

SJRWMD WATER NEWS

Sept. 3, 2015

District and UF scientists discuss progress made on springs science investigation

More than 50 scientists and engineers with the St. Johns River Water Management District and University of Florida (UF) met Sept. 1 to report on progress made in the first year of a three-year partnership to enhance the scientific foundation needed to develop solutions to restore and protect Florida's springs.

Among accomplishments:

- Installed wells in the Silver Springs springshed to measure water quality changes that occur as water moves through soil layers and the aquifer system.
- Began assessing how nitrogen sources vary within the springshed according to differences in land uses, land cover and soils.
- Assessed the importance of conduits in the aquifer system to better understand most cost-effective and feasible projects to reduce nitrate loading to the aquifer and the springs.
- Initiated field and laboratory studies in the Silver Springs ecosystem to investigate physical, chemical and biological factors that contribute to the overgrowth of algae and diminish the health of native plant communities.
- Measured flow patterns, sediment characteristics and vegetation character and distribution in the Silver Springs system. These measurements will help to develop a hydrodynamic model that will predict influences of velocity, vegetation and flow characteristics of the river.
- Continued to measure the chemistry of sediments and water quality in the springs system to assess their effects on the health of the ecosystem.

"Science is the foundation of the decision making that we have to do real-time," said Dr. Ann Shortelle, District executive director. "While this work has been under way, the District has been actively engaged in dozens of projects, many now under construction, to help protect and restore major spring systems. The science will help to ensure that those investments bear productive fruit."

In the three years that Gov. Rick Scott and the Legislature have allocated targeted springs funding, the District has invested in approximately \$120 million worth of projects to improve water quality and/or enhance flows in Volusia Blue Spring, Silver Springs, the Wekiva River system springs and Lower Santa Fe River springs in cooperation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and local partners.

"St. Johns is responsible for the public policy for managing our fragile springs," said Jack Payne, UF senior vice president for Agriculture and Natural Resources. "The University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is dedicated to the science behind sustainable agriculture and natural resources. So our collaboration is a natural fit."

"This team of investigators is seeking to unravel the complexities associated with the transport, transformation and fate of contaminants in our groundwater and surface water systems so that we are better positioned to repair the damage and more effectively manage springs in the future," said Tom Frazer, director of the School of Natural Resources and Environment and acting director of the UF Water Institute.

"The springs not only reflect the status of the aquifer but also influence the ecological health of many of Florida's most significant surface water ecosystems," said Dr. Ramesh K. Reddy, graduate research professor and chair of the UF/IFAS Soil and Water Science Department. "This multidisciplinary research effort is aimed to understand more fully the complex processes regulating health of these fragile ecosystems."

"Florida is rich in water resources and its springs are, perhaps, the most exquisite expression of this wealth," said Dr. Ed Lowe, chief scientist for the District. "This partnership is an unprecedented, giant step forward toward understanding how we can restore and protect these natural gems and the aquifer on which they, and we, depend."

Sept. 8, 2015

Board approves purchase of 4,900 acres to protect Silver Springs

The St. Johns River Water Management District's Governing Board on Sept. 8 approved the acquisition of nearly 4,900 acres in Marion County that will protect Silver Springs and the Silver and Ocklawaha rivers.

The property, called Silver Springs Forest, is located directly north of Silver Springs State Park. The District is partnering with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Conservation Trust for Florida (CTF) on the purchase from Rayonier, Inc.

The \$11.5 million acquisition will contribute to an eight-mile buffer zone where forests "capture" rainwater to recharge the aquifer and augment the springs' flow. The purchase also will protect the headwaters of Halfmile Creek and an unnamed tributary that flow into the Silver and Ocklawaha rivers, which are designated as Outstanding Florida Waters. The tract includes 378 acres of wetlands along these two creeks.

Other benefits include reducing nitrate loading into springs and rivers, allowing for hydrologic restoration that will result in water quality improvement, and creating opportunities for water storage. The property provides habitat for the Florida black bear and other wildlife and links Indian Lake State Forest, Silver Springs State Park, the Cross Florida Greenway and District-managed lands to the Ocala National Forest. This connection increases public opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The District is contributing \$8.7 million toward the purchase and will manage the property. Other funding includes \$2 million in springs protection funding from DEP and \$917,000 from CTF.

"This partnership acquisition allows us to contemplate restoration projects that will benefit Silver Springs and provides a valuable opportunity to preserve and possibly enhance groundwater recharge close to the spring," said Board Vice Chairman Fred N. Roberts Jr., of Ocala. "Also, linking thousands of acres of public lands will provide additional recreational opportunities in the region and creates a 20-mile migratory corridor that will enhance wildlife habitat."

"Collaboration between state and local partners is key to reaching our restoration goals. DEP is proud to be a partner on this important acquisition that will reduce nitrate loading to Silver Springs, as well as provide vital aquifer recharge to benefit the springs' flow," said DEP Secretary Jon Steverson. "Addressing both water quality and quantity will further our efforts to protect this spring."

"The Silver Springs Forest project is a huge step forward in CTF's effort to protect private forests close to Silver Springs," said CTF President Susan Carr. "Partners are essential to the success of large conservation initiatives and, in this case, we are fortunate to have the District's strong commitment to improving the health of Florida's springs and Rayonier's history of placing its most environmentally significant lands into conservation."

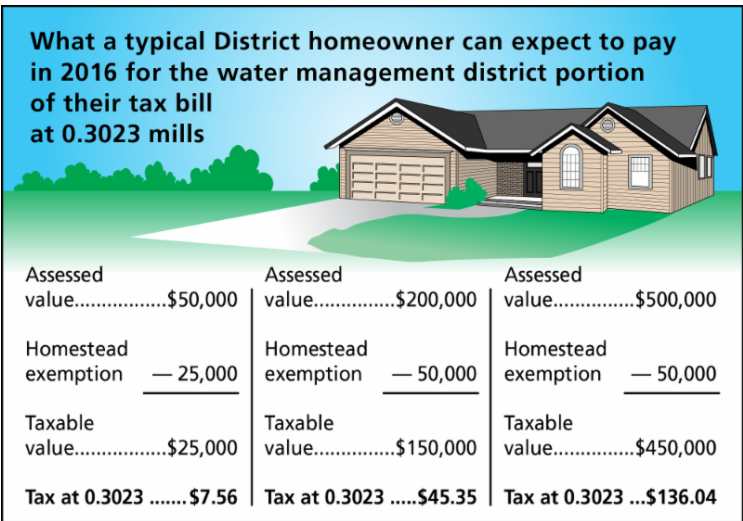
"Rayonier is proud to have partnered with the District and CTF to make the conservation of this land permanent. Florida's forests are important to the health of its aquifers, springs and rivers, and maintaining the health of these systems is critical to the vibrant future of Florida," said Callie DeHaven, conservation manager for TerraPointe Services, Rayonier's real estate services subsidiary. "Land, stewarded by Rayonier foresters for many years, provides a key piece in this conservation landscape

connecting the state forest, state park, greenway and a national forest -- an important win for Silver Springs and for all Florida citizens."

"In 2006, Marion County supported the purchase of the Indian Lake State Forest as a critical step in the protection of Silver Springs," said Marion County Commission Chairman Stan McClain. "Today, the county stands with CTF and our agency partners in celebrating the next phase of protecting the springs-- a land purchase that will connect the currently isolated state forest with a vast network of public conservation lands for our area's wildlife and world-class outdoor recreational opportunities."

Sept. 22, 2015

District Governing Board adopts FY 2015-2016 budget



The St. Johns River Water Management District's Governing Board on Sept. 22 adopted a fiscal year 2015-2016 budget of \$169.4 million. The final budget expands partnership programs to conserve water, develop water supplies and protect water quality in springs and priority water bodies, including the acquisition of nearly 4,900 acres of land to protect Silver Springs.

The Board also adopted a millage rate of 0.3023, which reduces the rate for taxpayers for a third consecutive year and is approximately 4.5 percent less than the current year's tax rate. This millage will generate \$82.8 million in revenue for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. In addition to tax revenue, the budget is funded through state, federal and other District sources.

Under a 0.3023 millage rate -- 30.23 cents for every \$1,000 of assessed property value -- the owner of a \$200,000 house with a \$50,000 homestead exemption would pay \$45.35 in the coming fiscal year in property taxes to the District.

"This budget allows the District to step up its funding partnerships with local governments on water quality projects and projects to improve water supply in their communities, while remaining fiscally responsible to taxpayers," said Board Chairman John A. Miklos of Orlando. "We will pursue major projects this year that will protect springs and priority waterways, and we have been able to save hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest payments through early retirement of the District's debt."

The final budget includes a reduction of \$6.5 million through early retirement of debt, making the District debt free and saving taxpayers more than \$200,000 in interest payments.

Budget highlights include:

- Nearly \$50 million in cooperative funding projects, including springs and priority water body protection and restoration, water conservation initiatives with public water suppliers and projects to maximize the reuse of reclaimed water.
- \$11.5 million (including partner funding) for the acquisition of Silver Springs Forest, which will reduce nitrate loading into springs and rivers, allow for hydrologic restoration that will result in water quality improvement, and create opportunities for water storage, public recreation and a 20-mile wildlife corridor.
- \$8.2 million for the Eau Gallie muck dredging project to improve navigation and water quality.
- \$7.8 million in new state funding for springs protection projects and approximately \$3 million toward second-year cooperative projects that support local efforts to protect spring flows and water quality.
- \$7.5 million for the District's agricultural cooperative funding program, which assists farmers in implementing water-saving technologies and helps fund dispersed water storage projects.
- \$2.8 million for land management restoration projects.

Major construction projects in the proposed budget include continued work at the Fellsmere Water Management Area; completion of the Canal 1 Rediversion Project in Brevard and Indian River counties, which are among the final components of the Upper St. Johns River Basin Project; construction of the 1,300-acre C-10 Reservoir in Brevard County; and flood protection enhancement through water control structure and levee maintenance and rehabilitation.

OCTOBER 14, 2015

SJRWMD Launches New Cost Sharing Program

BY FLORIDA WATER DAILY

From the [SJRWMD Press Release](#):

Governing Board members from the St. Johns River Water Management District today approved a new \$5 million cost-share program that will reward rural communities and innovative projects that support the District's missions.

The Board approved selection criteria and funding for the Cost-Share Program for innovative projects and Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) communities. In August, the Board approved nearly \$25 million in cost-share funds and directed District staff to expand the program to target these communities and projects.

"These are often economically challenged communities that have a difficult time competing with larger communities for cost-share dollars," said District Executive Director Ann Shortelle. "This funding will allow the REDI communities to continue to provide sustainable and reliable water supplies for their constituents."

An innovative project is one that uses emerging technology or proven technology (on a limited basis in Florida) to improve the water resources of the District in support of the core missions. Examples of innovative projects that the District will consider for the new funding include:

- Direct/indirect potable reuse water
- Rainfall harvesting for commercial or residential uses
- Stormwater harvesting for recharge benefits (used on a limited basis in Florida)

District staff will evaluate each project based on the evaluation criteria approved by the Board and prepare a recommended list for later Board approval. More details about the program and how to apply for the cost-share funds will be available in the coming weeks.

From [WJCT](#):

"Some environmentalists worry the board signed away its authority to choose which projects get the funds, which could hinder transparency.

Lisa Rinaman with the St. Johns Riverkeeper is all for that extra money, but she's worried about giving one person so much power.

"We always want to make sure there's as much transparency as possible on these decisions that are going to be made to potentially help our natural resources and so this will force the public to be a little bit more engaged," Rinaman said.

Legislature asks court to dismiss Amendment 1 lawsuit

By Lloyd Dunkelberger , Herald-Tribune

/ Thursday, September 10, 2015

TALLAHASSEE

The Florida Legislature has filed a motion asking a trial judge to dismiss a lawsuit filed by environmental groups that alleged the House and Senate misappropriated \$237 million in Amendment 1 spending in the new state budget.

Environmental groups, including Earthjustice, the Florida Wildlife Federation, St. Johns Riverkeeper and the Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida filed a lawsuit in June, alleging the new budget did not meet the requirements of Amendment 1, which was approved by voters last November and required about \$740 million be spent on environmental programs in the 2015-16 budget.

The environmental groups, which also include the Sierra Club, alleged that \$237 million in Amendment 1 funding was “patently misappropriated,” including \$174 million spent on salaries and other personnel costs in state agencies, \$26.7 million spent on management plans and water retention projects on non-conservation agricultural land that is privately owned and \$38.6 million spent on building sewage treatment plants and storm water facilities.

The lawsuit says lawmakers shortchanged environmental land-buying programs, like Florida Forever, which they say was one of the primary purposes of Amendment 1.

In asking the court to dismiss the environmentalists’ call for an injunction on the spending, lawyers for the House and Senate said all the Amendment 1 spending in the new budget is for “permissible purposes.”

“While plaintiffs might have struck a different balance, allocating more funds for land acquisition and restoration and less (or none) for management and improvement, the constitution commits that decision to the Legislature,” the motion says.

“In reality plaintiffs contest the wisdom of the Legislature’s decision to appropriate funds for one permissible purpose in preference to another, but that challenge presents a question of policy, not law,” the Legislature said.

The motion for dismissal also says there is no basis for the environmental groups to ask the court to not only block the contested \$237 million in spending but to direct the

state's chief financial officer, Jeff Atwater, to redeposit the funding into the land-acquisition trust fund.

“While a court can, in a proper case, enjoin the expenditure of unlawfully appropriated funds, its authority to fashion equitable relief does not include the authority to transfer public funds and, in effect, amend the General Appropriations Act,” the Legislature said.

The motion also contends the environmental groups lack the legal standing, or a “direct and personal stake” in the spending, to seek an injunction.

The case is being tried in circuit court in Leon County.

Taking care of state's water needs should come before political patronage

By Paula Dockery | Guest Columnist

Published: September 17, 2015

One of the perks of being governor is appointing thousands of individuals to various boards, commissions, authorities and committees. Although most of these are unpaid positions, they do carry prestige and the ability to shape policy.

Some of these boards are extremely influential in the running of an agency — belying the volunteer nature of the appointment. For example, the appointees to Florida's five water management district boards select their executive directors. This is done to ensure the executive director's loyalty is to the board and the taxpayers of the district and not to the governor and other elected officials in Tallahassee.

One caveat: The governor can indirectly choose the executive director if his board appointees decide to be little more than rubber stamps. That was unfortunately the case recently with the board of governors of the South Florida Water Management District.

Serving on the board of one of the water management districts comes with important responsibilities. Board members deal with complex water policy and restoration efforts. They determine water usage. They are entrusted with land management and resource protection.

So it's disturbing that the governor has slashed their funding, downsized their staffs, all but eradicated Florida Forever spending and forced out many of the most knowledgeable and scientific-based employees.

Many who once trusted the water districts to carry out major restoration projects now fear that their professionalism, science-based decision-making and political independence has been compromised.

Under this governor, their resources and staff have been decimated while they are expected to speed up permitting for developers — particularly agricultural landowners who are converting their lands to development.

The state is split into five water management districts: Northwest Florida, Suwanee, St Johns River, Southwest Florida and the granddaddy of them all, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

It's this last and largest district that has been in the news.

Covering 16 counties from Orlando to the Florida Keys and serving a population of 8.1 million residents, the district is responsible for a safe and adequate drinking water supply, permitting for agricultural uses, flood control, land acquisition and management, and Everglades restoration. SFWMD has a budget of some \$750 million. Board members need to be good watchdogs over public funds — spending not only tax revenue levied through their ad valorem taxing authority but also spending tens of millions of dollars through other state revenue sources and programs such as Florida Forever.

The majority of the nine appointments to the SFWMD are attorneys, realtors/developers and agriculture interests. Most are well connected politically. One member is affiliated with the King Ranch, a private hunting operation that entertains Florida's elected officials. Until recently, U.S. Sugar, a politically powerful corporation that has been the beneficiary of millions of Florida tax dollars, was represented on the board.

These board of governor appointees recently pushed out Executive Director Blake Guillory, an engineer with a 24-year career in water management, and replaced him with Peter Antonacci, an attorney turned lobbyist who served a stint in Gov. Rick Scott's administration.

Does that name sound familiar? It should.

As Scott's general counsel, Antonacci secretly visited Gerald Bailey, the well-respected commissioner of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and suggested he resign, intimating that the governor and other Cabinet officials supported his recommendation. This set off a scandal for a variety of reasons.

First, the FDLE commissioner is a Cabinet appointee, not a gubernatorial appointee. It would take a public meeting and public vote to replace him before the full Cabinet. Second, all three of the Cabinet officials, other than the governor, denied any knowledge of Bailey's ouster. Third, it was a blatant violation of Government in the Sunshine Laws.

Now, in a similar situation, Guillory was forced out and Antonacci was installed. The post was never advertised, and qualified candidates never sought.

Antonacci, general counsel to the governor, left the Governor's Office to parlay his political relationships into lucrative lobbying opportunities.

But duty calls.

Scott, displeased that the board and Guillory did not follow his directive to further lower ad valorem taxes to the detriment of the district's needs, wanted a change. So, Antonacci, who proved his loyalty to the governor and his willingness to do the governor's dirty work — forcing people out and providing plausible deniability — is being placed in another, rewarding position.

It seems loyalty to the governor trumps having any real job qualifications.

Antonacci's appointment requires Senate confirmation. Senators should vote down his appointment and send a strong message that taking care of the state's water needs comes before political patronage.

Paula Dockery is a syndicated columnist who served in the Florida Legislature for 16 years as a Republican from Lakeland. She can be reached at PB Dockery@gmail.com.

Florida needs \$16.5 billion for drinking water infrastructure

By JASON DEAREN
The Associated Press

Published: Sunday, September 27, 2015 at 11:24 p.m.

Last Modified: Sunday, September 27, 2015 at 11:24 p.m.

GAINESVILLE — With a burgeoning population and aging water systems, Florida will need \$16.5 billion in funding over the next 20 years just to maintain its existing drinking water infrastructure, according to estimates from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In most places across the country, the promise of clean, cheap, readily available water has been taken for granted, but that has begun to change. Farm runoff has polluted municipal water sources, and the aging underground networks of pipes that carry water to homes and businesses rupture all too frequently. Just as with crumbling bridges or congested highways, the solutions don't come cheap.

Replacing pipes, treatment plants and other infrastructure as well as expanding drinking water systems to handle population growth could cost as much as \$1 trillion nationwide over the next quarter century. Without that investment, industry groups warn of a future with more infrastructure failures that will disrupt service, transportation and commerce.

Despite the need, the largest federal aid program for improving the nation's drinking water system has more than \$1 billion sitting unspent in government accounts. That is largely because of poor management by some states and structural problems.

But the data show Florida has been successful where others have failed, spending most of the nearly \$615 million it has received on improving water infrastructure in both densely populated and rural areas.

Still, the billions needed to fix the state's old water system presents a major funding and logistical challenge moving forward, one the state says it is addressing.

"We have communities in Florida with 100-year-old pipes still. Old pipes cost more to repair now, and it's got to be done over many years. It's a real headache," said Tom Friedrich, a Jacksonville-based water infrastructure expert who consults with local governments.

In addition to funding projects like water treatment facilities in densely populated areas throughout the state, Florida water officials say they use the EPA's grants to fund the Florida Rural Water Association, which gives technical support to smaller communities.

While the law allows Florida to set aside up to 31 percent of its funding for noninfrastructure projects related to drinking water, the records show the state has set aside less than 10 percent. That indicates that, unlike many other states, Florida is moving forward to fix problems more efficiently.

"Program staff is dedicated to helping local communities through our funding and application process," Dee Ann Miller, a spokesman for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, or DEP, said in an emailed statement. "In addition, we work hard through the legislative process and through building relationships with local governments to better leverage funding opportunities."

Miller said Florida will also use money from existing loans, interest paid and Clean Water Act grants.

All of this action on water infrastructure is spurred by an intense need: Florida has long relied on groundwater to fill its cup, but as the state has grown to the nation's third-most populous, that source is dwindling.

"As communities continue to grow, the DEP shows that by 2025 we'll need an additional 2 billion gallons a day," Friedrich said.

Putnam calls for state water policy

By Jim Turner

The News Service of Florida

Published: Monday, September 28, 2015 at 10:57 p.m.

TALLAHASSEE — Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam said Monday that Florida lawmakers must approve a water-policy plan floated last spring to avoid the types of shortages being experienced in California.

Putnam, warning of "dark clouds on the horizon" at the Florida Chamber of Commerce's Future of Florida Forum, also spoke of the need to further improve educational options in the state and for a third natural-gas pipeline to be built to further diversify the state's energy sources.

But the initial focus of his speech was the need to establish new water policies for a state that will "face over a 1-billion-gallon-a-day shortfall by 2030." And the way to do that, he said, is to approve water policies outlined in a bill (HB 7003) that died when the House abruptly ended the regular legislative session in April.

Putnam said lawmakers need to close the remaining "minor" differences in their water proposals as a way to maintain the quality of life in Florida and plan future economic opportunities.

"The House, the Senate have worked very hard throughout the last year to close a big gap between their two ideas, and we're on the goal line," Putnam said at the two-day forum held at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate. "We need your help to punch it across the goal line this year. This session. Not to monkey with it. Not to go back and litigate fights that were resolved last session. Pigs get fat, and hogs get slaughtered. Let's pass the bill we have this year, this session so that we can move on to all the other economic-development issues that our state faces."

The House water proposal, which had backing from the state's agriculture industry and influential business groups, failed to get approval from the Senate, where members had their own ideas about changing the state's water policies to meet the demands of a voter-approved constitutional amendment about land and water conservation.

The Senate moved closer to the House's proposed expansion of best-management practices — such as advanced stormwater management, erosion controls and specific fertilizing procedures — beyond the 470,000-acre farming region south of Lake Okeechobee to all lands around Lake Okeechobee and the state's natural springs.

But as the session was scuttled, the Senate reaffirmed its support, in a 39-1 vote, to include two measures that had been opposed by the House — a pedestrian trail network backed by Senate President Andy Gardiner and an oversight council to rate potential water projects.

Gardiner, R-Orlando, said at the time that the council would provide spending oversight of money from Amendment 1, the ballot initiative supported by 75 percent of voters in 2014. The initiative requires 33 percent of the proceeds from a real-estate tax to go for land and water maintenance and acquisition.

Putnam said the key parts of the proposed legislation will help avoid local governmental fights over water rights that dominated regions in the 1980s and that could impact business development and recruitment to Florida.

"You can't expect world class attractions in Orlando to put billions of dollars into their parks if they don't know whether they're going to get an allocation for their newest water-based features," Putnam said. "You can't expect to bring in a Boeing, a Mercedes, whatever shiny economic-development prize that we want, if there is some question about whether the most fundamental element in economic development will be available to them."

Sept. 28, 2015
News Release

Governor Appoints Henslick and Rice to the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Governing Board

Governor Rick Scott appointed John Henslick and Kelly Rice to the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Governing Board. Henslick represents Manatee County and Rice represents Citrus, Lake, Levy and Sumter Counties.

Henslick, 64, of Myakka City, is the owner of Henslick & Associates. Henslick received his bachelor's degree from Jacksonville University and his master's degree from the University of Florida. He fills a vacant seat and is appointed for a term beginning Sept. 25, 2015, and ending March 1, 2017.

Rice, 47, of Webster, is the Broker/Owner of Prime Property Resources, Inc., President of Physical Therapy Services of Brooksville Inc. and the President of Rice Cattle Company. Rice received his bachelor's degree from the University of South Florida. He fills a vacant seat and is appointed for a term beginning Sept. 25, 2015, and ending March 1, 2019.

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.

Chris Zajac
Senior Government Affairs Program Manager
Southwest Florida Water Management District

Sept. 29, 2015
News Release

District Approves Millage and Budget

On Tuesday, the Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) adopted a FY2015-16 millage rate of 0.3488 mill, 4.6 percent lower than the current fiscal year. For the owner of a \$150,000 home with a \$50,000 homestead exemption, the District tax would be \$34.88 a year, or about \$2.91 per month. The fiscal year runs from Oct. 1, 2015, through Sept. 30, 2016. The total FY2015-16 proposed budget for the District is \$184.3 million.

The budget continues the District's commitment to protect Florida's water resources and to improve Florida's economic vitality. All programs and projects are dedicated to the core mission of the District and designed to provide the highest quality service to residents within the District.

The budget includes more than \$109 million for Cooperative Funding Initiatives and District projects. The District funds are leveraged with its partners' resulting in a total investment of more than \$150 million for water resource management projects.

This budget includes \$22.7 million for springs protection, including \$13.4 million in state funding, leveraged with an additional \$5.5 million from local cooperators. This results in a \$28.2 million investment for the northern coastal springs systems.

Other key budget highlights include \$25 million for reclaimed water projects which reduce reliance on groundwater sources; \$8 million for the restoration of impacted lands to improve water quality and re-establish wetland and upland natural systems; and \$12 million for storm water improvement projects to improve water quality of SWIM priority water bodies.

Chris Zajac
Senior Government Affairs Program Manager
Southwest Florida Water Management District

Florida springs to receive \$82 million toward restoration projects

Gov. Rick Scott made the announcement that 26 springs projects have been approved.

| 10/5/2015

Gov. Rick Scott announced that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Water Management Districts have approved 26 springs projects to receive more than \$40 million included in the 2015-16 "KEEP FLORIDA WORKING" budget, the highest amount ever provided for Florida's springs. Along with \$41.8 million in matching funds at the state and local level, investment in springs' projects resulted in over \$82 million of projects this year. Governor Scott has provided historic funding for the past three years to directly benefit water quality and quantity of springs totaling \$189 million.

Gov. Scott said, "Florida's 900 freshwater springs bring families, visitors and job creators to our state. Over the last three years, we have invested record funding for **PRESS RELEASE**

Florida springs to receive \$82 million toward restoration projects

Gov. Rick Scott made the announcement that 26 springs projects have been approved.

Florida's springs, and the projects we are announcing today will ensure our springs are protected for future generations to enjoy."

DEP Secretary Jon Stevenson said, "I would like to thank Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature for providing record funding for springs restoration, and for securing the recurring funding that will allow us to continue to protect springs in the future. Combining efforts and resources with local governments, stakeholders and the water management districts enables us to take a more comprehensive and efficient approach to springs protection."

The 26 statewide projects include:

- **TAMPA – Southwest Florida Water Management District** (*Homosassa, Kings Bay, Rainbow and Weeki Wachee Springs*) – A total investment of nearly \$20.48 million for five projects including in central sewer connection, reuse and infrastructure projects.
- **JACKSONVILLE/ORLANDO – St. Johns River Water Management District** (*Silver Springs, Volusia Blue Springs and Wekiva River springs*) – A total investment of more than \$31.3 million for eight projects including land acquisition, water reclamation and aquifer recharge, central sewer connection and storm water projects.
- **GAINESVILLE – Suwannee River Water Management District** (*Convict, Ravine, Fanning and Hornsby springs, Ichetucknee, Santa Fe and Suwannee rivers and springs*) – A total investment of more than \$13 million for seven projects including aquifer recharge, central sewer expansion, water quality and enhanced agricultural water quality management practices projects.
- **PANAMA CITY/TALLAHASSEE – Northwest Florida Water Management District** (*Gainer Spring, Jackson Blue Spring and Wakulla Springs*) – A total investment of more than \$17.87 million for six projects including land acquisition, central sewer connection and improved management practice projects.

» **For a list of the approved spring's projects, click here.** (PDF document) To see DEP's interactive spring's project map, please click **here**.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 5, 2015

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

SPRINGS RESTORATION CONTINUES WITH \$20.4 MILLION INVESTMENT IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

~Collaboration enables more comprehensive and efficient approach to restoration~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Southwest Florida Water Management District have approved [five springs restoration projects](#) in Citrus, Hernando and Marion counties. These projects will receive more than \$13.4 million in state funding from Governor Rick Scott's 2015-16 "Keep Florida Working" budget. This funding is expected to leverage over \$7 million in matching funds.

These five selected projects will benefit Homosassa, Kings Bay, Rainbow and Weeki Wachee springs.

"I would like to thank Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature for providing record funding for springs restoration, and for securing the recurring funding that will allow us to continue to protect springs in the future," said DEP Secretary Jon Stevenson. "Combining efforts and resources with local governments, stakeholders and the water management districts enables us to take a more comprehensive and efficient approach to springs protection."

The project development process is a collaborative effort among the department, water management districts, community leaders and local stakeholders. Projects are selected based on pollutant reduction, water conservation, cost effectiveness and available matching dollars.

Robert Beltran, executive director of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, said, "We appreciate the Governor's and the Legislature's commitment to springs in our district. This funding will allow us to complete significant restoration projects that will allow the citizens of Southwest Florida to continue to enjoy these unique natural resources."

Southwest Florida Water Management District projects include:

- **Garcia Point Septic Project (Citrus County):** Through the connection of 88 residential septic systems to Citrus County's central wastewater collection system, this project will improve water quality within the Homosassa Springs springshed by reducing nonpoint source nutrient loads. The project will be a continuation of efforts to provide wastewater service to residential and commercial developments adjacent to the Homosassa River.
- **Citrus County Private Package Plant Interconnection Project (Citrus County):** This project will connect several private wastewater package plants to Citrus County's central wastewater collection system. The project will reduce nutrient loading to the Crystal River/Kings Bay and Homosassa Springs springsheds and will also increase the availability of reclaimed water for potential reuse or aquifer recharge.
- **Fort Island Trail Septic Interconnection Project (Citrus County):** The project will extend Citrus County's wastewater collection system and eliminate approximately 250 septic systems. This project will reduce nutrient loading to Kings Bay and will also increase the availability of reclaimed water for potential reuse or aquifer recharge.

- **Infrastructure Development (Marion County):** The construction of a new wastewater collection system will reduce existing and future wastewater discharges into the Rainbow Springs springshed. This project benefits Rainbow Springs by reducing nutrient loading and supplying reclaimed water for agricultural and other irrigation needs.
- **US19 Reclaimed Water Transmission (Hernando County):** This project will construct a reclaimed water main to provide up to 1.7 million gallons of reclaimed water per day to the Timber Pines Subdivision and Golf Course for irrigation use. The Weeki Wachee Springs springshed will benefit from reduced nutrients and reduced potable water use, and the project will help ensure a long-term sustainable water supply for the area.

Including these five Southwest Florida Water Management District projects, a total of 26 projects statewide have been selected to receive \$41 million in state funding from Governor Rick Scott's 2015-16 "Keep Florida Working" budget, and are expected to leverage another \$41.8 million in matching funds. This brings the total state and local investment springs projects to \$189 million in the last three years.

For a list of all the approved springs projects, click [HERE](#). To visit the department's new interactive springs projects map, please click [HERE](#).

Appeals court puts hold on regulation protecting waterways

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By JOHN FLESHER
AP Environmental Writer

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) - A federal appeals court on Friday blocked an Obama administration rule that attempts to clarify which small streams, wetlands and other waterways the government can shield from pollution and development.

In a 2-1 ruling, a panel of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati put the regulations on hold nationwide until the court decides whether it has jurisdiction to consider lawsuits against them. More than half the states have filed legal challenges, continuing a debate over federal water protection authority that two Supreme Court cases and extensive rulemaking efforts over the past 14 years have failed to resolve.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued their latest regulations in May, drawing fierce criticism from landowner groups and conservative lawmakers who described them as costly, confusing and a government power grab. Environmentalists and other supporters said they would safeguard drinking water for 117 million Americans while preserving wetlands that filter out pollutants, control floods and provide crucial wildlife habitat.

The EPA and the Corps said in a joint statement that they respected the court's decision and looked forward to defending the rule, which they said "represents the agencies' continuing commitment to protecting and restoring the nation's water resources that are vital for our health, environment, and economy."

Republican Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, said the court ruling was "a victory for all states, local governments, farmers, ranchers and landowners" and urged Congress to approve legislation that would force the agencies to rewrite the rule. The House has done so, while similar measure has cleared a Senate committee. The White House has threatened a veto.

House Speaker John Boehner, of Ohio, also lauded the ruling in a news release: "I am encouraged that the judicial branch has blocked implementation of an egregious regulatory scheme that dooms landowners, small businesses, farmers, and manufacturers to a regulatory and economic hell."

U.S. District Judge Ralph Erickson in Fargo, N.D., halted the rule's implementation in 13 central and Western states shortly before it took effect in August. Erickson said judges have wide discretion to craft their orders narrowly or broadly, but he declined to extend his order to additional states.

The 6th circuit panel took a different approach, even while acknowledging uncertainty over which court was the proper venue for the legal battle. Judges David W. McKeague and Richard Allen Griffin - both appointed by Republican President George W. Bush - said delaying implementation nationwide "temporarily silences the whirlwind of confusion that springs from uncertainty about the requirements of the new rule and whether they will survive legal testing."

The legal challenges have "a substantial possibility of success," the judges said, adding that it was "far from clear" that the new regulations comply with guidelines in the Supreme Court's latest ruling in 2006.

Judge Damon Keith, appointed by Democratic President Jimmy Carter, dissented, saying the court should not interfere with the rule before the jurisdiction question was answered.

The Obama administration could challenge the 6th circuit ruling. In an immigration case, the administration has appealed a nationwide order issued by a federal judge in Texas that blocks the government from implementing rules to spare nearly 5 million people living in the U.S. illegally from deportation.

At issue in the ruling Friday is which smaller waterways – those not adjacent to navigable rivers or lakes – are subject to federal oversight under the Clean Water Act. The EPA contends Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006 left 60 percent of the nation's streams and millions of acres of wetlands without clear federal protection.

Under the latest regulations, a business or landowner would need a permit to fill wetlands or otherwise damage affected waters with a "direct and significant" link to larger water bodies downstream that have legal protection.

Opponents such as the American Farm Bureau Federation said the provisions give federal officials power over even intermittently flowing streams that farmers use for drainage and irrigation – “nearly every pothole and ditch in our country,” Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said.

John Rumpler, senior attorney for the advocacy group Environment America, said the regulations are "backed by more than 1,200 peer-reviewed scientific studies showing that smaller headwaters and streams are vital to the health of our rivers and lakes."

Associated Press reporter Mark Sherman in Washington, D.C., contributed to this story.

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Adam H. Putnam: The time for bold water policy is now

By Adam H. Putnam

Special to *The Sun*

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In response to The Sun's Oct. 4 editorial, "Real leadership needed on water policy," I couldn't agree more, which is exactly why I have traveled throughout our state imploring all Floridians, including the general public, legislators and the media, to take seriously the one-billion-gallon-per-day shortfall we will face by 2030 if we do nothing. And I have offered thoughtful, science-based proposals on how to take a comprehensive, statewide approach to securing our long-term water quality and supply.

In a state as diverse as Florida, water is our common identity. And as a fifth-generation Floridian, I am dedicated to protecting this precious resource, which many take for granted yet all of us rely on.

Fortunately, in relatively recent years, Florida has built a strong foundation in law for the protection and management of our precious water resources. From the Water Resources Act of 1972, which established our five water management districts, to the Water Protection and Sustainability Act of 2005, we've seen measurable improvement in the health and supply of our water. Those achievements span more than 30 years. But there is clearly more work to be done. Our water supply and quality challenges span from Apalachicola to the Everglades and Keys. It's no longer "us against them."

I am motivated by a sense of urgency. However, it will take a combination of us forging ahead with policy now based on the data and research we currently have and relying on the best and brightest young minds, many of which are at the University of Florida, to develop the next generation of soil sensors, sod varieties, pollution removal and water recycling tools. UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences has already developed drought-tolerant lawns that are attractive and require far less water. Additionally, new technologies in homes have reduced water usage while still meeting people's daily water needs.

By criticizing tidbits from speeches I've given that included positive comments about our progress as a state, The Sun editorial implies that it is disappointed to hear that it isn't all bad news. The good news is that despite explosive population growth, per capita water consumption in Florida fell from 123 gallons per capita in 1995 to 89 gallons in 2010. In agriculture, investment in drip or other low volume irrigation technologies has resulted in 12 billion fewer gallons of water per year being used to grow our food and support the \$123 billion industry. At the same time, best management practices in the Everglades Agricultural Area resulted in a 79 percent phosphorous reduction.

Much more remains to be done, though. Our springs have played second fiddle to South Florida's complex and expensive plumbing issues for too long. These first magnitude springs are a global treasure and the original tourist destinations. The St. Johns River, Apalachicola Bay and Northern Everglades all face their own unique challenges. This is truly a statewide concern, and the time to act is now.

To suggest that pushing a bold, statewide water policy is maintaining the status quo, as The Sun did, is off base. If we take care of our natural systems, we are taking care of our urban water supply needs. If we restore our springs, we are supporting tourism and forestry and the many jobs that benefit from healthy ecosystems and a high quality of life.

Water is Florida's "golden goose." It is vital to every industry in every corner of our state. We need to put the policy — and the money — in place to do this right, and to do it now.

— Adam H. Putnam is Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture.

Commissioner Adam H. Putnam Raises Florida Water Issues to International Platform at WATEC 2015

Oct 13, 2015

TEL AVIV, Israel—Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam today participated in WATEC Israel 2015. The biennial conference and exhibition brings together government officials and business leaders from around the world to discuss the challenges facing the world's water supply. The event also features the latest innovations and technologies to develop new fresh water supplies.

Commissioner Putnam participated in a discussion on the “Implementation of Water Scarcity Solutions Worldwide – Lessons Learned from Different Regions.” The following are excerpts from his remarks:

“The diversity of this panel, from every corner of the world and varying degrees of conflict over water supply and water quality, reflects the global nature of this challenge and the need for us to focus on it.

“What I have attempted to do in the state of Florida is to challenge our leadership to take action on water policy when we are not in reactionary mode to an active hurricane season or a particularly severe drought, but rather to move forward at a time when we can make the best possible decision in a non-reactionary, thoughtful way.

“Our flat topography, explosive growth and competing demands between people and the environment have created a situation where water is the biggest long-term problem facing Florida. And after listening to a number of remarks around the world, I think most people would agree that this is a global challenge requiring all of our attention.

“At the same time we are witnessing growing conflict over water, we are witnessing growing conflict over food. Florida is the winter fruit and vegetable basket for the United States, and the United States in general is a very agriculturally blessed land in that it serves as the breadbasket in the heartland. We are blessed with great soil characteristics that are high-yield, highly productive soils. But as the world's population reaches 10 billion by 2050, our agricultural industry in the United States and around the world will be stressed in ways that we haven't seen before if we're going to meet the needs of that global population.

“Projections indicate that population around the world will grow by 80 million people per year, the equivalent of adding a new Germany every year. And as a growing middle class continues to develop around the world, the first thing that changes is diet and the addition of fruits, vegetables, nuts and proteins to that diet further stresses agricultural productivity around the world. By 2050, we will need to produce 69-percent more calories than we did in 2006. That will require the equivalent of another green revolution.

“We need to not only plan for the future needs of the people, but also the future needs of the natural resources. During the 20th century, oil was king. It was the source of power; it was the source of tension; it was the source of conflict; it was the source of wealth and wealth disparity. And in the 21st century, that oil conflict may very well be replaced by water. It is an essential resource. It is finite, but reusable and the struggle to allocate that water pie and involve new

water technologies may well determine conflict—or the lack of conflict—as we struggle to meet the needs of that 10 billion population.

“As we look to the next green revolution, we have to find new methods that rely less on water and less on resource-intensive inputs, and modify those factors to reach the productivity gains that would be required by our growing planet.

“Our focus is on increasing productivity for people and reducing our impact on the environment. In Florida, we have Best Management Practices, and they are standard on many of the 47,000 farms and ranches in the state of Florida. We have mobile irrigation laboratories that travel the state, assessing water usage on the farms and ranches on site. To give you a sense of the progress, in 1980, 300,000 acres in Florida, or 16-percent, of irrigated land had micro irrigation. By 2010, that number was nearly 700,000 acres, or 40-percent, of irrigated lands that adopted micro irrigation techniques.

“We've installed over 180 weather monitoring stations throughout the state that give growers real-time data to make decisions on whether to crank pumps or not crank pumps, particularly on weather-related events, like cold nights. Growers now have more tools to make better decisions that not only save water, but also save fuel.

“They've integrated the ability to remotely control their devices to manage their already efficient irrigation systems. Because of the new technologies and best practices that these farmers have adopted in our state alone, the industry of agriculture is saving the equivalent of 12 billion gallons per year, or 33 million gallons of water per day.

“Florida's signature crop, citrus, has completely transformed itself by adopting these new techniques, where now 95-percent of growers are using drip irrigation technologies in that industry alone, which occupies a footprint of 450,000 acres in the state. Just the citrus industry is saving 4 billion gallons of water per year.

“But it's not just on the backs of farmers and ranchers. All sectors of water users are making strides to be more efficient. Through water conservation, through the development of new technologies inside and outside the home, as well as the development of alternative water sources, we continue to reduce our overall consumption of water. Fresh water withdrawals for public supply, agriculture, and commercial, industrial and mining all decreased over the last decade. We've constructed nearly 500 domestic wastewater treatment facilities that provide over 700 million gallons of water per day of reclaimed water that can be put back in the system.

“We have to get out of the habit of using water only once. We're recycling 45-percent of the state's total wastewater flows, recycling more water than any other state in the nation. Per capita use of water in the state of Florida is lower than it has ever been and continues to decrease statewide despite the continuous population increases in the state. Despite the fact that 800 new residents per day are moving to the state of Florida, we are using less water per capita.

“No one has a monopoly on solutions to this global crisis, and to the extent there are ways for us to collaborate and to partner with one another to meet the needs and to tailor those needs from Florida to California and from the rainforests to Brazil to the arid climate of Azerbaijan, this is an important forum for people who are looking into the future and seeing less coming.”

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Steve Crisafulli says it's amazing "anything" gets passed in GOP-led Legislature

By Mitch Perry
October 14, 2015

The intense divide between the Florida House and Senate this year was so intense that House Speaker Steve Crisafulli led his members out of the chambers three days prematurely this past April, leading for the first of a series of special sessions in 2015.

Speculation surfaced that the enmity between Crisafulli and Senate President Andy Gardiner was still present, after it was announced that for the first time in recent years, the House Speaker and Senate President would not meet the press jointly at the AP Florida Legislative Planning session held in the state Capitol Wednesday in Tallahassee, but Crisafulli insisted on Wednesday that nothing should be read into that when meeting with reporters.

"Senator Gardiner and I are good friends," Crisafulli insisted.

But he then went on to say for various reasons, such as the age of legislators, experience and size of their respective districts, that it's "extraordinary" that anything gets done in the Capitol.

Left unsaid was that this isn't a partisan divide between Republicans and Democrats as is the case in Washington – but an internecine battle among Republicans who have controlled the legislative agenda in Tallahassee for well over a decade now.

The 44-year-old House Speaker then weighed in on a variety of issues that he expects to be issues in 2016, without getting too specific about any of them. He said one of his top goals is to help in the passage of legislation for aid to disabled Floridians, a top priority for Gardiner as it was in 2015.

His other top issue is tackling water policy, where he invoked the drought in California as a reason why the Legislature must act this year. When the House broke early from session in April, they failed to pass a water bill, though the Senate companion was approved on a 39-1 vote.

The major divide between the two legislative bodies last regular session was the House's intense opposition to any form of Medicaid expansion, refusing to look a hybrid plan that required federal approval for a never-before sought waiver under a privately-run health insurance plan called the Florida Health Insurance Exchange, or FHIX.

"We remain steadfastly opposed to any efforts, even those disguised as free-market proposals, to expand Medicaid under Obamacare," the House Speaker declared. "Let's be clear. The House believes the solution to health care is innovation and choice, and not big government entitlement programs."

Last year, Governor Scott and the House proposed \$673 million in tax cuts. Ultimately, that became a \$400 million cut that was approved. However, Scott said again on Wednesday that he'll propose a similar \$673 million in cuts this year, and Crisafulli said on "potentially" the House may do the same. "That conversation will take place," he promised.

Crisafulli pushed backed that he personally had done anything wrong in the whole congressional redistricting imbroglio, saying that the Supreme Court's rejection of the legislature's maps in 2012 preceded him.

Afterwards, the House Speaker said that the odds on passing something on the gambling compact was "good."

Withdrawing water from St. Johns River report based on outdated data, Riverkeeper says

Water from river looked at as supply for Orlando growth

By David Bauerlein

Wed, Oct 14, 2015 @ 5:33 pm | updated Wed, Oct 14, 2015 @ 9:35 pm

St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman talks about the lift/pumping station for the Yankee Lake Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility behind her (photo). Bob.Mack@jacksonville.com

Critics of withdrawing water from the St. Johns River argue a Central Florida Water Initiative report relies on outdated statistics to show the Orlando area will need far more water in the next 20 years than it actually will.

The case for withdrawing water from the river is based on “highly inflated” projections for future water demand, St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman told the Jacksonville Waterways Commission on Wednesday.

Rinaman spoke after St. Johns River Water Management District Executive Director Ann Shortelle gave the waterways commission an overview of the draft plan put forward by the Central Florida Water Initiative.

Shortelle said river withdrawals are just an option in the plan, which outlines ways to meet future water needs for growth in a five-county area including Orlando. She repeatedly said that greater water efficiency is the best and least expensive way to confront that challenge.

“Water conservation is the first line of defense for water supply planning,” Shortelle said.

“At the end of the day, conservation is the most economical way to solve this issue,” said Robert Beltran, executive director of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Rinaman countered that the plan low-balls what can be achieved by tougher conservation measures.

The draft plan says the five-county area covered by the Central Florida Water Initiative uses about 800 million gallons of water daily and by 2035, it will need another 300 million gallons a day for population growth. Aquifer wells can handle about 50 million gallons of future water needs, and the rest would come from water conservation and “alternative sources,” which possibly would include up to 155 million gallons from the St. Johns River.

The report identifies how conservation can reduce demand by 36 million gallons, which Rinaman said isn’t enough.

In addition, she said that based on information from a water management district workshop this week, Central Florida’s current water use is around 700 million gallons a day, not 800 million gallons.

She said the reduced consumption likewise translates to a slower rate of growth in overall water needs in the next 20 years, but the report’s use of “outdated data” portrays a dire situation that would justify using the river for water.

Shortelle said after the waterways commission meeting that the report, which has been many years in the making, does not use the most current data, but the planning had to have a cut-off point for that data collection. She said the report will be updated in 2020.

“That’s why we have the five-year refresh,” she said.

The report will come up for votes in November before the St. Johns River Water Management District, Southwest Florida Management District and South Florida Water Management District. Each district overlaps a portion of the Central Florida Water Initiative.

The St. Johns River Water Management District will get the first crack at the report when it meets Nov. 10 in Palatka. For information about the report, go to cfwiwater.com.

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Florida lawmakers set to try again on statewide water policy

By Jim Turner

News Service of Florida / 12:00 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015

TALLAHASSEE — Lawmakers appear closer to patching up differences on new statewide water policies which failed to advance earlier this year.

House Speaker Steve Crisafulli told reporters on Wednesday that talks were well underway to solve “minor technical hang-ups.” Two days later, measures dealing with the issue were filed in both chambers. The proposals contain most of the elements included in a business-friendly plan approved by the House last year but which failed to win Senate support.

The measures seek to establish water flow levels for the state’s natural springs and define the Central Florida Water Initiative. The bills also include further management action plans for Lake Okeechobee, the Caloosahatchee Estuary, and the St. Lucie River and Estuary, the inland portion of the Caloosahatchee River watershed.

The proposals (SB 552, PCB SAC 16-01) also would require the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to provide an annual assessment of the state’s water resources and conservation lands, something that was not included in the House’s plan this spring.

Senate President Andy Gardiner said that having state economists “a little more involved” gives him more comfort about the plans. The Senate’s push to include an oversight council to rate potential water projects was one of the sticking points earlier this year.

“That certainly gives me a comfort that there is somebody besides just the political side of the decision making,” Gardiner, R-Orlando, said Monday.

The House water proposal — backed by the state’s agriculture industry and influential business groups — earlier this year failed to get approval from the Senate, whose members had their own ideas about changing the state’s water policies to meet the demands of a voter-approved constitutional amendment about land and water conservation.

The Senate moved closer to the House’s proposed expansion of best-management practices — such as advanced stormwater management, erosion controls and specific fertilizing procedures — beyond the 470,000-acre farming region south of Lake Okeechobee to all lands around Lake Okeechobee and the state’s natural springs.

But before the session was scuttled over the state budget, the Senate reaffirmed its support to include two measures that had been opposed by the House — a pedestrian trail network backed by Gardiner and an oversight council to rate potential water projects.

The bike trail network, known as SunTrail, was settled when it was worked into the final budget that was approved in a special session in June.

House State Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Matt Caldwell, whose committee will discuss the water proposal on Thursday, called the inclusion of the state economists a compromise.

“We came to a resolution,” Caldwell, R-North Fort Myers, said on Monday. “The Senate felt very strongly about a council proposal, and we instead agreed upon this (Office of Economic and Demographic Research) report.”

Otherwise, the 2016 proposals mostly start where the House measure died at the end of the 2015 session, Caldwell said.

The current measures also include a Senate plan that Audubon Florida executive director Eric Draper said would give the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services “more teeth” regarding water quality than what was initially proposed by the House at the beginning of the year.

“It gives more certainty that ag producers will do a better job controlling pollution,” Draper said.

On Wednesday, Crisafulli told reporters that the policy changes are needed before water issues become a crisis for the state.

“We have to look no further than California to know what these challenges could look like — a state experiencing a drought that has left them with potentially, as they say today, one year of reserves, an agricultural industry that is losing billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs, that has really no contingency in place,” Crisafulli, R-Merritt Island, said.

Speaking at the Florida Chamber of Commerce’s Future of Florida Forum late last month, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam mirrored Crisafulli’s assessment of the differences between the House and Senate.

Putnam also drew upon near-apocalyptic images of drought-plagued California and Florida’s growing population — which could potentially create a one billion gallon-per-day shortfall by 2030 — as reasons lawmakers need to close their remaining “minor” differences over water policy.

Putnam told the chamber that the key parts of the proposed legislation will help avoid local governmental fights over water rights that dominated some regions in the 1980s and that could hamper the state’s business recruitment efforts.

“You can’t expect world class attractions in Orlando to put billions of dollars into their parks if they don’t know whether they’re going to get an allocation for their newest water-based features,” Putnam said. “You can’t expect to bring in a Boeing, a Mercedes, whatever shiny economic-development prize that we want, if there is some question about whether the most fundamental element in economic development will be available to them.”

UF/IFAS-developed app saves significant water and money

October 16, 2015

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — An app developed by scientists at the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences may save homeowners about 30 percent on water usage, which translates into lower utility bills, new research shows.

Kati Migliaccio, the lead designer of the irrigation app, led a study at the UF/IFAS Tropical Research and Education Center in Homestead, Florida. Through their research, scientists found the app saved 42 percent to 57 percent of the water used with time-scheduled irrigation.

The finding is significant for homeowner money savings and water conservation. Urban turf irrigation accounts for 30 percent to 70 percent of residential per capita water use, according to a 2007 UF/IFAS study.

Grass is green virtually year-round in South Florida; thus, the higher savings on the Homestead plot. But Migliaccio said homeowners statewide can expect to save 30 percent on watering their lawns.

Many homeowners water their lawns based on timed irrigation systems. In other words, the system starts up on days when irrigation is allowed and runs for the set amount of time, based on the times the homeowner sets. Depending on where you live in Florida, residential irrigation may be under restrictions such that homeowners are allowed to irrigate only on particular days.

But the UF/IFAS app gives the homeowner an irrigation schedule based on data the user puts into it, describing their irrigation system and links to weather information to calculate evapotranspiration – a combination of water that evaporates from grass and soil. The app gives real-time information to users, relying on constantly updated data from the Florida Automated Weather Network and the Georgia Automated Environmental Monitoring Network.

The app might suggest to users that if there's a rain chance above 60 percent, you might not want to irrigate. By contrast, if significant rain fell in the last 24 hours, the app might suggest skipping irrigation for a day.

"The app takes the guesswork out of irrigation," said Migliaccio, a UF/IFAS professor of agricultural and biological engineering. "It's based on science."

On top of the science, the app provides advantages – it's free and user-friendly.

Details about the app can be found at <http://smartirrigationapps.org>.

The newly published study appears in the journal *Computers and Electronics in Agriculture*. Migliaccio and her colleagues have already set up a similar experiment with the UF/IFAS-developed app at the Gainesville campus.

By: Brad Buck, 352-294-3303, bradbuck@ufl.edu

Source: Kati Migliaccio, 352-392-1864, klwhite@ufl.edu

For Immediate Release October 22, 2015

Contact: Ryan Smith (850) 717-5000, ryan.smith@myfloridahouse.gov

Comprehensive Water Policy Bill Passes House State Affairs Committee

Tallahassee, Fla.—The Florida House State Affairs Committee today unanimously passed PCB 16-01 relating to environmental resources. The bipartisan bill is a comprehensive approach to modernize Florida's water policy to address water quality and supply issues.

"Florida's water resources are the lifeblood of our families and our agriculture and tourism industries," said House Speaker Steve Crisafulli (R-Merritt Island). "We need to proactively address challenges regarding Florida's water quality and supply now to prevent crises in the future. While water issues that face our state cannot be solved in one legislative term, this bill will help create a solid foundation for future efforts to strengthen Florida's water resources. I'm grateful for Chair Caldwell's continued leadership on this issue."

"This legislation addresses both the water quality problems we face today and the imminent strain on our water supply," said Representative Matt Caldwell (R-Lehigh Acres), Chairman of the State Affairs Committee. "Our bill modernizes existing water policies by providing scientifically sound, responsible solutions to protect the health of our waterways and develop greater, reliable access to clean water for Floridians."

The bill makes a number of revisions to Florida's water policy. It:

- Creates the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act to expedite protection and restoration of the water flow and water quality in the aquifer and Outstanding Florida Springs;
- Ensures the appropriate governmental entities continue to develop and implement uniform water supply planning, consumptive water use permitting, and resource protection programs for the area encompassed by the Central Florida Water Initiative;
- Updates and restructures the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Act to reflect and build upon the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) completion of basin management action plans (BMAP) for Lake Okeechobee, the Caloosahatchee Estuary, and the St. Lucie River and Estuary, DEP's continuing development of a BMAP for the inland portion of the Caloosahatchee River watershed, and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' implementation of best management practices in the three basins;
- Modifies water supply and resource planning documents and processes in order to provide more robust representations of the state's water needs and goals;
- Requires the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to conduct an annual assessment of water resources and conservation lands;
- Requires DEP to publish an online publicly accessible database of conservation lands on which public access is compatible with conservation and recreation purposes;
- And requires DEP to conduct a feasibility study for creating and maintaining a web-based, interactive map of the state's waterbodies as well as regulatory information about each waterbody.

The bill enjoyed support from a broad spectrum of organizations.

Brewster Bevis of Associated Industries of Florida and the Florida H2O Coalition said, "For years, AIF and the Florida H2O Coalition have been actively advocating for good, sound water policy here in the state of Florida. Water policy that is comprehensive in nature, water policy that is science backed, and water policy that focuses on springs, the Central Florida Water Initiative, Lake Okeechobee, and the Northern Everglades. AIF and the Florida H2O Coalition believe this work product does all of that."

Beth Lewis of the Nature Conservancy stated, "The Nature Conservancy appreciates you working with us over the last two years to make changes that are significant and positive in this bill. We very much are supportive of this bill and we look forward to working with you and appreciate your commitment to passing this legislation this session."

Grace Lovett from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services said, "Thank you for this thoughtful legislation. As Commissioner Putnam has said many times, Florida's biggest long-term challenge is ensuring Florida has a healthy and abundant supply of water to meet the state's future needs. The bill before you today demonstrates a commitment to address this challenge. The Commissioner looks forward to working with you this session on this comprehensive statewide water policy. We believe this bill will protect this precious resource for future generations. "

David Childs from the Florida Chamber of Commerce stated, "This bill is really about securing Florida's water future. The state has tremendous economic opportunities and tremendous natural beauty. This bill will ensure those two magnets will continue to pull people to this state, develop our businesses, and improve our quality of life."

###

Water, spring bills mirror bills from last session

By Chris Curry

Staff writer

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Water policy and springs bills introduced for the 2016 session in Tallahassee closely resemble measures that died in the final acrimonious days of the 2015 session, when the Florida House adjourned three days early.

“So far it is largely the end of last year's session, when everything blew up...,” said David Cullen, a lobbyist for the Sierra Club Florida.

For springs-protection advocates, that may be a mix of good and bad news.

The new bills introduced by State Sen. Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, and the House's State Affairs Committee both point to the declining flow and reduced water quality of the state's groundwater and springs and say that “action is urgently needed.”

The bills set a July 1, 2017 deadline to set minimum flows in levels for outstanding Florida springs that do not yet have those protections in place, call for five-year work programs that detail projects for springs and other water bodies with high pollution or reduced flow and would require multiple water management districts and the Department of Environmental Protection to work together on recovery plans for springs that are impacted by groundwater pumping withdrawals in a neighboring water management district.

The impact of groundwater pumping within the jurisdiction of the St. Johns River Water Management District on springs and groundwater levels within the Suwannee River Water Management District has been a topic of concern and discussion for several years.

Since the bills closely resemble the measures from the end of the 2015 session, several protections from the bill that Dean originally filed at the start of 2015 have been watered down.

Under the bills introduced for 2016, any time a water management district denies an application for a groundwater pumping permit on the basis that the withdrawal would push a river or spring below its adopted minimum flow level, the state will review the regional water supply plan of that district and require an update if the plan is found to be deficient. Those updates typically take place every five years.

The new language says the review will take place because those water supply plans are intended to make sure enough water is available for all existing and future “reasonable-beneficial uses and natural systems.”

The amended bill also states that any restoration plan for a spring with flow below the adopted minimum-flow level cannot rely solely on conservation measures.

The Senate and House bills also stay in line with current state law and define minimum-flow levels as the point from which any additional groundwater pumping will be deemed “significantly harmful” to a water body. Dean's initial bill from last year dropped the word “significantly” and,

in doing so, would have allowed less environmental harm before groundwater pumping permit-holders had to take part in projects to try to restore the springs.

But industry groups, such as the Associated Industries of Florida, objected to the more stringent standard saying it was a potentially costly regulation that did not have enough science to support it. The word "significantly" was added back into Dean's bill as it moved through the committee process last year and remains in this year's proposal.

There are concessions to groundwater pumping permit-holders. If a permitted pumping operations holder, such as an agricultural business, reduces its actual water usage as a result of conservation, the fact that its usage is below its permitted level cannot be used as a reason to reduce the amount of water it is legally allowed to pump under its current permit.

Bob Palmer, the legislative committee chairman for the Gainesville-based Florida Springs Council, said the bills do more to protect the springs and aquifer than last session's House bill.

"We do have concerns about these bills, especially the way in which they rely on the accelerated application of existing regulatory tools (total maximum daily loads, basin management action plans, minimum flows and levels) which are not currently working to protect springs," Palmer wrote in an email. "If the relevant state agencies were to apply the provisions of these proposed bills vigorously, there is no doubt that the health of springs would rebound from its currently compromised condition. However, we are all too familiar with the ways in which the state misapplies these tools today, which leads us to question whether passage of these bills will fundamentally change springs protection in Florida."

Palmer noted that, in this area of the state, the state has already concluded that spring-fed lower Santa Fe River exceeds its targeted total maximum daily load for nitrate pollution and that the lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee rivers are flowing below their set minimum-flow levels.

He said the state's basin management action plan to reduce those nitrate levels relies heavily on agricultural businesses voluntarily deciding to implement pollution-reducing best management practices and has not yet improved water quality.

While the Ichetucknee and lower Santa Fe are both already below the minimum-flow levels finalized for them in June, the state has pushed back the timeline for recovery projects for the rivers to as late as 2019, until after a new computer model for regional groundwater flow is in place.

SJRWMD WATER NEWS

Oct. 30, 2015

Cost-share project applications accepted Nov. 3-Dec. 15

PALATKA, Fla., Oct. 28, 2015 -- The St. Johns River Water Management District will accept applications Nov. 3-Dec. 15, 2015, to share in \$5 million in cost-share funding for rural communities and innovative projects that support the District's core missions.

The District's Governing Board on Oct. 14 approved selection criteria and funding for the Cost-Share Program for innovative projects and Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) communities.

Project proposals considered for funding should help benefit water supply (including water conservation, alternative water supplies, and maintenance or enhancement of REDI community supply systems), improve water quality, provide flood protection, or protect or enhance natural systems. Project criteria, application instructions and additional information about the program are available on the District's website at floridaswater.com/funding.

Informational workshops about the cost-share opportunity will be held at:

10 a.m. on Nov. 3 at District headquarters, 4049 Reid St., Palatka

10 a.m. on Nov. 4 at the District's Maitland Service Center, 601 South Lake Destiny Road, Suite 200, Maitland

An innovative project in Florida that will be considered for funding is one that uses emerging or proven technology in a unique way to promote alternative water supply development or to expand available quantities to offset groundwater withdrawal, or to otherwise demonstrate projects to improve the water resources of the District in support of the core missions.

A REDI community is economically disadvantaged with an employment base dominated by traditional agriculture or resource-based industries and a population of 25,000 or less. As of Sept. 1, 2015, REDI-designated communities include Baker, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and Okeechobee counties and the communities of Bunnell, Callahan, Crescent City, Fellsmere, Fernandina Beach, Flagler Beach, Glen St. Mary, Hawthorne, Hilliard, Macclenny, Palatka, Interlachen, Palm Coast, Pomona Park and Welaka. District staff will evaluate each project based on the evaluation criteria recently approved by the Board and prepare a recommended list for Board approval in February 2016.

Irrigation limited to one day a week beginning Nov. 1

PALATKA, Fla., Oct. 29, 2015 -- Starting Sunday, Nov. 1, landscape irrigation will be limited to one day a week across the 18 counties of the St. Johns River Water Management District.

Plants and grass need less water in cooler months and watering restrictions ensure the efficient use of water for lawn and landscape irrigation. One of the most important ways to help meet Florida's water supply needs for today and the future is through conservation.

Lawn and landscape irrigation often accounts for more than half of residential water use. Watering wisely promotes healthier lawns and landscapes and conserves Florida's water resources.

Because lawns need significantly less water in Florida's winter months, landscape irrigation is limited to one day a week on the following schedule when Eastern Standard Time is in effect:

- Saturday at addresses that end in an odd number or have no address
- Sunday at addresses that end in an even number
- Tuesday for nonresidential landscape irrigation
- No irrigation allowed between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

In addition, irrigation is limited to 3/4 inch of water per irrigation zone and to no more than one hour per irrigation zone.

The one-day-per-week restrictions will be in place until daylight saving time returns on March 13, 2016.

The restrictions apply to water withdrawn from ground or surface water, from a private well or pump, or from a public or private water utility, but they do not apply to irrigation using reclaimed water or storm water.

For complete information about the District's watering restrictions and exceptions to the rule, visit floridaswater.com/wateringrestrictions on the District's website.

CFWI Steering Committee accepts updated CFWI planning documents, clearing the way for consideration by water management district leadership

KISSIMMEE, Fla., Oct.30, 2015 -- The Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) Steering Committee today accepted the amended Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP) and the draft 2035 Water Resources Protection and Water Supply Strategies Plan (Solutions Plan). Today's action sends the documents to the Governing Boards of three central Florida water management districts for consideration.

The RWSP charts a long-term course for water supply in Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole and south Lake counties through 2035.

Today's actions are the culmination of more than five years of a coordinated effort involving experts in the water-supply field, and the contributions of more than 6,000 stakeholders who attended public meetings and provided comments that helped shape the plans.

Three water management districts will now consider approval of the documents at the following meetings:

- St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board -- Nov. 10 meeting in Palatka.
- South Florida Water Management District -- Nov. 12 meeting in West Palm Beach.
- Southwest Florida Water Management -- Nov. 17 meeting in Tampa.

The CFWI is a collaborative effort that engaged the three water management districts, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the central Florida utilities and stakeholders representing agricultural interests, the business community, local governments and the environmental community.

The CFWI process led to the creation of a regional groundwater model. It found that the potential water-supply needs of 2035 could exceed the sustainable limits of the Floridan aquifer by as much as 250 million gallons a day. The Regional Water Supply Plans, and the more-detailed 2035 Water Resources Protection and Water Supply Strategies Plan call for more aggressive water conservation programs, expansion and more efficient water reuse projects and a comprehensive menu of alternative water-supply projects to ensure adequate water supplies for the regional through 2035.

District seeks public input about Upper Ocklawaha River Basin lakes

The St. Johns River Water Management District is seeking public input as part of its work to develop minimum flows and levels (MFLs) for the Upper Ocklawaha River Basin (UORB), including lakes Apopka, Beauclair, Dora, Eustis, Harris and Griffin, in Lake, Marion and Orange counties.

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.

An important part of setting MFLs is the development and calibration of surface water models. Surface water models are computer programs that use continuous rainfall and other meteorologic records to simulate water levels and/or flows within water bodies. The use of models allows the District to evaluate whether MFLs are met under different water management scenarios, such as potential future water withdrawals that may lower lake water levels.

The District is initiating the formal peer review of the UORB hydrologic model (HSPF — Hydrological Simulation Program—Fortran) and invites stakeholders to participate in that review process.

Review documents:

- The HSPF Calibration Model
- The HSPF Baseline Model
- Documentation report
- Directions for use of model

More detailed information about MFLs is also available at this [web page](#).

The model review period will be Oct. 30, 2015–Jan. 4, 2016. The District asks that all comments be sent by email to Dr. Andrew B. Sutherland at asutherl@sjrwmd.com by Jan. 4, 2016, 5 p.m. Please put "UORB HSPF Model Review Comments" in the subject line of the email. The District will place all comments received from the peer review panel and stakeholders on the District web page by Jan. 6, 2016, 5 p.m. for public review.

A public workshop is currently scheduled for Feb. 3 and 4, 2016, to discuss all peer review panel and stakeholder comments received.

For more information or questions, please contact Dr. Sutherland by email or (386) 329-4201.

OTHER VOICES

Nathaniel Reed: Putnam protects Big Ag more than water

By Nathaniel Reed
Special to the Star-Banner
Published: Sunday, November 1, 2015 at 6:30 a.m.

I read with interest Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam's comments to the Star-Banner's Oct. 5 editorial, "Water policies need real change."

There is not a thoughtful, well-informed Floridian who is not concerned with the proposed, complex "water bill" that will be presented to the Florida Legislature when it convenes. I have been a critic of the commissioner for a number of years, as Florida's public waters — rivers, lakes, and estuaries — have all suffered from excessive amounts of agricultural pollution. Incredibly for an outspoken "water conservationist, Commissioner Putnam indicates that "Florida's springs have played second fiddle to South Florida's complex and expensive plumbing issues far too long."

Yes, the water issues that South Florida faces are complex and costly. The Biscayne Aquifer supplies drinking and irrigation water for 7 million South Floridians. The combination of agriculture and the 7 million residents and the millions of tourists who visit South Florida should be of major concern to Commissioner Putnam.

His interests regrettably have shown primary concern for protecting the subsidized sugar plantation owners whose drainage has been a major source of pollution of the Everglades system. It took major federal legal action to force the state and water district to acquire thousands of acres of expensive land and construct a series of so-called Stormwater Treatment Areas to reduce the tons of excess phosphorus flowing from the sugar plantations into the Everglades.

The commissioner has been all too silent on the issues of Everglades agricultural pollution. The vast majority of the costs of land acquisition, construction of the STA's — in reality Pollution Control Treatment areas — and the management of the system to cleanse the polluted drainage has been borne by the taxpayers of the 16 counties that comprise the South Florida Water Management District. So much for the amendment requiring that "Polluters shall pay the full cost of cleansing their pollution"! Without effective litigation before federal courts, the industry would never have complied with strict water quality standards.

Commissioner Putnam avoids the “costly issue” of saving billions of gallons of water desperately needed to recharge the Biscayne Aquifer and restore a functioning Everglades ecosystem. He ignores the wasting of billions of gallons of excess Lake Okeechobee water by having to release it down the lake's two outlets — the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers — constantly destroying their estuaries. He simply cannot support acquisition of a major land area within the Everglades Agricultural Area; the construction of a major reservoir to hold the lake's excess water, cleanse it and allow it to flow south to Florida Bay, which is in desperate need of the once natural runoff from the Everglades system. He is “blinded by the usual suspects.”

No one would deny the needs for major statewide water management improvements. No one would object to the polluters being required to dramatically reduce their discharges to the publicly owned “waters of the state.” We would all hope that water managers will take serious concern over the needs of Florida's unique natural systems as a legitimate co-equal partner as our state's water priorities are divided up.

We all will watch with curiosity Commissioner Putnam's claims of keen interest in the management of our state's most precious asset — plentiful supplies of clean fresh water — in the months ahead as a water bill will be fiercely debated.

Nathaniel Reed has served seven governors. He is best known as the chairman of the Commission on Florida's Environmental Future. He also served as assistant secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks in the Nixon and Ford administrations. He is a member of the Board of the Everglades Foundation. He lives in Hobe Sound.

CFWI Steering Committee accepts updated CFWI planning documents, clearing the way for consideration by water management district leadership

BY FLORIDA WATER DAILY · NOVEMBER 2, 2015

From the SWFWMD Press Release:

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The CFWI process led to the creation of a regional groundwater model. It found that the potential water-supply needs of 2035 could exceed the sustainable limits of the Floridan aquifer by as much as 250 million gallons a day. The Regional Water Supply Plans, and the more-detailed 2035 Water Resources Protection and Water Supply Strategies Plan call for more aggressive water conservation programs, expansion and more efficient water reuse projects and a comprehensive menu of alternative water-supply projects to ensure adequate water supplies for the regional through 2035.

Springs Restoration Continues with \$20.4 million investment in District Projects

From the SWFWMD Water Matters Blog
October 7, 2015

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and District have approved five springs restoration projects in Citrus, Hernando and Marion counties. These projects will receive more than \$13.4 million in state funding from Governor Rick Scott's 2015-16 "Keep Florida Working" budget. This funding is expected to leverage over \$7 million in matching funds.

These five selected projects will benefit Homosassa, Kings Bay, Rainbow and Weeki Wachee springs.

"I would like to thank Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature for providing record funding for springs restoration, and for securing the recurring funding that will allow us to continue to protect springs in the future," said DEP Secretary Jon Stevenson. "Combining efforts and resources with local governments, stakeholders and the water management districts enables us to take a more comprehensive and efficient approach to springs protection."

The project development process is a collaborative effort among the department, water management districts, community leaders and local stakeholders. Projects are selected based on pollutant reduction, water conservation, cost effectiveness and available matching dollars.

Robert Beltran, executive director of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, said, "We appreciate the Governor's and the Legislature's commitment to springs in our district. This funding will allow us to complete significant restoration projects that will allow the citizens of Southwest Florida to continue to enjoy these unique natural resources."

District projects include:

Garcia Point Septic Project (Citrus County): Through the connection of 88 residential septic systems to Citrus County's central wastewater collection system, this project will improve water quality within the Homosassa Springs springshed by reducing nonpoint source nutrient loads. The project will be a continuation of efforts to provide wastewater service to residential and commercial developments adjacent to the Homosassa River.

Citrus County Private Package Plant Interconnection Project (Citrus County): This project will connect several private wastewater package plants to Citrus County's central wastewater collection system. The project will reduce nutrient loading to the Crystal River/Kings Bay and Homosassa Springs springsheds and will also increase the availability of reclaimed water for potential reuse or aquifer recharge.

Fort Island Trail Septic Interconnection Project (Citrus County): The project will extend Citrus County's wastewater collection system and eliminate approximately 250 septic systems. This project will reduce nutrient loading to Kings Bay and will also increase the availability of reclaimed water for potential reuse or aquifer recharge.

Infrastructure Development (Marion County): The construction of a new wastewater collection system will reduce existing and future wastewater discharges into the Rainbow Springs springshed. This project benefits Rainbow Springs by reducing nutrient loading and supplying reclaimed water for agricultural and other irrigation needs.

US19 Reclaimed Water Transmission (Hernando County): This project will construct a reclaimed water main to provide up to 1.7 million gallons of reclaimed water per day to the Timber Pines Subdivision and Golf Course for irrigation use. The Weeki Wachee Springs springshed will benefit from reduced nutrients and reduced potable water use, and the project will help ensure a long-term sustainable water supply for the area.

Including these five District projects, a total of 26 projects statewide have been selected to receive \$41 million in state funding from Governor Rick Scott's 2015-16 "Keep Florida Working" budget, and are expected to leverage another \$41.8 million in matching funds. This brings the total state and local investment springs projects to \$189 million in the last three years.

- See more at: <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/blog/entry.php?blogPRId=114#sthash.gavkU2X5.dpuf>



Leaders Celebrate Reclaimed Water Project

District leaders attended the ribbon cutting of the Crystal River to Duke Energy Reclaimed Water Project. It will provide highly treated wastewater from the City of Crystal River to the Duke Energy power plant facility in Citrus County.



Two New Members Join Governing Board

Governor Rick Scott appointed John Henslick and Kelly Rice to the Governing Board. Henslick represents Manatee County and Rice represents Citrus, Lake, Levy and Sumter counties.

District Sees Gains in Seagrass Coverage in Pinellas County

Pinellas County waters saw an overall increase of 150 acres in seagrass coverage, according to **recently released results** from the District's 2014 seagrass mapping study. Pinellas County waters — St. Joseph Sound, Clearwater Harbor North and Clearwater Harbor South — now collectively support 17,334 acres of seagrass beds.



Water Bill Attempts to Strike a Balance

Tallahassee / Nov. 5, 2015

A compromise bill that attempts to strike a balance between the agriculture industry's need for water and the public's desire to restore degraded springs received approval from a key Senate committee Wednesday despite warnings from some environmentalists that it does little to reverse the pollution and over-pumping that has caused the damage.

The Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee unanimously approved SB 552 Wednesday and heralded it as a comprehensive water policy bill that gives farmers predictability and environmentalists some of the independent oversight they have sought.

Sen. Charlie Dean, R-Inverness, the chairman of the committee who has made the bill a top priority for the last three years, said it will "provide transparency" to water policy in Florida and will "show the entire nation that we are challenging the status quo."

But environmentalists complained that while the measure makes some important progress in establishing new standards and definitions, it doesn't do enough to restore Florida's natural springs and aquifers, which have been declining at a rapid rate in the face of nitrate pollution and over-pumping.

"This water bill doesn't go far enough. We need to have the water resources protected better. We need to have less water withdrawals," said Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson of Our Santa Fe River, Inc.

The bill is on a fast-track after a previous version last year became a victim of the infighting that led the session to end last year without a budget.

This year, the House State Affairs Committee unanimously backed an identical version of the Senate bill last week, PCB SAC 16-01.

The bills require the Department of Environmental Protection to establish guidelines by July 1, 2017, such as minimum flow levels, to withdraw water from vulnerable Florida springs that do not yet have those protections in place.

It also directs the agency to adopt a uniform definition of what is considered "harmful" to Florida springs and calls for DEP to work with water management districts to establish five-year recovery plans intended to reduce pollution and pumping from the state's most polluted springs.

And it requires DEP to develop remedies for 20 percent of the septic tanks that are determined to be polluting lakes, springs and waterways.

But Bob Palmer, the legislative committee chairman for the Florida Springs Council, a coalition of 35 groups formed last year to demand action to protect the state's springs, told the committee that requiring more regulations of an agency that has failed to enforce existing laws is shortsighted.

"I think a lot more can be done in terms of oversight, holding the agency's feet to the fire," when regulations don't produce the desired result, he said.

He noted that regulators too often rely on models to justify policies that allow problems to continue. For example, Manatee Springs, Wekiva Springs and other waterways have had regulations relating to minimum flow requirements in place for years and "aren't making it."

“I don’t find a certain amount of harm is acceptable,” he said. “I think there should be no harm.”

But Sen. David Simmons, R-Altamonte Springs, countered that the goal of the committee was to create a new standard that will “prevent groundwater withdrawals that are harmful” and he expects regulators to develop a new definition that the public will have input in.

“I don’t know how much better the Legislature can do to putting something together than this,” he said.

Ryan Smart of 1000 Friends of Florida said that while there are good elements in the bill, some provisions will allow for excessive pumping of water from the state’s aquifers with little or no oversight.

For example, while the bill allows for monitoring of consumptive use permits that use eight-inch pipes — which can withdraw 2 million gallons of water a day — it does not require monitoring of people who draw water using six-inch pipes which can pump more than 1.5 million gallons a day.

“Since this provision will only apply to new or modified permits, anyone can just come in with a six-inch pipe, or two six-inch pipes or three six-inch pipes and get around it,” he said.

The bill makes several concessions to agriculture and business interests, which had opposed a stricter version being pushed in the Senate last year.

For example, one provision that would have put limits on groundwater pumping from water bodies if it was determined that the pumping would have been “significantly harmful” was removed.

Mary Ellen Klas can be reached at meklas@miamiherald.com and at (850) 222-3095. Follow her on Twitter @MaryEllenKlas

Florida Legislature strikes a balance on water rules

Critics warn that bill won't halt harmful policies

Regulators are required to come up with plans to restore polluted springs and waterways

Bill has backing of agriculture and business groups but tepid support of environmentalists

By Mary Ellen Klas

Herald/Times Tallahassee Bureau

A compromise bill that attempts to strike a balance between the agriculture industry's need for water and the public's desire to restore degraded springs received approval from a key Senate committee Wednesday despite warnings from some environmentalists that it does little to reverse the pollution and over-pumping that has caused the damage.

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Florida Senate Committee Advances Statewide Policy for Water and Natural Resources

By Sunshine State News

November 4, 2015 - 1:30pm

Charlie Dean and Andy Gardiner

Sen. Charlie Dean's Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation today passed Senate Bill 552, Environmental Resources, which provides for a statewide policy to restore and preserve Florida's water and natural resources.

Senate President Andy Gardiner's office released the following statement:

"Over the last three years, Senator Dean, Senator Simmons, Senator Simpson, Senator Hays, and Senator Montford have worked with Speaker Crisafulli, our colleagues in the House, Commissioner Putnam, and other dedicated stakeholders from across Florida to develop a statewide policy to restore and protect Florida's water supply and natural resources," said Gardiner, R-Orlando. "I am pleased the legislation includes key provisions from the bills the House and Senate advanced last year and am particularly grateful to Senator Dean for his tireless work on this legislation."

"This legislation represents a comprehensive plan to restore our unique springs to make sure they are preserved for the next generation of Floridians and visitors to our state," said Dean, R-Inverness. "The bill will also help protect Florida's Everglades and estuaries by ensuring we stick to our action plans and implement best management practices that will improve our water quality and make sure we have the clean water supply we need to accommodate the needs of a growing state."

"This bill creates a transparent process to address water quality and quantity projects in Florida, so we can ensure we are making the best use of limited taxpayer dollars," continued Gardiner. "The legislation also expands access to public lands and will make information about conservation areas and recreational opportunities more readily available, so more Floridians will have the opportunity to enjoy the pristine environment the state has worked so hard to conserve."

Public Access to Public Lands

The bill requires the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to publish an online, publicly accessible database of conservation lands on which public access is compatible with conservation and recreation purposes. The bill requires the database to be available online by July 1, 2017. The database must include at a minimum: the location of the lands; the types of allowable recreational opportunities; the points of public access; facilities or other amenities; and land use restrictions.

The bill also directs the DEP to create a downloadable mobile application to locate state lands available for public access using the user's current location or activity of interest. Using a smartphone, users could locate recreational opportunities throughout Florida just as easily as people can currently locate hotels, restaurants, and gas stations.

Outstanding Florida Springs

SB 552 creates the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act to provide for the protection and restoration of Outstanding Florida Springs (OFSs).

The bill defines "Outstanding Florida Springs" to include all historic first magnitude springs, including their associated spring runs, as determined by the DEP using the most recent version of the Florida Geological Survey's springs bulletin. The following springs and their associated

spring runs are also considered OFSS: Deleon Springs, Peacock Springs, Poe Spring Rock Springs, Wekiwa Springs, and Gemini Springs.

Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection

SB 552 updates and restructures the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program to reflect and build upon the DEP's completion of basin management action plans for Lake Okeechobee, the Caloosahatchee River and Estuary, and the St. Lucie River and Estuary, and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' implementation of best management practices;

Water Conservation and Water Supply

The bill requires additional information related to all water quality or water quantity projects as part of a 5-year work program. The following must be included in the Consolidated Water Management District Annual Report:

- All projects identified to implement a Basin Management Action Plan or recovery or prevention strategy;
- Priority ranking of each listed project, for which state funding through the water resources development work program is requested, which must be available for public comment at least 30 days before submission of the consolidated annual report;
- Estimated cost of each project;
- Estimated completion date for each project;
- Source and amount of financial assistance that will be made available by the DEP, a water management district (WMD), or some other entity for each project;
- A quantitative estimate of each project's benefit to the watershed, waterbody, or water segment in which it is located;
- And, a grade for each watershed, waterbody, or water segment where a project is located representing the level of impairment and violations of adopted or interim minimum flow or minimum water level.

SB 552 also creates a pilot program for an alternative water supply in restricted allocation areas, a pilot program for innovative nutrient and sediment reduction and conservation, and revises certain considerations for water resource permits.

Annual Review of Water Supply and Conservation Lands

The legislation requires the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) to conduct an annual assessment of water resources and conservation lands and modifies water supply and resource planning and processes to make them more stringent.

Concerning water resources, the assessment must include:

- Historical and current expenditures and projections of future expenditures by federal, state, regional, and local governments and public and private utilities based upon historical trends and ongoing projects or initiatives associated with water supply and demand and water quality protection and restoration;
- An analysis and estimates of future expenditures necessary to comply with federal and state laws and regulations;
- A compilation of projected water supply and demand data;
- Forecasts of federal, state, regional, and local government revenues dedicated in current law for the purposes of the water supply demand and water quality protection and restoration, or that have been historically allocated for these purposes, as well as public and private utility revenues;
- And, an identification of gaps between projected revenues and projected and estimated expenditures.

Concerning conservation lands, the assessment must include:

- Historical and current expenditures and projections of future expenditures by federal, state, regional, and local governments based upon historical trends and ongoing projects or initiatives associated with real property interests eligible for funding under the Florida Forever Act;
- An analysis and estimates of future expenditures necessary to purchase lands identified in plans produced by state agencies or WMDs;
- An analysis of the ad valorem tax impacts, by county, resulting from public ownership of conservation lands;
- Forecasts of federal, state, regional, and local government revenues dedicated in current law to maintain conservation lands and the gap between projected expenditures and revenues;
- And, the total percentage of Florida real property that is publicly owned for conservation purposes.

SB 552 also requires the DEP to conduct a feasibility study for creating and maintaining a web-based, interactive map of the state's waterbodies as well as regulatory information about each waterbody.

- See more at: <http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/story/florida-senate-committee-passes-statewide-policy-florida%E2%80%99s-water-and-natural-resources#sthash.PJIDx6Kb.dpuf>

Springs bill clears hurdle despite environmental concerns

By Christopher Curry

Staff writer

Published: Wednesday, November 4, 2015 at 3:51 p.m.

Last Modified: Wednesday, November 4, 2015 at 3:51 p.m.

Over environmental groups' objections, this year's version of a water policy and springs bill cleared its first committee Wednesday.

The Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee, whose chairman, State Sen. Charlie Dean, sponsored the bill, passed the measure in a unanimous vote.

For the state's first magnitude and outstanding springs, the bill would put in place timelines for setting minimum flows and levels intended to protect flow and water quantity. It would also set basin management action plans to ensure water quality by reducing pollution produced on the land near springs.

The bill also prohibits some uses in the "priority focus" areas around springs, including hazardous waste disposal facilities, the land application of treated sewage sludge and, with some exceptions, construction of new wastewater treatment plants and the installation of some septic systems on lots less than 1 acre.

Representatives of the Florida Springs Council, Our Santa Fe River, the Sierra Club and 1,000 Friends of Florida all raised objections that the proposed legislation does not do enough to protect springs.

Our Santa Fe River's Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson said the state is not doing enough to require conservation. Water management district officials who say rivers and springs are already flowing below historic levels need to turn down applications for groundwater pumping permits, she said.

"We think the problems for the springs are overpumping and too much nitrogen," said Bob Palmer, with the Gainesville-based Florida Springs Council.

Palmer said flow levels and basin plans are "ineffective tools" because rivers and springs that have them aren't necessarily healthy.

Palmer suggested the state start levying an "aquifer protection fee" for using fertilizer in a spring shed.

During the meeting, committee member State Sen. Darren Soto, D-Orlando, introduced and withdrew four amendments that the Florida Springs Council sought.

One would have changed the language regarding Minimum Flows and Levels, or MFLs, to allow less environmental harm to springs before groundwater pumping permit-holders must take part in trying to restore the springs.

Another would have made a tougher requirement for monitoring groundwater pumping. As it stands, the bill requires groundwater pumping of at least 100,000 gallons per day from an at least 8-inch-wide well to be monitored when a new permit or permit change is approved.

Ryan Smart, the president of 1000 Friends of Florida, questioned if that would effectively monitor withdrawals when more than 100,000 gallons could be pumped from wells less than 8 inches wide.

State Sen. David Simmons, R-Longwood, who has worked with Dean, R-Inverness, on proposed water legislation in the past, said he felt some of the criticism was off base.

Simmons pointed to language in the bill that requires the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to adopt “uniform rules preventing groundwater withdrawals that are harmful to water resources” for areas near springs and allows water management districts to put in place a more restrictive rule for what is “harmful” to those resources.

“I don’t know how much better you can do than that,” Simmons said.

A Nature Conservancy of Florida representative spoke for the bill, saying it set the framework for springs protection.

Two prominent business groups, the Florida Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Florida, also offered support. The state chamber representative said it would protect Florida against the water shortages California now faces.