

Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Fwd: WATER CONSERVATION MONTH SHOWS FLORIDIANS IMPORTANCE OF YEAR-ROUND SAVING

April 3, 2013 10:55 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Florida Department of Environmental Protection" <FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com>
Date: April 3, 2013, 10:45:23 AM EDT
To: disalz@yahoo.com
Subject: WATER CONSERVATION MONTH SHOWS FLORIDIANS IMPORTANCE OF YEAR-ROUND SAVING
Reply-To: FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 3, 2013

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

WATER CONSERVATION MONTH SHOWS FLORIDIANS IMPORTANCE OF YEAR-ROUND SAVING

-DEP encourages residents to implement water conservation strategies this and every month-

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection recognizes April as Water Conservation Month, a time dedicated to educating residents and visitors of the importance of protecting Florida's water resources and supply and everyday steps that can be taken at home to help.

Governor Rick Scott has recognized April as Water Conservation Month in a [proclamation](#) that emphasizes the importance of increasing awareness and prompting action for efficient use of the state's water resources.

"Our priority continues to be to ensure the sustainable supply and quality of our water," said Greg Munson, Deputy Secretary for Water Policy and Ecosystem Restoration. "This April is the perfect time for Floridians to join us in these efforts by learning more about water conservation."

For the last 16 months, the Department has led a statewide effort to improve consistency in the consumptive water use permitting programs implemented by the state's five water management districts. As part of that process, the Department has taken steps to incentivize water conservation measures at the local level. The Department is also revising and expanding state rules to further increase Florida's use of reclaimed water. Even as the rules have been developed, the state's five water management districts continue to fund extensive water conservation initiatives through education campaigns and reclaimed water development projects.

Ongoing efforts statewide show that water conservation efforts are working. Florida remains one of the most water-efficient states in the nation. In 2011, Florida used more than 722 million gallons of reclaimed water every day to conserve freshwater and replenish rivers, streams, lakes and aquifers. Florida uses reclaimed water to irrigate 311,068 residences, 546 golf courses, 998 parks and 346 schools, according to 2011 data. As a result, Florida re-uses more water than any other state.

"On this 15th anniversary of April as water conservation month we would like to thank all that adopt and integrate conservation into their everyday routine," said Lisa Krentz, Water Use Efficiency Division Chair of the Florida Section of the American Water Works Association. "It is imperative we continue to recognize water is the keystone to life in Florida."

Since most areas of Florida continue to struggle with drought conditions, water conservation is critical. Water conservation is the least costly and easiest plan to preserving our natural resources. Floridians can participate this month by implementing one or more of these 10 simple tips from the [Southwest Florida Water Management District](#). These tips can help lower monthly water bills while helping to save hundreds of gallons of water:

Indoor Tips:

- Only run your washing machine and dishwasher when they are full.
- Use the shortest clothes washing cycle for lightly soiled loads.
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator or microwave, not under running water.
- Scrape, don't rinse, your dishes before loading in the dishwasher.
- Install high-efficiency showerheads, faucets and toilets.

Outdoor Tips:

- Check your home's irrigation system for leaks to save up to 6,300 gallons of water per month.
- Turn off your home's irrigation system and only water as needed; save up to 2,000 gallons each time a watering day is skipped.
- Don't leave sprinklers unattended. Use a kitchen timer to remind yourself to turn sprinklers off.
- Use a hose with a shutoff nozzle when washing the car to save around 40 gallons per wash.
- Consider installing a rain barrel with a drip irrigation system for watering your landscaping. Rainwater is free and better for your plants because it doesn't contain hard minerals.

For facts and information about water conservation throughout April, follow @FLDEPNews on Twitter.

Adam Putnam: Florida Needs a Statewide Water Plan

By: Jim Turner | Posted: February 19, 2013 10:30 AM



Green algae grows in Fanning Springs, part of the Florida aquifer.

The numerous regional fights over water rights across Florida continue to threaten the long-term sustainability of the state's vital agriculture industry, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam warned state senators Tuesday.

Appearing before the Senate Agriculture Committee, Putnam listed the maintenance of water resources, along with expanding the "Fresh From Florida" promotion of Sunshine State produce both in schools and abroad, and the eradication of invasive species and diseases, among his legislative priorities for the 2013 session.

"There is not a corner of the state that's not in some type of water scarcity conflict," Putnam said. "We've got to work our way and manage through those things, with a particular sensitivity to agriculture because it is such a foundation for our economy."

He pointed to ecological and economic collapse facing Apalachicola Bay, to regional fights over spring sheds from Jacksonville to Central Florida, to the pressure of population growth on water supplies in the Southeast. "For the past decade-and-a-half the Everglades have received the bulk of attention when it comes to water policy. I think that we need to have a statewide strategy for water, and that includes protecting our springs and the aquifer that feeds those springs, as well as our surface water issues," Putnam said after the committee meeting. The message isn't anything new from Putnam, who has been sounding the alarm since taking office that Florida must increase its alternative water supplies and desalination plants and offer incentives to developers to help conserve water supplies. With Florida expected soon to surpass New York as the third most populated state in the nation, the projections have been that the Sunshine State will need to increase its water production by 2 billion gallons a day by 2025, a task the state's five water management districts have started planning for. Also to help the citrus industry, Putnam told the committee he is backing a \$9 million request for citrus greening research, to match the \$60 million already invested to fight the disease by the state's \$9 billion a year citrus industry.

Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Fwd: DEP STATEMENT REGARDING APPELLATE COURT RULING ON FLORIDA'S NUMERIC NUTRIENT CRITERIA
February 25, 2013 6:54 PM

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Florida Department of Environmental Protection" <FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com>

Date: February 25, 2013 5:37:18 PM EST

To: disalz@yahoo.com

Subject: DEP STATEMENT REGARDING APPELLATE COURT RULING ON FLORIDA'S NUMERIC NUTRIENT CRITERIA

Reply-To: FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 25, 2013

DEP STATEMENT REGARDING APPELLATE COURT RULING ON FLORIDA'S NUMERIC NUTRIENT CRITERIA

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is pleased with today's decision by the First District Court of Appeal, which affirms Administrative Law Judge Bram D. E. Canter's Final Order upholding DEP's numeric nutrient criteria rules.

Today's ruling was in response to an appeal of the June 2012 order by Judge Canter which upheld DEP's rules in their entirety. The petitioners had challenged whether DEP's existing and proposed nutrient rules were scientifically supported. The District Court of Appeal per curiam affirmed Judge Canter's order. The appellate court's affirmation follows the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's decision in November to approve Florida's numeric nutrient criteria.

These peer-reviewed rules have received the full support of the Florida Legislature, members of the Cabinet, and the EPA, and now have withstood two rounds of judicial scrutiny. Due to the efforts of staff at the Department, and the support of Florida residents, the State of Florida has more numeric nutrient criteria set for our waterways than any other State in the nation.

These rules set limits on the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen, also known as nutrients, allowed in Florida's waters. DEP based these rules on more than a decade

of research and data collection, and designed them to improve water quality, protect public health and preserve aquatic life in Florida's waters.

No other state in the nation has even come close to adopting complete nutrient standards that cover 100 percent of lakes, rivers, streams, springs, and now 72 percent of its estuaries, as Florida has.

To view today's ruling, visit:

http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/files/per_curiam_affirmed.pdf

To view the Florida Division of Administrative Hearing cases (case nos.11-6137 and 12-157), visit <http://www.doah.state.fl.us/ALJ/>

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call the DEP Press Office at (850) 245-2112.

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/bulletins/gd/FLDEP-6e0a7f>



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Rain fills rivers

(<http://suwanneedemocrat.com/local/x36430493/Rain-fills-rivers>)

Flooding not likely

Staff

Suwannee Democrat (<http://suwanneedemocrat.com>)

Live Oak — Depending on which gauge you read, Live Oak received just over seven inches of rain between Sunday and Tuesday morning.

The gauge at WQHL 98.1 showed 7.15 inches. The Suwannee River Water Management District gauge in Live Oak showed 6.4 inches.

The storm's deluge has added to river levels but flooding should not be a great concern at this time.

"The rain helped river levels a lot, but most of that water fell in Georgia," said Megan Wetherington, district senior professional engineer. "They got double the amount of rain compared to what we got. People should expect to see a rise of about 10 feet in the Withlacoochie and Suwannee rivers, but flooding does not look likely."

Wetherington said that the intensity and timing of local rainfall between river gauges can cause unforeseen impacts.

"It's best to wait a few days to see how the Georgia gauges crest before letting your guard down. Every flood is different," Wetherington said. "It takes eight to 10 days for the crest to travel from the Georgia boarder to Branford, so people farther down the Suwannee have time to watch and make decisions as the forecasts become more definitive.

"The rain has also improved aquifer conditions.

Conditions on the upper Suwannee around White Springs will continue to improve, after falling to extremely low levels in the last month.

The Suwannee River level stage at Suwannee Springs was at 42.18 feet as of 6 a.m. Tuesday. Flood stage is 67 feet. It was 37.95 feet at 7 a.m. Saturday.

At Dowling Park the river level was at 30.13 feet Tuesday morning. Flood stage is 50 feet. And the Suwannee River at Branford was 14.76 feet with flood stage at 29 feet.

The Santa Fe River at Three Rivers Estates was at 11.95 feet Tuesday morning. Flood stage is 19 feet. Wetherington said the river will continue to rise over the next few days and will peak sometime next week.

Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
shrinking water supply...
March 11, 2013 9:43 AM

OrlandoSentinel.com

Utilities unite to try to stop climate change from shrinking water supply

By [Kevin Spear](#), Orlando Sentinel

6:26 PM EST, March 4, 2013

It's now a common nightmare for Florida's water utilities: An endless drought takes hold, the weather turns persistently hotter and rising sea levels poison underground wells with salt. So just as the warmer weather boosts demand for water, the supply of water shrinks.

The name of that bad dream is climate change, a phenomenon already beginning to play out and gain momentum, according to urgent warnings from many of the nation's leading climate-and-environment scientists.

But how might climate change play out at a local level? Will the amount of fresh water in the Floridan Aquifer or the Kissimmee and St. Johns rivers shrink to critically low levels? And which coastal cities' wells are most likely to become fouled by seawater?

Spurred by that lack of location-specific knowledge, a half-dozen Florida water utilities, along with state water managers and some university scientists, have formed a grass-roots alliance to do what otherwise isn't being done: Figure out what climate change will do in different parts of Florida and devise ways to ensure enough water for the state's counties and cities in the years and decades to come.

"It's a very big concern of ours," said Rob Teegarden, vice president of Orlando Utilities Commission's water division. "The world and the nation have no plan for serious climate-policy initiatives. People have their desires, but they aren't there yet, and we're trying to seriously figure it out."

Because water resources are already stressed by pollution or overuse, utilities across the U.S. have been paying particular attention to repeated warnings about dire changes to the climate in the offing.

Most recently, the 60-person National Climate Assessment and Development Advisory Committee, which reports to Congress, released the draft of a major report that spelled out the situation in stark terms. Among its conclusions:

- The climate change of the past 50 years is due primarily to human activities, predominantly the burning of fossil fuels.
- Climate change threatens human health and well-being in many ways, among them the

effects of increasingly extreme weather events.

- The U.S. is already being harmed by phenomena associated with climate change, including sea-level rise, storm surge, heavy downpours and extreme heat.

A chapter of the report devoted to the Southeastern U.S. notes that the "region is exceptionally vulnerable to sea-level rise, extreme heat events, and decreased water availability."

Meeting in Orlando last week, the 2-year-old Florida Water and Climate Alliance made clear that its members are taking those overarching warnings into account. However, the practical problem with such warnings is that they apply to a state or a region of the country and so are far too broad to be of much use for things such as planning where to build a water-treatment plant or deciding what type of plant to build.

"We're bringing it down to the local level," said Wendy Graham, director of the University of Florida Water Institute, a partner in the utilities' alliance, "because you can sit in these meetings and hear things like, 'Over the Southeast, we expect temperatures to increase,' and you think, 'What does that really mean?'"

At the core of the alliance's work is nitty-gritty stuff, such as using computer programs to turn global climate predictions into city-size predictions. That's being done by meshing global models with long-term local temperature and rainfall data — and by using newer types of climate analysis, including work at Florida State University, that specifically focuses on smaller geographic areas.

The alliance is modeled after the Water Utility Climate Alliance, a primarily Western U.S. group based in Seattle that was organized in 2008.

Alison Adams, a senior manager at Tampa Bay Water, a wholesale water utility and operator of the nation's largest desalination plant, said her regional utility was invited to join that alliance in 2010 and is one of only two Eastern utilities in the group.

"Its focus has been on establishing strategies for adapting to climate change, which is getting about as much attention from the federal government as the calls for preventing climate change," Adams said. "We don't see anything across the country at the federal level of a consistent strategy or initiative to look at climate-change adaptation."

Members of the Florida Water and Climate Alliance, which meets quarterly, are concerned that a lack of action at the federal level may play out at the local level, too, making it difficult to build support for research and, eventually, practical solutions.

"You really do have to have some larger political game plan because — like with sea-level rise down in the southeast of Florida — they see it happening and they see flooding, but some of the things they might need to do down there, there's no political will to do it," Adams said. "There's only so much a utility can do if there's no political will to do the big things."

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Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Lack of rain prompts drought fears
March 11, 2013 9:47 AM

Lack of rain prompts drought fears

By [J. David McSwane](#)

Published: Wednesday, March 6, 2013 at 4:57 p.m.

Fears of a return to drought conditions are stirring among water resource managers as reservoirs, rivers and aquifers fall amid an exceptionally dry season and rising use by residents.

With a below average chance of rainfall expected in the three-month forecast, Sarasota and Manatee County aquifers and rivers are slowing falling ahead of the beginning of the usual rainy season in June, which will need to bring ample rain to allay drought conditions next year.

Still, no additional water restrictions have been imposed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District, which includes Sarasota, Manatee and most of Charlotte County.

Less stringent water restrictions — a limit of twice a week lawn watering, for example — have been in effect for Sarasota County and adjacent communities since 2010. Heightened restrictions have not been imposed here since the spring of 2009.

Greater restrictions have not been called for the region — yet — thanks to downpours last summer which filled reservoirs and raised lakes, rivers and ground water to healthy levels.

"It looks like we could flip back into drought conditions," said Granville Kinsman, hydrologic data manager for the 16-county district commonly called Swiftmud. "It's really kind of hard to say."

"But right now things are OK in the southern region," Kinsman said. "We are seeing declines."

Farther north — in Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties — restrictions for lawn watering, car washing and fountain use have been imposed because of repairs on the Tampa Bay region's primary reservoir.

For Sarasota-Bradenton, rainfall from October 2012 through February 2013 was comparable to same months a year ago, with recorded average rainfall of 7.4 inches for the latest months versus 7.3 inches a year prior.

Historically, normal for the two months is 11.7 inches.

The National Climate Prediction Center's drought conditions forecast also calls for persistent drought conditions in Southwest Florida and developing drought conditions in South Florida.

The Peace River is flowing at a rate of about 50 million gallons per day at Arcadia, compared with the more than 200 million gallons typical for this time of year.

"It's strongly below normal," Kinsman said.

"People just need to be conservative with their water usage, only water when they absolutely have to," he said.

There is enough stored water to serve the region for 200 days at current usage, said Patrick Lehman, executive director of Peace River-Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority.

As of late February, 5.5 billion gallons of water were stored in the reservoir, compared with 4.7 billion gallons one year ago. Similarly, 2.2 billion gallons are stored in aquifers this year, compared to 1.9 billion gallons in 2012.

Lehman said the authority is monitoring water levels and rainfall month to month but said he is optimistic Sarasota and Manatee counties will safely make it to the June start of the rainy season.

"We have more than enough to reach the rainy season," he said.

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Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Vision, diligence & ample water supply
March 11, 2013 9:52 AM

Tryon: Vision, diligence and an ample water supply

By Thomas Tryon

Published: Sunday, March 10, 2013 at 1:00 a.m.

The only thing worse than being up a creek with no paddle is being dependent on a river with no water.

Charlotte County, which has depended on the Peace River for decades, would be in a water crisis if not for a long-term project that dramatically changed the way our entire region uses and manages a vital natural resource.

Today the flow of the Peace River is so low that withdrawals cannot be made. In fact, there have been no withdrawals from the Peace in our region since Jan. 28.

The Peace and other rivers, known as surface waters, typically experience significantly reduced flows before and after the rainy season (June through early October). Yet the use of potable water rises during the dry season, due to higher population counts and lower rainfall levels, creating an imbalance between stressed supplies and higher demands.

For instance, in January, Charlotte County needed an average of 25 million gallons of water per day to satisfy household and commercial demands. Yet an average of only 16 million gallons could be withdrawn daily from the Peace River, which supplies virtually all of the potable water purchased from public supplies in Charlotte.

The city of North Port, which obtains about two-thirds of its potable supplies from the Peace River, would have been in similarly dire straits.

The imbalance would have gone from bad to worse in February and this month, because the regional water authority stopped pumping from the Peace.

That's right, not a single gallon withdrawn -- the same scenario that occurred in 2012 between January and May.

Saving during rainy days

So, how have Charlotte, North Port and other governments -- including Sarasota County, which now buys about two-thirds of its supply from the Peace River, reducing its historical reliance on Manatee County -- been able to keep water flowing to residences and businesses despite drier than normal conditions?

They are part of a regional system that saved during rainy days.

What's more, local governments and their utilities in the four-county region have built hundreds of miles of pipelines, building connections that allow water to be moved in cost-effective, environmentally responsible ways throughout the region.

This system has been created under the auspices of the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority, which is controlled by a four-member board with one representative each from Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties.

During the 1980s, the formative years of the authority, Franz Ross -- then a Charlotte commissioner -- articulated his vision of a system featuring pipeline connections among local utilities. (Ross died before his idea came to fruition but, today, utility systems are linked from Manatee County all the way south to Punta Gorda.)

In the early 1990s, the authority purchased a small, deteriorated water-treatment plant from the now-defunct General Development Corp. The plant served mainly Charlotte customers but was located in DeSoto.

I was at the first meeting during which Ed Chance, then a Manatee County commissioner, proposed to state water managers that the authority purchase the General Development plant and pursue storage strategies to help make the region drought-proof.

Today, thanks in part to the steady performance of Pat Lehman, the longtime executive director, the regional authority has more than 8 billion gallons -- yes, billion with a "b" -- in storage, a supply that could last 200 days, even if it's not replenished.

That water is stored in a 6-billion-gallon reservoir and two wells -- all of which were constructed by the authority.

River withdrawals limited

The reservoir and wells enable the authority to store water "harvested" from the Peace River during the rainy season, when flows spike at their highest levels, often flowing over its banks.

Even when water is plentiful, the withdrawals cannot exceed 10 percent of total flow, an amount determined through extensive scientific studies; usually, the withdrawals are about 3 percent to 4 percent of flow.

When the Peace is close to running dry, the authority turns first to the reservoir. (Chance died before the giant lake was completed, but he made the greatest single political contribution to the system in place today.)

Fortunately, a number of public officials -- including Charles Black, a former chairman of the Southwest Florida Water Management District -- believed in the regional approach. And because the authority worked through its challenges, instead of putting them off, the Peace River project benefited from funding once available through the water-management district, and state, federal and local governments.

As a result, there have been no water shortages in our region, despite below-average rainfall.

There have been no water wars between local governments. Local economies, finally on the rebound, have not been disrupted by draconian water-use limits or construction moratoriums.

Best of all, water managers have not had to increase their reliance on stressed aquifers -- or make the no-win choice between protecting the environment or excessively draining surface waters.

These positive conditions did not materialize out of thin air. They are the results of an extraordinary vision and diligence.

Tom Tryon is opinion editor. Tom.Tryon@heraldtribune.com

Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
water not addressed in Scott speech
March 11, 2013 10:06 AM

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Diane Salz** <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Mar 11, 2013 at 10:05 AM
Subject: water not addressed in Scott speech
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Water Not Addressed In Scott Speech

Out of the eight-member Polk County legislative delegation, Neil Combee was perhaps the most skeptical of last week's State of the State address by his fellow Republican, Gov. Rick Scott.

By [Bill Rufty](#)
LEDGER POLITICAL EDITOR
Published: Monday, March 11, 2013 at 3:49 a.m.

After mention of the environment in his budget message earlier this year, Gov. Rick Scott said nary a word about it during his State of the State address to the Florida Legislature last week.

Rep. Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, said he noticed there was nothing about water policies in the speech.

"I believe he framed his speech in those things needing immediate attention, (but) I believe the governor will work with us on developing a statewide water plan. We have no more than eight years (to get it in place), and I believe we need to move in that direction very soon," Albritton said following last Tuesday's address.

Several environmental groups noticed the absence in the speech.

"There has been chatter on emails by environmental groups," said Eric Draper, a lobbyist for Audubon Florida. "Maybe he just framed the speech for the Legislature."

Scott did mention when unveiling his budget earlier in the year that he'd like to see nearly double the funding for the restoration of the Everglades and \$75 million for Florida Forever, the program created with the help of former Sen. Paula Dockery of Lakeland to preserve environmentally sensitive land.

But an overall water policy for Florida is missing, Albritton noted.

There are two major water bills and other environmental legislation beginning to move through

the Legislature, but no major overall umbrella policy.

The two biggest, Draper said, are House Bill 109, Consumptive Use Permits for Development of Alternative Water Supplies, by Reps. Dana Young, R-Tampa, and Ray Pilon, R-Sarasota, and Senate Bill 948, Water Supply, by Sen. Denise Grimsley, R-Sebring, whose district includes southern Polk County.

The problem with the divergent views on water, Draper said, is that the legislative leadership looks at the water problem as one of supply for agriculture and drinking, while most environmental groups are concerned with whether there is enough water in the environment — the lakes and streams.

But there are areas of conservation issues developing from elsewhere.

"Polk County itself has had a big push for alternative water supplies, and HB 109 is moving through the House," he said.

Alternative water uses, he said, would include reclaimed wastewater for irrigation and stormwater runoff for irrigation and perhaps treated for drinking water. Excess water during the rainy seasons also could be stored in reservoirs.

RACE FOR WIGGS' SEAT GETTING CROWDED

It's getting a little crowded in the race for the at-large seat on the Lakeland City Commission.

Once the filings stop, all the candidates for the post probably won't be able to fit into City Clerk Kelly Koos' office at the same time.

The election is not until Nov. 5.

City Commissioner Howard Wiggs has held the seat for 16 years and is term-limited. He is running for mayor instead. With the seat being at-large, residents from anywhere within the city limits can run for the office.

Those who already have opened campaign accounts include Ricky Shirah, Edward Hall, Michael Folsom and Jim Malless. Two others picked up candidate packets last week.

City employees said they have picked up rumors that one or more new candidates are expected to open accounts this week.

Since the office is nonpartisan, if no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote, the two top vote-getters will meet in a runoff, likely in early December.

Who says city elections are boring?

It's likely to be a long forum when various civic groups begin their candidate debates.

YOU HAVE TO PROVE IT TO COMBEE

It is a stereotype that first-time legislators sometimes arrive with stars in their eyes and for the first session are quoted as saying, "Oh, the governor's speech was fine" or "I think we are doing great."

Not new Rep. Neil Combee, R-Polk City, who after his years on Polk County Commission

demands a little substance in reports.

Out of the eight-member Polk County legislative delegation, Combee was perhaps the most skeptical of last week's State of the State address by his fellow Republican, Gov. Rick Scott.

Like many of the Republicans who control the Florida House, Combee disapproved of the governor's call for expanding Medicaid through the federal program.

He departed with many in the GOP who praised Scott's call for an across-the-board pay raise of \$2,500 for all public school teachers.

Combee said the merit pay raise bill passed last year, which give raises based on merit determined by each school, is enough.

With former state representative and now U.S. Rep. Dennis Ross and Sen. Paula Dookery gone from the Legislature, could Combee become the delegation's new maverick?

[Ledger Political Editor Bill Rufty can be reached at bill.rufty@theledger.com or [863-802-7523](tel:863-802-7523). Read his blog at polkpolitics.blogs.theledger.com. Follow on Twitter @LedgerBill.]

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Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
two reapponted to SWFWMD
March 11, 2013 10:12 AM

Two reappointed to SWFL Water Management District

By Naples Daily News staff report

Friday, March 8, 2013

Gov. Rick Scott announced the reappointments of Carlos Beruff and George Mann to the governing board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Beruff, 54, of Bradenton, is a developer with Medallion Home Gulf Coast.

Mann, of Polk City, is a retired business development manager for Treatt USA.

Both are reappointed for terms beginning Friday and ending March 1, 2017.

Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Governor Appoints Beswick and Bronson to Governing Board
March 11, 2013 10:18 AM

----- Forwarded Message -----
From: Chris Zajac <Chris.Zajac@swfwmd.state.fl.us>
To:
Sent: Tuesday, March 5, 2013 1:49 PM
Subject: Governor Appoints Beswick and Bronson to Governing Board

March 5, 2013

Governor Appoints Beswick and Bronson to Governing Board

Governor Rick Scott appointed Bryan K. Beswick and Thomas E. "Tommy" Bronson to the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Governing Board. Beswick represents Desoto, Hardee and Highlands counties. Bronson is the representative for Hernando and Marion counties.

Beswick, of Arcadia, is the grove manager for Blue Goose Growers LLC and a sales associate with Blue Goose Realty. He previously served on the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Governing Board. Beswick received his bachelor's degree from Florida Southern College.

Bronson, of Brooksville, is the retired CEO of Meridian Aggregates. He is a former member of the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council. Bronson received his bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee.

Both appointments are for a term beginning March 4, 2013, and ending March 1, 2016, and the appointments are subject to confirmation by the Florida Senate.

Governing Board members are unpaid, citizen volunteers who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Florida Senate. The Governing Board sets policy for the District, whose mission is to manage the water and related resources of west central Florida to meet the needs of current and future water users while protecting the environment.

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Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Fw: FL's biggest challenge is water...
March 14, 2013 8:58 AM

FYI.

----- Forwarded Message -----
From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 14, 2013 8:57 AM
Subject: FL's biggest challenge is water...

Move Over, Health Care: Florida's Biggest Future Challenge is Water

By: [Anne Smith](#) | Posted: March 14, 2013 3:55 AM

Water could be the biggest challenge Florida faces over the next 20 years.

Florida's water infrastructure is in dire need of help, Florida Water Advocates (FWA) told the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee Wednesday.

The state relies on water to propel its two most lucrative industries: tourism and agriculture. And, that's on top of what's needed to quench the needs of Florida's growing population, a segment tied to a third economic driver in Florida – construction.

But, with its critical need for water and the economic consequences of it, Florida has only invested 0.2 percent of its budget on water over the past five years. Frank Bernardino, of FWA, said the state “got out to a bang” after it implemented a dedicated revenue source for water sustainability in 2005, under SB 444. But, even in the good years, the funding was a mere 0.7 percent of total state spending. When the fiscal crisis hit, he said, water was one of the first items to be cut.

Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Fwd: DEP AND EPA CRAFT SOLUTION FOR SAFER, CLEANER WATER FOR FLORIDA

March 15, 2013 12:09 PM

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Florida Department of Environmental Protection" <FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com>
Date: March 15, 2013 10:16:48 AM CDT
To: disalz@yahoo.com
Subject: DEP AND EPA CRAFT SOLUTION FOR SAFER, CLEANER WATER FOR FLORIDA
Reply-To: FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com



MEDIA ADVISORY: March 15, 2013

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

DEP AND EPA CRAFT SOLUTION FOR SAFER, CLEANER WATER FOR FLORIDA

~ Florida's numeric nutrient criteria will cover the vast majority of Florida waterbodies ~

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reached an agreement to continue the protection of Florida's waterways from excess nitrogen and phosphorus pollution. These pollutants cause algal blooms and are among the largest contributors to water quality problems in Florida. This agreement marks a significant step forward in protecting and restoring water quality across the state.

The agreement builds off of momentum from November, when EPA approved the state's numeric nutrient criteria to cover all lakes, rivers, streams and springs, as well as estuaries from Clearwater Harbor to Biscayne Bay. The Department will move forward with rulemaking and legislation in 2013 to finish the job of setting numeric nutrient criteria for Florida's waterways.

"As a result of continued cooperation, the Department and EPA have developed a joint commitment to clean up Florida's waterways," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "We can now move forward to implementing nutrient reduction criteria, rather than delaying environmental improvements due to endless litigation. We all should recognize the dedication of EPA and Department scientists to protecting our waterways. We appreciate their commitment to a sound, long term plan to protect Florida waters."

The plan includes proposing state legislation and adopting additional state rules that, when combined, will eliminate the need for continued dual rulemaking and secure the foundation for a singular, state-led solution for the state of Florida. Currently, state and federal rules are in place for some Florida waterbodies.

The proposed legislation would require the Department to complete its nutrient criteria rulemaking for remaining coastal and estuarine waters by Dec. 1, 2014, and establish interim nutrient standards until then. The legislation would further codify requirements for nutrient conditions in all managed conveyances and canals, and makes it clear that all state criteria will go into effect when EPA removes the federal criteria and ceases future rulemaking.

"Clean water is vital to Florida's future. The health and growth of Florida's economy, and the jobs that go with it, depend on high quality and sustainable sources of water," said Sen. Charlie Dean. "We expect this legislation to be part a strong, effective framework for protecting and restoring waters which are vital to the economic and environmental health of Florida. Secretary Vinyard's leadership is instrumental in getting the water right."

"There is not a bigger challenge or more important issue to address than nutrients, if we are to restore and protect the health of our rivers, lakes, springs and estuaries," said Rep. Matt Caldwell. "Measurable nutrient criteria will result in cleaner, safer water for all Floridians."

In addition, the Department has adopted a clear implementation plan for the criteria so application of the new rules can occur immediately. This agreement, once implemented and completed, will be coupled with EPA's prior approval in November of the Department's adopted water quality standards. The result will be Florida having numeric nutrient standards for lakes, streams springs, estuaries and coastal waters, and all but nearly 1 percent of these waterways in the state.

Supplemental Information:

[NNC Agreement](#)

[Path Forward Document](#)

[Implementation Plan](#)

[Proposed Legislation](#)

[Florida Numeric Nutrient Criteria Coverage Map](#)

[Numeric Nutrient Criteria State-by-State](#)

Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Fwd: GOV SCOTT ANNOUNCES \$2.2 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR SPRINGS PROTECTION

March 19, 2013 5:28 PM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Florida Department of Environmental Protection" <FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com>

Date: March 19, 2013, 5:18:37 PM EDT

To: disalz@yahoo.com

Subject: GOV SCOTT ANNOUNCES \$2.2 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR SPRINGS PROTECTION

Reply-To: FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 19, 2013

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

GOV. SCOTT ANNOUNCES \$2.2 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR SPRINGS PROTECTION

TALLAHASSEE – Today, Governor Rick Scott and members of the Florida Cabinet approved a plan for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to purchase a tract of land in Madison County that will fill a critical gap for springs protection, flood control assistance and groundwater recharge. The Cabinet approved the Department's \$2.2 million purchase of a 599-acre property owned by the Damascus Peanut Company on the Suwannee River, located near Anderson Spring. The property will complete sections of the Ellaville Twin Rivers State Forest and will be managed by the Florida Forest Service. It is part of Florida's First Magnitude Springs Florida Forever Project.

Gov. Scott said, "This investment signifies our commitment to acquiring critical lands for water quality improvements. A healthy environment is part of Florida's economic engine and we depend on its health. This investment builds on our Florida Families First Budget which invests \$269.5 million to improve water quality throughout the Sunshine State."

The property marks another land purchase that aids in the Department's goal of protecting springs throughout the state. On March 7, Governor Scott and the Florida Cabinet approved a [\\$1.5 million purchase](#) of land outside Wakulla Springs and within the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone with Florida Forever money. Purchasing land near springs protects the springs, karst windows and the Floridian Aquifer from the effects of commercial, agricultural and residential runoff.

"The Department saw the springs protection, water quality and water quantity that this property offered, so we worked hard to acquire it," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard, Jr. "This purchase keeps a key piece of land in state ownership and furthers the Department's mission of land purchases that benefit springs."

The property provides springs protection, a 100-year floodplain and surface water protection. The property lies partially within the springshed for Anderson Spring, which is located on state land directly across the Suwannee River from this property. Cave divers have mapped a connecting cave system that moves toward this property, meaning it has high spring recharge protection potential.

A large number of springs are located along the Suwannee River and this property has 1.6 miles of river frontage on the western bank of the river. Those springs are Hardee Springs, Madison Blue Springs, Falmouth Spring and Lafayette Blue Spring.

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/bulletins/gd/FLDEP-71f5ef>



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The Florida Current

Deal with feds on water quality rules wins quick approval from House committee

Bruce Ritchie, 03/20/2013 - 10:22 AM

Setting up a likely quick passage through the House, the **State Affairs Committee** on Wednesday voted unanimously to introduce a proposed committee bill to approve a plan with the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** on setting water quality standards in Florida.

Environmental groups sued the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2008 to require stricter numeric limits for nitrogen and phosphorus to replace the state's narrative water quality standards.

While utilities and industry groups on Wednesday lined up in support of the bill, **PCB SAC 13-02, Sierra Club Florida** lobbyist **David Cullen** said the plan violates a 2009 court agreement.

"Delay may be a good legal strategy," Cullen said. "It is not a good strategy for getting sewage, manure and fertilizer out of our waters."

The **Florida Department of Environmental Protection** announced Friday that it had reached agreement with the federal agency on a "path forward" plan to avoid having dual state and federal water quality standards.

The **Earthjustice** law firm responded Friday that the "bogus plan gives deep-pocketed polluters even more loopholes." Environmental groups represented by Earthjustice sued the federal EPA in 2008 to force it to require water quality standards, called numeric nutrient criteria.

The groups signed a legal agreement in 2009 that required the EPA to propose those standards in Florida. Industry groups, utilities and state and local officials immediately responded in opposition, claiming that the federal rules would be difficult and expensive to meet.

In 2011, the state resumed setting its own rules subject to EPA approval. A representative of wastewater utilities offered rule language that required the federal EPA to halt rule-making in Florida before state rules could be implemented.

DEP accepted the rule language, which wound up in **HB 7051** in 2012. The bill passed the House and Senate with no opposing votes and was signed by **Gov. Rick Scott**.

DEP officials said in January they couldn't implement the state rules because EPA still was proposing federal pollution limits. A month earlier, **U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle** had refused a request by EPA to delay setting numeric limits as required by the 2009 court agreement.

PCB SAC 13-02 calls for removing the all-or-nothing provision from Florida rules (**Rule 62-302.531(9), Florida Administrative Code**) once EPA removes federal rules and ceases

future numeric nutrient rule-making.

Groups supporting the bill included the **Florida Association of Counties**, the **Florida Water Environment Association-Utility Council**, the **Florida League of Cities**, the **Florida Stormwater Association**, the **Florida Land Council**, the **Florida Chamber of Commerce** and **Associated Industries of Florida**.

But the Sierra Club's Cullen said many areas in South Florida won't have nitrogen limits and there is no set date for the state developing nitrogen and phosphorus limits for many estuaries.

"The flawed plan violates the consent decree, and it is subject to court review to ensure that it complies with the consent order and the (federal) **Clean Water Act**," Cullen said. "We suspect Judge Hinkle will not be satisfied."

But the bill won unanimous support on the State Affairs Committee. **Rep. Ben Albritton**, R-Wauchula, congratulated the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for defending the state's right to deal with the problem on its own.

He also said that providing certainty for water resources "is bound to have a positive impact on our economy."

Rep. Linda Stewart, D-Orlando and sponsor of **HB 789** to require five-year plans for restoring Florida's springs and groundwater, told committee members that she may be surprising them by saying she supports the proposed committee bill.

"We've got to get started," she said. "We can't just wait around and have debate after debate and not accomplish anything."

Time Is the Enemy in Dealing With Looming Water Woes, Florida Legislator Says

By [Bill Rufty](#)

LEDGER POLITICAL EDITOR

Published: Sunday, March 24, 2013 at 12:01 a.m.

TALLAHASSEE | The Florida Legislature is dealing with major controversies this session like Medicaid, education funding and state employee pay raises, just to name a few.

Yet there is another issue being ignored by all but a handful of legislators and environmentalists, and it's one Rep. Ben Albritton said will become a much more serious crisis than Medicaid costs if the state doesn't take action in the next few years.

"Today, you turn on the spigot, and you have water," said Albritton, a Wauchula Republican whose district includes southern Polk County. "No one has ever been without it except during incremental outages due to a broken pipe or draw down in winter, and it is cheap. But that could change." As a resident, legislator and citrus grower, Albritton said he's very concerned about the state's water supply.

"I know it is hard to talk about what will be a crisis in 10 or 15 years, but if we don't start now to develop a complete water policy for the entire state, it will be too late. What has happened with water in the state is that there hasn't been a sense of urgency. I think in the backs of their minds, people get it." Albritton and a few others are pushing for water planning and policies to be moved to the forefront and for Florida to have an intense discussion about future water supplies, "like we have never had before."

'POLK IS AT THE EPICENTER'

A 2011 report from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection predicted that by 2030, Florida's demand for fresh water will increase by about 1.9 billion gallons per day, for a total of 8.2 billion gallons per day. "Traditional sources of fresh groundwater will not be able to meet all of (that) additional demand," the DEP report stated. And that could lead to a crisis.

"Right now, Polk County is at the epicenter of a drought across Central Florida," Albritton said, referring to a Florida Department of Forestry map that tracks conditions. "Now, that changes from year to year, depending on climate. We don't have a water-quantity problem, even in periodic droughts; we have a water-retention problem." As of last week, Polk was the sixth driest county among the 67 in the state, according to forestry department data. (See related map.)

Demand is rising, he said, with reports from chambers of commerce around the state showing Florida is beginning to see an increase in construction, with its accompanying population growth and greater need for water.

One of Albritton's chief concerns, and that of others like Rep. Dana Young, R-Tampa, is a need to plan for alternative water sources, such as retention areas that can be filled during rainy

times as a hedge against shortages and desalination plants that can generate fresh water. In one of the few items in the Legislature this year dealing with water supply, Young has filed a bill to make permitting for alternative water sources easier and for changes that would allow them to be constructed through long-term bond issues.

"The maximum length of consumptive use permits is 20 years," Young said. "Alternative water projects are very expensive and require bonding, but bonds are issued for 30 years, leaving a great deal of uncertainty. So we hope to change that." She filed water legislation last year creating incentives for alternative water sources. Young said she doesn't think the state's current water policy needs to be thrown out and a new one written, but it does need "tweaking."

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES

Albritton said all alternative methods should be considered. "There are many alternative ways to make certain we retain water for use. An awful lot of water in the rainy season flows away. I flew over the Everglades in a helicopter in what is known as the Everglades Flow Equalization Basin. These are structures that allow the basin to store water and to control nutrient runoff.

The city of Winter Haven has developed a flow-equalization basin plan on a much smaller scale, which could be built in Polk County to retain water in Peace Creek Water Shed that includes Haines City, Winter Haven, Lake Wales and Bartow. It is dubbed the Sapphire Necklace by Mike Britt, director of the city's Natural Resources Division, because of its circular design stretching across east and south Polk. "It could be used for a lot of things — irrigation, water recharge, drinking water — instead of allowing it to flow down the Peace River into the Gulf of Mexico," Britt said. There is no cost estimate and no money for the project, which would involve a series of water catchment areas. But Britt said such structures could be built in public-private partnerships in which, for example, a developer who wants to add a subdivision might agree to add a retention area to store water for it and for public use.

The lack of an overall state policy is a great concern, he said. "Almost every water manager in the state will tell you that the current water policies will not help us in the future," Britt said. "But no one will sit down and discuss a plan."

WATER AND MONEY

Lee Killinger of Florida Water Advocates, a non-profit environmental organization promoting water policy, said there is an immediate need for the state to turn its attention to the future of water supplies in the state. "I think definitely there is a need for more funding and for planning for water's future. I am not in favor of writing the entire water policy over again just to rewrite it, but there need to be some policy changes there," Killinger said. Funding is crucial, he said, citing a report from the American Society of Civil Engineers, the "2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure," that gave the nation a grade of D on water infrastructure. "If we don't have enough water, the state will be in bad shape. It doesn't make any sense to have the different regions of the state or of agriculture, industry, development and utilities fighting for their share because there isn't enough," Killinger said.

Former Republican senator Paula Dockery of Lakeland, who guided water-policy development in the Senate in 2004 and 2005, said there must be change. "Unfortunately, over the years, special interests have chipped away at the policy, and the Legislature has raided the funding," she said. "Hopefully, a new leader will emerge to regain the ground we've lost. A clean and adequate water supply should be a top priority of the Legislature and the governor, but I fear we are moving in the wrong direction. I'm disappointed in the shortsightedness and a lack of vision for Florida's growth, environment and quality of life."

Albritton said he wants to be that leader, at least in getting the state thinking about what he says is a problem looming over the state. "I want us to have a global discussion on water quantity in this state," he said. "The reason I am worried about water for agriculture and cities is (that) I was in California on citrus business, and I noticed all these concrete ditches alongside the road as a way of distributing water to the fields and to whoever has the most pull. Yes, I am worried about water for agriculture, but I am also worried about water for cities. I would hate for us to be in the position of having to decide who we give water to."

[Ledger Political Editor Bill Rufty can be reached at 863-802-7523. Read his blog at www.polkpolitics.blogs.theledger.com.]

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Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Fwd: Wasting Time, Wasting Water...
March 28, 2013 1:33 PM

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Diane Salz** <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Mar 28, 2013 at 1:32 PM
Subject: Wasting Time, Wasting Water...
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Editorial: Wasting time, wasting water

Published: Thursday, March 28, 2013 at 6:30 a.m.

State environmental officials predict that by 2030, Florida will be consuming nearly 8 billion gallons of water a day. That is about 1.6 billion gallons a day more than we currently use. They also say traditional sources of water supply, that is, Florida's aquifers, are inadequate to meet that projected demand.

Those officials from the Department of Environmental Protection are not alone in their assessment or concerns. Besides the expected environmental groups and watchdogs, the Florida League of Cities, the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida Chamber and Associated Industries of Florida all have the ensuring of a sufficient future water supply on their long-term agendas.

You wouldn't know it, though, to look at the 2013 Florida Legislature. Sure, there are a handful of bills being floated under the guise of increasing the water supply, but they also fall short of serving the public interest, and instead help special interests like utilities and big agriculture.

A bill sponsored by state Sen. Alan Hays, R-Umatilla, who represents Marion County, for instance, is designed to encourage utilities to develop alternative sources of water. But it would allow consumptive use permits to run 30 years instead of the current 20 years under the presumption that they could more easily obtain financing with the longer permit.

We must ask, however, how much has Florida's water landscape changed since 1983 — 30 years ago? Totally.

Instead of looking for ways to pump more and more water from more and more sources, we are confounded that no one in Tallahassee, from DEP or the Legislature, has embraced the common sense notion that the best way to ensure our water supply future is to conserve what we already have and use it more judiciously. Virtually everyone engaged in Florida's water conversation concedes that extending our groundwater supply is far more economical than having to develop alternative sources of water.

Renowned Florida water writer Cynthia Barnett, who says our state needs to create "a water ethic," summed up the problem during a speech in Tallahassee a few weeks ago.

"Our entire system of water planning in Florida is based on a false assumption — and really on the 20th century model — that we must have more and more water to grow and prosper."

Barnett is right, and our policymakers and politicians know it. Yet, they continue to sidestep the real solution to meeting our future water supply needs and continue to waste water, time and taxpayer money looking for ways to build new, costly water projects that merely shift the problem and increase the cost of water. The average Floridians use a little more than 150 gallons of water a day. Communities around our state, prominently Pinellas County and Sarasota, have reduced their water usage to two-thirds that or less. It can be done.

Instead of looking for ways to extend water permits and create new public debt, our lawmakers and water policy makers need to create serious conservation programs and develop incentives that will bring about behavioral changes in how Floridians use and, importantly, conserve water.

It's time to quit wasting time and to quit wasting water. Is anyone in Tallahassee listening?

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Tampa Bay Times

Springs revival languishes in Legislature

Sunday, March 31, 2013 5:46pm

U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson rode around on a glass-bottom boat in Silver Springs last week to highlight how he's concerned about the state's springs. But he's not sure what he can do about it.

Gov. Rick Scott boasted to the *Tampa Bay Times* editorial board about how much money he's spending on the problem — but it's far less than what state water officials have said would fix the problems.

Meanwhile, a pair of bills filed in the state House and Senate calling for developing plans to fix the springs are, halfway through the session, languishing without having had a committee hearing.

"I knew it was going to be heavy lifting to pass that," said Sen. Darren Soto, D-Kissimmee, who's sponsoring SB 978, the Springs Revival Act.

The reason is simple, Soto said: "The majority of the Legislature doesn't have an appetite to have a real aggressive spring rehabilitation program, because of the expense."

Florida's gin-clear springs once drew presidents and millionaires and tourists seeking to cure their ailments by bathing in the healing waters. Now the springs tell the story of a hidden sickness: The water in many springs no longer boils up like a fountain, the way it has for centuries. The water that does come out is polluted by nitrates, spurring the growth of toxic algae. Some freshwater springs are showing signs of a growing saltiness.

The pollution comes from a variety of sources, including leaky septic tanks, cattle pastures, and overfertilized lawns and farms. The loss of flow, meanwhile, has been blamed on everything from drought and climate change to the overpumping of the underground aquifer.

One reason it's difficult to fix the blame is because the state's computer models for how water behaves in the aquifer are all based on the wrong kind of geology for Florida, and have been for years, suggesting water pumping permits are off-base as well.

A state-sponsored effort to save the springs, launched 12 years ago by then-Gov. Jeb Bush, ended in 2011 under Scott. Groups drafting plans to restore some of the most important springs were disbanded because they lost their funding. While the Bush springs initiative existed, it spent a total of \$25 million.

But Scott, meeting with the *Times* editorial board last week, said that over the past two years his administration had spent \$10 million on springs-related programs, which he said was more than had been spent previously.

Just this month, for instance, Scott and the Cabinet approved spending \$1.5 million to buy 678 acres near Wakulla Springs to protect it from development that could send more pollution into the aquifer. That leaves another 3,280 acres on the state's list of properties around that spring to be acquired to protect it.

However, when the state Department of Environmental Protection solicited the five water management districts for projects that would restore the springs, they came up with a list totaling \$122.4 million — just for starters. The list included \$10 million to replace all the septic tanks near the state's major springs. There are about 2.6 million septic tanks in the state, half of them more than 30 years old.



U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, center left, tours Silver Springs in a glass-bottom boat last week. He was surprised at the extent of toxic algae growth but unsure how the federal government could help.

"That's a heck of a big number," Senate President Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, said of the DEP list in a January interview. Still, he said, when it comes to springs, "we need to do more than we're doing now."

Nelson, D-Fla., agrees with that last part. He said he had heard about the problems at Silver Springs from Marion County officials and read about it in the *Times*, but wanted to see for himself.

He remembers marveling at the crystal-clear waters of Silver Springs when he was a boy growing up in Melbourne. When he rode a glass-bottom boat across the spring this week, he could see how it had declined. Everywhere he looked he saw toxic *Lyngbya algae*, he said. "They had some statues in the water that had been placed there for a movie, a James Bond flick called *Moonraker*," he said. "These statues were completely covered in algae."

However, afterward Nelson was unsure how he could prod the federal government to help. One possibility might be enlisting the U.S. Geological Survey to plumb the capacity of the underground aquifer and see if overpumping indeed is to blame not only for the loss of spring flow but also for causing the sinkhole that killed a Hillsborough County man recently.

So far, even with all the talk about springs, Bob Knight of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute said little has really changed. Knight drafted a bill that was much more aggressive about cleaning up the springs than SB 978, the bill sponsored by Soto, and HB 789, sponsored by Rep. Linda Stewart, D-Orlando. He couldn't find anyone to sponsor it. "Nobody wants to touch something like that," Knight said. What the state needs to do is determine how much water remains in the aquifer and then "not permit pumping one drop of water more than that," he said.

Despite the lack of progress on his bill, Soto said he's not discouraged. He's hunting for other water-related bills onto which he could stick amendments that could help the springs.

"I've still got a few tricks up my sleeve," he said.

Craig Pittman can be reached at craig@tampabay.com.