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News Articles

Tampa Bay Times

A Times Editorial

Editorial: Don't weaken laws to protect Florida waters Wednesday, September 3, 2014
6:14pm

Florida Republican leaders are yet again making outlandish claims to torpedo federal rules for protecting the water supply. Appearing together last month, U.S. Rep. Steven Southerland of Panama City and Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam blasted a federal proposal for identifying wetlands as a power grab by bullying bureaucrats that would seriously harm the state's businesses and homeowners. Great sound bite — but that is not the case.

The proposal by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers would establish more clearly which waters deserve protection under the 1972 Clean Water Act. Two U.S. Supreme Court opinions have for the past decade clouded the issue of whether the federal law applies only to navigable waters. The federal agencies proposed the new rule in an effort to address legitimate concerns by state and local governments, businesses and other groups. Continuing to leave them in legal limbo is irresponsible.

That didn't stop Southerland from pointing his finger at "big government bullies" who were out to create more costs and uncertainty in the workplace. He has filed legislation that is headed to the House floor that would let states — not the federal government — determine which wetlands deserve protection. Southerland proclaimed that local officials are better suited to make these decisions than "D.C. bureaucrats a thousand miles away." Putnam chimed in by denouncing federal "overreach," suggesting that even "mushy" lawns would be a problem.

These claims are ridiculous. The federal rule merely clarifies what streams and wetlands would be protected. It does not give the agencies more power, redefine farming, or apply to any waters that historically have not been covered. The measure expressly exempts waste treatment ponds, upland ditches, artificial lakes and ornamental lagoons from regulation. It doesn't change the exemptions that farmers and ranchers already enjoy, infringe on property rights or apply in cases when rainfall saturates lawns and fields. In some cases, the rule could actually broaden the definition of what waters are exempt. Decisions about Florida wetlands permits are made in the Army Corps' offices in Tampa and elsewhere around the state, not in Washington. And the EPA estimates that the marginal costs of implementing the rule would generate about double the return in benefits to public health, flood control and the economy.

Florida Republicans used the same tactic of misinformation several years ago on behalf of the state's biggest polluters to fight the federal government over clean water standards. They had the wrong allegiance then and they have the wrong allegiance now. Florida's congressional delegation should be the last ones urging Congress to weaken a law that protects some of this state's most precious resources.

Editorial: Don't weaken laws to protect Florida waters 09/03/14 [Last modified: Wednesday, September 3, 2014 6:14pm]

Florida Trend

The Issues, People and Ideas that Define Florida Business

Ebb and flow: Managing Florida's water supply

by Mark R. Howard

Posted 6/27/2014

Updated 2 weeks ago

Michael Minton, an attorney with the Dean Mead firm in Orlando, is a fifth-generation Floridian who grew up on Florida's east coast in Fort Pierce. Minton's late father, Dick Minton, was one of the "swampbusters," pioneer citrus growers who worked beginning in the late 1940s to make the land in Florida's Indian River region tillable.

As elsewhere in Florida at that time, making the land productive meant draining it — by speeding the natural flow of surface water from the interior to the coast via canals. Minton says his father, who was inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2003, was an innovator who recognized that the drainage effort worked all too well. Dick Minton, an early adopter of high-efficiency irrigation systems, became a leader in soil and water conservation efforts and instilled in his son both a love for the land and a drive to restore more of the natural flow of the St. Lucie region's water, which at one time extended north up into the headlands of the St. Johns River.

Surface water resources and conservation both have to be part of meeting Florida's water needs. Regions will have to cooperate in creating new supplies.

His father, Minton says, saw ahead to a time when all the surface water that was being channeled away would become a commodity rather than a nuisance. "That water will be valuable one day," his father told him.

We've reached that day. As the recession has receded, growth has resumed in Florida. And communities, landowners and businesses are bumping up against the limits of how much water can be pumped out of the state's aquifers without environmental and economic catastrophe. Nowhere is the problem more acute than in central Florida, where the three water management districts that govern water use in the area estimate that without conservation and additional sources of supply, the area faces a 250 million gallon a day shortfall within a decade.

What such a shortfall can translate to in practical terms is economic and political disruption as businesses, governments and individuals sue each other dizzy over their respective "rights" to water from the aquifers. Communities around Tampa Bay waged water wars over pumping groundwater for more than 30 years before creating an independent, regional authority called Tampa Bay Water that now supplies water to Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties. The agency blew millions on a desal plant that barely functions, but the region's water supply system today is more diverse,

efficient and environmentally sound. Groundwater pumping has been reduced by 50% since 1998.

Meanwhile, Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties collaborated to create a similar independent water-supply district, the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority. That authority has built a combination of underground and above-ground reservoirs where it has more than 9 billion gallons of surface water stored.

As the need for water intensifies, the state will see a growing number of proposals for water-supply initiatives involving storing and cleaning surface water. All will come with price tags. What direction should the state take to create and manage new supplies? Some favor a cohesive, statewide approach, perhaps under a “water czar.” Others think Florida should adopt policies that emphasize locally based public-private partnerships cobbled together among water management districts, local governments and landowners. Among Minton’s clients is a big landowner and citrus grower, Evans Properties, that has been working on a deal with two water management districts. A subsidiary of Evans called Grove Land Utilities would build — with funding from the state, the two water management districts and its own money — a 5,000-acre reservoir and 2,000-acre stormwater treatment area in Okeechobee and Indian River counties that would capture more than 50 billion gallons of the stormwater that now streams into the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon through the water management district’s canals.

The proposal — a feasibility study is due this month — seems well-conceived, offering the potential for the state to do something relatively quickly to reverse the degradation of the estuary and lagoon. The reservoir would also offer a way to create a new source of up to 100 million to 125 million gallons a day of drinking water for the central Florida region. Ultimately, Minton says, it could help restore some of the historic flow of water from the area up into the headwaters of the St. Johns. Wiser heads than mine will have to evaluate the soundness of the proposal and how to structure such a deal financially, but Grove Land’s proposal is the kind of initiative that Florida will see more of as the demand for water meets the reality of water supply — and as big landowners evaluate a business mix that includes farming water along with growing oranges and other crops.

However Florida may decide to manage its surface water resources, the broader dynamics of water in Florida — illuminated incisively by writer Cynthia Barnett in a [2005 cover story in Florida Trend](#) — remain the same: There’s a mismatch between where most people live in Florida and where the water is. The state needs new sources of water supply to meet growth. Regions will have to cooperate to create new supplies. Water belongs to the state, not local communities. Water will, over time, cost more. Increased conservation and privatization both will be part of the answer to ensuring water supply, whether Floridians like it or not.

Robert L. Knight: Paying the springs bill

By Robert L. Knight

Special to The Sun

Published: Sunday, August 24, 2014 at 6:01 a.m.

On July 11, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection provided the 2014-2015 springs' restoration funding project plan to the Legislative Budget Commission.

As expected, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$25 million for springs' restoration and the water management districts kicked in an additional \$12.8 million of state money. Local governments pledged to spend \$31.7 million, for a total of \$69.5 million to help ease the hurt at the state's springs.

Combined with last year's pledge of \$37 million in state and local funding for "springs restoration," this sounds like a good start. Unfortunately for Florida taxpayers, this is just the tip of the springs-cleanup iceberg that will be required to pull our springs back from the brink of disaster. Lax enforcement of Florida's environmental laws by state regulators has resulted in the need for another multi-billion dollar environmental cleanup painfully reminiscent of the Everglades boondoggle in South Florida.

First, some history of springs' protection efforts in Florida. In 1999, Jim Stevenson, former chief biologist with the Florida Park Service, led Gov. Jeb Bush and DEP Secretary David Struhs on a canoe trip to see firsthand the Ichetucknee springs and river that were being threatened by a cement factory. This momentous trip was a response to strong public opposition to this threat to the springs and aquifer.

After the canoe trip, Jim Stevenson was appointed to organize and chair the Florida Springs Task Force. In 2000, the 16 public and private members of the task force published a report detailing the magnitude and causes of spring impairments and laying out a plan for springs' restoration.

During the next 10 years, the Florida Legislature and Govs. Jeb Bush and Charlie Crist allocated \$23 million to the Florida Springs Initiative for springs research and protection projects. That expenditure was augmented by springs-related funding from the St. Johns River and Southwest Florida water management districts. A significant increase in the scientific and public awareness of Florida's springs' crisis was provided by the state's relatively small investment.

After entering office in 2010, Gov. Rick Scott cancelled the Florida Springs Initiative and drastically reduced funding and staff at DEP and all five of Florida's water management

districts. By those actions, Gov. Scott and his like-minded Legislature effectively brought all springs' research and restoration efforts to a screeching halt.

Fast forward to last year. Amid another growing outcry from concerned citizens about the springs' tragedy of declining flows and increasing nitrate pollution unfolding throughout North Florida, the Legislature, governor and water management districts made a sudden about-face and once again started funding "springs' restoration." And so this year the ante for springs' restoration projects was raised again by our elected officials.

Like last year, this year's springs' projects were selected behind closed doors by DEP and water management district staffs, with no citizen involvement. No independent springs' task force was formed to develop an overall springs' project plan, quantitative evaluation procedures or adaptive management methodology to verify that this large sum of money will result in measurable benefits at our springs.

While some of this year's proposed projects may indeed help to reduce nutrient and flow impacts at the springs, government planning without public involvement is suspect from the outset. An examination of the springs' restoration projects planned with taxpayer money is needed to separate the springs' "turkeys" from those projects that may actually benefit the public interest.

Most suspect are seven "agricultural" projects on DEP's list that provide taxpayer support to private, for-profit businesses that are harming the public's groundwater and springs. For example, a total of \$8.9 million of this year's springs' funding is designated to buy new agricultural irrigation systems. Another \$3.6 million is earmarked to subsidize a phosphate company in North Florida that has contributed to reduced flows at White Sulfur Spring for decades. Over \$12 million is allocated for providing central sewer hookups to private developments near Wakulla Spring.

The remaining DEP projects include connection of septic tanks to public sewer systems, wastewater treatment plant upgrades and installation of water-efficient toilets and faucets. Hopefully, these projects will provide some true springs' benefits. But the state did not follow a publicly vetted springs' restoration agenda or provide an evaluation and ranking of the most cost effective alternatives necessary to protect our springs.

The current Florida state government has no estimate for how much it will ultimately cost to reverse the existing damage to our springs. But the science is clear. Comprehensive springs' restoration must include a significant reduction in groundwater pumping and a greatly reduced reliance on the use of nitrogen fertilizers. Both of these actions are attainable with little to no expenditure of tax dollars. Our springs deserve better from our elected officials.

Robert L. Knight is director of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, a private, nonprofit corporation located in North Florida.

Subject: Fwd: Gov. Scott announces distribution plan for springs \$
From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Aug 11, 2014 4:29 pm
To: WRWSA <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

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

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Aug 11, 2014 at 4:29 PM
Subject: Gov. Scott announces distribution plan for springs \$
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Gov. Scott announces distribution plan for springs' money

By [Phil Ammann](#) on August 8, 2014

Gov. Rick Scott announced today that \$30 million state lawmakers approved this year for [Florida's endangered natural springs](#) would be applied – along with local money — across 27 different projects from the Panhandle to Central Florida.

Using contributions from local governments, agencies and water management districts, \$69 million will be spent for projects in 18 springs threatened from groundwater pumping and pollution.

"These nearly \$70 million in projects that (the [Department of Environmental Protection](#)) is proposing will restore water quality, protect water flow and reduce water consumption," according to a statement from Scott's office.

Last year, lawmakers selected \$10 million in the state budget for protecting Florida's natural springs.

The money, set for eight regions between Central Florida and the Panhandle, has \$27 million in matching funds from local governments and organizations.

Scott, during a re-election tour starting Monday, outlined a \$1 billion environmental blueprint for Florida that includes funding of \$50 million annually over 10 years for springs' restoration.

Among the Florida springs directly benefiting from the current year's funding: Fanning, Levy Blue, Jackson Blue, Wakulla, Volusia Blue, Silver, Wekiva, Aripeka, Chassahowitzka and Crystal Springs, the Ichetucknee, Santa Fe and Suwannee rivers and Lake Panasoffkee, as well as springs linked to Econfinia and Holmes creeks.



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Speakers address state of area's springs, water supply at forum

By [Fred Hiers](#)

Staff writer

Published: Tuesday, August 5, 2014 at 10:35 p.m.

Silver Springs' health continues to decline as the amount of its pollutants rise and its flow diminishes despite environmentalists' efforts to draw attention to the water's ills.

But the tide is beginning to turn as water regulators take better stock of the springs, the public becomes more informed and more politicians take heed.

That was much of the collective sentiment by speakers who took part in the Silver Springs Alliance forum Tuesday at the CenterPoint Church on State Road 40 to update the public about the progress and shortcomings in protecting the first-magnitude spring east of Ocala.

About 200 people attended the forum.

Speaker Robert Knight, director of the nonprofit Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute and president of Wetland Solutions Inc. in Gainesville, said the solution to fixing Silver Springs was attainable but requires resolve.

"We don't have to wait 50 years to restore Silver Springs," he told the audience.

The problem is that Florida water regulators have never made a significant effort to restore its flow or reduce its pollutants, he said.

"(As a result, Silver Springs) has never gotten better in any respect," Knight said.

The solution is to "dial back the pumping ... and not issue any more permits," Knight said.

"Turn off the pumps and you get half the flow back," he said.

Knight's remarks came just weeks after St. Johns River Water Management District staff recommended denial of a Fort McCoy cattle ranch's request to pump 1.12 million gallon of water a day. Water district staff said they recommended the denial because that much withdrawal would harm Silver Springs.

But more importantly, Knight said, the water agency staff, as part of the denial recommendation, had re-evaluated how much water was still available to pump from the aquifer in Marion County. The staff's new modeling concluded the aquifer feeding Silver Springs was nearly tapped out.

St. Johns' new and more accurate modeling shows that the existing groundwater withdrawal in the springs' 800,000-acre springshed is already doing harm to the spring's flow, Knight said.

He estimates that existing withdrawal levels could result in Silver Springs' flow shrinking by another 52 million gallons a day, or about 10 percent of its current flow.

Silver Springs' flow has already decreased by at least a third compared to historical trends, and polluting nitrate levels have increased about 3,000 percent, Knight said. In the past few years, flow had fallen to 50 percent.

Marion County withdraws about 100 million gallons of water a day from the aquifer.

The 70-year average Silver Springs flow has nearly free-fallen from 790 cubic feet per second (or about 510 million gallons a day) before 2000 to 535 cfs between 2001 and September 2011.

"You can't squeeze more water out of a spring that's already dying," he said.

Knight also called for reducing nitrate levels. Excess nitrate is responsible for algae blooms that are clogging Silver Springs and other Florida waterways.

Most of the nitrate in the spring is from fertilizer application, mostly from lawn and agricultural uses. Knight wants application to be reduced by 79 percent.

But Knight said that people should take control of the issue and not depend on Tallahassee.

"The people still have the power ... thank God," he said. "We need to save our springs. We can't rely on the government to do everything for us."

Silver Springs was the largest first-magnitude spring in Florida and remains a popular water body destination, being famous for its glass bottom boat rides and its use as both television and film sets. Its flow has recently been surpassed by Rainbow Springs.

Silver Springs feeds the 4.5-mile-long Silver River, which empties into the Ocklawaha River.

The forum was held in the wake of Gov. Rick Scott's announcement this week of his plans for Tallahassee to send Florida's springs hundreds of millions of dollars in relief help over the next decade. But most environmentalists are skeptical that the money — if it's approved by the Legislature — will be used to help reduce spring pollutants or address shrinking flows.

But as Silver Springs suffers, speaker Karen Ahlers, executive director at Florida Defenders of the Environment, talked about setting the groundwork to better protect Silver Springs in the future.

Ahlers reported to the audience about environmentalists' success in challenging the request by a 30,000-acre Fort McCoy cattle operation that originally wanted more than 13.3 million gallons of ground water a day to irrigate its grasslands. The original water request by Sleepy Creek Lands was made in 2011.

Ahlers, along with others, sued Sleepy Creek Lands and helped organize engineers and geologists who showed that if Sleepy Creek's request was granted, the nearly Silver Spring would be harmed.

Amid public pressure, Sleepy Creek reduced its request down to 1.12 mgd.

"The (St. Johns River Water Management District) tends to pay a lot more attention ... when knowledgeable people are talking back," Ahlers said.

"None of these things would have happened if citizens had not declared their intent to fight," Ahlers told the Star-Banner before the forum began.

"Letters from attorneys backed up by top-of-the-line scientific experts get far more attention than comments from outraged citizens," she said.

Speaker Doug Ray, executive editor of the Star-Banner and Gainesville Sun, said that water issues resonate with voters and lawmakers. Both newspapers published numerous articles as part of their Fragile Springs series.

Ray said that while many issues will be debated leading to the November elections, none will "rally" people as much as water and springs issues.

The Fragile Springs series was something that could draw together both the Star-Banner and the Gainesville Sun, he said, and that the area's springs were an important issue that interested both cities.

Tourists and local residents who once enjoyed the area's springs are now angry to find them clogged with algae, he said, adding, "That kind of passion helped drive the series."

Speaker and nature photographer John Moran showed a series of photographs of local springs taken a few decades ago and compared them to some taken recently. The comparison during the forum showed how the springs have deteriorated due to too much algae and decreased flow, sometimes leaving dried pits.

Moran said he would rather take "beautiful" pictures of springs and rivers, "but reality keeps getting in the way."

"This is negligent homicide ... we did this," he said, citing the springs' declining health.

"If you think clean water is expensive, consider the alternative," he said.

"Resistance to change is no longer an option," he said, citing Floridians' waste of water, including lawn irrigation.

Speaker Ryan Smart, of the Florida Conservation Coalition, said it was important for audience members to join environmental organizations. He said local governments take heed when organized environmentalists push water issues.

"You can have a great effect on what those folks say and do," Smart said.

Speaker Guy Marwick, of the Felburn Foundation, urged the audience to support Amendment 1 during the November elections. It would generate about \$10 billion during the next 20 years from real estate documents taxes and use the money for land and water conservation and springs restoration.

Other speakers included Whitey Markle of the Suwannee St. Johns Sierra Club and Jim Stevenson of the Wakulla Springs Alliance

Harriett Jones, 65, who came to the forum from Williston, said such gatherings are a good strategy in forming public opinion about the need for healthy springs.

"I think (such forums) try to do more education ... and let everyone take part and get more involved," Jones said. "And it's good for the forums to offer a scientific approach ... and the facts that anyone can use when discussing the springs."

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

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Subject: Fwd: Kissimmee River battle looms: Water for fish or cities?

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

Date: Mon, Jul 28, 2014 10:08 am

To: WRWSA <richardowen@wrwsa.org>

Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmith@wrwsa.org>

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

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

Date: Mon, Jul 28, 2014 at 10:03 AM

Subject: Kissimmee River battle looms: Water for fish or cities?

To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

Hi Richard,

This may be a precedent-setting case we want to closely follow.

Diane

Kissimmee River battle looms: Water for fish or cities? [Kevin Spear](#), Orlando Sentinel

6:18 p.m. EDT, July 27, 2014

The Kissimmee River, which begins as rain running off Orlando streets and has had nearly \$1 billion in environmental repairs along its run to South Florida, is under scrutiny again for how much water it could provide to Central Florida cities while still preserving its rebounding fish and wildlife.

The South Florida Water Management District already has put enormous effort into figuring out the biology of the liquid spine of the greater Everglades ecosystem and how many millions of gallons of water could be pumped from it.

That effort — amid warnings from environmentalists and utility companies' worries that little water would be available for new development — was shelved five years ago. Now it's back and likely more contentious than ever.

"It is non-negotiable that the water-management district must fully protect water for the Kissimmee River restoration before even considering giving away any water," said Jane Graham, an Audubon Florida legal expert.

Tensions over the Kissimmee River water include:

- Findings in the past year by a Central Florida consortium that the traditional source of water, the Floridan Aquifer, is unable to provide much more and that rivers are among the most likely new sources.

- A recommendation this month by the St. Johns River Water Management District to block a billionaire from pumping Floridan Aquifer water, confirming for many that pressure to tap rivers is on the rise.

- Creation of the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge three years ago to protect 150,000 acres of wildlife and water along the river.

"We've seen a tremendous investment in the restoration of the Kissimmee River," said Dan O'Keefe, an Orlando lawyer and chairman of the South Florida Water Management District. "We need to maximize return on that investment."

O'Keefe is on the steering committee of the Central Florida Water Initiative, the consortium of water regulators and utilities that has calculated that the region's demand for water will rise significantly in coming decades.

He said he is aware of growing pressure to pump water from rivers such as the Kissimmee but does not know if that's going to prove appropriate. "I would hesitate to guess," he said.

A report by the South Florida Water Management District in 2009 concluded "all water" in the Kissimmee River "is required for the protection of fish and wildlife." But even as that report circulated, agency administrators were suggesting further study may show the river has extra water during rainy times.

What is certain is that the Kissimmee River is complex. The many lakes in Orange and Osceola counties that drain south to the

Kissimmee River are regulated by dams.

Farther downstream is a stretch of river wrecked by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers a half-century ago. The federal agency cut a 57-mile ditch and filled or bypassed 103 miles of winding river.

After decades of work, more than 40 miles of river and 40 square miles of adjoining wetlands have been restored. Fish and wildlife have responded impressively, district scientists say.

To protect those species and the water they depend on, the water-management district is using a state regulation called a "water reservation." Once set, a reservation will "guarantee that the water needed to keep these ecosystems thriving will not be allocated," according to the district.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which created the new wildlife refuge, pledges to pay close attention to the setting of a reservation "to help ensure the best possible outcome."

Also watching are water-utility directors, including Brian Wheeler at Toho Water Authority, Osceola County's largest utility.

"We understand that the Kissimmee River is extremely flashy, meaning that right now, with all the rain we've had, it's running at a pretty good volume," he said. "At other times, there isn't much water draining to the river so there isn't much to be taken out."

"What we've told the district is to go ahead and do the reservation and let us know if there is excess water, and then we can sit down to see if there is a project where we can utilize that water," Wheeler said.

The water district will hold a public workshop Wednesday at the Osceola County Administration Building in Kissimmee from 10 a.m. to noon.

Don Medellin, district manager for the reservation project, said he didn't know when proposed limits on river water would emerge. "We're going to take our time and do the technical work right to make sure it's legally defensible," he said.

kspear@tribune.com or [407-420-5062](tel:407-420-5062)

From the Jacksonville Business Journal

:<http://www.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/news/2014/07/25/water-management-district-says-plan-for-st-johns.html>

Jul 25, 2014, 2:47pm EDT

Water Management District says plan for St. Johns River can safely meet demand



[Catherine Byerly](#)

Digital Producer- *Jacksonville Business Journal*

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Countering [pushback from St. Johns Riverkeeper and Florida Defenders](#) over its plans that include withdrawing water from the river, the St. Johns River Water Management District said the opposed plan is a draft with a range of potential options to ensure Northeast Florida has enough water

The district is already seeking more aggressive conservation measures as part of its draft plan, said Management District spokeswoman [Teresa Monson](#).

"Water conservation is a priority for the District," she said, pointing out the measures already in place to save water: Industry, agriculture and recreational users, such as golf courses, must use reclaimed water or storm water for irrigation where feasible and implement additional rigorous water conservation measures.

But conservation alone won't be enough to keep up with water demands from a growing population, she said.

"Water conservation is necessary to prolong existing supplies," she said. "However, a conservation-only strategy will not completely offset the predicted deficit in fresh groundwater supplies."

As far as pumping water from the St. Johns River goes, if the plan is turned into actions, the measure wouldn't harm the environment, [Monson](#) said.

"The study, which involved more than 70 scientists and engineers, confirms the findings of earlier investigations," [Monson](#) said, "The St. Johns River can be used as an alternative water supply source without causing significant harm to the environment."

From the Jacksonville Business Journal

:<http://www.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/news/2014/07/24/st-johns-riverkeeper-and-florida-defenders-of-the.html>

Jul 24, 2014, 2:54pm EDT

St. Johns Riverkeeper and Florida Defenders of the Environment urge against water withdrawals



[Catherine Byerly](#)

Digital Producer- *Jacksonville Business Journal*

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The St. Johns Riverkeeper and Florida Defenders of the Environment aren't happy with plans to overcome water shortages by pumping water from rivers.

The St. Johns River Water Management District's plan — which the St. Johns Riverkeeper and Florida Defenders of the Environment disagree with — is to take 86 million gallons of water a day from the Ocklawaha River and over 64 million gallons of water a day from the St. Johns River once shortages occur.

The opposing groups say they would like to see a more efficient use of the water already at play.

"The time is now to get serious about conservation," said [Lisa Rinaman](#), the St. Johns Riverkeeper.

By 2035, the water management district estimates demand for water will exceed groundwater availability by 257 million gallons a day.

"Why spend billions of dollars and jeopardize the health of our rivers with massive surface water withdrawals when we can meet our future supply needs by using our water resources more responsibly and efficiently?" Rinaman said. "We must first address the root cause of our water problems and exhaust all opportunities to use water more efficiently, instead of focusing on new sources, such as water withdrawals from the St. Johns."

The St. Johns Riverkeeper and the Florida Defenders of the Environment are calling for the water management district to not pump water out of the two rivers and instead prioritize and mandate conservation efforts.

"Over-pumping from the aquifer has already resulted in low lake levels, dried up wetlands, and reduced flows in springs and rivers," said [Karen Ahlers](#), executive director of Florida Defenders of the Environment, "It is outrageous to suggest that taking even more water from these already depleted surface waters is the remedy to the problem."