

CHIEFLAND CITIZEN

THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2010

WATER

Continued from 1A

Water negotiations at standstill

Fate of well property fuzzy

By **MARK SCOHER**
news2@chieflandcitizen.com

Chiefland Mayor Teal Pomeroy told the commission at Monday night's meeting that negotiations with the Suwannee River Water Management District over the fate of acreage surrounding Chiefland's new well head were going nowhere.

"As it stands now," he said, "we're leaving it with them to do what they like. That's the answer that I have for this commission."

Commissioner Rollin Hudson told Pomeroy, "I think you need to let the water management (district), let them handle what they need to handle."

At the commission meeting on June 14, Pomeroy asked if the commission would approve hiring an attorney, John Fumero, to represent the city's interests regarding the 122 acres that surround Chiefland's 33-acre well site. The city commission, wanting answers about the fate of the property and a lease-or-purchase option on it, voted 4-1 in favor of hiring Fumero.

Hudson voted against it and questioned the mayor's suggestion that Fumero, charging \$250 an hour, could do more than City Attorney Norm

Fugate. Still, Fugate himself said he had a couple of questions he wanted to ask Fumero.

Pomeroy and Fumero met with David Still, executive director of SRWMD, on June 22, according to Steve Minnis, director of government affairs with SRWMD.

Minnis said the meeting went nowhere. Still would not agree to the lease-or-purchase of the land, Minnis said.

"As it stands now, we're leaving it with them to do what they like."

— Mayor Teal Pomeroy

As for the fate of the property, details are sketchy. The Nature Coast Regional Water Authority recently released a draft version of a study that includes the property as one of its options for a potential well site. But engineers from three separate firms working on the study said a well at the property in question was only one of about two dozen options for water sourcing and wastewater handling being considered. The comments came at an Authority workshop on June 24 at the Fanning Springs City Hall.

"At this point, we're just sort of exploring all the different options," Jason Shepler, of Mittauer and Associates Inc., said. A final report will not be ready until September, he said.

"It's only one option. It may never come to fruition at all," he said.

Minnis, who attended the workshop,
See **WATER 14A**

addressed a question from the audience about whether NCRWA's potential use of the well site would affect the water needed by the proposed hospital in Chiefland—a reason Pomeroy recently offered as justification for not wanting a second well on the property.

"Quantities needed for a hospital are already allotted for in what Chiefland will need," Minnis said.

The water authority or the water district could potentially sink a well on the 122-acre site, and it would not affect how much water the city is permitted to draw, he said.

"At Suwannee River Water Management District, we have a mission to make sure all existing users are protected."

After the workshop, Fanning Springs Mayor Cheryl Nikola said she wanted it known that it was the City of Fanning Springs that backed out of dealing with Chiefland at the outset of NCRWA's creation.

Pomeroy maintains that Chiefland, willing to supply water to Fanning Springs, backed out when other counties and municipalities became included in the deal.

Nikola said, "They had no qualms about selling water to Fanning Springs."

Fanning Springs backed out of its dealings with Chiefland on the matter only

after Chiefland refused to give Fanning Springs a "seat at the table," she said. Chiefland wanted full control.

Nikola said NCRWA is going to be an important factor leading to the protection of drinking water.

"Yes, it's another layer of power," she said. "But it's also another layer of protection."

The last two workshops on the NCRWA water and wastewater feasibility study are scheduled for this evening in the Town of Bell and the City of Trenton. The Bell workshop is at 6 p.m. at the Town Hall. The Trenton meeting is at 7:30 p.m. and will be held at the Trenton Community Center. The workshops are intended to receive input from the community.

Buchanan honored for 20 years of service at SRWMD

Submitted

LIVE OAK, FL, June 9, 2010 – Paul Buchanan, of the Suwannee River Water Management District (District), was recently honored for 20 years of outstanding service. District Director of Mission Support Melanie Roberts and District Governing Board Chairman Don Quincey congratulated Buchanan at a governing board meeting June 8.

Buchanan has worked at the District since April 1990. His current position is geographic infor-

mation systems program coordinator. In this capacity, his responsibilities include overall administration of geographic information systems (GIS) activities, such as spatial data analysis, map production and GIS data storage management. He is also involved in the District's global positional system activities, as well as the digital processing of digital aerial photography, satellite imagery and LiDAR data.

Buchanan graduated

from the University of South Alabama in 1987 with a B.S. degree in geography. In 1990 he received an M.S. degree from the University of South Carolina in geography with an emphasis in GIS and remote sensing.

Buchanan has met the standards and requirements as established by the GIS Certification Institute for a certified geographic information systems professional. He is also a certified floodplain manager.



Paul Buchanan, the District's GIS program coordinator, was recently honored for 20 years of outstanding service. Governing Board Chairman Don Quincey, far left, and the District's Mission Support Director Melanie Roberts presents an award to Buchanan at a governing board meeting June 8. Photo submitted

SRWMD declares emergency order in response to oil spill

Submitted

LIVE OAK, FL, June 10, 2010 - The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) has issued an emergency order in response to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The order is for the District's coastal communities of Jefferson, Taylor, Dixie and Levy counties.

The order authorizes only BP and its contractors and governmental units and their contractors to undertake specific prevention, containment and recovery activities. This will allow prevention, containment and recovery actions due to the spill to occur in an expedited manner without the need to obtain certain permits in advance from the District. The order is effective until June 30, 2010 unless renewed or modified by the District.

The District also passed a resolution that identifies District assistance available to the state in response to the spill. Such assistance includes water quality monitoring, mapping, manpower, equipment and other services.

"The District is taking the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill very seriously," said District Executive Director David Still. "We are committed to implement all necessary action to prevent harm to our coastal communities." The District will continue to monitor the situation closely to ensure that impacts to water resources are minimized.

The District's Governing Board approved the order and resolution at a board meeting June 8. For more information about the emergency order call Jon Dinges, District director of water supply and

resource management, at 386-362-1001. More information on the state's response to the oil spill is available at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/default.htm>.

GRU rates could be changing

Water rates may rise, while electric rates could fall slightly.

By Chad Smith
Staff writer

As demand for water has dropped with more and more consumers conserving during the recession, Gainesville Regional Utilities is looking to raise its water rates and lower its electric rates beginning in October, meaning an average monthly bill increase of \$2.55 — or 1.7 percent — for the typical ratepayer.

Jennifer Hunt, the chief financial officer for the city-owned utility, said the company has had to dip well into the money reserved to back up water services because consumption is well below projected use, and the revenue from the rate increase would partly go toward replenishing that fund.

"People are fundamentally changing their behavior," Hunt said in an interview Wednesday. "Because of that, our sales have gone down significantly."

Water sales have dropped by 23 percent since 2008, she said,

GRU on Page 5B

GRU: City Commission will have the ultimate say

Continued from 1B

in part because of the economy and the utility's own conservation programs.

While that is good environmentally speaking, GRU still has bills to pay.

"There are just certain things you're going to have to pay no matter what," Hunt said, estimating that GRU is essentially locked into 73 percent of its expenditures.

In 2008 and 2009, GRU shored up about \$31.7 million in its budget through cuts and a hiring freeze, and there are few places left to cut, she said.

Next week, she will be pitching her budget to the City Commission, which has the ultimate say before the new rates go into effect Oct. 1.

As it stands, rates for water, wastewater and natural gas would go up while the electric

If you go

GRU's State of the Utility

■ **What:** General Manager Bob Hunzinger will give the annual report of the utility's performance and initiatives, and there will be an open-mic panel with him and other executives

■ **When:** 6 p.m. today

■ **Where:** Thomas Center, 302 N.E. Sixth Ave.

rates would go down, equating to a net increase in most ratepayers' bills.

In the proposal for next year's \$385 million budget, the biggest expenditure is fuel, accounting for \$143 million, or 37.1 percent.

Another significant piece is the amount the utility will pay into the city's general fund — \$35.15 million.

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Gainesville Regional utility bills to rise

Although electric rates will decrease, gas, water and wastewater rates will increase:

	Average usage	Current Avg. Residential Bill	Projected Avg. Residential Bill	Price Difference
Electric	813 kWh	\$100.90	\$99.15	-\$1.75 ▼
Gas	25 therms	\$35.77	\$37.43	\$1.66 ▲
Water	6,000 gal.	\$17.20	\$19.90	\$2.70 ▲
Waste water	5,000 gal.	\$31.35	\$32.95	\$1.60 ▲
Total		\$185.22	\$189.43	\$4.21 ▲

SOURCE: Gainesville Regional Utilities

In the spring, the commission agreed to a set annual transfer until 2014, thus ensuring the city a huge chunk of its operating budget.

Next fiscal year, that transfer will account for nearly 36 percent of the city's general fund.

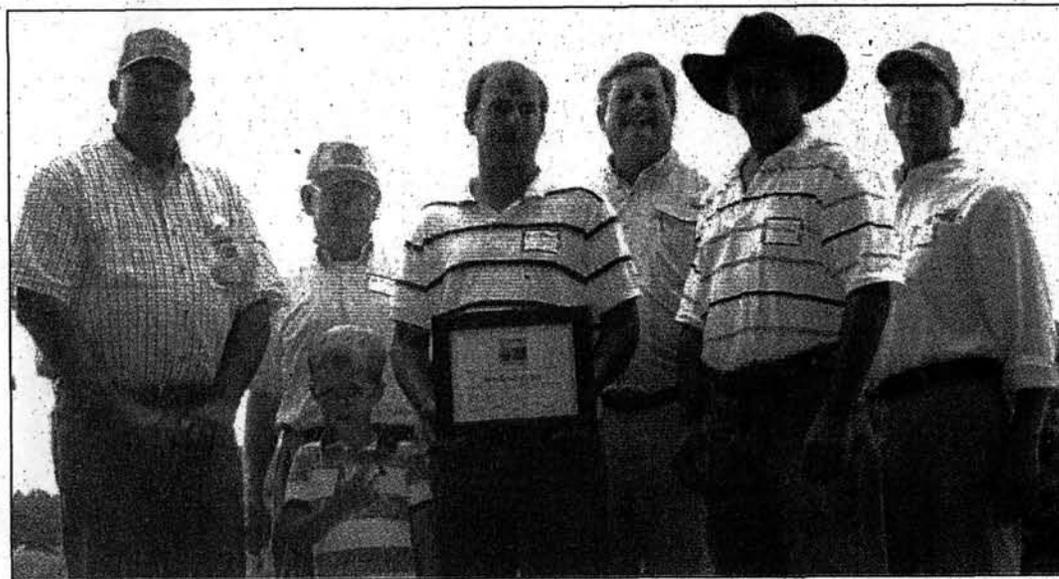
Mayor Craig Lowe said after reviewing GRU's budget and meeting with Hunt and the utility's general manager, Bob Hunzinger, he would like to see

more emphasis on conservation programs going forward, particularly for low-income families.

But Lowe said that fixed costs don't change when consumption does.

"Regardless of how much water is used, the pipes still cost the same and the plants pretty much still cost the same," he said.

Contact Chad Smith at 338-3104 or chad.smith@gvillesun.com.



The Deas Brothers Farms, of Hamilton County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. The Deas family is pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, third from right, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, far right. - Courtesy photo

Farmers recognized for environmental stewardship

Deas family takes top honors in Hamilton

Twenty-five local farmers, a Jasper family included, were recognized for their efforts to protect the environment at the 10th Annual County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship (CARES) dinner on June 29.

The Florida Farm Bureau and the Suwannee River Partnership (SRP) created the CARES

program to highlight efforts by farm owners to improve natural resource management in the Suwannee and Santa Fe river basins.

CARES farmers are committed to improving the environment by implementing best management practices, which

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FARMERS

Continued From Page 1A

help increase irrigation efficiency and protect water quality.

"These farmers are protecting and conserving water on their farm operations," said SRP Coordinator Darrell Smith. "They have proven to be good stewards of the environment and we applaud their efforts."

At the event, held at the UF/IFAS Research and Education Center in Suwannee County, CARES farmers were recognized and congratulated by Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau.

The event drew hundreds of

folks, including farmers, local officials and others from both the Suwannee and Santa Fe river basins.

Following are those recognized at the CARES dinner and the counties in which their operations are located: Straughn Farms, LLC, Alachua; Ramsey Stock Farm, Alachua; Butler Farms, Alachua; Patterson Farms, Columbia; Dewy Gay Farm, Columbia; C. Bar Ranch, Columbia; Ellis Goat Farm, Gilchrist; Edwin Douglas Farm, Gilchrist; Deas Brothers Farms, Hamilton; Koon Farm, Inc., Lafayette; Witt Farm, Lafayette; Central Florida Lands & Timber, Lafayette; Southpoint Dairy,

Levy; Sunset Hill Farm, Madison; Glee Heritage Acres, Madison; Kinsey Farm, Madison; S&J Farm, Madison; Diamond in the Rough Ranch, Madison; Carl Ann Corporation, Madison; Iott Hay Day Ranch, Madison; Full Circle Dairy, Madison; Suwannee Valley Grassing, Madison; Randlell Family Hay Farm, Suwannee; North Florida Research and Education Center, Suwannee; and New River Ranch, Bradford.

For more information about the CARES program, call the Suwannee River Partnership at 386-362-1001. You may also call your county Farm Bureau office or Scot Eubanks, Florida Farm Bureau Federation, at 352-384-2633.

3 Lafayette men among those honored

Farmers recognized for environmental stewardship

Twenty-five Suwannee River Basin farmers and ranchers, including three from Lafayette - Matt Buchanan, Sidney Koon and Jimmy Witt - were recognized for their efforts to protect the environment at the 10th Annual County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship (CARES) dinner on June 29.

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The Koon Farm, of Lafayette County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. The Koon family is pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, third from right, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, far right.



The Witt Farm, of Lafayette County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Pictured from left, Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, Jimmy Witt and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau.



Central Florida Lands & Timber, of Lafayette County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. The Buchanan family. - Courtesy photos

Farmers recognized for environmental stewardship

Continued From Page 1A

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Ranch, Madison; Full Circle Dairy, Madison; Suwannee Valley Grassing, Madison; Randell Family Hay Farm, Suwannee; North Florida Research and Education Center, Suwannee; and New River Ranch, Bradford.

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Bradford County

USPS 062-700 — Two Sections — Starke, Florida

Thursday, July 8, 2010

FARM

Continued from page 1A

Farmers recognized for environmental stewardship

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"These farmers are protecting and conserving water on their farm op-



New River Ranch of Bradford County was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Pictured from left, Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, Marie and Eddie Oden, and Pat Cockrell of Florida Farm Bureau.

See FARM page 2A

erations," said SRP Coordinator Darrell Smith. "They have proven to be good stewards of the environment and we applaud their efforts."

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SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN

Southpoint Dairy, of Levy County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Pictured from left, Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, Guy Wayne Parrish and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau.

Thursday, July 8, 2010

Chiefland Citizen

Area farmers honored for conservation

By MARK SCOHIER
news2@chieflandcitizen.com

Twenty-four farmers and ranchers from the Suwannee and Santa Fe River basins were honored on June 29 for their efforts in environmental conservation.

Hundreds turned out for the 10th annual County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship (CARES) awards, held this year in Live Oak at the UF/IFAS Suwannee Valley Research and Education Center. The Florida Farm Bureau and the Suwannee Valley Partnership give the awards each year.

"It recognizes farmers and ranchers for implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) on their ranches and farms," Scot Eubanks, assistant director of agricultural policy for the Florida Farm Bureau, said in a phone interview prior to the event.

Eubanks said BMPs include using new technologies and methods to conserve water and reduce the use of fertilizer, practices he said are especially important in environmentally sensitive areas like the Suwannee River Basin where both the quantity and quality of the water have been adversely affected.

"In the Suwannee and Santa Fe it's really caught on," he said.

More than 400 CARES awards, also given out to agriculturists in other parts of the state, have been given out over the last 10 years. The lion's share of those awards has gone to farmers and ranchers in the Suwannee River Basin.

"A big part of this is PR, showing the non-ag community what's going on."

Ron St. John, owner of Southpoint Dairy, in Chiefland, was the only farmer in Levy County to receive a CARES award this year.

St. John was unavailable for comment, but

CARES

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Hugh Thomas, a representative from the Florida Department of Agriculture who was at the event, said St. John was being honored for the rotational grazing that he practices with his dairy cows.

"It produces a lot less animal waste," he said.

Thomas explained that on farms like Southpoint, dairy cows are allowed to graze on pie-shaped wedges of pastureland. After they are rotated to another wedge, much of the nutrients from animal waste on the previous wedge are used up by grass that's allowed to grow, putting a dent in the amount of nitrates that end up in the area's groundwater.

"It's an old practice," he said. "But what they have found in Florida is that traditional methods were not always production-oriented." The dairy cows typically used, he said, just didn't do very well in Florida's heat.

But according to Thomas, St. John was able to deal with the issue of Florida's heat by using a mixture of different breeds of dairy cows like Holsteins, Jerseys and Guernseys.

"It's more of a traditional

method with a little bit of a twist."

According to the UF/IFAS website, rotational grazing, compared to continuous grazing, works by more evenly distributing animal waste, which is good for the growth of forage and grasses. Animals under a continuous grazing system in warm climates tend to deposit waste near water and shade.

Rotational grazing,

according to the website, can also extend the life of a pasture and cost the farmer less in terms of fertilizer that might normally need to be used.

The only drawbacks include the initial investment for fencing, water and feed banks, labor to move the animals from one field to another and the potential to make more decisions on the part of management, the website stated.

Dispute continues over Chiefland area well site

By Terry Witt
Staff Writer

Water, from Page 1A

Chiefland Mayor Teal Pomeroy said he and an attorney met recently with an official of the Suwannee River Water Management District and explained the city's concerns regarding a plan to allow a regional water authority to drill a well a block north of the Chiefland city limits to supply other municipalities.

The meeting ended without a decision on whether SRWMD will eventually permit a regional well field to be drilled by the Nature Coast Regional Water Authority on a piece of land the city says it thought would always remain as a natural buffer to protect the city's future water well.

"As it stands now the City of Chiefland has expressed its concerns and we are leaving it to them," Pomeroy said at Monday's regular city commission meeting. Pomeroy said the city will wait to see what develops.

The city hired water attorney John Fumero to accompany Pomeroy to the meeting in Chiefland with SRWMD Director David Still. Pomeroy and Fumero consulted with City Attorney Norm Fugate in advance on what issues the city would raise regarding the 122-acre parcel at County Roads 341 and 346.

The land is part of a larger 155-acre tract the city helped SRWMD purchase in 2004 for the Chiefland Wellhead Protection Area. The city contributed \$160,000, but for reasons unknown, former city manager Ed Smith never asked the district to give the city partial title to the property. Still said SRWMD would probably have been willing to give the city one-fifth title if the city had asked for title at that time.

But the water district owns the

See **Water**, Page 4A

property now and, as the legal owner, the district says it can decide what the property is used for. Still said the water district's responsibility is to protect Chiefland's well and it will do whatever is necessary to make that happen. But he said the district has a legal contract with the city and did nothing wrong.

"The city knew what it was doing, so why does this become the big bad district doing everything under the table," Still said in an interview.

City Auditor Robert Beauchamp said SRWMD told him it considered the \$160,000 Chiefland contribution to be "a gift" from the city. Beauchamp had found the expense listed in city books as a pre-paid lease deposit on 155 acres. Reading the minutes of city commission meetings, he said it was clear the city commission thought it was leasing the entire 155 acres when it authorized the expenditure. But when he called the water district, officials there said they considered the money a gift from Chiefland to make the purchase happen.

The city said it received assurances from SRWMD that the land would remain the Chiefland Wellhead Protection Area. Fugate said that designation, which is in writing, is an important legal tool for the city. He said using the land for a regional wellhead site for the Nature Coast Regional Water Authority would be a major change of use and in his view would violate SRWMD's agreement to use Florida Forever money to purchase a Chiefland Wellhead Protection Area.

The city settled for a long term lease with the option to purchase 33 acres of the 155-acre tract. SRWMD kept the remaining 122 acres as district property. Fugate said the contract came back to him in 2004 for a 33-acre lease on the property. He was not part of Smith's negotiations with the district. But he said he knows the original negotiation with SRWMD was for a lease with the option to buy the full 155 acres. He doesn't know how or why

the original lease proposal was changed to 33 acres. But he said the 33-acre lease is what Smith sent to him and he presented to commissioners, who approved it.

The city has now exercised its option to purchase the 33 acres for what the district paid, or \$5,000 per acre. The city was given credit for the \$1,000 per acre it contributed for each of the 33 acres, but had to borrow an additional \$132,000 to secure the land. A majority of city commissioners didn't trust the district to honor the lease, given the district's plan to allow the other 122 acres to be used for a regional well site by a different organization. They decided buying the 33 acres was the best way to assure a future well site. The city has borrowed nearly \$300,000 to this point.

Sandra Stockwell, deputy general counsel for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the state agency that released the Florida Forever money to SRWMD to buy the 155-acre parcel, said the FDEP has no oversight authority once it allocates Florida Forever money to an agency like SRWMD. She said the water district is an independent government agency. As long as the land is used for a public purpose and the interest on the bonds used to finance the Florida Forever funding remains tax deductible, the state has no further role to play.

Stockwell said the questions being raised by the city may become a consumptive-use issue. She said another issue the city appears to be raising is that there was an expectation that the property would remain a water recharge area. But she said FDEP is basically out of the picture at this point. It issued the bonds and therefore has done what it was supposed to do as a state agency.

Stockwell said as far as she knows, SRWMD has not issued a well permit for the property. If it ever does issue a well permit, she said public hearings would have to be held by the entity that wants to drill the well, which would give Chiefland an opportunity to have public input.

Farmers Recognized For Environmental Stewardship

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For more information about the CARES program, call the Suwannee River Partnership at 386-362-1001. You may also call your county Farm Bureau office or Scot Eubanks, Florida Farm Bureau Federation, at 352-384-2633.

Photo submitted
 Diamond in the Rough Ranch, of Madison County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Representatives of the farm are pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, far left, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, far right.



Photo submitted
 Glee Heritage Acres, of Madison County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Representatives of the farm are pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, fourth from left, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, second from right.



Photo Submitted
 Iott Hay Day Ranch, of Madison County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Representatives of the farm (Richard Iott, his wife, Danatta, and his son, Zac) are pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, far left, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, far right.



Photo submitted
 S&J Farm, of Madison County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Representatives of the farm (Sandra and Johnnie Norris) are pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, far left, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, far right.

Photo submitted
 Full Circle Dairy, of Madison County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Representatives of the farm (Greg Watts and his son, Philip) are pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, far left, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, far right.



Photo submitted
 Sunset Hill Farm, of Madison County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Representatives of the farm (Jan Smith, Bern Smith and Mac Smith) are pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, second from left, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, far right.



Photo submitted
 Suwannee Valley Grassing, of Madison County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Representatives of the farm are pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, far left, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, far right.



Photo submitted
 Kinsey Farm, of Madison County, was recognized at the 10th Annual CARES dinner on June 29. Representatives of the farm (Ernestine Kinsey, her son, Bobby Kinsey, and her grandson, Casey Kinsey) are pictured with Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson, far left, and Pat Cockrell, of Florida Farm Bureau, second from right.

When the well runs dry it'll be too late

Thanks to the Sun's editorials, an awareness of water conservation is consistently provided to readers. Because we humans can only survive seven or eight days without water, it's essential that we collectively guard our finite underground supply. Drinking water remains relatively inexpensive but we should not allow this fact to give us a false sense of security.

"When the well's dry, we know the worth of water,"
Benjamin Franklin (1776).

David Flagg
*Vice Chair,
Suwannee River Water
Management District
Governing Board
Gainesville*

Vote on Lilly Springs bottling delayed

By Christopher Curry
Staff writer

It appears that a long-lingering application for a bottled water operation near Lilly Springs will linger at least a little longer.

The Suwannee River Water Management District governing board was scheduled to vote today on a request for a 20-year permit to pump 400,000 gallons of water a day from two wells planned at a Gilchrist County property about a half-mile south of Lilly Springs.

But, with district staff recommending denial, applicants Richard Corbin and John A. Barley have now requested and received a 60-day delay,

district spokeswoman Vanessa Fultz spokeswoman confirmed Monday.

That would push back a board vote on the withdrawal request, which was first proposed in 2007, to September.

The site eyed for the water withdrawal is a 3.5-acre parcel at Northeast County Road 340 and Northeast 90th Avenue. The property is just across the Alachua County line and southwest of Poe Springs Park.

A business plan submitted by Corbin and Barley stated the water would be transported off site in tanker trucks and sold through Panther Creek Inc., a spring water brokerage firm based in

the Liberty County municipality of Telogia.

In general, the water management staff's recommendation of denial concluded that Corbin and Barley's application did not show that a pumping operation was a "reasonable-beneficial use" of the resource or "consistent with the public interest."

Specifically, water management district staff concluded the withdrawal would have "unacceptable impacts" on the flow from Hornsby Spring in Alachua County and that Corbin and Barley "failed to provide reasonable assurances" that environmental harm would not be done to other area springs, wetlands, the Santa Fe River and Poe Springs

Nature Park.

The recommendation to deny questioned if the water withdrawn from the site, located a half-mile from Lilly Springs, would qualify as "spring water." Water management district staff also stated the application lacked any detail on which companies would purchase water from Panther Creek Inc., the water broker, or their water bottling facilities.

Wayne Flowers, the Jacksonville attorney representing Corbin and Barley, could not be reached for comment Friday or Monday.

Contact Christopher Curry at 374-5088 or chris.curry@gvillesun.com.

RE: Fate of sinkhole still unknown

I would like to thank Mark Scohier for the excellent article that brought us up to date on the plans—or the lack of plans—for Chiefland's Florida Department of Transportation sinkhole.

Thanks to Mr. Scohier's investigation, we know that the Florida Department of Transportation is not planning to address any polluted runoff issues in the near future. Thanks also to the Citizen for publishing the results of the dye trace study that was done earlier this year. It is amazing that sinkholes in Chiefland are connected to a groundwater cave system that flows all the way to Manatee Springs.

Water quality in most of Florida's springs is declining due to changing land uses in the spring's watersheds. Manatee Spring is no exception.

Now that Mr. Scohier pointed out that runoff from roads, yards and neighborhoods can lower our local water quality, the Citizen has helped to raise public awareness that could help to solve this problem.

This article also gave me an idea. Because engineering solutions to divert the road runoff from directly entering the Manatee Spring cave conduit is likely too expensive to do right now, perhaps the FDOT or the Suwannee River Water Management District could post informational signs on the fence around the sink and on US 19 and 27 to let the public know that the runoff goes straight to Manatee Springs.

Another awareness raising project might be to label the storm drains with a stencil that reads "Runoff from this drain goes to Manatee Springs." For those who live in the area, it would remind us all not to dump pollutants at the curb (oil, fertilizer, doggie doo, antifreeze, trash etc.).

Thanks for the excellent work that you do.

Annette Long
Chiefland, FL

Lilly Springs water permit vote delayed – again

By Rachael Anne Ryals
Herald Staff Writer

HIGH SPRINGS – Due to unresolved concerns on how a bulk water permit for a planned water plant could impact the Santa Fe River downstream of Lilly Springs, the water district had recommended denial of a water use permit.

But an extension of time before the decision is made has been given at the applicant's request, said Vanessa Fultz, spokesperson for the Suwannee River Water Management District.

Richard E. Corbin and John A. Barley, who applied for the 400,000-gallon water permit, have stated they can resolve all concerns of the district if they had more time.

The permit could have “unacceptable impacts” to areas downstream on the Santa Fe, the water district states.

The applicants have been trying for three years to receive the water use permit.

According to materials prepared by the water district, removing that much water from Lilly Springs could harm nearby springs including Hornsby Spring, as well as Poe Springs Park.

The permit could have “unacceptable impacts” to the Santa Fe River, the material states, going on to say that the water withdrawal would “harm the source” from which it came. Further, the water permit does not serve the public interest, according to the water district materials.

Lilly Springs is located near Ginnie Springs on the Santa Fe River and is most famous for its caretaker, Naked Ed. The owners of the springs have tried to get a permit in the past but were unable to do so because of questions about who owned the land.

Water permit applications can often stretch on for years, as extensions are given to applicants who have rights under state laws.

Even though the district staff has recommended denial, Jon Dinges, director of the Department of Resource Management, said that “this is not the end of the line.”

Suwannee water to raise tax; first time in 20 years

Two public hearings will be held before the rate is finalized.

By Karen Voyles
Staff writer

For the first time in more than 20 years, the Suwannee River Water Management District is proposing an increase in its tax rate.

The district's governing board has approved an increase of 0.0535 mills.

The proposed increase means the district's annual tax on a piece of property with a taxable value of \$100,000 would increase by \$5.35 to \$49.34.

If given final approval, the increase means the district's budget for fiscal 2010-11 will be \$61.6 million.

The district covers more than 310,000 people and 13 river basins,

including the Suwannee and Santa Fe rivers.

The district includes all of Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union counties as well as portions of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Jefferson, Levy and Putnam counties.

Before the tax increase and budget are finalized, the district will hold two public budget hearings.

The meetings are scheduled for Sept. 14 and Sept. 28 at 5:40 p.m. in the district's headquarters at the corner of U.S. 90 and Suwannee County Road 49 in Live Oak.

The final budget and millage rate will be adopted during the Sept. 28 meeting.

For more information, call the district at 800-226-1066 or 386-362-1001.



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Printed on page A12

[FLORIDA'S WATER SUPPLY]

Florida's Water Supply: Cheap, Ignored, Wasted

Published: Friday, July 16, 2010 at 12:01 a.m.

Last year, with much of the country in a severe drought, Richard A. Meeusen, CEO of Badger Meter, wrote in the Milwaukee Journal: "A large part of the problem is that we do not charge for the value of water, so there is little incentive to conserve. The average cost of water in the United States is about \$3 per thousand gallons, while it is closer to \$10 in Europe."

Meeusen's company surveyed residential water rates across the U.S. and found that "some cities with severe water shortages have the lowest rates in the nation."

Last week, several counties north of Polk in Alachua, the news that Gainesville Regional Utilities wants to raise water rates because customers are using less of it raised hackles. Customers asked, why conserve if it's going to cost us more?

MILLIONS OF 'STRAWS'

The answer is that to the degree water remains a relatively cheap commodity, the urge to use it in wasteful ways will continue.

The fact that water conservation in the Southwest Florida Water Management District's area has improved somewhat of late is no guarantee that the trend will continue.

The district conducted a study a few years ago showing, "Water use decreases with increases in water price. The decreases are predictable and statistically valid."

A David Still, executive director of the Suwannee River Water Management District, noted: "The misperception that our region has an abundance an unlimited supply of groundwater has given us an unquenchable thirst and little appetite to curb our water use. ... But we're beginning to better understand the serious impacts of the thousands, indeed millions, of 'straws' that are sucking our aquifer dry."

Historically water has been a much undervalued, and thus more casually wasted, resource in our society. Appropriate pricing helps ensure sustained, wiser water use.

This story appeared in print on page A12

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SRWMD adopts tentative budget, millage rate increase for 2010-11

The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) Governing Board approved a tentative budget of \$61.6 million for Fiscal Year 2010-11 on July 13.

The board also approved a proposed ad valorem millage of 0.4934.

The proposed millage rate represents an increase of 0.0535 of a mill over the current fiscal year. Those who own property with a taxable value of \$100,000 will see an increase of \$5.35 in property taxes paid to SRWMD.

The owner's tax bill to the district will be \$49.34. Owners

of property with a taxable value of \$150,000 will have an increase of \$8.02 for a district tax bill of \$74.01.

If the proposed millage rate is adopted, this will be the first time in more than 20 years the district has raised the tax rate, officials said.

The tentative millage rate increase is earmarked to fund the district's Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) Program.

MFLs are benchmarks that show the district how much water is available for issuing water use permits.

Taxes paid to the district also fund numerous public services,

including protection of rivers and springs, water monitoring programs, water resource development and water supply planning.

The district will hold two budget hearings on Sept. 14 and Sept. 28. Both meetings will take place at 5:30 p.m. at the district's headquarters in Live Oak at the corner of U.S. 90 and CR 49.

The final budget and millage rate will be adopted at the Sept. 28 hearing. The public is invited and encouraged to attend.

For more information call (800) 226-1066.

SRWMD approves tentative millage rate and budget

The Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board on July 13 approved a tentative budget of \$61.6 million for Fiscal Year 2010-11. The board also approved a proposed ad valorem millage of 0.4934.

The proposed millage rate represents an increase of 0.0535 of a mill over the current fiscal year. Those who own property with a taxable value of \$100,000 will see an increase of \$5.35 in property taxes paid to the district. The owner's tax bill to the district will be \$49.34. Owners of property with a taxable value of \$150,000 will have an increase of \$8.02 for a district tax bill of \$74.01.

If the proposed millage rate is

adopted, this will be the first time in more than 20 years the district has raised the tax rate.

The tentative millage rate increase is earmarked to fund the district's Minimum Flows and Levels Program. This will offset funding reductions from the state that have paid for the establishment of MFLs in the past.

MFLs are benchmarks that show the district how much water is available for issuing water use permits. MFLs will help protect springs, rivers, and groundwater resources while ensuring there is an adequate water supply for all users.

"We are facing critical times concerning our water supply," said District Executive Director David Still. "MFLs have shown us that groundwater levels are diminishing in some areas within our District. Without the adoption of MFLs districtwide, other areas remain vulnerable."

Taxes paid to the district also

fund numerous public services, including protection of rivers and springs, water monitoring programs, water resource development and water supply planning.

The district will hold two budget hearings—Sept. 14 and Sept. 28. Both meetings will take place at 5:30 p.m. at the district's headquarters in Live Oak at the corner of U.S. 90 and C.R. 49. The final budget and millage rate will be adopted at the Sept. 28 hearing. The public is invited and encouraged to attend. For more information call 1-800-226-1066 (FL only) or 386-362-1001.

Thursday, July 22, 2010

Chiefland Citizen

Water district tax rate may increase

The tax rate imposed by the Suwannee River Water Management District will go up for the first time in 20 years if its governing board holds to its tentative tax rate approved on July 13.

The SRWMD's Governing Board approved a tentative \$61.6 million-dollar budget for the upcoming fiscal year and a tax rate of 0.4934 mills at the last meeting held in Live Oak. The tax rate increase represents 0.0535 of a mill. A mill is a tax rate of \$1 per every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Those who own property with a taxable

value of \$100,000 will see an increase of \$5.35 in property taxes paid to the water district. The owner's tax bill to the water district will be \$49.34. Owners of property with a taxable value of \$150,000 will have an increase of \$8.02 for a water district tax bill of \$74.01.

The tentative millage rate increase is earmarked to fund the District's Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) Program. This will offset funding reductions from the state that have paid for the establishment of MFLs in the past.

MFLs, according to SRWMD, are bench-

marks that show how much water is available for issuing water use permits. MFLs were designed to help protect springs, rivers, and groundwater resources while ensuring there is an adequate water supply for all users.

"We are facing critical times concerning our water supply," said District Executive Director David Still. "MFLs have shown us that groundwater levels are diminishing in some areas within our District. Without the adoption of MFLs districtwide, other areas remain vulnerable."

Taxes paid to the District also fund

numerous public services, including protection of rivers and springs, water monitoring programs, water resource development and water supply planning.

The District will hold two budget hearings - Sept. 14 and Sept. 28. Both meetings will take place at 5:30 p.m. at the District's headquarters in Live Oak at the corner of U.S. Highway 90 and County Road 49. The final budget and millage rate will be adopted at the Sept. 28 hearing. The public is invited and encouraged to attend. For more information call 800-226-1066 or 386-362-1001.

DIXIE COUNTY TIMES

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THURSDAY, JULY 22, 2010

SRWMD Approves Tentative Millage Rate And Budget

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board on July 13 approved a tentative budget of \$61.6 million for Fiscal Year 2010-11. The board also approved a proposed ad valorem millage of 0.4934.

The proposed millage rate represents an increase of 0.0535 of a mill over the current fiscal year. Those who own property with a taxable value of \$100,000 will see an increase of \$5.35 in property taxes paid to the District. The owner's tax bill to the District will be \$49.34. Owners of property with a taxable value of \$150,000 will have an increase of \$8.02 for a District tax bill of \$74.01.

If the proposed millage rate is adopted, this will be the first time in more than 20 years the District has raised the tax rate.

The tentative millage rate increase is earmarked to fund the District's Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) Program. This will offset funding reductions from the state that have paid for

the establishment of MFLs in the past.

MFLs are benchmarks that show the District how much water is available for issuing water use permits. MFLs will help protect our springs, rivers, and groundwater resources while ensuring there is an adequate water supply for all users.

"We are facing critical times concerning our water supply," said District Executive Director David Still. "MFLs have shown us that groundwater levels are diminishing in some areas within our District. Without the adoption of MFLs District-wide, other areas remain vulnerable."

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**SRWMD votes to increase property taxes for
first time in two decades****Approves \$61.6 million budget,
up from last year's \$55.9 million**

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board on July 13 approved a tentative budget of \$61.6 million for Fiscal Year 2010-11. The board also approved a proposed ad valorem millage of 0.4934, up from last year's rolled-back rate of 0.4399.

The proposed millage rate represents an increase of 0.0535 of a mill over the current fiscal year. Those who own property with a taxable value of \$100,000 will see an increase of \$5.35 in property taxes paid to the District. The owner's tax bill to the District will be \$49.34. Owners of property with a taxable value of \$150,000 will have an increase of \$8.02 for a District tax bill of \$74.01. If the proposed millage rate is adopted, this will be the first time in more than 20 years the District has raised the tax rate.

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SRWMD's June 2010 Hydrologic Conditions

RAINFALL - Average District rainfall in June was 6.54", nearly equal to the District's long-term average of 6.5". Distribution was uneven and typical of summer "hit or miss" convective rainfall patterns. While most of the Suwannee River Basin received above-average rain, the Santa Fe Basin, the Waccasassa Basin in Levy County, and the Waccasassa Basin in Levy County, and Jefferson, Madison and Taylor counties were below average, with localized areas significantly below average.

Rainfall for the past twelve months was 58.61". The twelve-month surplus was 3.93".

SURFACEWATER

Rivers: Flows at Suwannee River and upper Santa Fe River gauges remained near median seasonal conditions. The Santa Fe River near Fort White on the lower Santa Fe remained below the 25th percentile for the second month in a row (the percentile is the percentage of historic levels or flows for the month that are equal to or below the month's observed values). Conditions in the Fenholloway, Econfina and Waccasassa rivers were above average, but in a range considered normal for the time of year. The Steinhatchee River remained above normal.

Lakes: Levels at most monitored lakes fell, continuing a gradual decline since February. Eleven of the 16 monitored lakes fell below or remained below their long-term average levels, compared to ten in May. Levels at Waters Lake and Governor Hill Lake remained below the minimum measurable state. Lake Butler in Union County rose to its highest stage since 2006 but remained below its long-term average.

GROUNDWATER

Conditions continued to decline, with levels in 84 percent of monitored wells dropping by an average of 0.6 feet. Conditions averaged

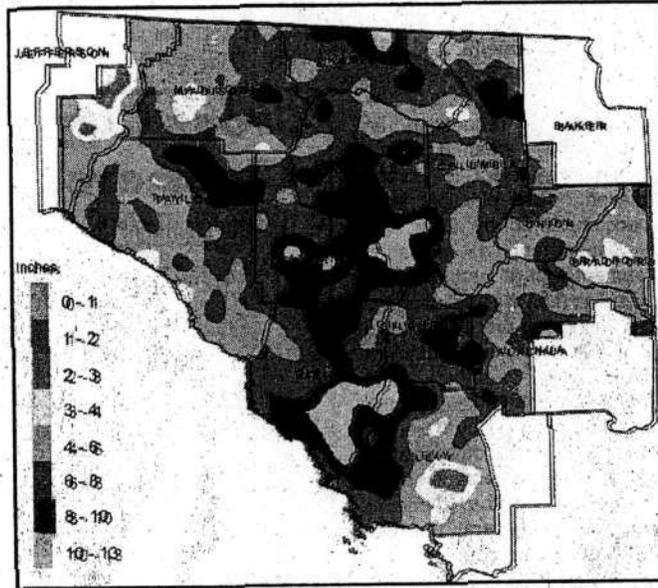


Table 1: Estimated Rainfall Totals

County	June-2010	June-2009	Last 12 Months	June Average
Alachua	6.18	5.21	51.74	6.57
Baker	5.92	3.68	47.82	6.29
Bradford	4.83	6.07	49.41	6.11
Columbia	6.33	3.68	51.50	6.25
Dixie	8.26	8.34	57.04	6.42
Gilchrist	7.27	6.69	51.26	6.43
Hamilton	7.00	4.57	54.42	6.13
Jefferson	4.29	4.53	65.71	6.09
Lafayette	7.94	7.27	63.58	6.25
Levy	6.21	7.65	60.88	6.87
Madison	5.71	4.52	60.44	6.08
Suwannee	7.82	5.03	57.56	6.20
Taylor	5.99	5.62	65.04	6.93
Union	5.44	4.47	49.94	6.78

June 2010 Average:	6.54
Historical June Average (since 1932):	6.50
Historical 12-month Average (since 1932):	54.68
Past 12-Month Total:	58.61
12-month Rainfall Surplus:	3.93

across the District remained above the 50th percentile based on records beginning in 1978. Levels in Taylor County were above the 80th percentile, while levels in Gilchrist County and the SRWMD portion of Alachua County fell below the 30th percentile.

HYDROLOGICAL/ METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

The Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI), a climatological tool produced by the National Weather Service, evaluates the scope, severity and frequency of prolonged periods of abnormally dry or wet weather using precipitation, temperature and soil moisture data. The PDSI indicated near normal conditions during June.

Long-term forecasts from the National Weather Service predict the likelihood of above-normal rainfall through the summer, based on a potentially active hurricane season.

CONSERVATION

Homeowners and others within the District are required to limit landscape irrigation to two days per week, based on a year-round water conservation rule that applies to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public and commercial businesses that aren't regulated by a District-issued permit. The District offers a variety of free water conservation information to the public via its website and by request.

Millage rate to rise for 1st time in 20 years at SRWMD

Staff

The Suwannee River Water Management District has been forced to raise its millage rate for the first time in more than 20 years.

The Governing Board on July 13 approved a tentative budget of \$61.6 million for 2010-11. The board also approved a proposed ad valorem millage of 0.4934.

SEE MILLAGE, PAGE 3A

MILLAGE

Continued From Page 1A

The proposed millage rate represents an increase of 0.0535 of a mill over the current fiscal year. Those who own property with a taxable value of \$100,000 will see an increase of \$5.35 in property taxes paid to the District. The owner's tax bill to the District will be \$49.34. Owners of property with a taxable value of \$150,000 will have an increase of \$8.02 for a District tax bill of \$74.01.

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"We are facing critical times concerning our water supply," said District Executive Director David Still. "MFLs have

shown us that groundwater levels are diminishing in some areas within our District.

Without the adoption of MFLs District-wide, other areas remain vulnerable."

Taxes paid to the District also fund numerous public services, including protection of rivers and springs, water monitoring programs, water resource development and water supply planning.

The District will hold two budget hearings - Sept. 14 and Sept. 28. Both meetings will take place at 5:30 p.m. at the District's headquarters in Live Oak at the corner of US 90 and CR 49. The final budget and millage rate will be adopted at the Sept. 28 hearing. The public is invited and encouraged to attend. For more information call 800-226-1066 (Florida only) or 386-362-1001.

SRWMD declares public lands as surplus

Submitted

The Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board on June 8 approved several parcels of District-owned lands to be declared as surplus and for the District to enter into a contract with a group of brokers to market the properties.

The board approved about 280 acres for surplus on parcels in Hamilton, Gilchrist, Dixie, Madison and Suwannee counties.

The surplus lands approved by the board are scheduled for appraisal and marketing, along with seven other tracts that were previously approved. Proceeds from land sales will be used to fund future pur-

chases of property with a greater environmental value.

"Rather than selling entire parcels, we are simply redefining tract boundaries," said Joe Flanagan, District director of land acquisition and management. "Sellers are sometimes unwilling to divide property that is offered to the District. Therefore, when the District purchases environmentally sensitive lands, they sometimes come with portions of property that have minimal conservation value."

"The surplus lands program will allow us to acquire land that better meets the District's water resource values," Flanagan added.

The District will evaluate all District-owned property to identify portions of land no longer needed for conservation purposes. Land that does not have one or more of the following characteristics will be considered for surplus: river frontage, floodplain acreage, wetlands acreage, aquifer recharge areas, adequate public access and management practicality.

To date, about 700 acres have been declared surplus out of the 160,000 acres of District-owned land.

The District may retain certain ownership rights of property that is sold to ensure environmental qualities remain preserved.

Properties considered for

surplus are reviewed by the District's Surplus Lands Committee before consideration by the Governing Board. The public is encouraged to provide input in the process. The next committee meeting is scheduled for June 22 at 1:30 p.m. at the District's headquarters on the corner of U.S. 90 and C.R. 49 in Live Oak. For more information contact Joe Flanagan at 386-362-1001.

The District acquires and manages lands for flood control, water quality protection and natural resource conservation. District lands are available for public use for recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping and horseback riding.

Local dairy takes CARE of environment Receives award from Suwannee River Partnership

Story and photos by Terry Witt
Staff Writer

Southpoint Dairy off County Road 347 west of Chiefland would be easy to miss if you didn't notice the sign. Nestled in lush fields of grass and tucked away in a grove of oak trees, it fits well with the Chiefland area landscape. If not for the grazing Jersey cows in the fields, the 1000-cow dairy would be almost invisible.

But someone did take notice of the farm recently.

The rotational grazing dairy was honored on July 2 for its environmental stewardship. The Suwannee River Partnership and Florida Farm Bureau presented owner Ron St. John with a County Alliance for Responsible Stewardship Award, a prestigious honor in the farming community.

CARES farmers are recognized for their efforts to implement best management practices, which increase production and profitability while protecting the environment, according to Hugh Thomas, Santa Fe Basin coordinator for SRP.

SRP was formed in 1999 as a coalition of state, federal and regional agencies, local governments and private industry representatives to reduce nitrate levels in surface waters and groundwater within the Suwannee River and Santa Fe River basins.

Grazing dairies are different from conventional dairies. They are smaller and the primary food source for the cows is grass. The grass is carefully monitored and scientifically grown to assure maximum nutrition with no impact from nitrates. Currently the cows are being rotated through a series of pastures over 10 days.

"We spoon feed this grass. The economic and environmental reasons are why we do it," said Dairy Manager Guy-Wayne Parrish.

Most of the waste is deposited in the fields by the cows and absorbed naturally into the ground.

If the waste disposal process sounds familiar, it should. It has been used by small family dairy farmers for as long as dairy farms have existed in Florida.

"This is nothing more than the way they used to dairy 50 years ago," Parrish said.

Parrish runs the dairy from a laptop using spreadsheets. He uses science to manage the grass and cows. The amount of grass and grain the cows eat and the milk they produce each day is carefully monitored

CARES, from Page 1A

on the laptop to calculate the amount of profit and assure the fields are managed to grow plenty of grass with the least amount of water. The average cow at Southpoint will produce 13,000 to 14,000 pounds of milk a year.

Parrish uses a carefully hand-drawn map showing the 410 acres of grazing fields under pivot irrigation, as well as the 84 acres used to spray liquid manure. He tracks the height of the grass using a special disc. He moves cows around to allow them to graze on grass that gives them maximum nutritional value. The grass is best when it's not tall and has tender stems.

The goal of the dairy is to run the dairy efficiently with a small work force. The goal is 150 to 200 cows per employee. Since there are no dairy barns and the cows are not confined in pens or barns, the process of milking the cows requires relatively little effort.

The cows file into a milking parlor twice a day to eat grain and get milked. It's a voluntary thing. The grain is like candy to them. They line up at the gate in the field when the employees arrive on four-wheelers to bring the cows to the barn. They wait at a gathering spot next to the milk parlor contentedly chewing their cud until it's their time to be milked. It's a routine. Cows like a regular routine.

The Jersey cows file out of the parlor when the milking is finished and head back to fields of ankle deep grass to graze again. The men who handle the milking aren't required to

do heavy lifting. They attach milking cups to the cow's udder. The cups swing from an overhead metal frame into place. The milk flows to a cooler. After being milked, the cows march out of the milking parlor as if they were trained. If they are thirsty, there is fresh water flowing into a trough next to the exit ramp. The dairy uses pivot irrigation sprayers equipped with misters to shower the cattle with cool water after leaving the milking parlor during the summer months.

Parrish said the dairy harvests hay silage and uses it as a food source for the cows. The grass silage is stored in white rolls of plastic. It looks like mowed grass from a lawn. The cows like the taste and it has high nutritional value. Using hay silage also makes the harvest easier. Parrish doesn't have to wait for hay to dry in the field to cut and store it.

Owner Ron St. John doesn't use growth hormones for any of his cattle. He also owns Alliance Dairy north of Chiefland, a 3,000-cow conventional dairy. Thomas said St. John uses best management practices at Alliance Dairy as well and the environmental impacts are about the same as Southpoint Dairy. But there clearly are differences between Alliance and Southpoint. Alliance is bigger, the cows produce much more milk, and more liquid manure is sprayed on fields because the cows are confined. The costs are also higher.

"The benefit of this operation is your input costs are low," Thomas said.

Millage rate to rise for 1st time in 20 years at SRWMD

Staff

The Suwannee River Water Management District has been forced to raise its millage rate for the first time in more than 20 years.

The Governing Board on July 13 approved a tentative bud-

SEE MILLAGE, PAGE 5A

Millage rate to rise for 1st time in 20 years at SRWMD

Continued From Page 1A

get of \$61.6 million for 2010-11. The board also approved a proposed ad valorem millage of 0.4934.

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The tentative millage rate increase is earmarked to fund the District's Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) Program. This will offset funding reductions from the state that have paid for the establishment of MFLs in the past.

MFLs are benchmarks that show the District how much water is available for issuing water use permits. MFLs will help protect our springs, rivers, and groundwater resources while ensuring there is an adequate water sup-

ply for all users.

"We are facing critical times concerning our water supply," said District Executive Director David Still. "MFLs have shown us that groundwater levels are diminishing in some areas within our District. Without the adoption of MFLs District-wide, other areas remain vulnerable."

Taxes paid to the District also fund numerous public services, including protection of rivers and springs, water monitoring programs, water

resource development and water supply planning.

The District will hold two budget hearings - Sept. 14 and Sept. 28. Both meetings will take place at 5:30 p.m. at the District's headquarters in Live Oak at the corner of US 90 and CR 49. The final budget and millage rate will be adopted at the Sept. 28 hearing. The public is invited and encouraged to attend. For more information call 800-226-1066 (Florida only) or 386-362-1001.

Farmer recognized for good environmental practices, credits satellites and chicken poop

By Alex Orlando
For The Herald

HIGH SPRINGS — Chester Patterson has an award-winning recipe for environmental farming: satellites and chicken poop.

Patterson was one of 25 local farmers — two from High Springs — last month who were recognized for implementing best management practices at the 10th annual County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship by the Suwannee River Partnership.

On his 50 acres of hay pasture in the Santa Fe River basin, near O'Leno State Park's River sink, Patterson said fertilizer runoff can be dangerous to the environment as he sprays his crop three times a year.

To minimize runoff and fertilize the grass more economically, he began using a global positioning device two years ago to guide his tractor in a straight line on each pass of the pasture to prevent spraying over some tracts of grass twice — a procedure that got him recognized by the partnership.

Before, he said, he would use landmarks like dead trees or boulders on the edge of the pasture fence to guide his tractor for a straight, 40-foot-wide trail of fertilizer behind him on each pass.

Now, he looks at a screen in his tractor showing a road with a dot on it that he keeps on the digital road by steering his tractor in a straight line.

He likened the concentration it takes to steer a straight path to playing one of his granddaughter's video games, but with higher stakes.

Any lapse of concentration or steering ability from bumps in the pasture could cause a shift in the trail. And he could end up spraying some sections twice, wasting time, fertilizer, hay and money.

Any patches of grass that he misses turn yellow within 90 days and can't be sold.

At the beginning of every growing season, around spring, he plunges 1-inch by 6-inch tubes into the soil around his pastures to collect soil cores for sampling. He mixes them up in a bucket and sends the dirt to the University of Florida's soil lab for testing.

A few weeks later, he gets back



Photo By Alex Orlando

Chester Patterson bales hay on his 50-acre farm near O'Leno State Park. Patterson uses GPS satellite technology to apply fertilizer three times a year, a practice that helps him use less fertilizer due to the precision that the technology allows. Less fertilizer means less time and money spent, but the practice also helps the environment by lessening the amount of fertilizer that would otherwise end up in the Santa Fe River basin.



Photo By Alex Orlando

the results so he knows what he needs in the fertilizer for that season, a blend of nitrogen, pot ash and chicken poop.

When figuring in \$150 a ton for nitrogen, spraying five tons per 30-acre pasture, oversprays can be expensive, Patterson said.

He said after bailing the hay, which usually takes two hours per 30-acre field, depending on weather, he usually sells the bales for \$45.

"You have to be a good steward," Patterson said. "If you take care of [the crop], it'll take care of you."

He said that as part of the CARES program, he is responsible for keeping a record of fertilization and production and following soil sample guidelines.

"You keep a record of what you

put on that field and what you take off," he said.

He said the partnership agreed to give him money for his fertil-

that he isn't wasting money and that he is abiding by state fertilization regulations by following the program.

He said if someone were to confront him about the level of fertilizer he is spraying on his crop, he would be able to point that person to the records he keeps and to the program.

"I know what I can put out because they tell me," he said. "If we follow their guidelines, we'll have someone behind us if someone questions us."

The other High Springs farmer recognized by the Partnership, Edwin Douglas, said he did not have time to be interviewed.

'You have to be a good steward. If you take care of [the crop], it'll take care of you.'

**Chester Patterson,
Local Farmer**

izer sprayer if he followed the program for three years. Patterson would not say how much the partnership paid for the sprayer.

The program also offers him confidence, he said — confidence

SRWMD to raise property tax rate for first time in 20 years

On July 13, the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) Governing Board approved a tentative budget of \$61.6 million for fiscal year 2010-11.

The board also approved a proposed ad valorem millage of 0.4934, which represents an increase of 0.0535 of a mill over the current fiscal year.

As an example of the proposed rate, those who own property with a taxable value of \$100,000 will see an increase of \$5.35 in property taxes. The portion of the tax bill going to SRWMD will be \$49.34. Those who own

property with a taxable value of \$150,000 will have an increase of \$8.02 with \$74.01 of their total property tax bill going to SRWMD.

If the proposed millage rate is adopted, this will be the first time in more than 20 years SRWMD has raised the tax rate.

The tentative millage rate increase is earmarked to fund the Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) Program to offset funding reductions from the state that have paid for the program in the past.

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the corner of U.S. 90 and C.R. 49 in Live Oak. The final budget and millage rate will be adopted at the Sept. 28 hearing. The public is invited and encouraged to attend. For more information, call 800-226-1066.



JASON MATTHEW WALKER/Lake City Reporter/Volunteering to take a little off the top

Volunteering to take a little off the top at vet's Domiciliary

Volunteer barber Gene Long trims Jack Stone's hair at the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans' Domiciliary Home of Florida in the facility's barber shop on Monday.

\$167 per seagull: Feds price oil damage

By MATTHEW BROWN
Associated Press

BAY RONQUILLE, La. — The marsh is soaked with oil and the grass is dying. It's a common sight on the Gulf coast these days, and it's nothing new for Robert Nailon.

The BP-hired environmental consultant kneels as he has done many times on the Louisiana coast, assessing the damage in a task now taking on new importance as the world's attention turns from the ubiquitous images of gushing oil to the daunting task of restoration.

He dips his hand, covered in a blue rubber glove, into the muddy ground. It comes up streaked brown with crude. "You've got sheen throughout," he says, and calls out his findings to a government scientist: Oil covers about 95 percent of the grass, reaching about 15 feet inland.

Both men nod, agreeing to add this stretch to the growing and painstaking census of the dead from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. About 40 BP-government teams are cataloguing seemingly everything touched by the oil, from poisoned plankton and fish to lost marshes and stained beaches.

BP PLC will eventually be given two options: Restore everything itself, or pay the government to do it. Before a final bill is written, however, those tallying the damage must still account for things they can't see — from contaminated fish eggs that never hatch to impacts that may take years to show.

Some experts worry BP could exploit the uncertainty to minimize its responsibility.

"If you end up with a bunch of dead fish five years from now, it becomes very hard to prove BP killed them," said Mark Davis, director of Tulane University's Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy.

BP spokesman John Curry declined to detail any potential challenges his company might make regarding wildlife and habi-



ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this July 15 photo, a joint BP-government team looks for oil in the fragile marshlands on Bay Ronquille, La. The team is performing a damage assessment that will determine how the company has to compensate for damage to natural resources.

tat claims.

"We're not trying to run and hide from the situation," he said. "Bottom line is we want to know exactly what the impact is, too."

So far, about 4,000 birds, more than 700 sea turtles, dozens of dolphins and one whale have been found dead, or alive but oiled. Oil has hit some 600 miles of shoreline and at least 44,000 square miles of the Gulf. The count doesn't include the hundreds of oiled birds left in the wild to avoid disturbing their nesting grounds.

Pinpointing damage beneath the Gulf's surface,

however, is turning into an even bigger problem.

"It's a 3-D challenge," said Tom Brosnan, chief of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's assessment and restoration division. "It's not just on the shoreline, it's at depth, down to 5,000 feet in the Gulf."

The government is deploying remotely operated submarines to get snapshots of what is happening in the deep, as well as collecting water samples to assess the populations of plankton and other small organisms.

Computers will use the information gathered to produce estimates of how many plankton, fish or shrimp are killed based in part on how much habitat is ruined.

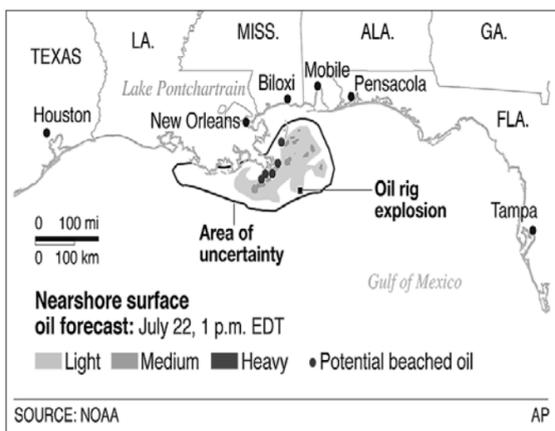
Gauging the consequences could take years and require some calculated guesswork to account for wildlife that dies or suffers unseen.

Federal officials haven't said whether they've assigned a cost to everything.

In some cases, however, arriving at a cost can be as straightforward as similar efforts during the 11 million-gallon Exxon Valdez spill in 1989 in Alaska. The state priced each seagull at \$167, eagles at \$22,000, harbor seals at \$700 and killer whales at \$300,000.

The scope of the latest census is enormous — the Gulf spill has so far unleashed between 91 and 179 million gallons of oil — and the cost of that tally will likely prove expensive in itself.

In the case of the Valdez, \$125 million has been spent on scientific research since the spill in Prince William Sound.



Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park to host Elvis

From staff reports

Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park in Live Oak has scheduled regional Elvis tribute artist winner

Matthew Spalding of Atlanta to portray the King during his tour years, and Ted "Teddy Mac" McMullen, to portray Elvis during Elvis' jumpsuit era on July 31.

McMullen is a nationally known tribute artist and show for his fans.

The Music Hall opens at 5 p.m. on July 31 with

music beginning at 7 p.m. Admission is \$10.

Call (386) 364-1683 or visit www.musicliveshere.com for directions or more information.



COURTESY PHOTO

David Pharr, a citizen gauge reader for the SRWMD, checks a wire weight gauge on the Suwannee River near Suwannee Springs.

Citizens engage in water data collection from rivers, lakes

From staff reports

Data collection specialists with the Suwannee River Water Management District spend long hours installing, maintaining and collecting data from gauges along local rivers, lakes, and streams, but they can't do it without the help of a few volunteers that supplement their efforts.

More than 30 volunteer observers help collect rainfall and water-level data from manual gauges within the district's 15-county region. Observers take readings at least once a week and record the data in a log that is returned to the district.

Volunteer observers typically live or own property near the gauge sites and have a vested interest in the information.

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Knowledge of river levels helps in planning weekend trips.

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The water had risen five feet under her home, which luckily, was built on 10-foot stilts in the 1970s.

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Obtaining reliable data for these purposes could not be possible without the District's volunteer observers.

"We have reliable data observers, whose service to the district serves an important purpose," said Monroe.

"The district appreciates all their efforts and hard work," he said.

HUD and VA work to prevent homelessness among war veterans

From staff reports

In an effort to prevent homelessness among veterans, primarily those returning from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced Thursday that both agencies will invest a combined \$15 million in five selected communities near military installations.

The HUD and VA grant funding is intended to provide housing assistance and supportive services to veterans who might otherwise be living in homeless shelters or on the streets.

Under the new Veterans Homelessness Prevention Demonstration Program, existing HUD grantees

or "Continuum of Care" located near the following military installations will each receive \$2 million: MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa; Camp Pendleton in San Diego, Calif.; Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas; Fort Drum in Watertown, N.Y.; and Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Tacoma, Wash.. In addition, VA medical centers in the following areas will each receive \$1 million: Tampa, San Diego, Dallas, Syracuse, N.Y.; and American Lake in Washington.

"The men and women who serve our nation deserve better than a life on the streets when they return home," said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan.

"These grants represent a first step," he said.

Citizens 'engaged' in water data collection

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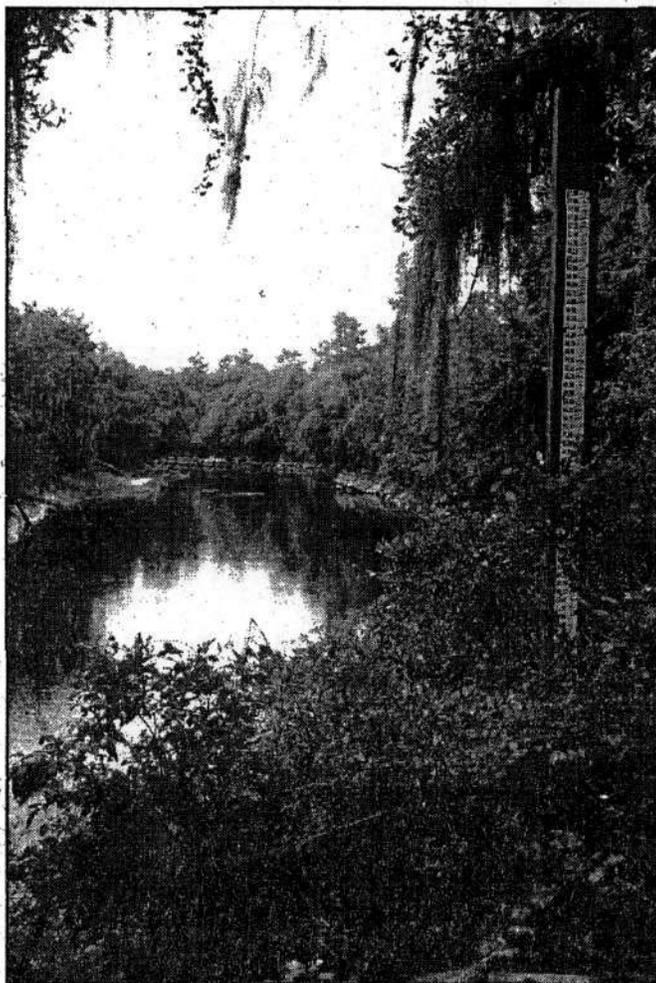
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See WATER page 7A

A staff gage along the Suwannee River.

Climate change should be considered in water management

BY MARK
SCOHIER

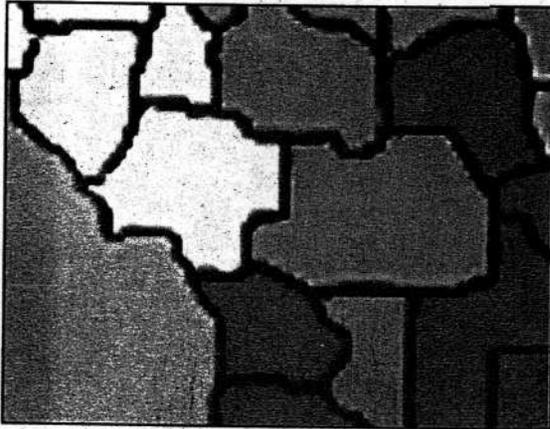
NEWS2@CHIEFLANDCITIZEN.COM

Levy County may have only a moderate risk of future water shortages, according to a new study by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The results of the study, released on July 20, show a county-by-county analysis of water shortages throughout the U.S. by the year 2050 due to climate change.

In Florida, 21 counties, mostly in Central Florida, were rated as having the potential for extreme water shortages where demand would outstrip supply. Twenty-five counties, including nearby Alachua, Marion, Suwannee and Columbia, were rated as having the potential for high-risk water shortages. Eighteen counties, including Levy, Gilchrist and Dixie, fall into the moderate category.

"One out of three counties



Florida counties expected to be impacted.

(in the U.S.) faces water shortages because of climate change," Dan Lashof, director of the climate center at NRDC, said at a news conference last week. "Four hundred counties are at extremely high risk, which is a 14 fold increase due to climate change."

Sujoy Roy, principal engineer for the project, said

at the news conference that Florida, though just one of 14 states to show significant risks, is definitely a concern. Florida, like the other states, will need to make water conservation and better management techniques a priority, Roy said.

Lashof said, "Certainly, some of the impacts can be mitigated through manage-

ment...but they're gonna' be expensive." There may be whole regions that end up migrating to areas where water is available.

Besides management of water resources, Lashof said, the U.S. needs to concentrate on reducing greenhouse emissions. The U.S. could be a global leader in that effort, he said.

So far, Lashof said, California has been the leader in trying to anticipate these kinds of problems.

In 2006, California passed Bill 32 that aims to reduce carbon emissions in the state by 25 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.

"I think there are some positive lessons there," Lashof said.

Critics of the bill say it is hurting the state's economy by reducing employment.

The NRDC study shows California with 36 counties having extreme and high risks of water shortages by

2050, most in the southern half of the state. Texas has the highest percentage of extreme risk, with more than half of its 264 counties painted red on the study's map.

"We need to anticipate that climate change will occur," Lashof said. "We need to plan for a planet in this situation."

Lashof said it's imperative that agencies that manage water take into account climate change when planning for the future.

Locally, the Suwannee River Water Management District, which manages part of Levy County, is working on a water-supply assessment of the Upper Santa Fe Basin, an area SRWMD said would have a demand that outstrips supply if nothing is done.

"Right now, we're doing a plan so it doesn't happen," said Steve Minnis, director

See WATER Page 10

Water

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of governmental affairs with SRWMD.

Four counties under SRWMD's jurisdiction are shown on the NRDC's study as being high risks. Three of those counties, Union, Columbia and Alachua, are part of the Upper Santa Fe River Basin.

But Minnis said he's not sure how SRWMD could possibly go about taking climate change into account.

"You don't discount it," he said. "But how do you go about it? Maybe you just keep a cautionary watch on it."

Carlos Herd, a senior hydrogeologist with SRWMD, agreed. When asked if SRWMD considered climate change in its assessments, he said, "That's a great question. I wish we could, but it's hard. You can't predict it."

Climate change has the potential to have an impact, he said. But there are too many variables to know to what extent. Herd explained

that much of SRWMD's assessments are based on projected population estimates. And even those are unpredictable, he said.

A few years ago, "We were gearing up for a tremendous population," he said. But now, not as many people are moving to the state.

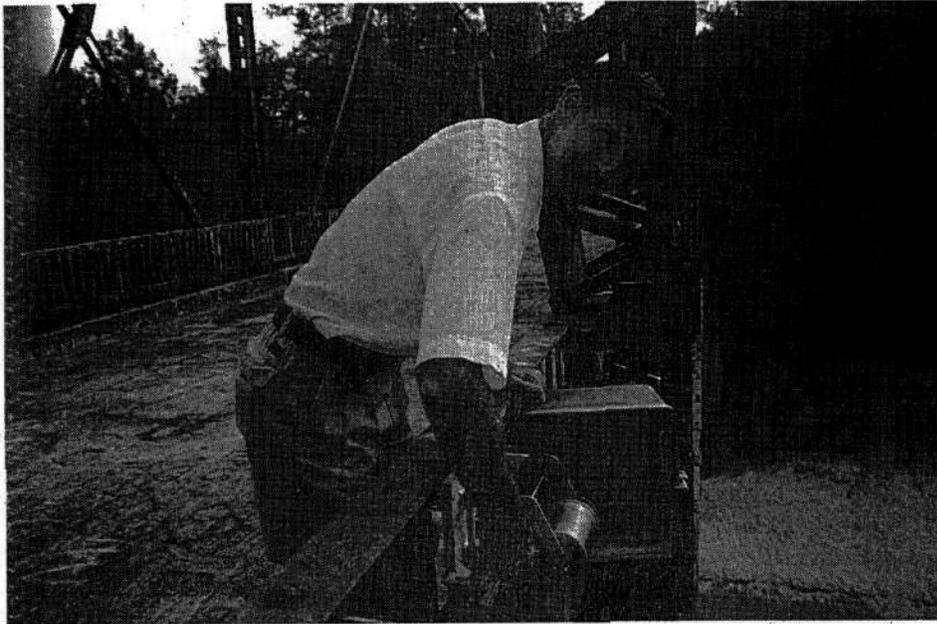
But despite whether or not climate change can be factored into management plans, Minnis said people should be conservative in their use of water. Running faucets and inefficient or poorly planned irrigation systems need to be addressed, he said.

"It's all about being a good steward and just being prudent with the resource."

The Upper Santa Fe River Basin assessment, which projects 20 years into the future, should be out by the end of the year, according to Minnis. An assessment of the Suwannee River Basin is soon to follow.

To see the NRDC's study and map of U.S. counties, go to www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/watersustainability.

Citizens engage'd in water data collection



David Pharr, a citizen gage reader for the SRWMD, checks a wire weight gage on the Suwannee River near Suwannee Springs. - PHOTO submitted

Submitted

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THURSDAY, JULY 29, 2010

PAGE 14A ~ THE MAYO FREE PRESS, Mayo, FL

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news2@chiefandcitizen.com

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— Dan Lashof, director of the climate center at NRDC

New county-by-county study shows future water shortages

Organization says climate change should be part of water management efforts

Chiefland Citizen Thursday, July 29, 2010

11A

STUDY

Continued from 1A

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Texas has the highest percentage of extreme risk, with more than half of its 264 counties painted red on the study's map.

"We need to anticipate that climate change will occur," Lashof said. "We need to plan for a planet in this situation."

Lashof said it's imperative that agencies that manage water take into account climate change when planning for the future.

Locally, the Suwannee River Water Management District, which manages part of Levy County, is working on a water-supply assessment of the Upper Santa Fe Basin, an area SRWMD said would have a demand that outstrips supply if nothing is done.

"Right now, we're doing a plan so it doesn't happen," said Steve Minnis, director of governmental affairs with SRWMD.

Four counties under SRWMD's jurisdiction are shown on the NRDC's study as being high risks. Three of those counties, Union, Columbia and Alachua, are part of the

Upper Santa Fe River Basin.

But Minnis said he's not sure how SRWMD could possibly go about taking climate change into account.

"You don't discount it," he said. "But how do you go about it? Maybe you just keep a cautionary watch on it."

Carlos Herd, a senior hydrogeologist with SRWMD, agreed. When asked if SRWMD considered climate change in its assessments, he said, "That's a great question. I wish we could, but it's hard. You can't predict it."

Climate change has the potential to have an impact, he said. But there are too many variables to know to what extent. Herd explained that much of SRWMD's assessments are based on projected population estimates. And even those are unpredictable, he said.

A few years ago, "We were gearing up for a tremendous population," he said. But now, not as many people are moving to the state.

Whether or not climate change can be factored into management plans, Minnis said, people should be conservative in their use of water. Running faucets and inefficient or poorly planned irrigation systems need to be addressed, he said.

"It's all about being a good steward and just being prudent with the resource."

The Upper Santa Fe River Basin assessment, which projects water supply 20 years into the future, should be out by the end of the year, according to Minnis. An assessment of the Suwannee River Basin is soon to follow.

To see the NRDC's study and map of U.S. counties, go to www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/watersustainability.

Citizens En "Gauged" In Water Data Collection



Photo submitted
A staff gauge helps specialists collect data on the Suwannee River.

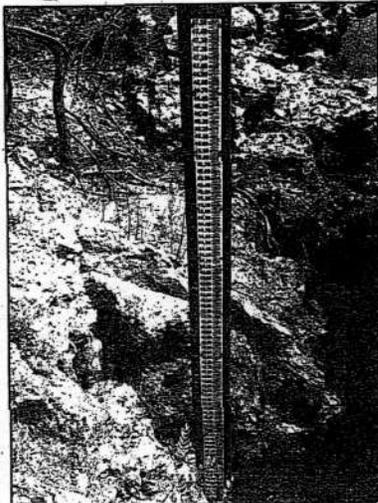


Photo submitted
A staff gauge along the Suwannee River.



Photo submitted
David Pharr, a citizen gauge reader for the SRWMD, checks a wire weight gauge on the Suwannee River near Suwannee Springs.

Data collection specialists with the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) spend long hours installing, maintaining and collecting data from gauges along our rivers, lakes, and streams, but they can't do it without the help of a few volunteers that supplement their efforts.

More than 30 volunteer observers help collect rainfall and water-level data from manual gauges within the District's 15-county region. Observers take readings at least once a week and record the data in a log that is returned to the District.

Volunteer observers typically live or own property near the gauge sites and have a vested interest in the information.

"They are folks who have an interest in river and lake levels for fishing purposes or who like to know how the levels affect their property, such as during a flood or drought event," said Donald Monroe, District hydrologic data collection specialist.

David Pharr, former owner and operator of the Canoe Outpost at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park in Live Oak, found that collecting water-level data was helpful to his customers.

"We would get frequent inquiries about flood levels," said Pharr, who is an observer for the

Suwannee River. "It was nice for us to provide our customers with information from the horse's mouth."

Now, he and his wife, Debbie, enjoy weekend trips rafting along the river on their floating platform dubbed the "Clampett Mobile." The platform - which carries a tent, chairs, coolers, fishing poles, the family dogs and other items - floats down the river with the current.

Knowledge of river levels helps in planning weekend trips.

"If the levels are too high we run into the branches; if they are too low there's not enough current to carry us," Pharr said.

Kim Davis, who lives on the Santa Fe River, has a staff gauge on her property. She reads the gauge weekly while out walking her dogs. However, when the river flooded in 1998, she was collecting levels for the District daily.

The water had risen five feet under her home, which luckily, was built on 10-foot stilts in the 1970s.

"There was no land in sight for two months at my house," Davis said, noting she had to use a gheenoe boat to access her property.

Davis was able to assist the District in taking readings during that flood until the staff gauge became submerged.

Observers serve as a backup for electronic gauges, which transmit data to a computer via satellite or phone lines.

"Having backup data is important in case of equipment failure and it also provides a means to check data against that which is produced from automated equipment," Monroe said. "The most critical time for this data is during a flood event when the public relies on this information."

The District provides water-level and rainfall data to the public through its website, www.mysuwanneeriver.com. Flood warnings are posted during a flooding event. Such data is also used to compile reports for projects and for decision-making.

Obtaining reliable data for these purposes could not be possible without the District's volunteer observers.

"We have reliable data observers, whose service to the District serves an important purpose," said Monroe. "The District appreciates all their efforts and hard work."