



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now](#)

Robert L. Knight: Water under pressure

By Robert L. Knight

Special to The Sun

Published: Sunday, May 27, 2012 at 6:01 a.m.

The Florida Springs Institute feels that it is necessary to respond to two Speaking Outs published by the Gainesville Sun on May 20 — "DEP is Using Science, Data to 'Get the Water Right,'" by Drew Bartlett, director of DEP's Division of Environmental Assessment and Management; and "Adena Springs Permit Won't Hurt Silver Springs," by Ed de la Parte, water-use permitting attorney for Adena Springs Ranch.

These two essays are similar in their efforts to convince the public that we should trust our government and large corporate lawyers to protect our environmental resources. The evidence to the contrary is overwhelming and irrefutable.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is financed by taxpayer's dollars to protect Florida's environment. In spite of Bartlett's assertion that DEP is using science to "get the water right," more than 30 years of data collected by DEP's own staff has documented excessive nutrient pollution in the state's springs, with increased nitrate concentrations in more than 80 percent of our springs and more than 40 percent of our springs with nitrate increases of more than 1,000 percent.

In 1998, DEP created a task force of scientists and engineers to address this problem. The Florida Springs Task Force concluded in 2000 that DEP needed to "enforce existing regulations that can be used to protect groundwater that flows to springs." Despite Bartlett's claim that DEP is on top of this springs pollution nightmare, his agency shelved the Springs Task Force and their report and has taken no substantive action to provide effective and timely enforcement of the state's water quality standards in springs. Our springs continue to become more polluted under DEP's watch.

The proposed Adena Springs Ranch is in the groundwater basin that feeds Silver Springs. Silver Springs in turn is one of Florida's most unique natural wonders and provides substantial baseflow to the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers.

Yet nitrate contamination has been evident in Silver Springs since the 1950s and continues to rise in spite of well-intentioned agricultural and urban wastewater management practices condoned by our state agencies and their "good science."

DEP issued all required water quality permits to the Adena Springs Ranch without any public input in spite of the many tons of nitrogen waste that will result from raising another 30,000 cows in the springshed.

De le Parte is an attorney and his only expertise as a groundwater and springs guru is a result of his tireless efforts to help big industry and municipal clients win consumptive use permits that allow large-scale withdrawal of Florida's precious

groundwater resources. His call to rely on the entire volume of the Floridan Aquifer System to supply the needs of the current generation of Floridian businesses is like suggesting that we tear down the Rocky Mountains so we can build more gravel roads.

He does not appear to understand a simple concept — Florida springs, rivers and lakes are reliant on only the top of the Floridan Aquifer and inevitably dry up when we lower aquifer levels by only tens of feet. He also chooses to ignore the fact that the freshwater under our feet is precariously balanced on salt water at greater depths, and for each one foot of aquifer drawdown there is a corresponding rise of more than 40 feet by the underlying saltwater.

Up-coning of salty groundwater is already happening throughout the coastal regions of Florida, and the Florida Geological Survey is warning that rising salt water in the groundwater under the center of the state is an indicator of an impending disaster if we continue to increase our rate of groundwater withdrawals.

Flows in Silver Springs are declining at an unprecedented rate never observed during previous extreme droughts. Existing rates of groundwater pumping throughout Marion County and as far away as Jacksonville are altering regional groundwater levels and spring flows.

It is likely that the St. Johns River Water Management District will grant the 13.26 million gallon per day groundwater withdrawal permit request by Adena Springs Ranch. By itself this permitted withdrawal could result in a flow reduction at Silver Springs of between about 6 and 13 million gallons per day. This is roughly 6 percent of the existing daily flow at Silver Springs and about 2 percent of the long-term average spring flow.

But added to the more than 2 billion gallons per day of existing groundwater withdrawals in the St. Johns and Southwest Florida water management districts, it may be the straw in the groundwater that breaks the camel's back.

Our message to Bartlett and de le Parte is clear — it is not in the best interest of Florida's future environment and economy to continue on this path of excess and environmental degradation. Existing state and federal laws were enacted to protect our groundwater resources and springs and they must be enforced, regardless of the wishes of special interests.

Dr. Robert L. Knight is director of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute.

Copyright © 2012 Gainesville.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.

Scientific evidence of a water crisis abounds as Adena Springs case unfolds

By Karen Ahlers and Neil Chonin

Special to the Star-Banner

Published: Sunday, May 27, 2012 at 6:30 a.m.

Upton Sinclair noted that "it is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it."

That pretty much sums up last Sunday's guest column about Adena Springs Ranch by Ed de la Parte, the attorney for billionaire Frank Stronach and his controversial cattle operation in Marion County.

In his May 20 column, de la Parte fails to understand the special feelings residents, and visitors, in North Central Florida have for the beautiful, iconic Silver Springs. He seems not to understand the common sense shared in local communities that existing aquifer withdrawals are contributing to the all-time low flow from the springs and that an additional withdrawal of 13 million gallons per day in the Silver Springs springshed is way too much, especially during this time of extreme drought. Droughts come and go in Florida. In which case, wouldn't it be sensible to plan for the worst rather than bank on the best?

According to the Adena Springs attorney, we are all too emotional and uninformed, and we ought sit down, be quiet and get with the science.

But the science that de la Parte presents is part of a lawyer's argument, and the "facts" are based on studies Adena Springs commissioned. Studies that have not been completed, accepted or approved by any agency looking out for the welfare of Florida residents.

For instance, Adena Springs' groundwater modeling study reported no harm to Silver Springs. But the study was set up improperly, according to the St. Johns River Water Management District. The district told Adena Springs that the model should not have included recharge because the district would only permit enough irrigation water to grow grass, not recharge the aquifer. Even if the model was set up correctly, the district says the suitability of the groundwater model to evaluate Adena Springs' withdrawal impacts has "been brought into question," and more investigation is required.

According to de la Parte, the results of an aquifer performance test conducted by Adena Springs have not been compiled and submitted, but he already has concluded it would be irrational to expect harm. The district, on the other hand, says further study beyond the aquifer performance test is warranted.

The district has stated that a "primary concern is that of nutrients from the site (sources that include manure, urine and inorganic fertilizer) could be transported directly off-site via surface water conveyance or indirectly off-site via groundwater conveyance to an adjacent OFW water body." Two OFWs (Outstanding Florida Waters) are at risk — the Silver River and the Ocklawaha River Aquatic Preserves.

Is the water management district also being too emotional?

Folks need not be concerned, according to de la Parte, because Adena Springs will use precisely as much water as their grass crop needs. They will manage fertilizer and manure so that only the precise amounts needed by the crop will be used. Some of this precision agricultural science will come from research through the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida's new Frank Stonach Plant Science Center, named for the Adena Springs Ranch billionaire owner and donor who funded the \$1.5 million building project.

De la Parte is telling us to leave it to IFAS and Adena Springs' private consultants to determine what best-management practices Adena Springs must follow. He believes the district can decide what's in the public interest. Unfortunately, organizations such as IFAS and the water management districts are bowing to the pressure of money and business and may not be serving the best interests of residents. The St. Johns district, as well as Florida's other water management districts, have been hogtied by the current administration in Florida, resulting in inadequate budgets, reduced staffing and pro-industry/anti-environment executive directors and governing boards. The approval by the district of more water withdrawal permits for the Jacksonville Electric Authority and other major water consumers has contributed to the current unprecedented water crisis. They publicly acknowledge this fact.

The Adena Springs Ranch application and submittals can be viewed online. So can the modeling correspondence quoted in this column and hundreds of objection letters and emails. Go to

<https://permitting.sjrwmd.com/epermitting/jsp/Search.jsp?option=permitNumberOption> and type in the permit number 129419.

So, don't judge the Adena Springs Ranch permit based on emotion like some people have. There's plenty of good old-fashioned, fact-based doubt to go around.

Karen Ahlers is an environmental advocate who lives in Putnam County, and Neil Chonin is a noted environmental lawyer with Southern Legal Council Inc. in Gainesville.

Copyright © 2012 Ocala.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.



FREE SUBSCRIPTION

Sign up to receive our **Morning Edition** via email.
Delivered weekday mornings.

Register
Now

Home | Health Care | State & Local Administration | Budget & Taxes | **Environment** | Economy | Education | Elections | Business | More ▾

[Environmental Permits](#) | [Oil Spill Compensation & Restoration](#) | [FL Dept. of Environmental Protection](#) | [Wildlife and Fisheries](#) | [Conservation](#) | [Water Quality](#) | [Groundwater](#) | [Water management](#)



First to Know
First to Act

Try Us Free

Environment and Natural Resources >

Judge extends deadline for federal agency to issue new pollution limits

Bruce Ritchie, 05/31/2012 - 03:34 PM

+ responses

Recommend

0

Tweet

8

3

A federal judge on Thursday granted the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** a nearly six-month extension on a deadline to establish new federal water pollution limits in Florida.

But **U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle** also warned the agency not to expect any additional extensions in an issue that has pitted some environmentalists against state officials and utilities and industry groups. The issue involves setting numeric background limits for nutrients, including phosphorus and nitrogen compounds. The nutrients come from a variety of sources including fertilizer, livestock operations, industry and utilities.

The EPA filed the [extension request](#) last week, saying it needed more time after Hinkle in February tossed out the pollution limits that some Florida officials and industry groups objected to as too costly.

Environmental groups represented by the nonprofit **Earthjustice** law firm filed [an objection](#) to the delay request, saying that EPA has had more than three years to produce the pollution limits and that nutrient pollution is a "serious and continuing problem in Florida." The groups have challenged proposed state rules that would replace the federal rules and are supported by industry groups.

Gov. Rick Scott in February signed **HB 7051** exempting the proposed state rules from ratification by the Legislature so they could be sent to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for review.

The EPA had faced a June 4 deadline for signing a proposed federal rule for streams other those than in South Florida. Hinkle agreed in [an order](#) Thursday to set a Nov. 30 deadline for those streams and a July 20 deadline for the South Florida streams.

Hinkle said he found the EPA requests for extensions reasonable but added, "The defendants (EPA) should take note: The effort that began in 1998 to establish numeric nutrient criteria for Florida waters must be completed. The defendants should not expect a further extension."

Earthjustice represents the **Florida Wildlife Federation**, **St. Johns River Keeper**, the **Conservancy of Southwest Florida**, the **Sierra Club** and the **Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida**.

With emails and photographs to media outlets, the groups highlighted an algae bloom in the Santa Fe River last week and said it showed the need for tough federal rules. But the **Florida Department of Environmental Protection** said Thursday that the Santa Fe River and some other water bodies would not meet pollution limits under the proposed state rules but would have been OK under the federal rules tossed out by Hinkle.

Advertise on
theCurrent



Click here for rates.

Related to this current:

BILLS

HB 7051 Relating to Rules Establishing Numeric Nutrient Criteria ([Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee](#))

02/16/12 Approved by Governor; Chapter No. 2012-3

Intervenor plaintiffs include the **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**, the state of Florida represented by the **Attorney General's Office**, the **Florida League of Cities**, the **Florida Stormwater Association**, the **Florida Pulp and Paper Association** and the **Florida Farm Bureau Federation**.

Related Research: [Access recent court documents associated with federal numeric nutrient criteria.](#)

Reporter Bruce Ritchie can be reached at britchie@thefloridacurrent.com.

Filed in: [Courts](#), [Environment and Natural Resources](#)

Tags: [Pollution](#), [Water Quality](#)

Related Current

- [State supreme court rules on hurricane insurance issues](#) (05/31/12)
- [Suwannee River Water Management District issues first-ever watering restrictions](#) (05/31/12)
- [Teachers' union spars with state over merit pay rule](#) (05/30/12)
- [Governor praises DEP Secretary Herschel Vinyard amid controversies, criticism](#) (05/30/12)
- [Appeal court asks high court to rule on juvenile sentences](#) (05/29/12)

Comments

Add New Comment

[Login](#)



Showing 0 comments

Sort by oldest first

☒ [Subscribe by email](#) [RSS](#)

[blog comments powered by DISQUS](#)



The Current is written for stakeholders in Florida's legislative process.

Executive-level legislative issue briefs
Interviews with policy makers and key players
Concise coverage of key meetings and events

Copyright © 2011 LobbyTools, Inc. All rights reserved.
LobbyTools • 320 Johnston Street • Tallahassee, FL 32303
Customer Service 850-915-0100 or info@lobbytools.com

Advertising

advertise@lobbytools.com

Editor, News Producer

Bill Prescott

bprescott@thefloridacurrent.com

Contributors

Bill Cotterell
Travis Pillow
Bruce Ritchie
Gray Rohrer

bcotterell@thefloridacurrent.com
tpillow@thefloridacurrent.com
britchie@thefloridacurrent.com
grohrer@thefloridacurrent.com

[Subscribe to our RSS feed](#)