Ryan.Duffy@hkstrategies.com>
Date: February 26, 2015 at 3:37:03 PM EST
To: Ryan Duffy <Ryan.Duffy@hkstrategies.com>
Subject: Tampa Bay Times Column: House speaker responds to Times editorial on water resources bill

<http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/columns/column-house-speaker-responds-to-times-editorial-on-water-resources-bill/2219257>

Column: House speaker responds to Times editorial on water resources bill

Rep. Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island
Tampa Bay Times

Benjamin Franklin delivered the memorable line, "In this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." Were he alive today, I believe Franklin would amend his short list of inevitabilities with a declaration that Florida Republicans can solidly count on negative editorials from the Tampa Bay Times.

Such is the case with the Feb. 22 editorial, "Water plan is a step backward." It was written with a lack of understanding of the complexities of Florida law and paints the House with an anti-environmental brush that can only be held by the most uninformed and extreme.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has publicly described Florida's water quality system as one of the most sophisticated and comprehensive water resource protection and restoration programs in the nation. The House water policy bill (HB 7003) builds upon Florida's existing foundation of science-based assessment and establishment of water supply and resource development plans, total maximum daily loads, basin management action plans, minimum flows and levels, and recovery and prevention strategies to protect and restore priority springs and other water bodies.

The Times states that the House's proposed legislation will slow Everglades restoration, the single largest natural resource protection program in the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. Everglades restoration will benefit from the bill's proposal for all northern Everglades protection and restoration programs to be concentrated under a single plan. The Florida Legislature is committed to seeing Everglades restoration through to its end and has demonstrated this commitment by adopting a plan to invest more than \$800 million to the project over the next 10 years.

The editorial also criticizes how the proposed legislation deals with the challenges facing Central

Florida's water supply needs. The House bill embraces and strengthens the draft regional water supply plan by requiring the public entities involved in the initiative to enter a formal interagency agreement and to proceed with the development of the regional water supply plan.

The Times does not mention an amendment to the bill was unanimously approved by the House Appropriations Committee to require the Department of Environmental Protection to create multidisciplinary workgroups for the specific purpose of developing a septic tank assessment and remediation program to include prioritized funding needs. As amended, the bill authorizes the department to award grants to reduce nutrient impacts from onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems.

The Times did not get everything wrong. It correctly observes there is no funding in the House water policy bill. Yet it fails to tell readers it is customary for the Legislature to put funding in the appropriations act, not a policy bill. The General Appropriations Act, which will be developed during the upcoming session, will include funding not only for springs restoration, but also for Everglades restoration, water quality improvements, water supply and water resource development.

Though their criticism of House Republican efforts is as inevitable as death and taxes, the facts do not support the many accusations made by the Tampa Bay Times. The truth is, Democrats and Republicans in the state of Florida are working together to aggressively address the water quality and supply issues we face. The House's bipartisan legislation is a continuation of our ongoing commitment to the overall restoration of Florida's most precious natural resources. While we welcome thoughtful and serious debate on restoration ideas and ways to improve our environment, we will vigorously defend against mischaracterizations like those that were so carelessly dumped into the public discourse by the Tampa Bay Times.

Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, is speaker of the Florida House of Representatives.

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

Date: Tue, Feb 24, 2015 at 1:20 PM

Subject: LAWMAKERS WADE INTO AMENDMENT 1 POLICY, FUNDING

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

LAWMAKERS WADE INTO AMENDMENT 1 POLICY, FUNDING

By JIM TURNER

THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, February 24, 2015..... New rules for Florida waters will be one of the first bills the House takes up when the legislative session gets underway.

But don't expect that all aspects of a voter-approved initiative to conserve water and land will sail smoothly through the 60-day session that begins March 3.

As House members and senators hammer out new rules and new funding levels required by the initiative, known as Amendment 1, a wide array of suggestions has poured in from Gov. Rick Scott, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, environmentalists and business lobbyists.

A House water policy measure (HB 7003) is intended to reverse the degraded state of the state's natural springs, coordinate water management in Central Florida and reduce pollutants that now flow into Lake Okeechobee and later into estuaries to the east and west.

Yet the House proposal doesn't match the details of what the Senate wants. And that is just one of three parts of the Legislature's approach to implementing Amendment 1, a priority of both House Speaker Steve Crisafulli and Senate President Andy Gardiner.

The legislative leaders expressed confidence lawmakers will agree on measures that backers of the amendment will support.

"When we look at water policy, we're really interested in that oversight, and that oversight not just on water policy but Amendment 1 as a whole," said Gardiner, R-Orlando. "We think it's very important that the voters that supported Amendment 1 know that decisions are being based on critical need."

Supporters of Amendment 1 are concerned the efforts will fall short of the improvements needed to the state's waters.

"We have an opportunity with Amendment 1 dollars to do something special for Floridians and that is deliver on their desire to conserve land," said House Minority Leader Mark Pafford, D-West Palm Beach. "We don't have cliffs and mountains, and mountain streams. Everywhere you go in Florida you're basically standing on top of your water supply. That said, we have these dollars available to talk about a comprehensive plan and that's what we need to do. ... And I hope we get there."

Environmentalists say state needs have reached a critical juncture as Florida has become the nation's third most-populous state and draws nearly 100 million visitors a year. Also, growth will have to accommodate another 4 million people in the next 15 years

And a worry is that the money voters want for water and land maintenance and preservation will end up going to municipal and county utilities and storm-water projects.

"Last year there was \$80 million for non-recurring member water projects," said Janet Bowman of The Nature Conservancy. "That's the kind of stuff that I don't see being funded with Amendment 1 money. It isn't necessarily connected with any restoration strategy. It's just something that's from a local government's capital-improvement plan."

Yet the environmentalists' desires are being countered from the business community.

Associated Industry of Florida's H2O Coalition has called the environmentalist approach to the policy changes "rigid" and said it would "cause water shortages and stifle responsible growth."

THE MONEY

The issue most groups are waiting to see from lawmakers is the eventual breakdown of the money. And that likely will have to wait until deep into the session.

The amendment, backed by 75 percent of voters in November, requires 33 percent of the proceeds from a real-estate tax to go for land and water projects over the next two decades.

Amendment 1 is expected to provide about \$757 million for land and water projects in the fiscal year that starts July 1, up from around \$470 million in the current budget year.

The Senate has proposed a series of trust-fund bills (SB 576, SB 578, SB 580, SB 582, SB 584, and SB 586) that would designate a single pot within the Department of Environmental Protection to handle the Amendment 1 revenue. The measures also call for shifting about \$100 million from transportation funding that typically comes from the real-estate taxes and another \$100 million from affordable housing.

A group known as Florida's Land and Water Legacy, which led the amendment drive, has outlined a plan that would send \$150 million to the Everglades and South Florida estuaries and another \$150 million to the Florida Forever program for land acquisition, springs and trails. Also, \$90 million would go for land management, \$50 million to springs, \$25 million for rural family lands and \$20 million for beach management. The rest would cover debt service.

Meanwhile, Scott has offered his own spending plans, some of which are drawing criticism.

While touting a desire to provide funding on a recurring basis for Everglades restoration and springs maintenance, Scott during the upcoming fiscal year wants \$150 million for the Everglades, of which \$122 million would cover work already underway. He also wants lawmakers to allocate \$50 million for springs and \$178 million for debt service on bonds tied to the Florida Forever and Save Our Everglades programs. Another \$20 million would go for land purchases and restoration of the Kissimmee River.

Scott has drawn criticism, in part, because his plan includes a proposal to provide \$17.5 million for wastewater treatment in the Florida Keys, which environmentalists question as an allowed use under Amendment 1. Also, criticism has focused on Scott's proposal to use \$156 million to cover operating expenses at state agencies.

WATER POLICY

Absent from Scott's plan, in the eyes of Everglades proponents, is money to purchase U.S. Sugar land to use as reservoir for water sent out of Lake Okeechobee. That would prevent polluted water from going into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries.

The state has an option to buy 46,800 acres at fair-market price by October or any deal would require Florida to pay for an additional 106,200 acres.

Groups such as the Everglades Trust have launched what they describe as a "six-figure television, radio and online campaign" that urges Scott and lawmakers to include the U.S. Sugar purchase in any Amendment 1 spending plan.

"This is our last, best chance to protect drinking water, save the Everglades and reduce deadly discharges of pollution from the lake into the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers and estuaries --- and time is running out," said Mary Barley, President of The Everglades Trust.

The House and Senate have taken different approaches to water policy.

Rep. Matt Caldwell, a North Fort Myers Republican who is sponsoring the House water-policy proposal, said the measure isn't about establishing individual regional projects.

"This bill broadens the process," Caldwell said. "There are certainly a number of projects I think can qualify in the Amendment 1 language. As we look to cost share --- it's not exclusively a state issue --- it's going to be a county and city and regional authority issue as well."

The Senate version is heavily focused on protecting the state's long-neglected natural springs, which were among Florida's first tourist attractions and now also are used as sources for bottled water.

The House approach, considered more business friendly, in part would impose what are known as "best management practices" for natural springs, the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee. Also, it would direct water-management districts to implement a water-management plan across Central Florida.

Environmentalists had hoped for more.

"They're just plans," Audubon Florida Executive Director Eric Draper, a lobbyist on environmental issues, said of the proposed "best management practices."

"They have a few things that people are required to do, but there is no requirement," Draper added. "And the one for Lake Okeechobee is ineffective."

Unlike in the Senate approach, the House does not include springs-protection zones, which would regulate the impact of septic tanks and the flow of storm water and agricultural runoff into springs.

Sen. David Simmons, among a group of senators that tried last year to advance a springs measure, said any land purchases or use of Amendment 1 money for water treatment and sewers must show the allocation is tied to water-quality improvements.

"At the end of the day, the real test is, are we solving the problems of our environment?" Simmons, R-Altamonte Springs, said.

CONCERNS

As lawmakers try to reach agreement during the session, the key issues will involve water policy, how the increased funding will be used and the creation of a single trust fund to handle the money. Each comes with issues beyond the differences in approaches being taken by the House and Senate and have raised concerns from groups involved in the discussions.

Here are some of the concerns:

- Future money for affordable housing and transportation could face decreases as trust funds are shifted to meet the environmental funding requirements of Amendment 1.
- Proposals have been made to use the Amendment 1 money to replace dollars that now go to cover some of the daily operations of state environmental agencies.
- A desire by South Florida residents and Everglades conservationists to purchase U.S. Sugar land for a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee isn't currently addressed, and there doesn't appear to be an appetite from legislative leadership for the idea. Nor have lawmakers addressed the Panhandle's Apalachicola Bay, which continues to be enmeshed in a legal battle between Florida, Georgia and Alabama over upstream waters.
- Little attention so far has been given to the future management of existing state lands.
- Amendment 1 money could be used for projects that otherwise would be a matter for local governments or communities.

-END-

2/24/15

Tampa Bay Times: A Times Editorial

Editorial: House takes wrong approach on water

Friday, February 20, 2015 4:52pm

The Florida House is moving to quickly change how the state manages and preserves water that is more about pleasing developers and farmers than protecting the environment. The legislation delays the cleanup of the Everglades and puts new pressure on the water supply in fast-growing Central Florida.

The Florida House's move to quickly change how the state manages and preserves water is more about pleasing developers and farmers than protecting the environment. The legislation delays the cleanup of the Everglades and puts new pressure on the water supply in fast-growing Central Florida. The priorities are upside down, and the Senate should insist on a more balanced approach.

Supporters are framing the legislation (HB 7003) as a comprehensive approach to address both water resources and conservation. In reality, this is an action plan for contractors and agribusiness masquerading as a sound policy for growth.

The bill addresses a legitimate concern for meeting the water needs in fast-growing Central Florida, where water demand is expected to increase by 40 percent by 2035 as the population swells to 4 million. It pushes the state, the three water management boards and local governments in all or parts of five counties to better collaborate on their water needs. But the bill advances an aggressive strategy toward developing new water resources while remaining silent or vague on the role that conservation should play. And it leaves the door open to forcing taxpayers in distant parts of the 5,300-square-mile region to pay for water improvements for the Orlando suburbs. Thinking in regional terms makes sense. But this bill is too skewed toward the interests of the utilities.

The measure also expands the effort in South Florida to curb the runoff of pollution entering Lake Okeechobee, a critical step in cleaning up the Everglades. But it allows farmers to effectively opt out of clean water enforcement by the Department of Environmental Protection, leaving them instead to adopt a regimen under the Department of Agriculture that replaces tight permitting restrictions with new targets. There should be tougher monitoring and enforcement of the use of large amounts of water by agriculture interests, not less.

The House killed a Senate plan for restoring Florida's springs last year, arguing that Rep. Steve Crisafulli was the incoming House speaker and wanted a bolder and more

ambitious water bill to pass under his watch. This one's neither bold nor ambitious. Though it addresses the springs, the House doesn't indicate how much it would spend. It doesn't attack the source of nitrogen-choking pollution by cracking down on leaking septic tanks. And the bill requires that any plan to limit farm runoff must "balance" water quality with "agricultural productivity."

The bill sets the stage to water down the Everglades cleanup timetable, and it does nothing to advance efforts — from setting stronger antipollution rules to buying land in the basin — that would have a real impact. It gives the state more authority over local officials in determining how water resources are used. And the Agriculture Department will assume more of a regulatory role over the very industry the agency promotes.

This is not what Florida voters had in mind in overwhelmingly voting in November to enshrine water and land conservation in the state Constitution. And many aspects of this legislation work against the very projects that taxpayers will commit billions of dollars to in the coming years. The House has work to do; advertising this bill as a forward-looking water policy doesn't make it so. It is in many respects a step backward and tilts in favor of both large urban and agricultural water users rather than conservation and the concerns of individual Floridians.

Editorial: House takes wrong approach on water 02/20/15 [*Last modified: Friday, February 20, 2015 4:52pm*]

Dean's bills clear Senate panel

By Abdon Sidibe

Sunday, February 22, 2015 at 11:25 pm

Six bills designed to address the structure, breadth and implementation of Amendment 1 — the environmental conservation restoration measure — have passed their first hurdle: clearing the Florida Senate's Preservation and Conservation Committee.



Charlie Dean is a state senator, R-Inverness.

However, several interest groups watching the process have raised questions about the structure of a key portion of the bills — the elimination of the state's various trust funds, folding them into a single-source trust fund designed to manage the distribution of funds meant for environmental protection and restoration.

The sponsor of the bills, state Sen. Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, calls the formation of the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF), which will be housed within the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), as a "structure necessary for accountability and transparency."

Expenditure of the funds in the LATF within the APD must be for the purposes specified by the constitutional amendment and not to be commingled with the state's general revenue.

In 2014, Florida voters approved the constitutional amendment, proposed by Florida's Water and Land Legacy, to provide a dedicated funding source for water and land conservation and restoration.

It was overwhelmingly — 75 percent — approved by voters.

The amendment requires that, starting July 1, 2015, for 20 years, 33 percent of net revenues derived from the existing excise tax on documents — doc stamps — be deposited into the LATF.

The amendment requires that funds in the LATF be used only for the following purposes:

- + The acquisition and improvement of land, water areas and related property interests, including conservation easements, and resources for conservation lands including wetlands, forests and fish and wildlife habitat.
- + Wildlife management areas.
- + Lands that protect water resources and drinking water sources, including lands protecting the water quality and quantity of rivers, lakes, streams, springsheds and lands providing recharge for groundwater and aquifer systems;
- + Lands in the Everglades Agricultural Area and the Everglades Protection Area, as defined in article II, section 7(b) of the Florida Constitution.
- + Beaches and shores.
- + Outdoor recreation lands, including recreational trails, parks and urban open space.
- + Rural landscapes.
- + Working farms and ranches.
- + Historic or geologic sites.
- + Together with management, restoration of natural systems and the enhancement of public access or recreational enjoyment of conservation lands.

On Feb. 18, the Environmental Preservation Committee, of which Dean is chairman, unanimously voted to move five of the six bills to the next stage of the legislative process. The sixth bill also cleared the committee, but two members of the panel, Sens. Christopher Smith, D-Fort Lauderdale, and Darren Soto, D-Kissimmee, voted no and had issues with cuts worth some \$200 million in the transportation and affordable housing funds.

Senate Bills 576, 578, 580, 582, 584 and 586 will now move to the budget panel and Dean told all those who wanted their issues heard further to bring them up during the next round.

"Because we are all on the same team," Dean added.

Contact Chronicle reporter A.B. Sidibe at 352-564-2925 or asidibe@chronicleonline.com.

IN OUR OPINION

Editorial: Moving water

Published: Sunday, February 22, 2015 at 6:30 a.m.

In its latest efforts to reverse decades of overpumping and underconserving of our water supply, the St. Johns River Water Management District board last week approved its latest plan to save Silver Springs from further decline.

The “prevention-and-recovery strategy” is primarily aimed at restoring the flow of Silver Springs and, in turn, prevent the springs and Silver River from falling below the state-mandated “minimum flows and levels,” which is the point at which declining water flow becomes environmentally damaging.

While the proposed plan is big on spending and moving water around, it is short on any teeth that would force water users, residential or commercial, to conserve. The St. Johns board has historically been averse to mandating conservation and, as a result, is facing widespread water supply concerns.

What the plan does call for is plenty of “cost-sharing” projects, where water users — primarily large commercial and agricultural ones — would be given water-district funding to undertake conservation measures.

The plan also would encourage more water reclamation efforts, millions of gallons more, in the Silver Springs Basin, and also would look at relocating or retrofitting wellfields within the basin to reduce their impact on the springs and river. Again, the water district is proposing “cost-sharing” to achieve this.

Deserving closer scrutiny is a proposed pipeline from the Ocklawaha River that would carry water from the river, “when available,” and pump it into Silver Springs and surrounding wetlands to “recharge” the aquifer and increase the water flow of the springs. While no price tag has been put on this proposal — which St. Johns officials call “central” to the overall plan — rest assured, it will be substantial.

Also worthy of caution, we believe, is a part of the plan that would increase pumping more water from the Lower Floridan aquifer instead of the Upper Florida aquifer. While water officials say this would reduce the impact on water tables and spring flows, it is hardly proven science. In fact, many hydrologists suggest the Upper and Lower aquifer are merely differently levels of the same water source.

And with every plan involving the Ocklawaha, there is a proposal for “production of alternative water supply for potable use,” i.e., drinking water, and that plan, again, calls for pumping the Ocklawaha — the same river that is being tapped to recharge the aquifer and Silver Springs.

There are no doubt benefits to some parts of this plan. Certainly cost-sharing on conservation and water reclamation would be useful, and working with permit seeker to “avoid adverse impacts” is only logical.

But glaring in its absence from the plan is any serious conservation plan that would mandate reduced consumption, that would incentivize every water user to save water, that would finally get a read on just how much water is pumped from the tens of thousands of private wells in the Silver Springs Basin.

Until the politically driven St. Johns board mandates conservation with real steps and real measures, it is hard to take any “prevention-and-recovery strategy” too seriously. As it stands, the proposed plan would move a lot of water around and offer no guarantees whatsoever that there will be any actual reduction in water consumption or halt the decline of the springs.

Subject: Legislature to tackle water woes
From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com> (Add as Preferred Sender)
Date: Sun, Feb 22, 2015 1:09 pm
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith nsmith@wrwsa.org

Legislature to tackle water woes

By Zac Anderson , Herald-Tribune/ Saturday, February 21, 2015

The blows have come one after another: An iconic Florida fishery collapses, a once-vibrant coastal ecosystem suffocates under an algal super-bloom, and thick layers of muck blanket once clear springs.

Not only is the state's environment suffering from water pollution and supply problems, but future economic growth could be threatened as communities fight to maintain their share of the precious resource.

Existing development already is pushing the state's water resources to the brink, fueling worries about what will happen if Florida meets expectations and adds another 4 million people — roughly equal to the entire population of Oregon — over the next 15 years.

"There is no part of our state that is not in some form of conflict over water," state Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam said during a recent speech.

Seizing on worries that have been building over the last few years, legislative leaders are touting plans for a "comprehensive" overhaul of Florida's complex water policy this year.

But critics say the proposals fall far short of fixing the underlying problems and could, in some cases, even make them worse.

While lawmakers will likely allocate significant sums for environmental cleanup and water-supply projects in the state budget, the House and Senate bills released so far do little to address the root causes of pollution or move water users toward more sustainable consumption patterns.

Water is at the center of Florida's lifestyle and economy. It fuels everything from tourism to agriculture, industry to new development — all competing for a limited resource.

Clean, abundant water is also critical to maintaining healthy ecosystems in a state famous for iconic watersheds such as the Everglades and Myakka River State Park.

Few issues are more important to Florida's future. Here are five key aspects of the debate that will be discussed during the legislative session that begins March 3:

WATER QUANTITY

Conflicts over water supplies have raged across the state, even pitting Florida against neighboring Georgia.

Florida sued to protect an oyster industry that has been devastated in recent years, with some faulting Georgia's diversion of freshwater coming into Apalachicola Bay.

Water wars flared in the Tampa Bay region for years, dying down only recently as new supplies have been developed. Concerns are rising about similar issues around Orlando.

One message was clear from business leaders during a recent legislative hearing on water policy: Florida's economy depends on abundant water.

"The last thing that we want is a series of water wars over the next 20 years as this additional growth puts demand on our resources," said David Childs, a lobbyist for developers and the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

The Senate wants to create a "Water Resources Advisory Council" tasked with choosing the best projects to receive state funding. The House is talking about overhauling water supply permitting.

Environmental groups say the House bill gives too much priority to agriculture operations in securing water supplies, and they note that there are no strategies in either piece of legislation for conserving water and reducing consumption.

WATER QUALITY

One of Florida's most pressing environmental problems in recent years is the excess levels of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous being flushed into waterways in the form of fertilizer, human waste and animal waste.

A massive algae bloom — likely fed by fertilizer-rich water released from Lake Okeechobee — blanketed the Indian River Lagoon in 2011, killing 73 square miles of seagrass beds and coinciding with the death of more than 500 manatees, dolphins and pelicans. Many of the state's freshwater springs also are choked with algae.

More than 1,900 segments of Florida waterways are on a list kept by the state Department of Environmental Protection that tracks excess levels of nutrients and other key pollutants, such as bacteria and mercury. That understates the problem because waterways are removed from the list once pollution limits are established, even though they are still considered "impaired."

And 57 percent of Florida waterways have yet to even be tested to see if they should be on the "impaired" waters list.

State officials long delayed setting strict limits on nutrient pollution in water bodies. Environmentalists sued the federal government in 2008 to try and expedite the standards, saying the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was failing to enforce federal law in Florida.

After years of legal wrangling, the state has stepped up efforts to adopt pollution limits on individual water bodies. But many waterways with verified pollution problems have yet to go through the process.

Statewide, pollution limits have been adopted for just 386 cases of documented "impairment" — out of more than 3,000 — with 27 completed last year. At that rate it could take many years for the state to finish the job.

Regardless, the House and Senate bills contain no mandate to speed up this process on a statewide level or adopt any new statewide pollution regulations.

“There’s nothing really new,” said Mark Pafford, the House Democratic leader, of the legislation moving through his chamber.

Rep. Matt Caldwell, the North Fort Myers Republican who is shepherding the legislation through the House, said it “builds on the existing foundation of science-based assessment” and that the idea was not to implement tough new restrictions on polluters, adding: “In my mind it’s not just about punishing folks.”

The most ambitious effort to control pollution is in the Senate legislation, which puts restrictions on activities near freshwater springs.

SPRINGS

Florida is believed to have the largest concentration of springs in the world, with more than 900 across the state.

Many are popular attractions for swimmers, kayakers and tubers, who are drawn to the cool, clear water and natural surroundings.

“If we didn’t have the Everglades in Florida springs would be what we’re famous for,” Putnam said recently.

But the limestone “karst” geology that creates Florida’s springs also makes them especially vulnerable. Pollutants move quickly through the porous rock. Of the state’s 33 first magnitude springs, 26 have excessive levels of pollution.

The House and Senate bills mandate that all first-magnitude springs, and a select number of second-magnitude springs, have a cleanup plan by Dec. 1, 2018. The Senate bill goes further by establishing “spring protection and management zones” for priority springs.

Local governments would have to come up with a plan to deal with pollution from septic tanks in the spring protection zones. They also would have to adopt ordinances to restrict fertilizer application. And certain activities that cause pollution would be prohibited in the zones.

Such rules are controversial. Lawmakers stripped the language from the House bill after agriculture interests protested.

In explaining his reversal, Caldwell said of the protection zones that testimony indicated they would be redundant because the state is already creating cleanup plans for each spring.

The same argument is being used to roll back environmental regulations in the Everglades.

EVERGLADES

More than 5,000 people attended a rally near Stuart two years ago to protest discharges of polluted water into the St. Lucie River, which flows into the Indian River Lagoon.

Yet the House bill would repeal a long-standing pollution control measure for the Everglades that environmentalists say serves as an important “backstop” in the event a new cleanup model doesn’t work. It also shift[s] control of regulating pollution in the Everglades to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which some worry would take a softer approach to regulating farm runoff.

House Speaker Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, has been talked about as a future candidate for state agriculture commissioner. Crisafulli runs his family agribusiness operation and is the past president of the Brevard County Farm Bureau.

“The bill is being championed by people who don’t like government regulation so, for the most part, this bill weakens the power of government,” said Audubon Florida President Eric Draper.

Supporters of the bill say it eliminates overlapping rules and emphasizes one set of statewide standards for protecting water quality.

“There’s a desire to focus on solutions and eliminating duplicative processes,” Caldwell said.

In the absence of new pollution controls, environmental advocates are hoping a substantial increase in funding for cleanup efforts could help some ecosystems recover.

FUNDING

One reason many lawmakers are reluctant to impose new regulations on water use and pollution is the cost.

The Florida Association of Counties notes in its 2015 legislative agenda that the price tag for cleaning up nutrient pollution in the state is estimated in various studies at \$3.1 billion to \$8.4 billion.

Developing new water supplies also is expensive.

The Peace River-Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority spent roughly \$300 million on a recent expansion, with nearly half of the money coming from the state.

“It was a big chunk of money. Will they have that in the future?” asked Water Authority director Patrick Lehman.

A key question facing the Legislature this year is how to divvy up money from a voter-approved constitutional amendment that requires 33 percent of state real estate tax collections — roughly \$757 million — to be spent on environmental initiatives.

House and Senate leaders have yet to release their budgets for environmental spending. Gov. Rick Scott’s proposal includes \$200 million for land conservation, \$150 million for Everglades cleanup and \$50 million for springs protection.

Draper argues that voters mostly had land conservation in mind when they approved the amendment, but he acknowledges that certain infrastructure projects may be appropriate. Funding

is likely to be approved for two reservoirs that will hold overflows from Lake Okeechobee during the rainy season.

But other infrastructure that traditionally has been the responsibility of local governments should not be funded with the conservation money, Draper said.

Lehman believes there should be a clear environmental benefit for projects that receive conservation amendment funding, but hopes lawmakers are flexible.

It's hard to accomplish much without money.

"It's the carrot that brings people together," he said.

Legislation at a glance

Florida lawmakers are talking about overhauling the state's water policy during the upcoming legislative session. Both the House and Senate have released draft bills. Highlights include:

House bill

- Requires state officials to create a cleanup plan for priority springs by Dec. 1, 2018.
- Repeals a long-standing pollution control measure for the Everglades, instead emphasizing newer regulations while moving oversight to the Department of Agriculture.
- Requires greater coordination of water supply efforts in Central Florida.

Senate bill

- Creates protection zones around priority springs and prohibits certain activities in the zones.
- Establishes the "Florida Water Resources Advisory Council" to evaluate which water projects should get state funding.
- Emphasizes public access to state-owned lands.
- Requires water management districts to publish more information about how water projects benefit the environment.

FYI – From the Florida Senate.

From: BETTA.KATHERINE [mailto:BETTA.KATHERINE@flsenate.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, February 18, 2015 3:53 PM

To: BETTA.KATHERINE

Cc: MICKLER.MAGGIE

Subject: Transparent Foundation for Implementation of Amendment 1 Passes Senate Committee

For Immediate Release

February 18, 2015

Contact: Katie Betta

(850) 487-5229

Transparent Foundation for Implementation of Amendment 1 Passes Senate Committee

Tallahassee, FL—The Florida Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation, chaired by Senator Charlie Dean (R-Inverness) today passed Senate Bills 576, 578, 580, 582, 584 and 586. This legislative package, sponsored by Senator Dean, creates the structural foundation for the implementation of the Water and Land Conservation Amendment (Amendment 1) passed by Florida voters in November 2014.

“The structure we are creating through this legislation will allow Floridians to track state spending required by Amendment 1 down to the specific project, so 20 years from now the people of Florida can look back and see what their tax dollars paid for,” said Chair Dean. “So far, we have received over 5,600 public comments on Amendment 1 and the Senate’s approach to implementation. This was a citizen initiative and we will continue to listen to the people as we work to implement this new provision of our constitution.”

The Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment, Article X, Section 28 of the Florida Constitution, was passed by 74.96 percent of voters in November of 2014 and will take effect on July 1, 2015. The provisions of Article X, Section 28 require the Legislature to do three things to implement the constitutional amendment: (1) Transfer 33 percent of the documentary stamp tax revenues to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF) within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP); (2) Spend the money placed in the LATF on specified water, land, environmental, recreational, and historic preservation purposes as provide by law; and (3) Prevent the commingling of these funds with the state’s general revenue.

“Chair Dean’s legislation maintains existing documentary stamp tax distributions to affordable housing, transportation and economic development at their current effective percentages,” said Senate President Andy Gardiner (R-Orlando). “However, as a result of the 33 percent distribution to LATF required by the constitution, there will be less documentary stamp tax revenue to distribute to the various other trust funds and General Revenue, so during the appropriations process the legislature will need to consider these impacts.”

In the 2014-15 General Appropriations Act, the Legislature appropriated more than \$3.5 billion to environmental programs. Based on the December 2014 Revenue Estimating Conference, 33 percent of documentary stamp funding will amount to \$757.7 million. Currently, approximately twenty percent of documentary stamp tax revenues (\$470.8 million) are distributed under s. 201.15, F.S., to trust funds supporting environmental programs.

Senate Bill 586 revises section 201.15, F.S., to provide the distribution of 33 percent of documentary stamp tax revenues into the LATF within the DEP. The bill removes existing distributions to environmental trust funds in recognition that future expenditures for qualifying environmental programs will be appropriated from the LATF to make these and other environmental expenditures with documentary stamp tax revenues transparent. The language ensures documentary stamp tax revenues continue to fully secure existing debt service payments as a first priority. The bill also provides for the funding of payments in lieu of taxes that were previously funded from one of the environmental trust funds because it appears these payments do not qualify for expenditure from the LATF under the constitutional amendment.

Senate Bill 584 restructures existing trust funds so documentary stamp tax is no longer commingled with other revenue sources to provide the greatest level of accountability and transparency. Documentary stamp tax revenue intended for expenditure under the constitutional amendment will only be deposited into the LATF within the DEP. This restructuring will not only meet the letter of the constitutional provision ("the Land Acquisition Trust Fund shall receive no less than 33 percent of net revenues derived from the existing excise tax on documents") but will also ensure citizens can track the LATF funds previously commingled with other revenue sources. Because the documentary stamp tax revenue will now be deposited and distributed from the LATF a number of trust funds will become obsolete or contain so little revenue from other sources as to render them inefficient from a budgeting stand point. While a number of trust funds will be terminated, the programs funded using those trust funds will remain intact. These programs will simply receive funding from the LATF or other designated trust funds.

Senate Bill 576, Senate Bill 578, Senate Bill 580, and Senate Bill 582 create new Land Acquisition Trust Funds within the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Department of State, and Department of Transportation. These trust funds, along with the LATF that already exists within the Florida Wildlife Commission, will serve as the agency trust funds that will receive documentary stamp tax revenues appropriated from the LATF within the DEP for expenditure on specific qualifying programs in those agencies. Like the LATF within DEP, these "mini-LATFs" will hold only documentary stamp tax revenues so that each dollar of the 33 percent set aside, pursuant to the constitution, can be easily followed all of the way through to its ultimate expenditure. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities is included because the agency manages Rish Park, the only state park dedicated for use by persons with disabilities. The Department of Transportation is included for funding for the development of the state's recreational trail system. Implementation of Amendment 1 is a key component of the Work Plan 2015 joint agenda announced last month by Senate President Andy Gardiner and House Speaker Steve Crisafulli (R-Merritt Island).

For more information, please visit the Florida Senate online at www.FLSenate.gov.

AMENDMENT 1 COULD HELP PAY FOR WATER PROJECTS, HOUSE SPEAKER SAYS

February 18, 2015 by Bruce Ritchie
<http://floridapolitics.com>

The Florida House has received \$1.2 billion in funding requests for local water projects and some of those could receive money from Amendment 1, House Speaker Steve Crisafulli said Wednesday.

Amendment 1, approved by 75 percent of voters in November, is expected to provide \$757 million from documentary stamp revenue for water and land conservation in the 2015-16 state budget and \$22.6 billion over 20 years.

Environmentalists say other funding is available for what they are labeling “water infrastructure” projects as opposed to conservation. Crisafulli said he agrees the bulk of funding should come from other sources but said some water projects could be deserving of Amendment 1 dollars.

“Without knowing exactly what those requests are it’s hard to answer that question (of how much could come from Amendment 1),” Crisafulli said.

“Right now we have a lot of free flowing water that runs through storm water systems right into our estuaries and lakes and rivers and lagoons and the whole bit,” he continued. “So I believe there are potentially some projects in there that could be funded out of Amendment 1.”

“But I imagine the majority would be a different pot of money that the Legislature would have to commit to local water projects and helping cities and counties work through some of their issues,” he said.

In the current state budget, the Legislature provided \$88.5 million for local water projects.

For the 2015-16 state budget, the House list of 475 funding requests include some statewide projects including \$75 million for improving agricultural practices and \$50 million for local governments to meet state pollution reduction requirements.

Big-ticket local projects include \$65 million for a Broward County water reuse system and \$50 million for a Florida Keys wastewater treatment. Gov. Rick Scott has requested the \$50 million for the Keys but only \$17.5 million would come from Amendment 1.

State Sen. Alan Hays, R-Umatilla and chairman of the Senate appropriations subcommittee that oversees environmental spending, likewise said he thinks some money for water

projects could come from Amendment 1. But he said he doesn't know how much funding is being requested from the Senate for those projects.

Surrounded by framed photographs of wading birds in lake settings, Hays said, "I like the outdoors. I want Florida to continue to be a nature capital of the country. So part of that involves preservation and proper management."

"And I don't understand why people are so uptight over the term water projects," he continued. "If a water project is going to enhance the water quality of the aquifer or a surface body, is that not environmentally friendly?"

Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon Florida, said the House list of water projects probably includes some that would meet the requirements of Amendment 1 but others would not.

"The voters did not vote 'yes' (on Amendment 1) in anticipation of funding \$1 billion in local infrastructure projects that should be paid for by the local governments that are proposing the projects," he said.

Subject: Fwd: Wider-ranging water bill filed in the Senate
From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Feb 16, 2015 12:41 pm
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

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

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Feb 16, 2015 at 12:40 PM
Subject: Wider-ranging water bill filed in the Senate
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

SB 918, filed by **Sen. Charlie Dean**, R-Inverness, appears to be wider-ranging legislation than an industry-backed House water bill (**HB 7003**) that was filed this week, according to Bruce Ritchie of SaintPetersBlog.com.

The Senate bill doesn't create or eliminate any programs and doesn't allocate funding. The bill does identify the 33 largest springs, along with five others, for protection by the state **Department of Environmental Protection** –similar to last year's bill.

SB 918 requires DEP to begin water quality assessments to complete springs assessments by July 1, 2018.

The bill also requires the state to identify septic tanks within springs protection zones and develop remediation plans for those causing pollution. Owners are not required to pay the cost of system inspection, upgrade or connection to sewage treatment plants.

The bill also creates the **Florida Water Resources Advisory Council** to annually evaluate and recommend to the Legislature water projects which have been prioritized by state agencies, water management districts or local governments. The five-member council would consist of the DEP secretary, the agriculture commissioner, the head of the **Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission** and two scientist members appointed by the Senate president and House speaker.

Audubon Florida's Eric Draper said the Senate bill lacks controversial language dealing with Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades permitting that are in the House bill. But he thinks that issue could come into play in the Senate bill later.

Draper said the Senate bill also has good criteria for evaluating local water projects. Spending on those projects has ballooned in recent years to \$88 million in the current state budget.

Subject: PLAN WOULD BOLSTER 'OUTSTANDING FLORIDA SPRINGS'

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

Date: Mon, Feb 16, 2015 8:59 am

To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>

Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

News Service Florida

PLAN WOULD BOLSTER 'OUTSTANDING FLORIDA SPRINGS'

February 13, 2015

Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Chairman Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, released a plan Friday that would beef up efforts to protect what it designates as "Outstanding Florida Springs." The plan (SB 918), which also includes proposals dealing with issues such as creating a trail network for bicyclists and pedestrians, could play a prominent role during the upcoming legislative session as House and Senate leaders have said they will focus on water policy. Dean is part of a group of senators who have worked on springs protection for the past year. Under the bill, the designation of Outstanding Florida Springs would go to what are known as "first-magnitude springs," along with DeLeon Springs, Peacock Springs, Poe Springs, Rock Springs, Wekiwa Springs and Gemini Springs. It would require a series of efforts to protect those springs. For example, the Department of Environmental Protection would have to delineate one or more spring-protection and management zones for each of the Outstanding Florida Springs. As another example, it would require recovery or prevention strategies if springs are projected to fall below certain minimum water flows or levels in the future. "The Legislature finds that springs are a unique part of this state's scenic beauty," the bill says. "Springs provide critical habitat for plants and animals, including many endangered or threatened species. Springs also provide immeasurable natural, recreational, economic, and inherent value."

TAMPA BAY TIMES

Editorial: Don't use Amendment 1 money as slush fund

Friday, February 13, 2015 6:14pm

Floridians' overwhelming vote in November to dedicate a specific amount of money to protect the environment was supposed to herald a new day for the state's precious natural resources. But even with the approval of Amendment 1, which will allocate three-quarters of a billion dollars for that effort next year, Gov. Rick Scott is proposing to spend less on environmental efforts in 2016 than is being spent now. The governor, legislators and environmental advocates should ensure that the clear call by the voters for conservation doesn't end up as a cynical exercise in cost shifting.

Scott's \$1.5 billion budget next year for the state's Department of Environmental Protection is \$29 million less than in the current budget year. Though it includes significant new money to restore the Everglades and buy sensitive lands, that is a reflection of how Tallahassee has starved environmental spending in recent years — and the widespread interest in using Amendment 1 dollars to plug the environmental funding gap.

The amendment sets aside one-third of the proceeds from the document tax on real estate transactions, and it is expected to generate \$757 million for water and land conservation next year. Scott would spend \$150 million on restoring the Everglades and South Florida waterways, slightly more than he proposed last year. His \$100 million for the Florida Forever land-buying program would restore spending to the level that existed when Scott first took office. His \$50 million for springs is actually less than what he requested last year. The proposal puts more money into play and brings — after years of heavy cuts — a degree of stability to conservation funding. But in all, it's an underwhelming plan that doesn't adequately realize the voters' intent.

Lawmakers should set higher priorities. They should increase funding for Florida Forever and springs protection, underscoring the amendment's main mission in preserving endangered water and lands. They should reject the move to use Amendment 1 as a tool to finance every conceivable environmental project; already, the governor's proposal shifts tens of millions of dollars away from the general state budget to the new trust fund. Lawmakers should establish that the Amendment 1 money will serve a statewide purpose, not be a slush fund to pay for bike trails, historic sites and beach renourishment projects that the state already was funding.

Lawmakers also need to use the budgeting process to discuss a host of changes that are needed to put the amendment into full force. The state will always be playing catchup until it cracks down on leaky septic systems, crafts a comprehensive water policy and revives the ability of local governments and the regional water districts to be partners in conservation efforts. The state also needs to acquire more agricultural land in the Everglades basin. None of this is cheap, and a coordinated approach will help taxpayers get the most bang for their buck. But the point of Amendment 1 was to provide a financing tool behind a coherent environmental strategy. It would be a monumental loss to waste it.

Editorial: Don't use Amendment 1 money as slush fund 02/13/15 [Last modified: Friday, February 13, 2015 6:14pm]

From: Ryan Duffy <Ryan.Duffy@hkstrategies.com>
Through: Diane Salz, Governmental Affairs Liasion
Date: February 13, 2015 at 4:43:30 PM EST
To: Ryan Duffy <Ryan.Duffy@hkstrategies.com>
Subject: FW: Legislation to Establish Policy for Amendment 1 Implementation

Good Afternoon,

Senator Charlie Dean (R-Inverness) today filed Senate Bill 918 relating to Environmental Resources. Please see the comment below from Chair Dean as well as the memo below from President Gardiner, which includes a summary of the legislation.

“For too long, Florida has lacked a statewide approach to policy for and spending on water and natural resources. As a result, once-pristine areas of our environment, like the unique natural beauty of our springs, have suffered. By establishing a comprehensive policy and a process for vetting environmental initiatives that leverages our existing programs, we can ensure that we are prioritizing our critical needs and making the investments necessary to restore, protect and preserve our precious natural resources for the next generation of Floridians. I am grateful to so many of my Senate colleagues who have provided input during this process and look forward to our continued work on this important issue.”

Best,
Katie

From: Office of the Senate President [mailto:OfficeoftheSenatePresident@flsenate.gov]
Sent: Friday, February 13, 2015 4:27 PM
To: !ALL SENATORS
Cc: !ALL SENATE; Ward, Bob
Subject: Legislation to Establish Policy for Amendment 1 Implementation

TO: All Senators
FROM: Andy Gardiner, President
SUBJECT: Legislation to Establish Policy for Amendment 1 Implementation
DATE: February 13, 2015

Last year Florida spent over \$3.5 billion on programs to manage, restore and improve our environment. Yet, with the passage of the Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment (Amendment 1) we have a new opportunity to provide an even greater focus on long-term planning and accountability for environmental policy and spending that can make a difference in the lives of current and future Floridians.

The Senate has divided this immense responsibility into three phases – structure, policy, and appropriation.

As you are aware, in order to establish the structure necessary to provide accountability and transparency for the expenditure of documentary stamp tax dollars as directed by what is now Article X, Section 28 of the Florida Constitution (Amendment 1), Senator Dean recently filed Senate Bills 576, 578, 580, 582, 584, and 586. This package is scheduled for a hearing in our Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conversation next Wednesday, February 18.

The next step is the development of the policy we will use to guide the appropriations phase of this implementation process, as well as future policy and budget choices. For this reason, today Chair Dean filed Senate Bill 918, which outlines a comprehensive, statewide water and natural resources policy for our state.

The legislation filed by Chair Dean builds on the good work of so many Senators who are committed to addressing the health of Florida's springs. It provides Floridian's greater access to natural resources and increases transparency through a process to ensure that revenues spent on the critical issue of water resource development are directed to projects that will have a significant and measurable impact on improving water quality and water quantity.

Similar to the legislation filed to establish a structure for implementation of Amendment 1. The legislation filed today does not eliminate a single program currently receiving state funding, nor does it allocate funding to any new or existing program, project, or initiative. Funding decisions will occur during the appropriations process and will be led by our Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, chaired by Senator Hays.

We have included a summary of Chair Dean's legislation below, and look forward to your feedback as well as the continued input from members of the public who have to date provided more than 5,500 comments via our website.

Senate Bill 918 relating to Environmental Resources

PUBLIC ACCESS to PUBLIC LANDS

To improve public knowledge of and access to lands acquired for conservation purposes, the bill requires the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to create and maintain a database and website providing the allowable public uses of the land together with the location, point of public entry, facilities, restrictions, and permissible uses by January 1, 2016. By January 1, 2018, the database shall be expanded to include all similar land owned by local and federal governments.

Either through its own efforts or through partnership with third party entities, the DEP must facilitate the creation of a mobile app to locate state lands available for public access.

Using a smartphone, users could locate recreational opportunities throughout Florida just as easily as people can currently locate hotels, restaurants, and gas stations.

WATER RESOURCES WORK PROGRAM

The bill creates the Florida Water Resources Advisory Council to annually evaluate and recommend to the Legislature water resource projects which have been prioritized by state agencies, water management districts, or local governments and are eligible for some level of state funding.

The Council is comprised of five voting members: the Secretary of the DEP, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Executive Director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and two science based members—one appointed by the President of the Senate and one appointed by the Speaker of the House. The Council will also have five non-voting members representing each of the five Water Management Districts (WMDs).

The bill requires the Council to develop criteria for the evaluation, selection, and ranking of projects, giving preference to those that have a measurable impact on improving water quality or water quantity, those in areas of greatest impairment, those of state or regional significance, those recommended by multiple districts or multiple local governments, those with significant monetary commitment from local or private sponsors, and those that are in rural areas of opportunity.

The bill requires the Council to hold at least eight meetings per year that are open to the public and provide opportunity for public testimony.

SPRINGS

Defines “Outstanding Florida Spring” as all historic first magnitude springs, plus DeLeon, Peacock, Poe, Rock, Wekiwa, and Gemini springs.

Requires the DEP, in consultation with the WMDs, to designate spring protection and management zones for Outstanding Florida Springs by July 1, 2016.

Sets the minimum flow and minimum level for an Outstanding Florida Spring at the point at which further withdrawals would be harmful to the water resources or ecology of the area. To expedite the process for implementing recovery and prevention strategies, the bill creates a process for establishing an interim minimum flow and minimum water level, until appropriate minimums can be adopted.

The bill requires expeditious adoption of a recovery or prevention strategy for an Outstanding Florida Spring that is below or is projected within 20 years to fall below the minimum flow or level.

For an Outstanding Florida Spring, a recovery or prevention strategy must include, among other things, a prioritized list of specific projects with their estimated costs and completion dates. The strategy must contain an implementation plan to restore minimum flows and levels within 20 years, and must contain measurable milestones at 5, 10, and 15 years.

The bill requires the DEP, if it has not already, to begin water quality assessments under the numeric nutrient standard in effect for spring vents, and to complete assessments by July 1, 2018.

At the same time the DEP or a WMD adopts a nutrient total maximum daily load for an Outstanding Florida Spring, a basin management action plan must be developed. The plan must be adopted within three years of initiating development and must include, among other things, a prioritized list of specific projects with their estimated costs and completion dates. The plan must contain an implementation plan to achieve the adopted total maximum daily nutrient load within 20 years, and must contain measurable milestones at 5, 10, and 15 years.

Requires local governments that fall within a spring protection and management zone to adopt an ordinance that meets or exceeds the requirements of the DEP's Model Ordinance for Florida-Friendly Fertilizer Use on Urban Landscapes.

Requires the DEP, in conjunction with the Department of Health and local governments, to identify onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems within each spring protection and management zone and develop remediation plans for sites that are significant contributors of nutrient pollution. Owners of such sites are not required to pay the cost of system inspection, upgrade or connection for systems identified as a priority for remediation. The bill creates a program funding pilot projects that test the effectiveness of innovative technology and remediation techniques designed to reduce nutrient pollution or restore flows to springs.

Within spring protection and management zones the bill:

- creates standards for new wastewater facilities,
- requires new agricultural operations to implement best management practices or be subject to groundwater monitoring,
- prohibits the application of certain biosolids and septage, and
- prohibits new hazardous waste facilities.
- Requires submission of a yearly report to the Governor and Legislature regarding the status of each total maximum daily load, basin management action plan, minimum flow or level, and recovery or prevention strategy adopted pursuant to the provisions of the bill.

FLORIDA SHARED-USE NONMOTORIZED TRAIL NETWORK (SUN Trail)

The bill creates the Florida Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail Network (SUN Trail) as a component of the Florida Greenways and Trails system consisting of hard-surfaced trails separated from roadways designed specifically for bicycle and pedestrian use.

The trail network is to connect a wide range of points of origin and destinations, including conservation areas, state parks, beaches, and other natural and cultural attractions, and is intended to foster social, recreational, and personal fitness activities, as well as provide transportation routes for work, school, and shopping.

Under the bill, the Department of Transportation is to include projects to be constructed as part of the SUN Trail in its work program, and is authorized to enter into agreements with local governments or the DEP for maintenance services on individual components of the network.

The bill provides authorization for concession and sponsorship agreements with a not-for-profit entity or private sector business, but requires revenue from such arrangements be used exclusively for maintenance of nonmotorized trails and related facilities that are part of the SUN Trail.

TRANSPARENCY – Water Conditions/Water Projects

- Requires the Consolidated Water Management District Annual Report to contain information on all projects related to water quality or water quantity currently under construction or planned for construction in the next five years.
- The report is to include information specific projects that are part of a basin management action plan (BMAP) or recovery for prevention strategy, information on the level of impairment being addressed by a project, a priority ranking for listed projects, the estimated cost, completion date, and funding source for each project, and finally, a quantitative estimate of a project's benefit to its respective water body.

UNIFORM WATER DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE

To ensure statewide consistency and maintain a centralized database for all testing results and analysis, the bill requires the DEP, in coordination with the water management districts, to establish standards for the collection of water quantity, quality, and related data to ensure quality, reliability, and validity of the data and testing results. Beginning June 30, 2015, WMDs are to submit such data to the DEP for analysis.

In order to receive state funds for the acquisition of land or the financing of water resource projects, a WMD or other entity must use the testing results and analysis published by the department as a prerequisite for any such request for funding.

Citrus Chronicle | Friday, February 13, 2015

Clarity key in funding projects of Amendment 1

THE ISSUE: Sen. Dean proposes consolidating conservation money.

OUR OPINION: Proposal's benefits aren't immediately evident.

On Jan. 30, local Sen. Charlie Dean, who chairs the chamber's Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee, filed a series of bills within the committee that would redirect the flow of environmental preservation funds — particularly those associated with the voter-approved Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative, better known as Amendment 1.

The bills — SBs 576, 578, 580, 582, 584 and 586 — would direct Amendment 1 funds to a single trust fund within the Department of Environmental Protection while simultaneously doing away with a number of other trust funds within the department, namely the Florida Preservation 2000 Trust Fund, the Florida Communities Trust Fund, the Ecosystem Management and Restoration Trust Fund, the Water Management Lands Trust Fund and the Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund. Balances remaining in the first two of those funds would be transferred to the Florida Forever Trust Fund, while the latter three would see their balances transferred to the Water Quality Assurance Trust Fund.

While Dean's proposals haven't been met with opposition from environmental advocates, the benefit of commingling these funds is not immediately clear to us. Senate President Andy Gardiner, R-Orlando, reassured his fellow senators in a letter that, "The legislation does not eliminate a single program currently receiving state funding," but Gardiner's reassurance is hard to reconcile with the text of Dean's proposed legislation.

It stands to reason that while it might seem more efficient to consolidate the state's environmental piggy banks, there's a greater chance of misappropriation and less opacity if all the money is put in one pot. Perhaps Dean is on the right track with his proposals, but absent any obvious rationale for the changes, we challenge Dean and his staff to explain to constituents why the moves are necessary and beneficial.

Subject: Fwd: HOUSE WATER POLICY STARTS TO FLOW
From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Feb 11, 2015 4:16 pm
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

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

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Feb 11, 2015 at 4:16 PM
Subject: HOUSE WATER POLICY STARTS TO FLOW
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

HOUSE WATER POLICY STARTS TO FLOW

By JIM TURNER
THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, February 11, 2015..... A business-backed plan to address the state's water resources received initial support in a House committee Wednesday, though it continues to draw questions from environmentalists and Democrats.

The wide-ranging water policy is being crafted separately from a plan to carry out a voter-approved constitutional amendment that will require the state to spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year on land and water projects.

The policy, in part, would impose what are known as "best management practices" for natural springs, the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee. Also, it would direct water-management districts to implement a water-management plan across Central Florida.

"My goal is to get the policy right," said House State Affairs Chairman Matt Caldwell, R-North Fort Myers. "Once we get the policy right, then we're going to figure out how to pay for what we need to do."

The State Affairs Committee voted 12-5 to advance the proposal (PCB SAC 15-01), with Daytona Beach Rep. Dwayne Taylor the only Democrat to vote in support.

Taylor said he expects lawmakers will "iron out" most of the issues that continue to draw flak before the proposal reaches the House floor.

"We're not going to be able to fulfill everybody's dreams of making this the exact perfect legislation," Taylor said.

Since introducing the proposal a week ago, Caldwell has met with environmental groups to address concerns. But apprehensions remained Wednesday.

Among changes worked into the proposal over the past week is to include best-management practices from the Department of Environmental Protection for second-magnitude springs. The initial draft had the regulatory process only for larger, first-magnitude springs.

However, the changes removed springs-protection zones, which are designed to regulate the impact of septic tanks and the flow of storm water and agricultural runoff into springs.

House Minority Leader Mark Pafford, D-West Palm Beach, said the bill should represent House leadership's call for a comprehensive statewide water policy.

"Look, at the end of the day, we've got oysters that are dying, springs that are suffering, a Kissimmee River basin that needs more help in depleting some of the phosphorous, nutrients that are going into the lake," Pafford said. "You've got tremendous outcry over the last number of years for the estuaries east and west of the lake (Okeechobee), and you've got a restoration plan for the Everglades that hasn't been completed."

Audubon Florida Executive Director Eric Draper, a lobbyist on environmental issues, said that among the remaining concerns is the lack of an immediate backup plan for water management agencies if the best-management practices, which have yet to be completed, fail to improve water quality.

"What happens if the (best management practices) don't work?" Draper said. "The water management districts don't have the ability at that point to adopt new rules without coming back to the Legislature."

The regulatory best-management practices are about 40 percent completed for the Everglades, while the regulatory requirements have only been set for eight of the state's 33 first-magnitude springs.

Caldwell said the rules for 11 additional springs are expected to be completed later this year.

Ryan Smart, president of 1000 Friends of Florida, said the proposal still needs to address more water conservation.

"Florida has a huge potential for water conservation to meet some of our supply needs going into the future," Smart said. "That's across all sectors, agriculture, public supply, low-flow toilets, better appliances, soil and moisture sensors for ag. It would be great to see some of those elements included in the bill as we look to expand the water pie to also make sure we're using the water as efficiently as possible."

The proposal has drawn support from business lobbying groups, including the Florida Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Farm Bureau.

Brewster Bevis, of Associated Industries of Florida, called the proposal a "thoughtful and comprehensive approach."

"This proposal takes a good first step toward ensuring Florida's water supply is sustainable and available for future generations to enjoy," Bevis said in a prepared statement after the meeting.

The Senate, which offered a springs-protection measure last year that failed to get heard in the House, has yet to release its plan.

Money to implement new policies is expected to be drawn from the "Florida Water and Land Legacy" constitutional amendment, which received the support of 75 percent of voters in November.

The amendment, which directs 33 percent of the proceeds from a real-estate tax for land preservation and water conservation efforts, is expected to bring \$757 million for the water and land efforts in the next fiscal year.

How that money will be divided up remains a separate battle for both chambers.

Subject: Fwd: The House State Affairs Committee passed an amended water policy bill
From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Feb 11, 2015 3:13 pm
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

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

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Feb 11, 2015 at 3:12 PM
Subject: The House State Affairs Committee passed an amended water policy bill
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

After conducting a workshop on a bill that establishes a comprehensive water policy for the state, the **House State Affairs Committee** passed an amended version of the measure today.

Members of the committee changed SAC1's language in the following ways:

- Under the original bill, the **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)** was the only entity authorized to re-evaluate best management practices (BMPs) in the Northern Everglades if water quality standards were not being met. The amended language extends that authority to the **Department of Environmental Protection** and local water management districts.
- It further clarifies that landowners who are complying with existing BMPs in the Everglades Agriculture Area are not required to implement duplicitious FDACS BMPs if the property in question is located in the Lake Okeechobee watershed. Those landowners would only be required to implement those additional BMPs if it's shown that the total maximum daily load (TMDL) limit of nutrients discharged in the area's waterways is being exceeded.
- Originally, SAC1 only included a list of 33 1st magnitude (or the state's largest) springs for continued evaluation. The amended language also includes a list of 2nd magnitude springs.
- The amendment removes a so-called duplicitious requirement for DEP to provide protection zones around springs considered to be impaired. However, the amended bill will now provide a hard deadline of Dec. 1, 2018, for DEP to finish its evaluations and establish BMPs and TMDLs for impaired springs. If DEP's evaluation finds that a spring is impaired, all agricultural producers in that given area will have 180 days to implement the new BMP. Those producers are implementing BMPs in order to bring nutrient levels into compliance with TMDLs.

According to **Rep. Matt Caldwell**, R-Leigh Acres, the committee's chair, evaluations for 19 of the 33 1st magnitude springs are expected to be completed by the summer of 2015, seven springs have already been deemed to be unimpaired and seven more will be evaluated between the summer of 2015 and the bill's deadline of December 2018.

The measure passed with 13 yes votes and only five no votes.

From: Water News <waternews@sjrwmd.com>
Date: February 10, 2015 at 5:07:41 PM EST
To: disalz@yahoo.com
Subject: Water Supply Strategies in Marion County
Reply-To: waternews@sjrwmd.com

Water News|St. Johns River Water Management District

February 10, 2015

Strategy being developed to protect Silver Springs and ensure adequate water supplies

The St. Johns River Water Management District is developing a prevention and recovery strategy to avoid or offset unacceptable impacts to Silver Springs that are caused by consumptive uses of water.

In a presentation today to the District's Governing Board, staff outlined potential components of a strategy that includes water conservation, projects and regulatory options to achieve proposed minimum flows and levels (MFLs) for Silver Springs.

MFLs are the minimum water flows and/or levels adopted by the District's Governing Board as necessary to prevent significant harm to the water resources or ecology of an area resulting from permitted water withdrawals.

When it is determined that an MFL is not being met, or will likely not be met in the future due to water withdrawals, prevention and recovery strategies are developed and implemented to ensure that water level and/or flow conditions will not be below their established MFL levels. A water body is considered to be in prevention status if its flow conditions will be below its MFL levels within 20 years. Systems that are already below their MFLs are considered to be in recovery status.

"One of our core missions is to ensure sufficient water for users and the environment," said Governing Board Vice Chairman Fred N. Roberts, Jr., of Ocala. "This strategy is being drafted to address environmental concerns relating to impacts of groundwater withdrawals on Silver Springs, while also ensuring that sufficient water is available for existing and new users."

The draft strategy focuses on recovery of flow at Silver Springs, which will help ensure downstream MFLs are met. The strategy would be implemented using a phased approach, with monitoring and revisions as needed. The components include:

- Enhancing water conservation by all user groups, including potential District cost-sharing for new conservation projects

- Additional reclaimed water projects for irrigation by Marion County and the cities of Ocala and Belleview, including District cost-sharing for new projects
- Optimization/relocation of wellfields and conversion of some withdrawals for public supply to the Lower Floridan aquifer
- Production of alternative water supply for potable use
- Upper Floridan aquifer recharge near Silver Springs
- Working with permit applicants to avoid adverse impacts to Silver Springs

Central to the draft strategy is an aquifer recharge project that would significantly improve spring flows for Silver Springs. The project would include a wetland treatment system to purify water before recharge. Expected sources of water for the recharge project include reclaimed water, storm water and surface water when available from the Ocklawaha River.

In a related matter, the Board today approved a land exchange that will allow the District to acquire 1,041 acres of the Halfmile Creek property and Ocklawaha River Tract in Marion County in exchange for \$1 million and 625 acres of the District-owned Bear Track Bay property, in which the District will retain a conservation easement. The Halfmile Creek property is a potential site for the recharge project as it is located within the Silver Springs springshed and is 1.2 miles from the main vent at Silver Springs.

"Treating and recycling water from the Ocklawaha River through the spring and returning it to the river is a unique approach," said Roberts. "We can offset impacts of water withdrawals by creating an underground bubble of water that protects Silver Springs."

The next steps include finalizing the draft prevention and recovery strategy, engaging stakeholders and the public in review and comment, and completing peer review and the rule-making process.

Water manager***Director talks about Withlacoochee regional authority*****A.B. SIDIBE****Staff writer**

In 1978 when Richard Owen graduated with a degree in food and resource management in Massachusetts he was pointed in Florida's direction because the state was going through exponential growth and therefore was grappling with resource management issues.

He settled in Tampa for a while and went on to get master's degrees in economics and public administration. He also began working for the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) more than 32 years ago. He remains steeped in water management issues.

In 2012, after nearly 30 years at SWFWMD, he was tapped to become executive director of the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority (WRWSA). He replaced Jack Sullivan who had been at the helm for nearly 30 years. The authority owns well fields in four counties — Citrus, Marion, Hernando and Sumter — but lets the various county government and municipality utilities maintain and operate the fields. The largest in Citrus County is the Charles A. Black Water Supply Facility.

Owen recently spoke to the Chronicle about the functions of the WRWSA and some of the issues relating to water resource management.

CHRONICLE: What is it that the authority does?

OWEN: Our purpose is to plan for, then develop when requested by a member government, water supply. Now we develop it on a wholesale basis and sell it to the local governments. They then sell it on a retail basis to their residential customers, commercial customers or whomever. We are not providing water directly to the resident, we provide it to that resident's utility.

CHRONICLE: What kind of volume are we dealing with here?

OWEN: This facility (the Charles A. Black facility in the Citrus Hills area) and another location are about 4 million gallons a day in quantity. The actual use is less than 4 million a day on an annual basis. It may vary from day to day, sometimes it can go up to 6 million or down to 3 million, but our daily annual average is about 3.4 million.

CHRONICLE: Is the water generated here used in other counties?

OWEN: It's for the service area that is served by this utility, not all the county. The county has multiple wells to serve those areas. For example, Meadowcrest has its own wells that the county owns and operates as opposed to this one, which is an authority-owned facility. And, for people unfamiliar with where the water comes from, it is groundwater, it is copper Florida water and requires very little treatment — chlorination that's about it in this area. It's one of the least expensive sources of water in the state.

So we are very fortunate to have abundant ground- water for consumption, but it's not an endless supply. There are limits to it, and that's part of job — to work with the water management district assuring that there is adequate water for future users, as well.

CHRONICLE: What programs do you have in place to help ensure that?

OWEN: One of our emphases is on water conservation. We don't do that directly ourselves. We provide funding assistance to local government that then implement conservation programs with their customers. For instance, we have two major programs. One is a grant program. We budget about \$130,000 a year, so local governments apply for that on an annual basis. We fund part of their conservation program. Here in Citrus County, it might deal with outdoor lawn watering; it might be indoor plumbing fixtures, what have you. That's one program. Also, we have a regional irrigation audit program.

So, three out of our four counties, not including Sumter — because they are not in the utility business themselves — but The Villages has participated in this where the water supply authority hires a contractor that goes out to customers of that utility, residential customers that have been identified by the utility as wanting to participate, and they evaluate their irrigation system; look for how they could modify the system or how it is operated to save water and save money.

You know, outdoor water use represents a huge portion of our water use. People watering their lawn primarily is an area where there is opportunity to still conserve water and save money. Even though we have done very well in this area, there are still opportunities making those irrigation systems as efficient as possible.

CHRONICLE: You talked about a grant system. Can you elaborate on that?

OWEN: Some of the things that have been funded out of that are, for instance, plumbing fixture replacement programs where they will go in and take toilets that have in the past used up to seven-and-a-half gallons per flush to three-and-a-half. Now they have toilets that use 1.2 gallons per flush. So maybe on an individual basis, that does not seem like a lot, but on a cumulative basis, when you are able to go in and retrofit multiple homes, that kind of efficiency level is a tremendous opportunity for savings.

CHRONICLE: This is an ongoing thing in all the counties at all times of the year?

OWEN: The counties structure it this way: they identify through their billing records the highest residential users. They then approach them and see if they want to participate and inform them that your use is so much higher than your neighbors. Would you like to address that? And a large part of that will be irrigation purposes. So our contractor can go out and identify if their rain sensor is working and then offer to replace it, look for broken heads and look for how long the zones are operating and they reduce the length of irrigation. Anything that goes into an irrigation, we normally go back maybe a year after and ask, 'What have you really gained by participating in the audit?', so we can get clear picture of what is being achieved through the audit.

CHRONICLE: So how do you quantify this and how effective have you been in the past few years?

OWEN: We have been very effective at reducing per capita water use, which can be attributed to that. You know, as the economy went down, people didn't use as much water, people unemployed aren't going to be watering their lawns, that sort of thing, but we also believe our conservation efforts have

significantly contributed to that. Our estimates are that one year's worth of savings is approximately 79,000 gallons a day, which is pretty good.

CHRONICLE: What do you expect out of these conservation efforts in the future?

OWEN: It helps stretch our limited supply of water and it allows the utilities to serve more customers with the same amount of infrastructure.

CHRONICLE: What are the long-term goals of the authority?

OWEN: I think, long-term, the water supply authority continues to play that role for planning for how future demands are met because we are still in a growth area even though Citrus County's has been very low; in fact, they lost residents in the last few years. It will return, and we want to be positioned to know how we will meet those growing water demands. And we are positioned that way.

We update our plans every five years. Long term, I think the water supply authority will get in the water supply business for other member governments and eventually, as the groundwater resources become fully used and we don't want to overuse them, we will have to turn to alternative supplies like surface water — and that is much more expensive. The treatment of it is more expensive than groundwater.

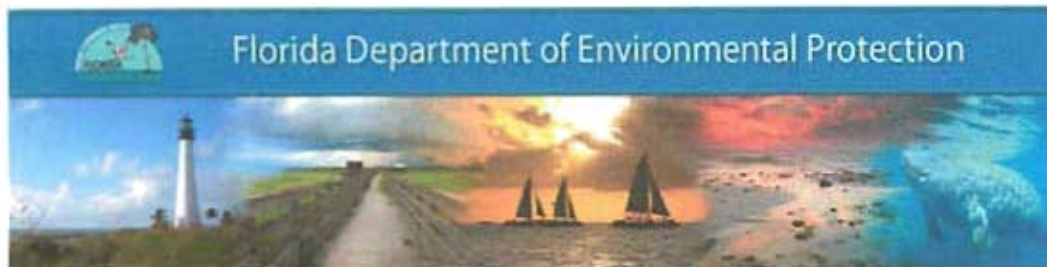
And it's only going to happen if you have multiple parties come together and do it, because no one single utility can take that cost on themselves. So it only makes sense to look at it from a regional perspective, and the water supply authority will be in position for that.

Subject: Fwd: GOV. SCOTT HIGHLIGHTS \$1.6 BILLION TO RESTORE FLORIDA SPRINGS
From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Date: Mon, Feb 09, 2015 5:40 pm
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Florida Department of Environmental Protection" <FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com>
Date: February 9, 2015 at 5:35:36 PM EST
To: disalz@yahoo.com
Subject: GOV. SCOTT HIGHLIGHTS \$1.6 BILLION TO RESTORE FLORIDA SPRINGS
Reply-To: FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 9, 2015

CONTACT: Governor's Press Office, 850-717-9282, media@eog.myflorida.com

GOV. SCOTT HIGHLIGHTS \$1.6 BILLION TO RESTORE FLORIDA SPRINGS

ORLANDO – Today, Governor Rick Scott highlighted a dedicated source of revenue that will provide \$1.6 billion for Florida springs restoration over the next 20 years as part of his proposed 2015-2016 "KEEP FLORIDA WORKING" budget. If passed by the Legislature, \$50 million will go toward springs restoration next year.

Governor Scott said, "Florida's springs are one of the many natural treasures that bring families, visitors and job creators to our state. Over the last two years, we have championed record funding for Florida's springs, and we are committed to building on that success going forward. By making these important investments now, we will be protecting and restoring our great springs for generations to come."

In addition to funds to restore Florida springs, Governor Scott's "KEEP FLORIDA

WORKING" budget also proposes a dedicated source of revenue that will provide more than \$5 billion for Everglades restoration over the next 20 years, including \$150 million toward Everglades restoration next year. The proposed budget also includes more than \$150 million for land acquisition and management which will focus in part on protecting land for the Florida panther.

Jon Stevenson, Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, said, "I'm a firm believer that how you spend your money is drives your policy, and Governor Scott's budget clearly demonstrates his continued commitment to the protection of our state's natural resources. This budget focuses on projects that will

directly benefit the environment and communities of Florida."

Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy for Audubon Florida said, "This \$1.6 billion commitment will assure families and businesses that Florida is committed to restoring our great springs. I applaud Governor Scott for his continued commitment to protecting Florida's natural treasures."

Robert Beltran Executive Director of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, said, "Florida's springs are environmental treasures and economic drivers for our state. In the Southwest Florida Water Management District alone there are more than 150 documented springs providing \$46 million in direct economic impact annually. Governor Scott's continued investment goes a long way to restoration and protection of these unique water resources."

John Miklos, St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board Chairman, said, "I'd like to thank Governor Scott on behalf of the St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board and our 560 employees for his continued and historic work to address springs, water quality and water quantity in the St. Johns District, and in all of the other water management districts. We look forward to continuing this good work with him, DEP Secretary Stevenson and the Florida Legislature."

Daniel O'Keefe, Governing Board Chairman of the South Florida Water Management District, said, "Protecting Florida's water resources requires sound science as well as sound investments. Governor Scott has consistently directed funding to strategic projects and initiatives that benefit our environment, which in turn strengthens our state's economy."

Don Quincey, Jr. District Board Chairman of the Suwannee River Water Management, said, "Through partnerships with local governments and through optimizing private-public partnerships, Governor Scott is utilizing significant resources to ensure that our springs and water supplies are protected. We must be good stewards of the land and waters of our great state, and this funding proposal highlights the importance of Florida's natural resources."

About the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is the state's principal environmental agency, charged to protect, conserve and manage Florida's resources and its natural resources. The department enforces federal and state environmental laws, protects Florida's air and water quality, controls air pollution, regulates solid waste management, promotes pollution prevention, and manages environmentally sensitive lands for preservation. The agency also maintains a statewide system of parks, trails and aquatic preserves. To view the department's website log on to www.dep.state.fl.us

<http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/FLDEP/bulletins/efec66>



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Subject: Fwd: Draft House Water Policy Bill 2/4 Workshop
From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Feb 05, 2015 9:49 am
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

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

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Feb 5, 2015 at 9:49 AM
Subject: Draft House Water Policy Bill 2/4 Workshop
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Members of the **House State Affairs Committee** presented draft language that addresses water policy in Florida to a crowded room of stakeholders. The draft language was filed as **PCB SAC 15-01** while the meeting was still taking place and contains much of the same language included in 2014's failed **SB 1576**, according to Bruce Ritchie of [SaintPetersBlog.com](#).

The 91-page bill as it's currently written, requires the **Department of Environmental Protection** to assess the quality of the state's 33 largest springs, or "first magnitude" springs, and draw boundaries around them for protection. It also requires DEP to begin developing pollution reduction plans within a year of setting pollution limits, called total maximum daily loads (MDLs). But some environmental advocates like the **Sierra Club's David Cullen** cautioned that the bill doesn't give a firm enough deadline for the completion of such assessments and that pollution goals were voluntary.

Last year's Senate bill would have required farms near impaired springs to implement agricultural best management practices. The draft bill this year includes the same requirement but appears to allow farmers to bypass the requirement by instead conducting water-quality monitoring.

The measure also would require DEP to establish an inter-agency agreement with three water districts and the **Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services** for the **Central Florida Water Initiative**, a five-county planning area that includes Orlando -- a plan that has been in the works for some time.

The committee will discuss the bill again Feb. 11.

Bruce Ritchie: Water bottling continues to draw fire despite small amount of pumping

Context Florida

February 6, 2015

<http://contextflorida.com/bruce-ritchie-water-bottling-continues-draw-fire-despite-small-amount-pumping/>

Some legislators again are taking aim at water bottling operations in Florida.

This week, members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture said they're concerned about shipping water out of Florida and the effects of pumping during drought and in areas with water shortages.

"Obviously there is money being made on use of a public resource — that is water," said state Sen. Rene Garcia, R-Hialeah.

Committee members persisted with questions even after being told that the amount of water being pumped for bottling is very small.

Water bottling is a lightning rod for the public and has received attention from state officials in the recent past although no action was taken. But it's so often a distraction from the need to reduce water use and improve the efficiency of the state's largest water users, including the average homeowner.

In 2009, Florida Gov. Charlie Crist proposed placing a 6 cents per gallon tax on water bottling plants to raise \$66 million a year. The revenue would have been spent on water supply and pollution reduction projects.

But the proposal went nowhere after legislators raised concerns about a possible loss of jobs and whether it could lead to taxes on other industrial water users.

In 2011, state Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Ormond Beach, filed bills to impose a 10-year ban on new water bottling permits and apply a 6 percent tax on the retail sale of bottled water. Neither bill was heard in a committee.

Florida overall uses about 6.5 billion gallons of water a day, down from more than 8 billion gallons per day in 2000, according to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Steve Minnis, governmental affairs and communications director for the Suwannee River Water, told the Senate Agriculture Committee this week that 44 water bottling permits in the state allow a combined pumping of 20 million gallons per day.

"That's very small — tiny," Minnis said, compared to the state's overall water use. But Garcia and state Sen. Bill Montford, D-Tallahassee and committee chairman, didn't seem satisfied. Their questions veered into the economics of bottled water and whether the state could share in the revenue.

Lane Stephens, a lobbyist representing Nestle Waters North America, said his company employs close to 1,000 people at its bottling plants in Madison County and in Zephyrhills. The company pays \$1.2 million in state and local taxes at the Madison County plant.

The bottling tax proposed by Crist in 2009 would have caused 45 workers at the Madison County plant to lose their jobs, Stephens said.

He tried to dispel the idea that large quantities of water are being shipped out of state, noting that Nestle has 16 brands pumped at various locations around the nation so the water can be bottled close to users.

There are 75,000 types of beverages available to consumers in the United States, not counting bottled water, Stephens said.

"Yes, the bottled water industry obviously uses water and they make a profit on that water," he said. "They wouldn't be in business otherwise. So does every other beverage manufacturer and every other user of water."

Montford said the purpose of the meeting was to begin a discussion on the issue. He said legislators have difficulty explaining to their constituents why water can be hauled out of state when some areas are facing water shortages.

"That's what's generating this discussion," he said. "It's not the question of trying to cost people their jobs."

Bruce Ritchie (@bruceritchie) is an independent journalist covering environment and growth management issues in Tallahassee. He also is editor of Floridaenvironments.com. Column courtesy of Context Florida.

----- Forwarded Message -----

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

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, February 4, 2015 8:23 AM

Subject: Draft Water Bill

Draft water bill focuses on springs, water planning and Lake O

By Bruce Ritchie on February 3, 2015

The House State Affairs Committee on Wednesday will consider draft bill language that would address springs, Lake Okeechobee and central Florida's water future.

Florida's springs have become choked with weeds and algae caused by nitrogen in groundwater from a variety of sources including septic tanks, sewage treatment plants, lawn fertilizer and farms.

Last year, SB 1576 would have required wastewater utilities near springs to upgrade to advanced treatment.

The bill initially would have provided \$376 million a year for improved wastewater treatment but that funding later was stripped from the bill, prompting opposition from cities and counties.

SB 1576 passed the Senate 38-0 with support from environmental groups but the House didn't take up the measure. House leaders said they wanted to take a comprehensive approach to water issues in 2015.

This year, the draft committee bill would require the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to complete an assessment of water quality for the state's 33 largest springs, called "first magnitude" springs. DEP would be required to draw boundaries for springs protection areas and adopt them as rules by July 1, 2016.

DEP would be required to set pollution limits for all impaired springs, but there is no requirement for advanced wastewater treatment in those areas around springs. Instead, DEP would be required to begin developing pollution reduction plans within a year after setting pollution limits, called total maximum daily loads.

Last year's Senate bill would have required farms near impaired springs to implement agricultural best management practices. The draft bill this year includes the same requirement but appears to allow farmers to bypass the requirement by instead conducting water-quality monitoring.

The draft bill also addresses water pumping by requiring water management districts to adopt or revise their "minimum flows and levels" set for springs and simultaneously adopt

strategies to address over-pumping. The draft bill doesn't appear to require an accelerated timetable as the Senate bill did last year for setting those minimum flows.

"The bill appropriately prioritizes science-based regulatory programs as a means to restore and protect our state's springs," said David Childs, who represents wastewater utilities in the Florida Environment Water Association-Utility Council. "We have the tools in the toolbox. This bill makes sure we use them."

The draft bill also would require DEP to establish an interagency agreement with three water districts and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for the Central Florida water Initiative, a five-county planning area that includes Orlando.

And the draft bill also would update and restructure the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Act to reflect the adoption by DEP of pollution plans Lake Okeechobee, the Caloosahatchee River estuary and the St. Lucie River and estuary.

The draft language appears to pre-empt the water quality standards set under South Florida Water Management District's "works of the district" (WOD) permitting program and replace them with the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Action Program. That is raising concerns with Audubon Florida, said Eric Draper, the group's executive director.

"We are not certain that the replacement of that water-quality regulation with an essentially voluntary program will be adequate to achieve the goals of the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan," Draper said. Other lobbyists representing cities, counties and utilities could not be reached for comment.

The committee meets at 4 p.m. in room 218 of the House Office Building.

The draft bill language and a committee staff analysis can be found at www.myfloridahouse.gov.

DEAN PROPOSES PUTTING CONSERVATION MONEY IN ONE POT

By JIM TURNER
THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, January 30, 2015..... Money that Florida voters want to use for land and water conservation efforts would go into a single trust fund under a new Senate proposal, but lawmakers are still weeks away from deciding how they will use the money.

Sen. Charlie Dean, an Inverness Republican who chairs the Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee, filed a series of bills Friday that would create the trust fund within the Department of Environmental Protection to handle money from the voter-approved "Florida Water and Land Legacy" constitutional amendment.

In addition to directing 33 percent of revenue generated from a real-estate tax into the new trust fund, Dean's proposal (SB 576, SB 578, SB 580, SB582, SB 584, and SB 586) would do away with a number of existing trust funds that benefit environmental programs.

But Senate President Andy Gardiner, R-Orlando, said in a letter to senators that the proposal won't impact those programs.

"The legislation does not eliminate a single program currently receiving state funding, nor does it allocate funding to any new or existing program, project, or initiative," Gardiner wrote, in bold lettering, to the senators.

The proposal also keeps lawmakers from tipping their hands about how they will decide during the upcoming legislative session to use the money.

Audubon Florida Executive Director Eric Draper, a lobbyist on environmental issues, said Dean's proposal appears "pretty straightforward" and doesn't immediately give reason for concern.

"What's encouraging to me is it gives us some sense of security that they are tracking close to the constitutional amendment," Draper said.

Meanwhile, Aliko Moncrief, director of Florida's Water & Land Legacy, said his group's legal and legislative team is still analyzing the proposed legislation.

Since the constitutional amendment was approved in November, lawmakers have differed on how to define land-preservation and water-conservation projects, how the state should determine which of its "impaired" water bodies is most critical and how to approach the reduction of stormwater runoff and agricultural fertilizer use.

Environmental groups have presented Dean's committee with a potential funding outline for next year that would send \$150 million to the Everglades and South Florida estuaries

and another \$150 million to the Florida Forever program for land acquisition, springs and trails. Also, \$50 million would go for springs, \$90 million for land management, \$20 million for beach management, and \$25 million for rural family lands. The rest would cover debt service.

Gardiner also suggested last month that lawmakers could use the amendment to craft a 5-year plan for the long-term water and land conservation projects.

Lawmakers have so far also received more than 3,800 written public comments about how the money should be used.

The state's Revenue Estimating Conference has estimated that the "Florida Water and Land Legacy" amendment, approved by 75 percent of voters in November, will generate \$757.7 million in the next fiscal year.

Currently, about 20 percent of the annual real-estate documentary stamp revenue --- \$470.8 million in the 2014-2015 fiscal year --- is divided up into the different trust funds supporting environmental programs, according to Gardiner's letter.

Gardiner added that by putting all the land and water money into a single trust, Dean's proposal will "prevent the commingling of these funds with the state's general revenue."

Last week, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam told House members that he thinks their Amendment 1 and water-policy priorities should focus on restoring the state's natural springs and revising laws to reflect progress on Lake Okeechobee and the Northern Everglades. He also said lawmakers need to complete the implementation of the Central Florida Water Initiative, which ties together the St. Johns River Water Management District, the South Florida Water Management District and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Meanwhile, he said the state needs to review its land-management policies and set priorities on purchasing new lands that close gaps between wildlife corridors and create buffers around military bases.

-END-

1/30/15

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

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

Date: Fri, Jan 30, 2015 at 3:19 PM

Subject: Process starts for Amendment 1 structure changes

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Process starts for Amendment 1 structure changes

The early steps of implementing Amendment 1 have started, but there's a long way to go.

Sen. Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, filed legislation Friday to restructure state funds that provide for buying and maintaining land for conservation, in accordance with the constitutional amendment, which passed in November.

In a news release, Senate President Andy Gardiner said the fund restructuring will not affect which conservation programs receive funds. A bold-face sentence in the release makes that clear:

"The legislation does not eliminate a single program currently receiving state funding, nor does it allocate funding to any new or existing program, project, or initiative."

There's still work to be done, though. The six bills put forward by Dean (S.B. 584, 586, 576, 578, 580 and 582) deal solely with fund structure, not with funding decisions or policy.

Those issues -- which have generated enough public interest to bring in more than 3,800 public comments -- will be dealt with in the next few weeks as legislation works through committees.

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

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

Date: Fri, Jan 30, 2015 at 11:14 AM

Subject: Ag Commissioner Putnam Suggests Amendment 1 Spending...

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

During the annual Associated Press Legislative Planning Day, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam suggested that some Amendment #1 funds could be spent on improving waste-water systems in some areas, but the ballot measure's advocates disagree, according to Sean Rossman of *The Tallahassee Democrat*.

"There is an appropriate limited role for using some Amendment 1 funds to upgrade failed systems," Putnam said. "It should be considered as part of a small portion of that conservation program where that is the best solution for that watershed."

Pegeen Hanrahan, of the Trust for Public Lands, said those projects should be paid for by other state revenues and not be taken out of Amendment 1 funds.

"Those are good and worthy projects to pursue, but they are not the focus of Amendment 1," said Hanrahan, the former mayor of Gainesville.

The goal of the amendment, she said, is to support existing land and water conservation projects like Florida Forever and the restoration of Florida's springs and the Everglades.

"We would like to see these dollars really cleaning water at the source," added Hanrahan.

But, the commissioner isn't the only person to interpret the amendment in that way. Free market think tank James Madison Institute [JMI] has proposed using the measure's dollars in a similar manner.

The third priority in the institute's recently-released report, *Responsible Preservation of Florida's Resources*, details JMI's belief that dollars should be used to "remedy government-permitted and government-owned properties and facilities" responsible for environmental damage.

The report goes on to name potential facilities to be targeted with Amendment #1 funds:

- All state-owned parks with non-polluting septic devices/nutrient filters to protect nearby springs and surface waters.
- Storm run-off water retention areas with nutrient filtering capability.
- Existing sewers to prevent exfiltration.
- Waste water treatment plants and their rapid infiltration basins

JMI calls these re-fits "essential to protecting Florida's natural resources."

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jan. 28, 2015

CONTACT: DEP Press Office, 850-245-2112, DEPNews@dep.state.fl.us

**GOVERNOR SCOTT'S "KEEP FLORIDA WORKING" BUDGET RECOMMENDS
NEARLY \$1.6 BILLION TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE FLORIDA'S NATURAL
RESOURCES**

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Scott today recommended nearly \$1.6 billion in funding dedicated to the protection and preservation of Florida's natural and water resources. The Governor's "KEEP FLORIDA WORKING" budget includes funding dedicated to key environmental projects, such as \$150 million for Everglades restoration, \$50 million for springs protection and improvements, more than \$150 million for the acquisition and management of conservation lands, and \$50 million for water supply development projects.

Governor Scott said, "Florida has an abundance of natural resources that help create a foundation for our growing economy, whether it is driving our state's tourism industry or providing a great quality of life that has attracted families to our state for generations. During my first term, we made historic investments in our springs and Everglades and I am proud to continue to make important investments in our environment this year. We will keep working to make sure we preserve our natural treasures so Florida can continue to be a top destination for families, visitors and businesses."

The Governor's proposed budget creates a dedicated source of revenue for Everglades restoration that will provide nearly \$670 million over the next four years and more than \$5 billion over the next 20 years. In addition, a dedicated source of funding will provide more than \$220 million over the next four years and \$1.7 billion over the next 20 years to ensure the continued protection of Florida's springs. The budget also proposes a 10-year, \$500 million program to ensure Florida's water supply remains adequate to support a growing economy while still ensuring the environment is protected.

"Governor Scott's proposed budget reflects his continued commitment to protecting the natural resources that greatly impact Florida's economy and quality of life," said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Jon Stevenson. "I look forward to working under his leadership to focus on completing projects that offer direct benefits to the natural resources and communities of Florida."

"Governor Scott's recommended budget recognizes the importance of restoring not only the Everglades, but Florida's treasured springs and other vital water bodies," said Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon Florida. "We applaud his continued commitment to the protection of Florida's environment."

The Governor is recommending the following proposals to help Florida's environment:

\$150 million for Everglades Restoration

In 2011, the Governor proposed his Everglades Restoration Strategies, which provides \$32 million annually in state funding to improve water quality and move more water south, reestablishing a more natural flow through the Everglades. The "KEEP FLORIDA WORKING" budget builds upon this recurring funding by providing \$150 million in Fiscal Year 2015-2016 for projects vital to the protection of the Everglades and associated South Florida estuaries, including construction of the C-43 and C-44 reservoirs.

\$150 million for Land Acquisition and Management

Governor Scott's recommendation includes \$150 million dedicated to land acquisition and management, so that the state can continue to conserve natural and historic resources, as well as effectively manage and protect lands already under state ownership for future generations to enjoy. This funding will focus in part on protecting land for the Florida panther.

The budget includes \$100 million to support land acquisition through the Florida Forever program, \$20 million to restore the Kissimmee River and \$30 million for additional management dollars to ensure the land already owned by the state is properly cared for.

"We applaud Governor Scott for taking this critical step toward increasing land management funding. This increase will allow for enhanced prescribed fire and invasive plant management necessary to ensure the health of Florida's conservation lands for iconic Florida species, such as panther and scrub jay and to enhance public recreation," said Temperince Morgan, executive director of the Nature Conservancy in Florida.

\$50 million for Springs Protection and Restoration

The "KEEP FLORIDA WORKING" budget includes \$50 million for springs restoration projects, building on the historic funding provided by the Governor's administration over the past two years. In partnership with Florida's water management districts, local governments and other stakeholders, the \$40 million directed to springs protection over the past two years has leveraged more than \$100 million in springs restoration and improvement projects throughout the state.

\$100 million for Water Supply Development and Keys Wastewater Treatment

Governor Scott is working to ensure Florida's natural resources, communities and growing economy all enjoy a sustainable supply of water. The "KEEP FLORIDA

WORKING” budget includes \$50 million and will kick-off a 10-year, \$500 million program to provide more than 250 million gallons of water a day to Floridians.

This also includes funding for regional alternative water supply development and for small, economically-challenged communities who need additional help to ensure the needs of their residents and natural resources are being met.

The Governor’s recommended budget includes \$50 million for improving wastewater treatment in the Florida Keys, which will build upon the \$100 million previously invested during the past four years. These improvements will protect water quality in the Keys, ultimately protecting South Florida’s reefs and waters.

“Florida has now surpassed New York as the third most populous state in the nation and as such, we need smart solutions to meet the needs of Florida’s families and small businesses,” said David Hart, executive vice president of the Florida Chamber of Commerce. “Governor Scott’s budget recommendations will continue to move Florida in the right direction. Ensuring our state has the necessary resources to stay competitive is vital to helping Florida’s economy grow.”

“Monroe County commends Governor Scott for his continued environmental commitment to the Florida Keys with his recommendation of \$50 million in funding to help implement measures vital to the protection of our nearshore and National Marine Sanctuary waters, and in doing so, helping to preserve the Florida Keys as a unique environmental treasure and a valuable economic engine,” said Monroe County Mayor Danny Kolhage.

\$25 Million for Beach Renourishment

The “KEEP FLORIDA WORKING” budget also includes \$25 million for projects to protect, preserve and restore Florida’s famous beaches and dune systems. Beach projects include:

- \$1,100,911 for Venice Beach Nourishment/ Sarasota County Shore Protection
- \$726,848 for Duval County Shore Protection Project
- \$10,520,990 for Walton County Hurricane and Storm Damage Reduction Project
- \$100,000 for Ft. Pierce Shore Protection Project
- \$39,262 for Brevard County Shore Protection Project/ North & South Reaches
- \$496,486 for Broward County Shore
- \$60,000 for Blind Pass Ecozone Restoration in Lee County
- \$117,630 for South Amelia Island Beach Nourishment
- \$4,566,500 for Upham Beach Groin Replacement

- \$1,598,463 for Longboat Key Beach Nourishment (funds will be divided with inlet project)
- \$2,684,976 for Statewide Post-Construction Monitoring
- \$160,500 for Port Canaveral Inlet Management Plan (IMP) Implementation
- \$46,500 for Lake Worth IMP Implementation
- \$4,963,900 for Longboat Pass IMP Implementation (funds will be divided with beach restoration project)

\$19 million for Florida State Parks Repairs, Renovations and Development

Florida is the only state that has been awarded three National Gold Medals for Excellence by the National Recreation and Park Association, and the funding recommended in the "KEEP FLORIDA WORKING" budget will help this award-winning system continue to improve. Along with repairs and renovations, the budget also includes funding for ADA access improvements so all Floridians and visitors are able to enjoy the natural treasures of Florida's 161 State Parks.

"This funding will help Florida State Parks continue to protect some of our state's most beautiful natural and cultural resources for millions of visitors to enjoy each year," said Don Philpott, president of Friends of Florida State Parks.

For more information on Governor Scott's "Keep Florida Working" budget, please visit <http://www.keepfloridaworking.com/>.

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About the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is the state's principal environmental agency, created to protect, conserve and manage Florida's environment and natural resources. The department enforces federal and state environmental laws, protects Florida's air and water quality, cleans up pollution, regulates solid waste management, promotes pollution prevention, and acquires environmentally sensitive lands for preservation. The agency also maintains a statewide system of parks, trails and aquatic preserves. To view the department's website log on to

www.dep.state.fl.us.

<http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/FLDEP/bulletins/ece45d>

Southeast AgNET

by Randall – January 22nd, 2015

From the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services:

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam presented recommendations on comprehensive water policy for Florida to the House State Affairs Committee today.

Excerpts of his testimony are below:

“Water is the biggest long-term issue facing Florida, regardless of what part of the state you are from. ... Every corner of the state for various reasons is in some form of conflict. This will be hard. This will be complex. It is important that we do it when we are not in crisis coming out of a drought year or a year of multiple hurricanes and that we do it sooner rather than later. Go big, go bold, be ambitious, and get it right.

“It’s time to evaluate what we have learned in the last 30 years of active, aggressive environmental acquisition programs, protection programs, and conservation programs. We should ask ourselves what worked and what didn’t. We should focus on water supply, water resource development, and on restoration. We need to focus on both quality and quantity.

“Agriculture, for example, used to be the number one user of water in the state. It is no more. As a result of best management practices and investments by farmers and ranchers, we are using 11 billion gallons of water per year less today than just a short time ago. Not just agriculture, but all sectors of water users are using less water today. Per capita consumption of water is the lowest it has ever been and continues to decline. That’s something to be proud of.

“What’s the next step? I offer the following as ideas for your consideration.

“We have in place a sound foundation of water policy that includes the requirement that water management districts assess the adequacy of water supplies, and, for areas where it is determined those sources are not sufficient, the requirement that the districts prepare regional water supply plans. We need to strengthen that water policy to ensure these policies are effectively implemented.

“We can do this by ensuring that our water supply planning efforts are scientifically rigorous and timely and that they identify economically and technically feasible priorities.

“In simple terms, we need to prioritize projects that help us achieve the minimum flows and levels and protect our aquifers, lakes, rivers and springs, while also growing our alternative water supply and contribute to water resource development. Alternative water supply has to be a bigger part of Florida’s future.

"As with water supply, we can apply some of these same concepts to water quality. We only need to focus our existing water policy to reflect the progress we have made and ensure that future progress is achieved in the most effective manner. I suggest we:

- Prioritize the expeditious implementation of our existing Total Maximum Daily Load and Basin Management Action Plan programs to restore our springs.
- Revise the current statutes governing the Northern Everglades to reflect the progress we have made and the adoption and implementation of Basin Management Action Plans as the method of addressing water quality.
- Codify the Central Florida Water Initiative in statute.

"In effect, I'm suggesting we have an overarching statewide policy that recognizes the differences around the state, but drives the policy discussion, that has an emphasis on springs, an emphasis on the Northern Everglades, and an emphasis on the Central Florida Water Initiative. We need to do this from a long-term perspective, the next 10 to 20 years. We need to estimate how much it's going to cost us. Then we prioritize by project.

"We're all in this together. You put 20 million people and 100 million visitors on a peninsula that is dominated by wetlands, and that's going to have an effect. We have a \$100 billion agriculture industry, a tourism industry that's even larger than that, and we need to protect them. We want to keep this the kind of place that people want to live, that people want to visit. And a lot of that is rooted in our affinity, our attachment to water.

"Our core values and our identity as a state is attached to water. We have an opportunity to think big and act boldly, and I'm excited about the opportunity."

For more information about the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, visit www.FreshFromFlorida.com.

Retrieved from: <http://southeastagnet.com/2015/01/22/commissioner-putnam-presents-recommendations-for-water-policy-to-house-state-affairs-committee/>

Putnam: 'Think Big, Act Boldly' on Land, Water

By JIM TURNER

THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

Published: Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 9:10 p.m.

PROVIDED TO THE LEDGER

Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam.

TALLAHASSEE | Florida lawmakers, who received a directive from voters in November to increase spending to protect water sources and sensitive lands, were told to "think big and act boldly" by the state agriculture commissioner Thursday.

Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam told members of the House State Affairs Committee that any approach to addressing Florida's water needs should first focus on restoring natural springs and revising laws to reflect progress on Lake Okeechobee and the Northern Everglades. He also said lawmakers need to complete the implementation of the Central Florida Water Initiative, which ties together the St. Johns River Water Management District, the South Florida Water Management District and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Meanwhile, he said the state needs to review its land-management policies and set priorities on purchasing new lands that close gaps between wildlife corridors and create buffers around military bases.

"We need to view this from a long-term perspective, the 10 to 20 years," Putnam said. "We need to estimate how much it's going to cost us and prioritize by project. So that as legislatures change, economic conditions change, budgets change, but if the policy is right, the investments that you're making, whether you can afford to make an enormous investment one year, and scale back the next, we're still moving down the road making the right investments based on an already prioritized policy."

Committee members didn't ask any questions, but Putnam said afterward he anticipates that will change as "this is a lot to dump on somebody at one meeting."

Meanwhile, through work Putnam has done with House leadership, a bill is expected to be rolled out that will include many of the commissioner's proposals.

Environmentalists credited Putnam with taking leadership on the issue.

"He's building on something that the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) and water management districts have been working on, but he's making sure they get the attention they deserve from the Legislature," said Audubon Florida Executive Director Eric Draper, a lobbyist on environmental issues.

Putnam's comments were also applauded by the H2O Coalition, a group formed by the business lobbying group Associated Industries of Florida, which was a critic of the "Florida Water and Land Legacy" constitutional amendment approved by voters in November.

With the 2015 legislative session starting in March, Putnam has requested \$25 million for the Rural and Family Lands Program, which allows farmers and ranchers to continue to use their land while the state is able to keep those parcels from being developed. Also he is seeking \$18 million to fight diseases impacting the citrus industry.

Subject: Fwd: H2O Coalition News Clips, 1/22/15
From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Date: Thu, Jan 22, 2015 9:22 am
To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>
Attach: image001.jpg

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ryan Duffy <Ryan.Duffy@hkstrategies.com>
Date: January 22, 2015 at 9:16:00 AM EST
To: Ryan Duffy <Ryan.Duffy@hkstrategies.com>
Subject: H2O Coalition News Clips, 1/22/15

From the News Service of Florida:

PUTNAM TO DETAIL WATER RECOMMENDATIONS

With Florida lawmakers preparing for a potentially major debate about water policy, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam will make recommendations Thursday to a House committee. Putnam said during an interview this week with The News Service of Florida that he hopes lawmakers will be "bold" in addressing water issues. "(We) need a policy that's flexible enough to recognize that some years we have droughts and some years we have 90 inches of rain in 80 days, comprehensive — in other words, making it statewide, recognizing this isn't just an Everglades issue or a Tampa Bay water shortage issue, this is statewide — and long-term," Putnam said during the interview. "It's going to take more than just one session of doing something about it to really have a long-term, sustainable method of bringing our water supply back to where we need it to support the economy and the environment." House Speaker Steve Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, and Senate President Andy Gardiner, R-Orlando, have made clear they want to focus on water issues. Also, voters approved a constitutional amendment in November that requires setting aside money for land and water projects. Putnam is slated to testify Thursday before the House State Affairs Committee.

<http://www.ocala.com/article/20150122/OPINION01/150129922/1008/OPINION?template=printart>

Ocala Star-Banner Editorial: Tallahassee raid

Published: Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 6:30 a.m.

Last November, Florida voters delivered a message on environmental protection so clear that not even the solons in Tallahassee could doubt its meaning. Three of every four voters supported Amendment 1, which mandated funding to help preserve and protect springs, rivers and the aquifer, the Everglades and beaches, open recreation lands and ranches — even geological sites.

Amendment 1 dedicated 33 percent of the net revenue from taxes on real estate transactions, commonly known as doc stamps, over 20 years for that purpose. One estimate pegged the potential windfall over two decades at \$10 billion. The beauty, supporters maintained, was that revenues would be sufficient to make up for past (and very deep) cuts to environmental protection while not hurting other programs.

Yet some lawmakers have openly suggested someone will get hurt in implementing Amendment 1. That would be the Floridians who need affordable housing. Two weeks after the election new Senate President Andy Gardiner, R-Orlando, told fellow lawmakers: "The challenge facing this Senate is the impact Amendment 1 will have on transportation, affordable housing, and economic development, and other priorities which also receive doc stamp funding."

Now, as the Legislature's budget-making season gets heated up, the Sadowski Coalition is trying to counteract that prediction. The group — an array of 30 different housing, social service, business, seniors and veterans groups — is urging an appropriate share of the doc stamp pie is set aside for low-income Floridians' housing needs.

In 1992, lawmakers passed the Sadowski Act, which, like Amendment 1, earmarked doc stamp revenue for housing programs. Cities and counties utilize allotted doc stamp revenues to partner with contractors in building or renovating single-family homes, while also helping prospective buyers with down payments and closing costs. Seventy percent of the housing trust fund is used this way. A state-approved agency doles out the rest to developers on a competitive basis to boost the supply of rental units.

The Sadowski Coalition projects that the housing trust fund would reap \$267 million in the state's 2016 budget.

Lawmakers, first under former Gov. Jeb Bush and then especially during the recession, were not shy about shoveling trust fund revenues — whether for housing, the environment, transportation or other needs — into the state's general fund to pay for government services. The ongoing economic upswing, however, should stop such raids.

Yet Gardiner and others indicate the housing account must be drained again to meet obligations now funded with general tax dollars.

Sadowski Coalition President Jaimie Ross says that doesn't have to happen. "Nobody voted for Amendment 1 and thought they were hurting affordable housing," she said. "It's unfair to do that to ... voters."

Her group argues a fully funded trust fund would create about 25,000 jobs and \$3 billion in new economic activity next year.

We must preserve Florida's natural splendor. It sustains us physically and economically. But all the coalition seeks is for lawmakers to use the doc stamp revenue as intended more than 20 years ago. Honoring Amendment 1 doesn't have to mean shortchanging residents struggling to find housing and idling the workers who can provide it.

Agriculture Chief Adam Putnam Talks About FDLE, Citrus, the Future

By MARGIE MENZEL

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TALLAHASSEE | Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam of Bartow easily won a second term in November and is widely thought to be considering a run for governor in 2018. Meanwhile, he is helping lead efforts to fight diseases damaging the citrus industry and could play a key role in a legislative debate this year about water policy.

Before running for his current post, Putnam served five terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was tapped as the Republican policy chairman from 2005 to 2007 and chairman of the House Republican Conference from 2007 to 2009.

Before his election to Congress, Putnam served in the Florida House from 1996 to 2000. A fifth-generation Floridian from a family with deep ties to the citrus and cattle industries, he graduated from the University of Florida with a bachelor's degree in food and resource economics. Putnam and his wife, Melissa, have four children.

The News Service of Florida has questions for Adam Putnam:

Q: How much trouble lies ahead for Florida's citrus industry, and what could be the impact on the state's economy?

A: Unfortunately, it's as bad as you've heard, and worse. The Florida citrus industry represents a roughly \$10 billion-plus contribution to our state's economy. So we all benefit from the citrus industry's economic impact, whether we're in a citrus-producing county or not.

Of course, it's part of the iconic images of Florida. You know, it's on the license plate, it's part of our postcards, it's part of the lore of coming to Florida and smelling the orange blossoms. And (citrus) greening is devastating. I was riding groves this weekend, and it looks like we've just come through a freeze, there's so much fruit falling on the ground prematurely. So that's hurting growers' bottom line. It's creating one of the lowest supplies of oranges in modern history, and we just don't have any answers yet.

It's really a race against time more than it is a matter of money, because growers are spending a fortune, the state's contributing money, the feds are contributing money. We just need answers to come out of all that research.

Q: Water policy is one of your top priorities. Bearing in mind that you don't have a vote on the Legislature's implementation of Amendment 1, what would you like to see happen?

A: Well, I hope that the Legislature is bold when it comes to implementing water policy. We have an opportunity to write water policy in a non-reactive mode. We're not coming off of a busy hurricane season. We're not coming off of a record drought. So we can have this debate in a dispassionate way, and, really, in a thoughtful way.

Amendment 1 ties into that because water infrastructure, water restoration, springs restoration, Everglades restoration — it's not cheap. And so learning from what the last 30 years of environmental programs have taught us, applying that to the entire state, not just to one part of the state. ... I think that the Suwannee valley, the Northwest district, areas that were once considered water rich — even they are in some form of water conflict now. So we need a policy that's flexible enough to recognize that some years we have droughts and some years we have 90 inches of rain in 80 days, comprehensive — in other words, making it statewide, recognizing this isn't just an Everglades issue or a Tampa Bay water shortage issue, this is statewide — and long-term. It's going to take more than just one session of doing something about it to really have a long-term, sustainable method of bringing our water supply back to where we need it to support the economy and the environment.

Q: You and the other Cabinet members are being criticized for not acting as more of a check on Gov. Rick Scott's ouster of former Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Gerald Bailey. This week, Sen. Arthenia Joyner and Rep. Mark Pafford called for an investigation — what are you going to do?

A: Well, I've made it clear publicly that I'm not happy at how his departure was handled at all. And we're in the process of reviewing options. You know, the Cabinet confirmed Rick Swearingen last week to be the new head of FDLE, the new commissioner of FDLE. And so we're evaluating what options are out there, whether it's legislative or Cabinet-based options.

Q: Is one of the options to revisit what happened to Commissioner Bailey?

A: We're gathering up all the options that are available to us under the statutes and under the constitution.

Q: If Insurance Commissioner Kevin McCarty's job comes up as an issue before the Cabinet, how would you approach that differently?

A: I've had no conversations about Kevin McCarty's future. He has certainly served multiple governors well, and served our state well. And I believe that a strong Cabinet system is important. Florida's constitution has a very interesting approach to the different Cabinet officials. For example, the (chief financial officer) has a role in (overseeing) the Office of Financial Regulation and Office of Insurance Regulation where he and the governor have to be in agreement. Department of Environmental Protection — the entire Cabinet has to be in agreement. There is a very clear path laid out for more than just one person to be involved in the hiring and firing of Cabinet agency heads. We need to make sure that that strong Cabinet system is protected and maintained as we go into this second term.

Q: Will you run for governor in 2018?

A: (Laughs.) It's only January! We just got sworn in three weeks ago. I love the opportunity to serve as commissioner of agriculture, and I know that we're going to make the most of this opportunity in my second term to build on the first four years. And the future will sort itself out.

Q: As you watch Congress these days, what are your thoughts about having chosen to leave when you did? Do you say to yourself, "I'm sure glad I'm not there?"

A: It was a privilege to serve in the Congress and to represent my district. But I'm glad that I chose to come back home to serve as commissioner of agriculture. I've been able to accomplish more in a variety of areas as a statewide elected official in Florida than I did in 10 years in Washington. I hope that Washington gets better. I hope that the dysfunction subsides. The world needs America to have a well-functioning Congress and a well-run federal government, and we're a long way from that. But in terms of my ability to serve the public and my ability to serve my family, I made the right decision.

I have loved being in the executive branch. It is nice to have a department of this size and the breadth and diversity of our responsibilities, to be able to move things forward. I've said that in Congress, you've got to round up a couple of hundred votes to pass a Mother's Day resolution, and that's not guaranteed. And here, we certainly have a strong working relationship with the Legislature, and they've empowered us to move forward on some of our priorities. But there's an awful lot that goes on year-round that we've been able to accomplish in a much more efficient and quick way than anything we tried to do in Washington.

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