

# RiverFronts



Serving communities in the Suwannee, Santa Fe, Alapaha, Aucilla, Withlacoochee, Waccasassa and Coastal Basins

June 2008

## Senator Bill Nelson Tours Suwannee River and Springs

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson and his staff were honored guests on a special tour of the Suwannee River and several local springs in May.

The District hosted the tour for the senator, who wanted to learn more about the current conditions of the region's water resources, and what steps might be taken to provide greater protection for them.

The eight-mile river trip began at Fanning Springs and ended at Manatee Springs. Prior to boat departure, Nelson heard from local elected officials and members of environmental groups at a meeting held in Cross City. Concerns expressed during the hour-long meeting included water transfer, protection of the Suwannee River and springs, and proposed water bottling plants along the Santa Fe River.



From left: Governing Board Member Don Curtis, Senator Bill Nelson, Governing Board Member Georgia Jones and Dixie County Commissioner Buddy Lamb toured the Suwannee River.

## Preserving a Piece of History In Madison

Work has begun on an historic preservation project on the 19th-century plantation mansion and grounds once occupied by Governor George F. Drew. The property, in Madison County, is now owned by the



Circa 1890

District. The project is funded with historic preservation grant assistance provided by the Bureau of Historic Preservation, Division of Historic Resources, Florida Department of State, and the District.

The project includes performing an in-depth archaeological survey of the ruins; locating subsurface archaeological material; and documenting the very large brick ruins of the mansion and its cistern.

Boundaries of the Governor Drew Mansion Cemetery and its grave sites will be located using ground penetrating radar, and thereafter mapped using a global positioning system (GPS). All tombstones will be noted, recorded and marked for future avoidance. Each of these resources will be evaluated with reference to specific criteria for possible inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

## News Briefs

Governor Charlie Crist has appointed Heath M. Davis, of Cedar Key, and Donald A. Quincey, Jr., of Chiefland, to the District governing board. They replace Kelby Andrews, of Chiefland, and Sylvia J. Tatum, of Lawtey, whose terms expired on March 1.

SmeadSoft, a government records management computer system, recognized the District and staff member Diane Bell as an outstanding customer for the efficient use of the SmeadSoft for Government database.

The District is developing rule language for landscape irrigation water conservation. The landscape irrigation water conservation measures, once adopted, will allow for better consistency with St. Johns River and Southwest Florida water management districts.

## The Ichetucknee Partnership

The District has joined forces with community leaders in Lake City and Columbia County to protect natural springs and tackle other local water quality issues

Ichetucknee springshed,” explains Georgia Jones, a District governing board member who also serves as president of the Lake City-Columbia County Chamber of Commerce and as TIP chairperson.



TIP committee members and partners celebrate at kickoff meeting.

through a newly-formed coalition, The Ichetucknee Partnership (TIP).

At a kickoff event in April, an estimated 60 invited guests learned of TIP’s mission to promote the environmental and economic well being of the Ichetucknee Springshed through locally-led, voluntary, incentive-based programs.

“Rapid development in Columbia County has created a need for more local coordination and leadership in protecting the water resources within the

River Partnership, Fort White Town Council and the District have each signed a memorandum of agreement in support of TIP. Other agencies and interest groups will be invited and encouraged to sign similar agreements.

An executive committee will set the course for TIP and develop a three-year action plan, with emphasis on education and outreach, research and monitoring, and best management practices. Initial funding for the TIP program will be provided by the District.

## New Lodging Facilities at Lafayette Blue Springs State Park

A ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the District on March 1 unveiled five new cabins for public use in Lafayette Blue Springs State Park, the newest addition to the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail. The cabins are the first in the state to receive the “Florida Green Lodging Program” stamp of approval and will serve as a model for other state parks planning to build, restore or reconstruct their lodging facilities. Future plans for the park include a recreational vehicle campground as well as additional parking for the public.



District board members, staff and guests participate in a ribbon cutting ceremony at Lafayette Blue Springs State Park.



**R.O. RANCH**  
Equestrian Park

## R.O. Ranch Equestrian Park Holds Groundbreaking Ceremony

After much anticipation and planning, R.O. Ranch Equestrian Park held its groundbreaking ceremony on March 8. An estimated 200 visitors gathered to celebrate the historic accomplishment and enjoy the festivities, which began with free wagon rides and horse-



back trail riding. Among the dignitaries who attended were representatives from Congressman Allen Boyd's office, county commissioners, and elected officials from local and surrounding area counties. Keynote speaker Tom Seay, host of "Best of America by Horseback," commented that R.O. Ranch Equestrian Park will be far superior in quality to other equestrian centers.

The District and R.O. Ranch, Inc. are in the design and permitting process for phase one of a three-phase project. Phase one includes a visitor's center, 30-unit RV campground, and covered arena. A challenging 20-mile Steinhatchee River trail is also being developed. Long-range plans include additional camping facilities, cabins, stables, and a cross-country course. For more information on R.O. Ranch, please visit the web site at [www.roranch.org](http://www.roranch.org).

### 2008 Legislative Appropriations

The Legislature passed a \$66.2-billion state budget for fiscal year 2008-2009. This is a decrease of about \$7 billion from last year's state budget. Budget highlights for environmental and natural resources for the District include:

- \$6.75 million for Florida Forever.
- \$5.9 million for the Water Management Lands Trust Fund.
- \$270,000 for the Water Protection and Sustainability Trust Fund to be used for springs protection.
- \$500,000 for the Suwannee River Partnership Program.

## RiverFronts

is produced by the  
Suwannee River Water  
Management District.

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# Mandatory Water Restrictions Cancelled

The governing board voted in May not to implement the District's first-ever mandatory water restrictions and instead reissued a Phase I Advisory calling for voluntary water restrictions district-wide. All water users are urged to conserve and eliminate wasteful or inefficient water use, and those who plan to implement long-range conservation measures are asked to speed their implementation.

To address ongoing water-supply concerns, the District is drafting a year-round water conservation rule for residential lawn and landscape irrigation. The rule will limit lawn watering to two days per week, with watering prohibited between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The District also is revising a separate rule that regulates water use for other categories including agricultural, commercial, industrial, and golf courses.

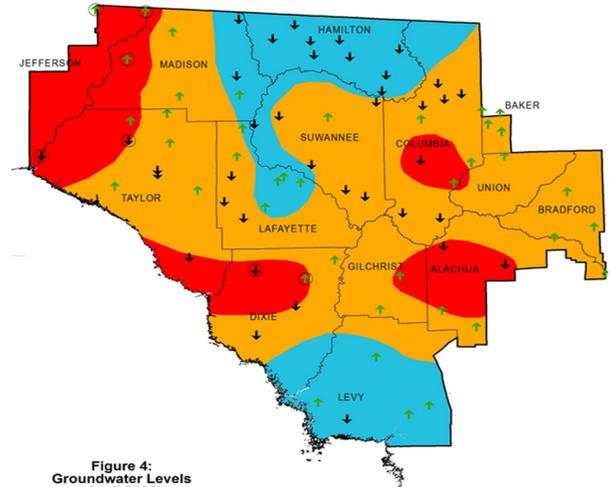


Figure 4:  
Groundwater Levels  
April 2008



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