

# The Madison Enterprise Recorder

Est. 1865

Friday, October 1, 2010

## SRWMD Adopts \$56.5 Million Budget

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board on Sept. 28 adopted a final budget of \$56.5 million and 0.4399 millage rate for the 2010-11 fiscal year that begins Oct. 1.

The budget reflects no change in the tax rate from the current fiscal year. Due to decreased property values, the District has actually lowered taxes by about \$300,000 District-wide by maintaining the same millage rate.

Under a 0.4399 rate, property owners with a taxable value of \$100,000 would pay \$43.99 in property taxes to the District.

"The District has worked hard to develop a budget and work plan that addresses current water resource issues within existing available funding levels," said District Executive Director David Still. "We will continue to seek ways to be conservative without affecting the commitment to meet the needs of the District's resources and people."

Property taxes paid to the District fund numerous services to the public. This year's budget and work plan include the following:

- The completion of a water supply assessment that will assess water availability in order to develop a water supply plan for the Upper Santa Fe River Basin.

- The establishment and implementation of minimum flows and levels (MFLs) on our rivers and spring systems to help protect our water resources.

- The Suwannee River Partnership to provide cost-share funding to local farmers for implementing best management practices to help protect water resources.

- The Ichetucknee Partnership (TIP) to promote protection of rivers, springs and groundwater in the Ichetucknee Springshed through education and outreach, research and monitoring, and best management practices.

- The Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps and Risk MAP programs to evaluate flood risks, update digital flood maps, and establish flood elevations. The information will provide the public better access and data to view which properties are located in a flood zone.

- Land acquisition and management program, which allows the District to purchase property for the purpose of flood control, water quality protection, and natural resource conservation. Lands are also open to the public for recreational use.

- Hydrologic, groundwater, and surface water monitoring network to monitor water levels and quality and to track rainfall and flooding conditions. The figures are available to the public through the District's website.

- Efforts to improve, update, and enhance the District's commitment to Information Technology in the form of computing facilities, software and data management tools, Geographic Information System, and Internet services to the public.

## Water district adopts \$56.5 million budget

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SEE WATER, PAGE 14A

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Continued From Page 1A

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# Lake City Reporter

Tuesday, October 5, 2010

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## Study: Water supply will fall below demand

20-year water projection concern for some areas.

By TONY BRITT  
tbritt@lakecityreporter.com

Even with low-range water usage demand projections, Suwannee River Water Management District officials say there are areas in the district where water

supplies will not meet the anticipated demand in the next 20 years.

The information was released as part of the Water Management District's draft districtwide water supply assessment. The draft-water supply assessment includes water use demand projections for the next 20 years, an assessment of current and projected water resource

impacts for the planning period and an evaluation of alternative water supplies.

"The demand includes all water use categories — public supply, agricultural and domestic cell supply," said Carlos Herd, Suwannee River Water Management District senior water supply manager, noting a demand not included in the water use projections is for environment — the amount of

water needed to support an area's ecology.

The assessment shows that groundwater levels in the northeastern portion of the district are in decline. This area includes parts of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Suwannee and Union counties.

The public will be able to comment on the draft water supply assessment

before it is adopted by the Suwannee River Water Management District governing Board during four public meetings.

The meetings and their locations:

■ 7 p.m., Oct. 7., Andrews Center Auditorium, 209 W. Call St., Starke;

■ 1 p.m., Oct. 12, Suwannee River Water Management District Headquarters, 9225 County

Road 49, Live Oak;

■ 7 p.m., Oct. 12, City Hall, 17651 NW 90th Street, Fanning Springs; and

■ 7 p.m., Oct. 19, Holiday Inn Express, 601 Everett Way, Perry.

"The meetings are being held to disseminate the results of the water supply assessment to the public," Herd said. "We'll give the

**WATER** continued on 3A

## WATER: Future concern

Continued From Page 1A

results to the public and listen to their feedback. We want to hear from them if they have any comments."

He said Water Management District officials will use the data taken from the draft water supply assessment to formulate water supply plans.

"The assessment defines the regions where we need to do water supply planning," Herd said. "The assessment will tell us whether there are any other areas in the district that needs to have planning done."

He said they plan to develop a water supply plan for each region that is described in the assessment that will not meet the projected water needs in the 20-year planning horizon.

"If we project there is not enough water for the next 20 years, then we propose to do a regional water supply plan in that area," Herd said, noting there is no set deadline for when the plans for the other regions would be developed or implemented. "As soon as we are able financially to start planning — we will do so in the other areas."

In order to address these water resource impacts, the Alapaha River, Upper and Lower Santa Fe River and Upper Suwannee River basins have been identified as water supply planning regions.

"We will look to alternative water supplies, such

as reclaimed water and surface water, and water conservation to meet future needs," Herd said.

The 2010 districtwide water supply assessment is scheduled for adoption by the end of this year.

## City Council Treatment plant will incur \$2M upgrades

Council votes on  
design firm for  
wastewater facility.

By **ANTONIA ROBINSON**  
arobinson@lakecityreporter.com

The City of Lake City is one step closer to an upgraded wastewater plant.

Council voted to authorize City Manager Wendell Johnson and city attorney Herbert

Darby to move forward Monday night at City Hall with negotiations with Mittauer and



**Johnson**

Associates for upgrading the St. Margaret Road Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Previously, council selected the firm that would handle the design of the new Kicklighter Road plant. Staff ranked the top three firms for the upgrades.

"The firms ranked by the staff were the most qualified," Johnson said. "I'm pleased the council chose to pick what staff feels was the best firm."

Mittauer and Associates will do a study to determine the scope of work for the upgrades, he said.

The upgrades are expected to cost about \$2 million, Johnson said.

Money will come from part of the utility bonds refinancing package and other funding. The project will take between 12 and 18 months, he said.

City Councilman George Ward said upgrades were done about a dozen years ago on the plant.

These new upgrades will take the plant a step further and help make the water safe to go back out for reuse.

Ward is excited about the upcoming upgrades, he said.

"Everything we do is to clean the environment and help keep the water pure," Ward said.

The next City Council meeting is at 7 p.m. Oct. 18 in City Hall.

## Water supply assessment draft to be presented to the public

The Suwannee River Water Management District recently completed its draft districtwide water supply assessment. Elements of the draft assessment include:

- Water use demand projections over a 20-year planning period.

- An assessment of current and projected water resource impacts for the planning period.

- An evaluation of alternative water supplies.

The low-range water demand projections—based on average population growth and water use trends—indicate that by 2030 water demands will increase districtwide by 10.3 million gallons per day for all water use categories. The high-range projection, which accounts for a peak growth scenario, indicates an increase of 62.8 million gallons per day.

The assessment shows that groundwater levels in the northeastern portion of the district are in decline. This area includes parts of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Suwannee and Union counties.

"The assessment indicates that the northeastern portion of the district may not have sufficient groundwater supplies to meet reasonable and beneficial water demands and protect natural systems, such as stream and spring flows, over the next 20 years," said Carlos Herd, the district's water supply project manager. "These impacts are regional in nature and are attributed to groundwater pumpage from within and beyond the district's boundaries."

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"We will look to alternative water supplies, such as reclaimed water and surface water, and water conservation to meet future needs," Herd said.

The 2010 districtwide water supply assessment is scheduled for adoption by the district's governing board by the end of this year. The public will have opportunity to comment on the assessment before that time. The following meetings will provide opportunity for public input:

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# Bronson makes new run at flood plan

By LOU ELLIOTT JONES  
editor@chieflandcitizen.com

The Town of Bronson is taking a new approach in its fight to keep residents from having to buy flood insurance, and the Levy County Board of Commissioners is joining the fight.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is taking public comment on its proposed maps that put a section of Bronson in a flood plane due to two drainage ditches constructed during the Depression. The ditches divert standing waters

into Chunky Pond to deter mosquito breeding. As a result, FEMA has determined there is a risk of flooding and homeowners need to purchase flood insurance.

T o w n  
Councilman Berlon Weeks, who has been battling the proposal for several months, asked the

**“I think we’re all on the same team on this.”**

**— County Commissioner Chad Johnson**

Commission on Sept. 30 to issue a letter of support for a proposal to place gauges along the ditches to determine whether there is any flooding.

“We’re asking them to allow us to gauge whether they flood or not,” Weeks told the commission. “We’re offering a win-win for everybody. He said if the research shows the ditches do not flood, residents may not have to buy flood insurance.

See **FLOOD 14A**

## **FLOOD**

*Continued from 1A*

The commission voted 4-0 to draft and send a letter of support. Commission Chair Nancy Bell was absent from the meeting.

Commissioner Lilly Rooks, of Rosewood, sympathized, saying her community faces the same dilemma with the new flood maps from FEMA. “To be under a time frame like that is awful.”

“I think we’re all on the same team on this,” Commissioner Chad Johnson, of Chiefland, said.

Earlier, Weeks won the commission’s support — with equipment and workers — to clear vegetation from the overgrown ditches.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2010

THE JASPER NEWS, Jasper, FL

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## SRWMD Governing Board meeting

Submitted

On Tuesday, October 12, 2010, the Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet at 9:00 a.m. at District Headquarters, 9225 County Road 49, Live Oak, Florida. The meeting is to consider District business and conduct public hearings on regulatory and land acquisition matters. A workshop will follow the Governing Board meeting.

On Monday, October 25, 2010, 1:00 p.m., a Governing Board teleconference meeting will be held at District Headquarters in Live Oak, Florida.

All meetings, workshops, and hearings are open to

the public.

# Revised digital map for Long Pond area shows less area flooding in 100-year storm

By Terry Witt  
Staff Writer

Revised flood maps for the Long Pond area in parts of south Chiefland and just below the city are more favorable to most landowners than the original proposed maps, according to a city official.

Chiefland Building and Zoning Director Bill Hammond said the preliminary digital flood maps being proposed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) no longer show Long Pond as wide and deep as before or potential flooded areas as wide.

He said the city will be notified when the 90-day period begins for landowners to appeal the maps.

URS Corporation, a company hired by FEMA to study the landscape of low lying areas in the county and revise maps to show places that might flood in a 100-year storm, changed its digital map of Long Pond after Hammond took them on a tour of the dry pond and showed them 20-foot tall live oaks growing at locations where the maps showed flooding in a 100-year storm.

He also showed them water marks under a bridge that crosses part of the dry pond. The water marks are from many years ago. Long Pond filled during the 1998 El Niño rains, but hasn't filled since then. Hammond thinks lack of rainfall and water withdrawals from wells around the pond may be factors.

The original maps proposed by FEMA were met with opposition from local landowners. The maps showed areas that had previously been dry on old FEMA flood maps as flooding in the future. Designating land as subject to flooding generally triggers requirements to elevate the building a foot over flood level. Lending institutions often require the owner to obtain expensive federal flood insurance, or the mortgage won't be insured.

Hammond gave officials from URS, FEMA and the Suwannee River Water Management the same tour. He pointed out the pond hasn't held water for 10 years and may never hold water again. SRWMD hired URS to do the study for FEMA.

"Even during the 2004 storms it didn't fill up," Hammond said. "There were sizeable puddles, but in four months it was gone and those storms were a 100-year event."

To cause flooding, Hammond said a 100-year storm would be needed to bring back the puddles in the pond and a second 100-year storm would be needed a few months later to fill it up. A third 100-year storm would be needed in about fourth months to make it flood. He said odds are it wouldn't happen.

Hammond said there are still areas surrounding the pond on the south end that are in flood Zone A, meaning URS believes they would flood in a 100-year storm. But even in those areas, he said it would only require the owner to build a foot above flood level. He said most homes are built a foot above grade because they have a concrete foundation.

The people in flood zones who want to build a home will probably be required to have flood insurance if they finance the mortgage through a lending institution. Hammond said it's not a perfect situation, but the map is much better than originally proposed. Some of the land around the pond has been completely removed from the flood designation in the revised map.

Hammond said the problem with the digital flood maps is that URS used satellite imagery to determine landscape elevations. He said no one from URS, FEMA or SRWMD actually walked the entire Long Pond area on foot and conducted surveys. Without ground survey crews checking elevations, the maps are less accurate. URS has acknowledged this fact, but said ground surveys would be much more expensive.

## Water supply assessment ready for public

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# Alachua County Forever shifts its focus to management of conservation land

*That effort does not have the same dedicated funding source.*

**By Christopher Curry**  
Staff writer

On a county-owned swath of land south of Waldo, hulking pieces of heavy machinery rumbled through a thick stand of slash pine. A feller and buncher downed trees. Then, the steel claw of a knuckle boom

## Inside

■ A map of Alachua County Forever property, 4A

In late September, on 55 acres of this 184-acre tract south of County Road 1471, known as Lake Alto South, crews with a Palatka company conducted the first timber harvest on a piece of county-owned conservation land. The harvest also signaled a turning point for the Alachua

snatched bundles of logs off the ground and loaded them onto the back of a flatbed semi.

County Forever land conservation program, which is shifting its primary focus from land acquisition to the management of more than 9,400 acres.

"We knew this day was going to come," said Ramesh Buch, program manager for Alachua County Forever. "The program started out heavily in acquisition. Our priority has always been in buying it. In the last year, we are transitioning more to stewardship."

**LAND** on Page 4A

*Continued from 1A*

Over the years, the program's land purchases have had a dedicated source of revenue — first the Alachua County Forever quarter-mill property tax that voters approved in 2000 and more recently approximately \$13.1 million from the Wild Spaces & Public Places sales tax that voters approved in November 2008. That tax expires at year's end.

Land management and operations, on the other hand, have been funded out of the county's general fund, Buch said.

Annually, \$60,000 has been budgeted for stewardship activities, he said. Starting this fiscal year, a \$200,000 prescribed burn and wildfire mitigation program — a scaled-back version of a program formerly under the fire department — will be added to Alachua County Forever.

Over the long term, challenges for the program will include funding site improvements, preparing additional properties for public access and continuing maintenance of land and dealing with operational costs.

The management plan for the Lake Alto Preserve, which encompasses about 662 acres north and south of CR 1471, shows one glimpse of expenses facing the county. One-time costs for site work, including the renovation of an existing dock, could run as much as \$104,000, with annual maintenance costs estimated at \$21,350.

The timber harvest at Lake Alto South illustrated the program's goal of restoring lands to their natural condition and its effort to raise money in order to move toward that goal.

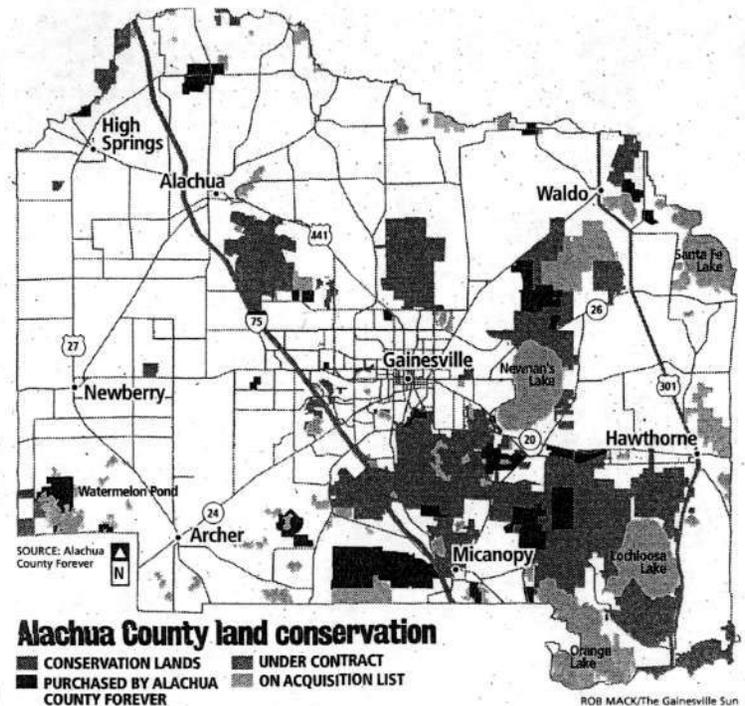
The slash pine forest that crews thinned was planted in the 1980s when the property was a tree plantation, said Ed Clark, the Alachua County

Forever forester. The harvest was the first step in the restoration of the property to natural growth, Clark said. A controlled burn will follow. Then, native plants, including longleaf pine, will be planted. The sale of timber from the harvest will generate \$47,000 to go into the restoration of the property and site work there.

Buch said a similar timber harvest could follow on 180 acres of the Phifer Flatwoods property.

"Where we have planted pine plantations, our goal is to restore it to something that is native ... you're doing restoration, and you're generating revenue," he said.

Some of the county-managed conservation properties opened to the public on a daily basis include Mill Creek, Phifer Flatwoods and Sweetwater Preserve.



The goal is to have 95 percent of the property acquired through Alachua County Forever, about 14,858 acres managed by either the county or one of the program's partners, which include the St. Johns River and Suwannee River water management districts, open to the public within five years.

Buch said staff would like to open the sprawling, more-than-5,600-acre Barr Hammock by 2012. He added that staffing levels and costs limit the program's capability to open additional properties for daily public access.

Sandra Vardaman, a lands biologist with the program, said a strong volunteer base has helped keep down maintenance costs. Last year, that included more than 2,000 hours of volunteer time. According to Buch's estimate, volunteer hours and partnerships with water

management districts and other partners have leveraged a \$60,000 annual investment into more than \$990,000 worth of stewardship activities.

## Forever facts

- Large county-owned conservation properties include:
  - Barr Hammock: approximately 5,600 acres
  - Mill Creek: approximately 1,200 acres
  - Lake Alto Preserve: approximately 662 acres
  - Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods: approximately 634 acres

- Some numbers to date:
  - Total acres purchased: 18,574 acres (9,436 acres managed by county)
  - Total purchase price: \$84,632,498 (partners' share: \$55,857,324; county's share: \$30,189,144)
  - Overhead costs to date: \$2,556,541 (includes salaries, land management, office rent, supplies, etc.)
  - Taxable value of land taken off tax rolls to date: \$6,880,400

Source: Alachua County Forever Aug. 30 status report

# Water District To Study Impact Of Rising Seas

The Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWMD) plans to explore the potential impacts of rising sea levels on aquatic resources in partnership with the University of Central Florida (UCF) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The district's governing board recently agreed to accept \$215,000 in a federal grant to fund the district's participation in the development and use of sea level rise tools over the next five years.

"The district will help coastal resource managers apply the tools developed as part of the research conducted by UCF," said

Graham Lewis, senior environmental scientist in the district's Resource Management Division. "These tools are intended to identify potential consequences of sea level rise and adjust plans to protect, preserve and restore critical resources under their care."

Added Ron Bartel, director of the Division of Resource Management, "Models to be adapted include those the district

has developed for its ongoing coastal flood hazard mapping study, as well as three-dimensional salinity transport models for analysis of freshwater needs. The study will also make use of recently collected LiDAR (detailed elevation data), as well as other water resources data the district has to offer through its Geographical Information System."

The district is expected to coordinate and

share technical information obtained during the study with the management agencies and staff of UCF and NOAA.

"This gives the district a unique opportunity to interact with sea level rise researchers and ensure that the research is practical and transferable to our local coastal communities" said Douglas Barr, district executive director.

The district will provide a liaison, outreach,

and oversight between the project researchers and resource managers, according to the scope of work. A total of \$46,100 will be received during the first year. The district will provide \$10,000 as in-kind match over the five-year period. The match funds are primarily for arranging outreach meetings along the Panhandle through its Surface Water Improvement and Management program.

# 8 No. Florida counties' water supplies in danger

Aquifer could drop by a foot in the next 20 years from high demand.

By **STEVE PATTERSON**  
The Times-Union

A squeeze on water supplies expected to grow with the First Coast's population could reach as far as Lake City and rural North Florida's farm towns, a state water agency says.

A draft of a water supply study from the Suwannee River Water Management District calls for special steps to protect groundwater supplies in all or part of eight largely rural inland counties.

Without protection, the report says, aquifer levels could drop a foot or more over the next 20 years in an area reaching from Jacksonville's beaches to areas as distant as Williston in Levy County, a county that touches the Gulf of Mexico.

Some areas are strained already, said Carlos Herd, the Suwannee agency's water supply project manager.

He said the upper basin of the Santa Fe River, which includes land in Baker, Bradford and Union counties, already has aquifer levels low enough they can't afford any more decrease without affecting the

**WATER** continues on B-3

## LISTEN AND TALK

The Suwannee River Water Management District has scheduled public meetings to talk about its draft water supply report and get feedback.

■ Tuesday, 1 p.m., Suwannee River Water Management District headquarters, 9225 County Road 49, Live Oak

■ Tuesday, 7 p.m., City Hall, 17651 NW 90th Court, Fanning Springs

■ Oct. 19, 7 p.m., Holiday Inn Express, 601 Everett Way, Perry

## Water

Continued from B-1

area's springs and streams.

"When there's no more water available, any additional stress on that area would cause harm," Herd said.

The findings are part of a water-planning project that's being done alongside one by the St. Johns River Water Management District. That agency has already told local utilities including JEA that they'll need to curb their use of groundwater to avoid damaging plants, wildlife and springs.

The two agencies were involved in planning sessions this year for utilities and others to look for new water sources, ranging from draining rivers to recycling cleaned sewer water.

Reusing wastewater and helping consumers conserve water look like the best options right now, said Tony Cunningham, an engineer with Gainesville Regional Utilities taking part in water planning talks.

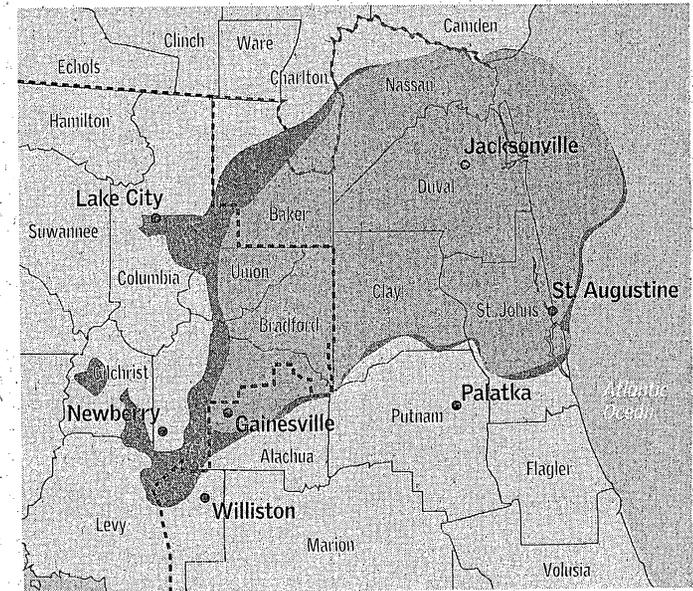
The strain on rural water supplies is expected to come from both groundwater use in the Jacksonville area and rising demand in smaller inland communities. However, Cun-

## Running low

Aquifer levels could drop at least a foot over 20 years in an area from First Coast beaches to North Central Florida farmlands, say state officials studying public demand for groundwater. Forecasts predicting a range of water use say the drawdown could stop near Gainesville or reach to Lake City and small towns like Williston and Newberry.

AREAS WHERE WATER LEVELS ARE FORECAST TO DROP AT LEAST A FOOT BY 2030

■ Minimum drawdown area ■ Maximum drawdown area  
--- Suwannee River water management district boundary line



Source: Suwannee River Water Management District

KYLE BENTLE/The Times-Union

ningham said customers at his utility and others seem to be using less water recently.

The head of a group organized to protect the Santa Fe said conservation measures like using less water on lawns should be the first step considered.

"We just need to change our ways," said Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson, president of the nonprofit Our Santa Fe River Inc. "Until all of us, not just Jacksonville but everybody in the state of Florida ... learn we need to conserve, we're going to continue to see [aquifer] draw-downs."

The upper Santa Fe is one of four places in the Suwannee district that officials are also recommending setting new rules to limit permits for taking groundwater.

The others are in the Santa

Fe's lower basin; the Suwannee River upper basin; and the Alapaha River basin.

Those rules haven't been written yet, and Suwannee managers are just now asking for public feedback in meetings that will run through Oct. 19. Herd says his agency expects to finalize its water study in December, then would start working on rules to protect the upper Santa Fe basin. That could take 18 months.

Steps to protect the other three basins would be developed separately, and Herd says the agency has to figure out how to pay for that work.

"The Suwannee district in particular is really struggling for funding right now," he said.

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# Orlando pools make waves in High Springs

*Water is the life blood of this region; aptly called the "Springs Heartland." And all life here is dependent on its circulation.*

**A**stronomers tell us the universe is a gigantic place. My own experience confirms that idea. No matter where I go there is always something over the horizon that I can't see.

Other people like to say: "Out of sight, out of mind" but I don't buy that. When I found out that flushing a toilet in Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Orlando or Tampa affects my ability to float a canoe on the Santa Fe River; that was the defining moment.

Yes, the universe is quite large, and yes, compared to a human, the Earth is large, and so is the state of Florida. But sometimes they are just not big enough to protect us from ourselves.

Jill Heinerth, the famous cave diver and former associate of the late Florida springs hero Wes Skiles, summed it up quite well at her presentation in High Springs this past weekend. She



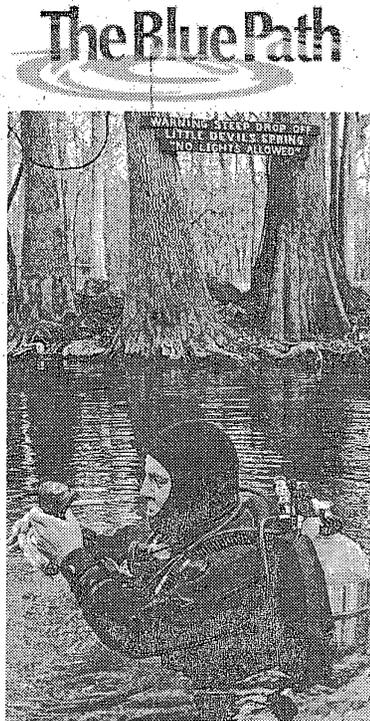
**ROBERT KNIGHT**

is currently producing a film titled: "We Are Water" that melds beautiful cinematography and good science to demonstrate what should be obvious to all of us: we actually

are mostly water (water typically comprises more than 70 percent of the body weight of a living human). As such, we have a personal vested interest in everything about water, including the "hydrologic cycle" that constantly purifies and returns clean water to us and the rest of the living world.

So what does water use in distant cities have to do with water in High Springs?

The water supplies for Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Orlando and High Springs are one and the same; the Floridan Aquifer, a mass of limestone that is honeycombed by caves and tunnels. Some of those caves are so large that humans like Jill and other cave divers can swim through them for miles, just like blood cells circulating in the vessels of a living organism. Thus, when Jacksonville "bleeds" water, it depletes the



same blood supply that keeps High Springs alive. When Tallahassee "sweats," it lowers the groundwater level in High Springs' wells. When Orlando cools off in swimming pools and fountains, Ginnie Springs flows a little less.

And yes, when local bottlers of spring water fill plastic bottles

and ship them off to the rest of the world, or when I water my garden in Gainesville, cumulatively there may not be enough water in the Santa Fe for ecotourists to paddle into Lily Springs to have their picture taken with Naked Ed.

The Navel of the Universe analogy comes to me from the 1970s and symbolizes the center of all life. Sometimes you feel as if you are at a cross-roads in space and time, or that the stars are aligned, or that there is a concentrated flow of energy focused on one small spot. That was how I felt in High Springs this past weekend.

Water was the theme. Thursday was the Save Our Suwannee meeting in nearby Ft. White to discuss growing threats to the area's springs. Friday was Jill's beautiful tribute to the late Wes Skiles' legacy; a presentation that tied together water's journey, from the clouds to the sea, and everywhere in between.

Saturday I enjoyed a University of Florida field trip to Fanning and Manatee Springs. Sunday was the first Santa Fe River Singer/Songwriter competition at the Great Outdoors Restaurant, sponsored by Our Santa Fe, a tenacious

group of private citizens who protect the Santa Fe River with the fearlessness of a she-wolf.

It was all happening in and around High Springs, and the Santa Fe and Suwannee Rivers.

Water is the life blood of this region; aptly called the "Springs Heartland" by the Suwannee River Water Management District. Life in High Springs and in surrounding Gilchrist and Alachua Counties is dependent upon this circulation of pure water — the "Blue Path" — and is artistically illustrated at the current exhibit at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville.

This "Blue Water Wilderness" is all about clean and plentiful groundwater that feeds the bubbling artesian springs of the Santa Fe, Ichetucknee and Suwannee Rivers. High Springs and this region are unique because of that blue water, the greatest concentration of springs in Florida and the world. Without that water the Heart of Florida will never beat as strong.

*Robert Knight is Director of the Florida Springs Institute in Gainesville. The Blue Path exhibit is on view at the Florida Museum of Natural History until February 13.*

## New Web offerings from SRWMD, Shands, LO Partnership

Residents, businesses, surveyors and others now have better access to flood hazard information through the Suwannee River Water Management District's website.

The District recently updated its flood information tool to improve access to flood zone locations and flood elevations. The new webpage is available at <http://www.srwmdflood-report.com>.

## New Web offerings from SRWMD, Shands Live Oak, LO Partnership

Continued From Page 1A

"This is a more advanced tool than what was previously available on the web and it makes flood hazard information more easily accessible," said James Link, the District's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinator. "Visitors of the site can view their property in relation to new flood zone designations and print custom maps of their property or any parcel of interest."

The tool also helps users interpret the flood zones affecting a property and

provides information concerning which property owners are required to purchase flood insurance.

The District continues to work with FEMA and counties within its boundaries to evaluate flood risks, update digital flood maps, and establish flood elevations through the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) and Risk MAP programs.

a partnership with Health Management, who led the effort to create the websites. The websites feature details about each of the hospitals' backgrounds, services, job openings, maps, volunteer opportunities and a whole host of detailed information.

The URL for Shands Live Oak is [www.ShandsLiveOak.com](http://www.ShandsLiveOak.com)

## Website offers improved flood hazard data

### *Submitted*

LIVE OAK, FL, October 7, 2010 – Residents, businesses, surveyors and others now have better access to flood hazard information through the Suwannee River Water Management District's website.

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The District continues to work with FEMA and counties within its boundaries to evaluate flood risks, update digital flood maps, and establish flood elevations through the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) and Risk MAP programs.

"The District hopes the new flood information tool will provide a better way to disseminate this information," Link said.

# Water woes surface at district meeting

## SRWMD projections show we're headed for trouble

By Stephenie Livingston  
stephenie.livingston  
@gafnews.com

White Springs in Hamilton County was considered a sacred place by its earliest settlers -- Native Americans -- who sought the spring's healing powers. As time went on, the spring attracted trainloads of folks seeking a new start, plentiful farmland, and the beauty of the Suwannee and its springs. Now, looking down from the old Spring House, one sees only mud and small stagnant pools of water.

"Our spring is dead," said Walter Mckenzie, a resident of White Springs and advocate for the rejuvenation of the spring, which officials say would cost billions.

SEE WATER, PAGE 2A

## WATER

Continued From Page 1A

Suwannee River Water Management District officials illustrated their state-required 20-year plan on future water demands and supplies during a public meeting in Live Oak on Tuesday.

During the meeting statistics and percentages clouded the room, but the bottom line was clear: The District's water supply is not expected to meet the projected demands of groundwater pumping within many areas of the Suwannee district by 2030. Already, very significant impacts have affected springs, river and possibly lakes within the district, ac-

ording to SRWMD consultant Greg Jones. "There are going to have to be alternatives and conservation," he said.

District officials and staff are looking at alternative sources for areas that have been most severely affected. Those areas include parts of Alachua, Union, Bradford, Gilchrist, Columbia and Hamilton counties. These areas includes the upper and lower Santa Fe River basins, the Alapaha River basin and the Upper Suwannee River. Talk of more intense conservation methods and measures seemed to be widely supported by the small crowd gathered Tuesday. The

District also proposed potential pumping of brackish groundwater and use of reclaimed water.

The most controversial alternative proposed was the consideration Suwannee River surface water withdrawals. Basically, the district wants to pump water from the Suwannee River when the levels are high during the wet season. "There is a lot of surface water that could be used by this district," said Jones. He said surface water could be one of the District's foremost alternatives, and could benefit agriculture locally.

But not everyone was as enthusiastic.

"I object to the use of surface water withdraw from the Suwannee Riv-

er," said Betty Johnson of Madison County. "We flat don't have it to give."

Frank Sedmeray of Lake City agreed, stating that he hoped the District would shy away from the use of surface waters.

Officials said the district would only entertain withdrawal of the Suwannee's surface water when minimum flows and levels are further tested and an accurate idea of how much water is available is also established.

But everyone agreed that whatever it is, something needs to be done, and soon.

"I don't want to sit here for five years before we decide to do something," said Carl E. Meece of O'Brien, a

member of the Suwannee district's governing board

Although he agreed with Jones that surface water withdrawal needs to be properly looked into, Meece said the solution needs to start right here with conservation.

The District's study estimated that conservation measures could save more than 24 million gallons of water a day by 2030.

The study predicts that water levels in the Upper Floridan Aquifer will drop by up to 1 foot in much of the district and slightly more in some isolated areas in the next 20 years. Those impacts are already too evident, and severe, to ignore. White Springs on the Suwannee River in Hamilton County is a primary example of one spring that has, except for a few bubbling puddles, stopped flowing. Another essentially dry spring is Worthington Springs on the Santa Fe River in Union County, with four other springs are expected to meet similar fates by 2030. In the Upper Santa Fe River Basin, aquifer groundwater levels have declined more than 15 feet since the early 1930's. For the

Alapaha River at Jennings, the Upper Suwannee at White Springs and the Upper Santa Fe at Worthington Springs, exceedance of established minimum flow is predicted in 2010.

"You don't have to drop the aquifer very much to have significant impact," said Jones.

In the Upper Suwannee River Basin, where White Springs is located, the groundwater basin divide has migrated southwestward as a result of the potentiometric surface decline that occurred from the 1930's through 2005. The divide has migrated

more than 35 miles to the southwest over the past 70 years. The migration has led to a decrease in the size of the groundwater contributing area to the eastern SRWMD by more than 20 percent or 1,900 square miles, according to the assessment. Jones said this movement of water is quite possibly the reason why White Springs has virtually disappeared.

While recently giving a tour of White Springs to a group interested in promoting the area, Mckenzie, a city councilman, said the current

state of the once famous spring took the visitors by surprise.

"It was almost as if they had witnessed a death," said Mckenzie. "In a way, they had."

He told SRWMD officials that the spring was the economic engine for the town, and now it is gone. Mckenzie told the board Tuesday, that White Springs wants its spring back.

"It's always bothered me that we let it happen," he said, "But we are a lot more aware now. We should not sit back and say nothing can be done."

Mayor Helen Miller of White Spring echoed Mckenzie's plea. She told the board that restoring the spring would help the town to grow and give it a more prosperous future.

"We ask your support to restore the flow that existed before the drawdown of the aquifer on which the town was built," she said. "White Spring has a long history, but we want a long future too."

District governing board member Don Quincey Jr. of Chiefland said to both fix the problem and restore springs like the one in White Springs, would cost well over a billion

dollars. Money that the district simply doesn't have. "Solutions are all about money," he said.

"I can't imagine how much water we'd have to put back in (to restore White Springs)," said Quincey. "We need to concentrate on not letting it get any worse, instead on focusing on reclaiming it. We need to stop it."

A couple of citizens asked why St. Johns water management hasn't been held accountable for the drawdown severely affecting the area. The assessment shows that, groundwater withdrawals in Duval and other areas of the St. Johns district included in the Suwannee study "is significantly larger" than withdrawals from the Suwannee district. Current groundwater withdrawals are projected to rise from 490.7 million gallons a day to nearly 609 million gallons a day by 2030.

"Jacksonville needs to pay for it if it's their fault," said Tom Burnett, an environmental engineer from Live Oak. "I'd like to see a lawsuit against the St. Johns water management district."

However, Jones said at this point, a finger cannot be pointed.

"The horses are out of the barn and they have been out of the barn for a long time as far as drawdowns," he said. "It's a statewide problem."

"Litigation would take a long time. Paying attorneys does not put water in our aquifer," said Quincey. "This will have to be a coming together."

The two districts already coordinating efforts on the update of their water supply assessments.

"Working together is our cheapest way. It's going to be difficult. It's like telling someone where to park their car," he said. "It's a slow process, but we are making some headways."

Quincey said the problem is also a legislative one, and, therefore, the issues run deeper than their own authority.

In the next 20 years, the District is projected to rise anywhere from 10.34 million gallons a day to 62.81 million gallons a day from the current range of 256 million to 263 million gallons a day.

Quincey said if the District does not want to resort to a multi-million dollar desalination plant or something similar.

To prevent this, it must start taking serious steps to solve the issue now, he said.

"We want to fix it before it gets to that point. It's like those people are on life support," Referring to the Tampa Bay area, whose water needs are met in part by desalination, Quincey said.

In December, the District board should vote on the assessment. Some district residents felt that before that time, changes should be made.

Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson, President of Save Our Santa Fe River, said she's concerned that bottling plants aren't specifically represented in the assessment, as well as proposed new biomass plants, such as Adage in Hamilton County.

And at least one meeting attendee was not encouraged by the District's suggestions for solving the problem.

"I don't see it working because St. Johns is going to keep growing," said James Montgomery of Lake City. "I think the day will come when it's not going to be enough."

Quincey said the aquifer downfall began before water management was ever in place, before monitoring wells, etc. Now, however, he said the Suwannee Dis-

trict must be a leader in conservation and in finding a solution to the inadequate water supply. Well attended meetings such as the one Tuesday are a start, he said.

"This is the start of what makes a difference," said Quincey. "People who show up, stand up, and speak out."

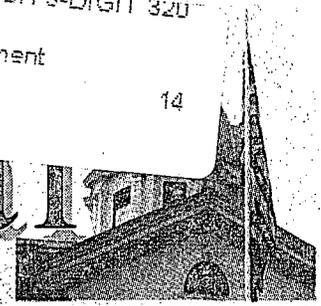
# Jefferson Journal

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Swannee River Water Management  
9225 County Road 49  
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Vol. 4 No. 13

Florida's Keystone County 50¢ 46¢ + 4¢

Friday, October 15, 2010

## NESTLÉ WATERS CONDUCTING TESTS ON WACISSA RIVER

**LAZARO ALEMAN**  
*Jefferson Journal*  
Senior Staff Writer

The exploratory testing of the waters of the Wacissa River by Nestlé Waters North America -- the country's largest bottled water company -- has raised concerns in the surrounding community, prompting a company spokesman to speak with the *Journal* about the project.

Jim McClellan, owner/consultant of Southern Solutions Inc., a public relations firm, spoke with the *Journal* from his office in Pensacola on Monday, Oct. 11. McClellan said Nestlé Waters was in the very early stages of testing and gathering data

to determine the viability of the Wacissa River as a source for the company's bottled drinking waters.

McClellan offered a little history on the company's Madison County facility, located at Blue Springs near Lee and dating from 2004. He said the Lee plant, which presently employs 145 people, has permits to daily pump 1.4 million gallons from the spring, plus an additional 200,000 gallons of groundwater.

Additionally, the company has alternative, or satellite, springs at Cypress Spring in Washington County, and White Springs in Liberty County.

McClellan said Blue

Springs provided sufficient water to operate the Lee plant. But times when the plant's pipes or pumps required routine maintenance or other work, the company trucked water from the satellite springs to keep the facility operating and production of its bottled waters uninterrupted.

"It helps so that we don't have to cut back on hours and it keeps the plant production viable," McClellan said.

He said the plant also drew from its satellite springs for the water it bottled for private labels, such as large grocery store chains.

"We don't like to use the same sources we use for the company

brands," McClellan said. Nestlé Waters North America produces seven regional spring water brands, including the Zephyrhills and Deer Park brands.

The reason the company was exploring the Wacissa River as a possible satellite spring had to do with its proximity to the Lee plant, McClellan said, noting that Cypress Spring was 160 miles away from the facility and White Springs 100 miles away. In order for the Wacissa River water to be harvested, however, it had to meet certain quality parameters, which explained the testing, he said.

"We are very, very early in the process," McClellan emphasized. "This is a long and involved process. We're at the point where we've drilled some test wells to gather data."

Actually, the process started about a year ago, when the company first began identifying potential sites that would serve its needs, he said. And it would likely be another year before a decision could be reached, he said, adding that the decision would depend on a host of variables, including the outcome of the testing and data gathering and the willingness of the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) to issue a permit.

"We're still a year off from a decision if everything works out," McClellan said. "We don't even know if the SRWMD will approve any withdrawals."

McClellan said the negotiations with the James Boland family so far had involved only the testing phase, in terms of the company being allowed to drill on the land and add gravel to the road to allow for the passage of heavy equipment. He said the company typically looked for springs located on lands owned by large property owners.

"We have to know that there won't be harmful activities going on in the vicinity of our spring areas, such as pesticide use and other practices that aren't compatible with drinking water," McClellan said. "We need enough land to protect our sources."

What about representations made to area residents by Nestlé Waters representatives at a recent meeting that the local operation could draw from 455,000 gallons to as much as 1.5 million

# Nestle Waters

gallons a day from the river and involve between 60 and 80 trucks to transport the water to the Lee plant?

McClellan didn't deny the statements, but he said the representations had to be understood as a worst-case scenario, given the many unknowns that existed at present.

He said the company had presented the cited numbers because the question had been asked; but it was really too early in the process to know what the actual numbers might be, or if the project would ultimately even prove worth doing or feasible, he said.

Moreover, the concerned residents had to understand that the company had a strong economic disincentive to use the satellite springs, he said.

"It's cheaper to draw water directly to the plant than it is to have to truck it in, which increases the costs," McClellan said.

Which raised another question: Did Nestlé Waters have any intention of eventually constructing a plant in Jefferson County?

Absolutely not, McClellan said, pointing out that the location here was a mere 60

miles from the Lee facility -- too near for Nestlé Waters to make another \$100+ million investment. It had to be understood that, small as the Wacissa site was expected to be -- taking up five acres (including a load station and pump house with a shelter for the drivers, etc.) -- it represented a significant investment for Nestlé, he said.

"We're talking in the millions," McClellan said. "That's why we do such long-term testing."

Why so costly?

Because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) set extremely high standards for materials and equipment used in the production of food and beverages, McClellan said. Meaning, for example, that all the pipes had to be stainless steel, he said.

McClellan avowed that Nestlé Waters was not seeking to draw more water than what it is permitted to draw at present. What the company was seeking, he said, was greater flexibility, so as to be able to draw water from various sources if necessary and so ensured the continuous operation of the

Lee plant. And no, there was no plan to close the Lee facility; if anything, the search for alternative springs was to ensure for its continued and continuous operation, he said.

McClellan said it was understandable that Wacissa area residents were concerned about Nestlé Waters' intention and wanted answers. He said the company was hopeful it could engage in a meaningful dialogue with the residents and allay their concerns. In fact, he and other Nestlé Waters representatives had already met with some of the residents and answered some of their questions, he said.

"Hopefully, we can assure the residents that we're not going to cause harm to the river or the ecosystem," McClellan said. "As a corporation, we have a dollars and cents interest in protecting our water sources. Water is our business."

Moreover, he noted, regulatory agencies such as the SRWMD and the Florida Department of Environmental Projections (FDEP) would have a say in the matter. It might even

be that the Wacissa River ultimately proved unusable for Nestlé Waters' purpose, he said.

"We haven't even applied for a permit yet," McClellan said, reiterating that it was still early in the process.

He challenged anyone who doubted the company representations to review its six-year track record in Madison County.

"Talk to the neighbors," McClellan said. "For six years, we've been good corporate neighbors. We're a doggone good company to have in a community."

He challenged others who had questions about the river's level, the withdrawals' possible effects on nearby shallow wells, or the integrity and water quality of Blue Springs, to check with the SRWMD or with 20-year readings of the river's levels at [http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/measurements/?site\\_no=02326526](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/measurements/?site_no=02326526).

As for the Malloy Landing Road closing and the associated controversy, McClellan said Nestlé Waters had nothing to do with the issue.

"It didn't have anything to do with us," McClellan said. "It doesn't matter to us if the road is public or private. It won't affect our decision at all."

Regardless, McClellan conceded that the timing of the road closing couldn't have been worst, in terms of presenting the perception of what he could only describe "as a hell of a coincidence".

Sheri Green is one of a group of Wacissa area residents concerned about Nestlé Waters' presence in their community and one of a few who met with McClellan and other company representatives recently. However reluctantly, Green was speaking here as a nominal spokesperson for the concerned residents group, which calls itself Protect Our Wacissa River Spring (POWRS).

Had the meeting with Nestlé people allayed the group's concerns?

"Our concerns haven't been satisfied," Green said on Monday, Oct. 11. "The concerns are still there, maybe even more so."

Cont. From Page 1

She listed among the abiding concerns the lack of creation of any local jobs; the potential for between 60 and 80 trucks to be put on the county's roads; the impact to the river's water level and that of nearby residential water wells; and the viability of the springs and river species such as the Suwannee bass.

The Malloy Landing Road closing also continued to be a sore point with many of the residents, and it would be extremely difficult to ever convince these individuals that a connection didn't exist between Nestlé Waters' coming and the road closing, she said.

Green said of particular concern to her was that when she had asked the Nestlé Waters' people to provide their assurances in writing, the latter had declined to do so.

"If they won't put it into writing, once they get their consumptive use permit, they can do whatever they want," Green said.

A spokesperson for the SRWMD confirmed on Wednesday, Oct. 13, that the

agency was aware of the drilling taking place on the Boland property and also that Nestlé Waters had not yet applied for a water-use permit.

Cindy Johnson, SRWMD communications coordinator, told the *Journal* that the

permit application would depend on the outcome of the water quality and quantity testing that Nestlé Waters was conducting on the site.

"If a water-use permit application is received, it will be noticed on our website and then the review phase will start," Johnson said. "The most recent water-use permit application for bottled water use is about 17 months in review since application. These types of reviews do take some time."

Johnson shared a June 30 agency memo summarizing the results of a site inspection of the drilling activities on the Wacissa River conducted by SRWMD personnel on June 29, following a citizen complaint filed on June 24.

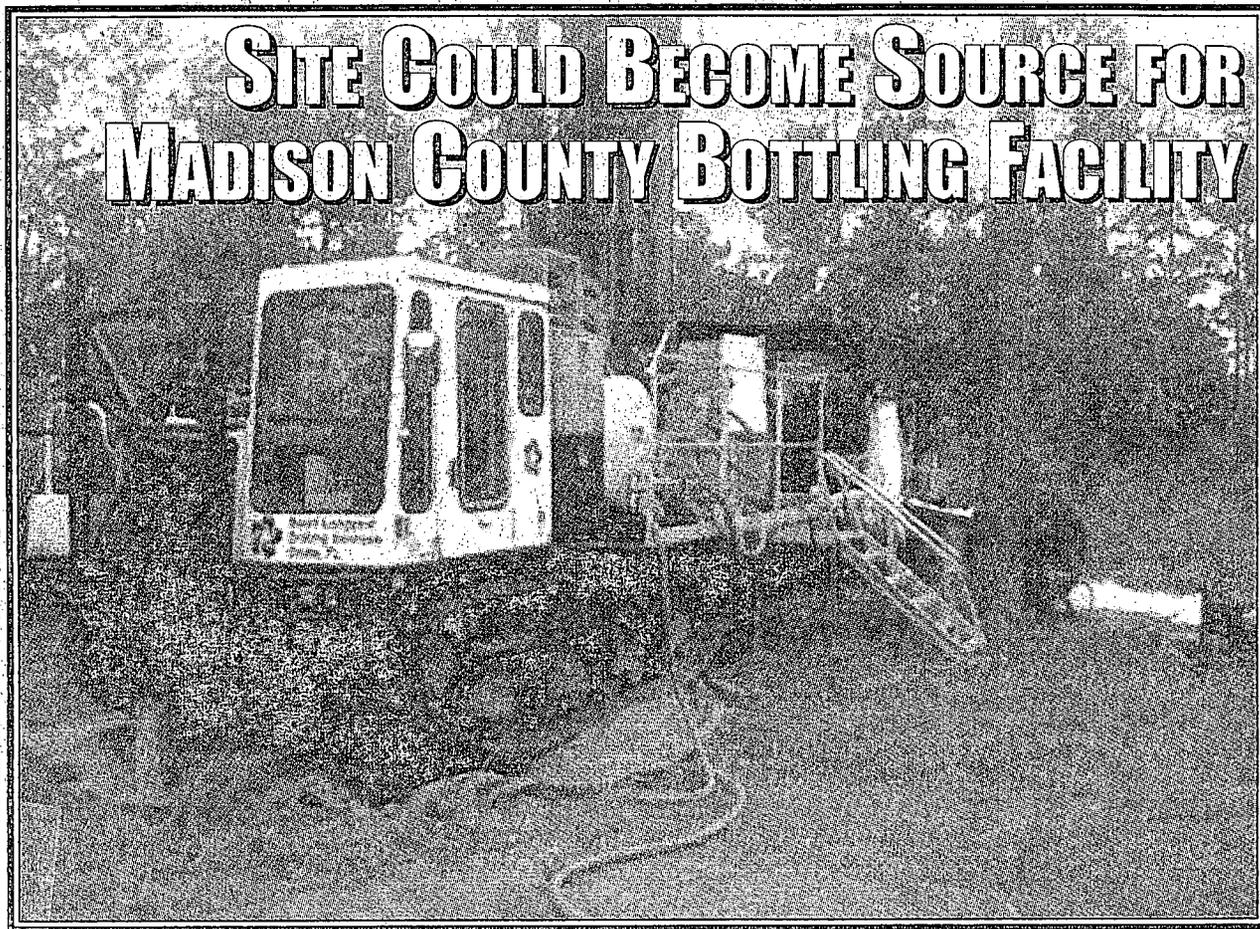
Per the memo, the SRWMD personnel observed no violations of district rules during the site visit, and further found that the drilling activities were being conducted properly and in accordance with two district-issued permits that allow Nestlé Waters to install "up to eight monitoring wells per permit".

Per the memo, Nestlé Waters' consultant geologist on the job site indicated that the "borings installed to date (June 29) had not yet located a significant limestone water bearing unit".

The memo relates that, per the geologist, "none of the borings installed had exceeded 200 feet in total depth and that all groundwater samples collected so far had the strong odor of sulfur."

"We should have the completion reports by Oct. 22 on the wells," Johnson said in conclusion. "I do not have any other recent information available."

## SITE COULD BECOME SOURCE FOR MADISON COUNTY BOTTLING FACILITY



This photo, courtesy of the SRWMD, shows the contractor for Nestlé Waters drilling wells on the Boland Land LLC property near the Wacissa River in late June.

## WATER WOES

# Projections show we're heading for trouble

At District meeting, water management officials look for answers

By **Stephenie Livingston**

stephenie.livingston@gallnews.com

White Springs in Hamilton County was considered a sacred place by its earliest settlers -- Native Americans -- who sought the spring's healing powers. As time went on, the spring attracted trainloads of folks seeking a new start,

plentiful farmland, and the beauty of the Suwannee and its springs. Now, looking down from the old Spring House, one sees only mud and small stagnant pools of water.

"Our spring is dead," said Walter McKenzie, a White Springs resident and advocate for the rejuvenation of the spring, which officials say would cost billions.

Suwannee River Water Management

**SEE PROJECTIONS, PAGE 3A**

District officials held a public meeting in Live Oak Tuesday to reveal their 20-year plan on future water demands and supplies. Fifty or so area residents attended.

Statistics and projections dominated the discussion, but the bottom line was clear: The water supply is not expected to meet the projected demands of groundwater pumping within many areas of the Suwannee district over the next 20 years.

Already, significant impacts have been seen at springs, rivers and possible lakes within the district, according to SRWMD consultant Greg Jones.

"There are going to have to be alternatives and conservation," he said.

District officials and staff are looking at alternative sources for areas that have been most severely affected, including parts of Alachua, Union, Bradford, Gilchrist, Columbia, Hamilton and Suwannee counties.

Talk of more intense conservation methods and measures seemed to be widely supported by the small crowd Tuesday. The District also proposed potential pumping of brackish groundwater and use of reclaimed water.

The most controversial alternative proposed was the consideration of Suwannee River surface water withdrawals. Basically, the district wants to pump water from the Suwannee River when the levels are high during the wet season.

"There is a lot of surface water that could be used by this district," said Jones.

He said surface water could be one of the District's foremost alternatives, and could benefit agriculture locally.

But not everyone was as enthusiastic.

"I object to the use of surface water withdrawal from the Suwannee River," said Betty Johnson of Madison County. "We flat don't have it to give."

Frank Sedmeray of Lake City agreed, stating that he hoped the District would shy away from the use of surface water.

Officials said the district would not further entertain withdrawal of the Suwannee's surface water until minimum flows and levels are further tested and they have a better idea of just how much water is available.

But everyone agreed that something needs to be done, and soon.

"I don't want to sit here for five years before we decide to do something," said Carl E. Meece of O'Brien, a member of the Suwannee district's governing board.

Although he agreed with Jones that surface water withdrawal needs to be looked into, Meece said the solution needs to start with conservation.

The District's study estimated that conservation measures could save more than 24 million gallons of water a day by 2030.

The problem is already too evident, and severe, to ignore. White Springs on the Suwannee River in Hamilton County is a primary example of one spring that has, except for a few bubbling puddles, stopped flowing. Another spring essentially run dry is Worthington Springs on the Santa Fe River in Union County, with four other springs expected to meet similar fates by 2030. In the Upper Santa Fe River Basin, aquifer groundwater levels have declined more than 15 feet since the early 1930s. Minimum flow levels are expected to be reached this year for the Alapaha River at Jennings, the Upper Suwannee at White Springs and the Upper Santa Fe at Worthington Springs. Moreover, the assessment has water levels in the Upper Floridan Aquifer dropping by up to a foot in much of the eastern part of the district. Since 2005 the aquifer has already fallen by up to four feet in some isolated areas.

"You don't have to drop the aquifer very much to have significant impact," said Jones.

In the Upper Suwannee River Basin, where White Springs is located, the groundwater basin divide has migrated southwestward as a result of the potentiometric surface decline that occurred from the 1930s through 2005. The divide has migrated more than 35 miles to the southwest over the past 70 years. The migration has led to a decrease in the size of the groundwater contributing area to the eastern SRWMD by more than 20 percent or 1,900 square miles, according to the assessment. Jones said this movement of water may well be the reason White Springs' most famous landmark has all but disappeared.

While recently giving a tour of White Springs to a group interested in promoting the area, McKenzie, a town councilman, said the current state of the once famous spring took the visitors by surprise.

"It was almost as if they had witnessed a death," said McKenzie. "In a way, they had."

He told water management officials that the spring had been the town's economic engine. McKenzie told the board Tuesday that White Springs wants its spring back.

"It's always bothered me that we let it happen," he said, "But we are a lot more aware now. We would sit back and say nothing can be done."

Mayor Helen Miller of White Springs echoed McKenzie's plea. She told the board that restoring the spring would help the town to grow and give it a more prosperous

future.

"We ask your support to restore the flow that existed before the drawdown of the aquifer on which the town was built," she said. "White Spring has a long history, but we want a long future too."

District governing board member Don Quincey Jr. of Chiefland said to fix the problem and restore springs like the one in White Springs, would cost well over a billion dollars -- money the district simply doesn't have.

"Solutions," he said, "are all about money."

He added, "I can't imagine how much water we'd have to put back in (to restore White Springs). We need to concentrate on not letting it get any worse, instead of focusing on reclaiming it. We need to stop it."

A couple of citizens asked why St. Johns water management officials haven't been held accountable for the drawdown severely affecting the area. The assessment shows that over the next 20 years, groundwater withdrawals in Duval and other areas of the St. Johns district included in the Suwannee study "will be significantly larger" than withdrawals from the Suwannee district. Current groundwater withdrawals are projected to rise from 490.7 million gallons a day to nearly 609 million gallons a day by 2030.

"Jacksonville needs to pay for it if it's their fault," said Tom Burnett, an environmental engineer from Live Oak. "I'd like to see a lawsuit against the St. Johns Water Management District."

However, Jones said at this point, blame cannot be placed.

"The horses are out of the barn and they have been out of the barn for a long time as far as drawdowns," he said. "It's a statewide problem."

"Litigation would take a long time. Paying attorneys does not put water in our aquifer," said Quincey. "This will have to be a coming together."

The two districts are already coordinating efforts on the update of their water supply assessments.

"Working together is our cheapest way. It's going to be difficult. It's like telling someone where to park their car," he said. "It's a slow process, but we are making some head-ways."

Quincey said the problem is also a legislative one, and because of it, some potential solutions exceed the District board's authority.

Future water use within the District is projected to rise anywhere from 10.34 million

gallons a day to 62.81 million gallons a day from the current range of 256 million to 263 million gallons a day in the next 20 years.

Quincey said if the District does not want to resort to a multi-million dollar desalination plant or something similar, it must start taking serious steps to solve the issue now, he said.

"We want to fix it before it gets to that point. It's like those people are on life support," Quincey said in reference to the Tampa Bay area, whose water needs are met in part by desalination.

In December, the District board is expected to vote on the assessment. Some district residents felt that before that time, changes should be made.

Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson, President of Save Our Santa Fe River, said she's concerned that bottling plants aren't specifically represented in the assessment, as well as proposed new biomass plants, such as in Hamilton County.

And at least one meeting attendee was not encouraged by the District's suggestions for solving the problem.

"I don't see it working because St. Johns is going to keep growing," said James Montgomery of Lake City. "I think the day will come when it's not going to be enough."

Quincey said the aquifer fall off began before water management was ever in place, before well-monitoring and other measures. Now, however, he said the Suwannee District must be a leader in conservation and in finding a solution to the inadequate water supply. Well attended meetings such as the one Tuesday are a start, he said.

"This is the start of what makes a difference," said Quincey. "People who show up, stand up, and speak out."

Monday, October 18, 2010 /

# Water testing at Wakulla Springs today

By Caryn Wilson  
DEMOCRAT WRITER

County officials will conduct fourth-quarter water quality tests at Wakulla Springs today. They will be testing for nutrients such as nitrate and common ions like chloride, in addition to measuring the color of the water.

Kris Barrios, director of field services at the Northwest Florida Water Management District, said overall the results of this year's quality tests have shown that the nitrate levels have stabilized at 0.5 to 0.7 milligrams per liter.

"The numbers are bet-

ter than it was, but it still should go down further," Barrios said.

In the past 15 years the cherished Big Bend deep-water spring has been endangered due to a medley of environmental and man-made hazards.

The concentration of nitrate, a by-product of human, animal waste and fertilizer, is believed to fuel exotic plants that choke out native species by eliminating sunlight and raising the water's temperature. Although safe for swimming, the increased presence of nitrates and exotic weeds

will dramatically change the spring's ecosystem.

The Department of Environmental Protection has proposed to require nitrate levels to go down to 0.35 milligrams per liter.

In January, tests showed nitrate levels leveled off to 0.58 milligrams per liter. April's findings reported the concentration of nitrate levels at 0.73 milligrams per liter. The results from July's quarterly report have not been finalized.

Barrios said those numbers tell scientists a different story.

"Right now the nitrate

levels at Wakulla Springs are from 0.5 to 0.7 milligram grams per liter. That varies, depending on flow," Barrios, a hydrogeologist, said. "There is a dilution effect. The higher the spring flow, the lower the nitrate level will be. There still are a lot of nutrients flowing into the system."

Barrios said tides and the sea levels affect Wakulla Springs' flow.

"The higher sea level, the higher flow. Due to climate change, the sea level is increasing over time, increasing the amount of

See WATER, PAGE 2 / LOCAL

## WATER

From Page 1 / LOCAL

pressure over the Spring Creek Springs vents," Barrios said.

About three years ago, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection funded the U.S. Geological Survey to install a spring flow gauge at Spring Creek Springs to improve flow measurements.

Hal Davis, a hydrologist for the U.S. Geological Survey, said the years of data showed them something they expected all along but couldn't confirm without accurate measurements.

### About three years ago, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection funded the U.S. Geological Survey to install a spring flow gauge at Spring Creek Springs to improve flow measurements.

Davis said fresh water flows for 2 to 6 months at a time, then it will abruptly stop flowing and switch entirely to salt water for a stretch.

Wakulla Springs always has a fluctuating amount of salt water because of the tide at the Spring Creek Springs group.

Davis said, "There is a tipping point in the cave system — when it fills up with salt water

that blocks the amount of freshwater going out."

When the Spring Creek Springs flow stops, this causes an increased flow at Wakulla Springs. This different mix of water causes a change in the springs' water quality.

Davis said, "It only looks like a slight decrease in the number of nitrate levels."

Barrios said black water is also related to diversion in water flow.

Tuesday, October 19, 2010

LOCAL / Tallahassee Democrat

## FLORIDA NEWS BRIEFS

■ PANAMA CITY BEACH

### New wilderness park planned

Panama City Beach is in the process of getting a new wilderness park. The city council is annexing about 700 acres from the Northwest Florida Water Management District for the project. That land will join about 3,000 other acres purchased by the city from a private owner in 2004. Panama City Beach leaders say the project is part of their mission to protect Florida wilderness areas. The park plans include 22 miles of unpaved nature trails and boardwalks for hiking, biking and bird-watching; a large picnic pavilion and an outdoor amphitheater for wildlife lectures.

## Web site offers improved flood hazard data

Residents, businesses, surveyors and others now have better access to flood hazard information through the Suwannee River Water Management District's Web site.

The district recently updated its flood information tool to improve access to flood zone locations and flood elevations. The new Web page is available at [www.srwmdfloodreport.com](http://www.srwmdfloodreport.com).

"This is a more advanced tool than what was previously available on the Web and it makes flood hazard information more easily accessible," said James Link, the district's Federal Emergency Management Agency coordinator. "Visitors of the site can view their property in relation to new flood zone designations and print custom maps of their property or any parcel of interest."

The tool also helps users interpret the flood zones affecting a property and provides information concerning which property owners are required to purchase flood insurance.

The district continues to work with FEMA and counties within its boundaries to evaluate flood risks, update digital flood maps, and establish flood elevations through the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) and

Risk MAP programs.

"The district hopes the new flood information tool will pro-

vide a better way to disseminate this information," Link said.

## Water and growth a dangerous mix

I see the crackerjack strategists at the Suwannee River Water Management District have taken account of Florida's worsening water shortage (Sun, Oct. 12) and are once again furiously rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

While lip service is always paid to conservation efforts, there is never any serious consideration of measures to control demand, only supply.

Simple logic dictates the ultimate cessation of Florida's runaway growth madness. The only question is whether this will be imposed by natural limitations or mandated by growth management legislation.

It is practically inconceivable that the state's population has attained a size that its water demand actually approaches, and in some areas exceeds, the aquifer's capacity and that the SRWMD is even considering withdrawal of water from the Suwannee River.

Residents will have to take things into their own hands. Voting "yes" on Amendment 4 is a start.

**Don Goodman**  
*Archer*

Tallahassee Democrat / **OPINION**

### **Nestle's plans could further threaten limpkins**

The limpkins were extirpated from the Wakulla River about six years ago. They survive on the Wacissa River because their snail food has

not been affected. Now, Nestle wants to pump water from the Wacissa River at astronomical proportions.

The river is already low, and any further pumping will lower it further and affect the snails' growth and reproduction, and then the limpkins will be gone from this river, too.

There are too many other reasons to list here as to why they should not pump. This is the one I choose to champion.

**JENNIFER MASON**

# VIEWSPOINTS & OPINIONS

## Letters To The Editor

*Letters to the Editor are typed word for word, comma for comma, as sent to this newspaper.*

# OUR RIVER UNDER ATTACK

Our beautiful Wacissa River is coming under attack from Nestle Waters North America (NwNA) and a local family owned business, owned by the Boland family. Both companies are in business to make money. Big Money!

Nestle Water has released a document titled "Frequently Asked Questions- Wacissa Satellite Spring Source." In the first document from Nestle, they state, "We will routinely update local officials and residents about our activities and plans. We will only move forward if the people in the community can be comfortable with our

plans." To my knowledge, nobody in all of Jefferson County wants this plan to move forward, except the Boland family.

Community Concerns- Nestle says 60 to 70 trucks a day could run from a well draining our already low river. Nestle did not state the exact gallon amount each truck would carry. Most tankers tote 6500 to 7000 thousand gallons, so to take an average of 7000 per truck that would be roughly 490,000 per day or 245,000 per week. Our beautiful river cannot sustain this unnecessary attack.

Nestle has admitted to asking Suwannee

River Water Management open discussion to consider bypassing all of Jefferson County's permitting systems and allow them to draw off of their existing permits in Madison County. People in Jefferson County say "NO DEAL! We smell a fish-looks like closed door politics again." This would bypass our county offi-

cial's input and permitting system, and our tax revenue.

Nestle stated "We will work hand in hand with the district to ensure NwNA will take only an amount of water that is reasonable and will not adversely affect the springs ecosystem or overall flow patterns to the springs and the river." It is the opinion of a number of

Jefferson County residents that once those pumps start, greed will not allow a single pump to shut down if it dries our river to a micro-trickle.

We are asking, and urging, all residents of the surrounding counties of Leon, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla, who enjoy our river and the recreational activities it offers, to please

join with the citizens of Wacissa and Jefferson County to protest this unnecessary attack on our river and tell the Nestle Corporation to STOP! SHOP SOMEWHERE ELSE!

You can go to the Wacissa Facebook Page for more information.

*Roland Brumbley, 9*

Sunday, October 31, 2010

# Wacissa residents brace for water war

## Nestle Water's interest in pumping at Wacissa Springs roils outdoor advocates

By Jennifer Portman  
DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER

WACISSA — The signs are popping up around this tiny Jefferson County hamlet like the host of freshwater springs that feed its namesake river: “Say no to Nestle Water.”

Officials with Nestle Waters North America, the nation's largest bottled water company, say it will be at least a year before they decide whether to press ahead with plans seek approval to pump water from the aquifer near the headwaters of the Wacissa to supplement its bottling operation in Madison County. But area residents, outdoor enthusiasts and spring advocates already are gearing up for a fight.

“I was raised on that river,” said 65-year-old Roland Brumbley, a lifelong resident, whose family has lived on the Wacissa for generations. “I’ve got a passion and a love for this river and I don’t want to see it destroyed.”

Nestle officials say they don’t want to see that happen either.

So far, the company is monitoring water quality and quantity at four test wells it began drilling this summer on a 430-acre parcel owned by the Boland family, which also has deep local roots. If the Wacissa site is found to be a good satellite water source — and, officials stress, that’s a big “if” at this point —

See WACISSA, PAGE 2 / NEWS

## WACISSA

From Page 1 / NEWS

they say they only would pursue a pumping permit from the Suwannee River Water Management District if the health and longevity of the spring system could be assured.

"We have a vested interest in protecting our spring sources and making sure no harm ever befalls them," said company spokesman Jim McClellan. "If we use any water at all we will have to prove to the water district and their scientists we will not harm the Wacissa."

### 'The pristine spring'

Tucked away in the far southern corner of Jefferson County, about 20 miles southeast of Tallahassee, Wacissa Springs is made up of more than a dozen springs that discharge an average of about 250 million gallons of water a day from the Floridan aquifer, making it one of 33 first-magnitude springs in the state.

The spring group and its namesake river comprise one of the region's most unspoiled outdoor spots. Its clear, cool water, relative lack of development and abundant wildlife draws paddlers, anglers, weekend partiers and nature lovers.

"It is THE pristine river," said Georgia Ackerman, owner of The Wilderness Way, a paddling outfitter that escorts hundreds of people down the river each year, many eager to see rare bird species like the limpkin. "There is a huge diversity of plant life and wildlife that would be affected if they pulled water out of there."

Florida springs expert Jim Stevenson pointed out that throughout the state, bottling companies use far less water than agriculture — the biggest consumer — or municipalities and domestic wells. But, he said, there is not enough research on the Wacissa

to know how much pumping the spring group could withstand without detrimental effects.

Stevenson likened it to someone who gives blood. Giving a pint every couple of months is fine. Too much can be hazardous.

"How many pints can you donate before you die? We can kill a spring with too much pumping," he said. "Unfortunately, there just isn't a lot known about the Wacissa, which should suggest great caution."

### A 'promising' long shot

Nestle natural resource manager Kent Koptiuch said the company began taking a hard look at potential spring-water sources in the Suwannee River Water Management District in August 2009 and quickly focused on the Wacissa area.

The company, which operates a water bottling plant primarily fed by Blue Spring in Madison County, has satellite pumping sites at Cypress Spring in Washington and White Spring in Liberty County, but was interested in developing a closer source. At each loca-

tion, the company is using less water than it is permitted draw.

Koptiuch said there is no problem with water quality or quantity at Madison Blue Spring, which is a source for Deer Park and Zephyrhills brand water. The company said it wants options for routine plant maintenance and also in instances when it takes on bottling for off-name brands.

"We are always looking for reliable satellite sources to boost the viability of a facility site," he said.

In December, Nestle approached the Boland family, which purchased a large tract of land from The St. Joe Co., in May 2009. In June, the company applied for and received two water prospecting permits that allow for the drilling of eight test wells.

Each year, Koptiuch looks at about 1,000 springs in the Southeast. Less than 10 percent make it as far as the Wacissa site has now, he said. In the three-and-a-half years he's worked for the company, he said none of the springs he's studied have been developed.

"It a real long shot," he said.

However, the company is encouraged by preliminary test well results at Wacissa.

"So far, the water quality is as excellent as we expected it to be," Koptiuch said. "It's very early in the stages of investigation, but so far, it's promising."

Connie Boland said her family has only given approval for prospecting for water on their land. She understands the trepidations and concerns of her neighbors, but thinks at this point they are overreacting. She said no one in the tight-knit community has called her family to talk to them directly about what's going on.

Boland is putting her faith in Nestle's reputation for good stewardship and the water district board's duty to properly regulate the resource.

"My family has grown up on this river too," she said. "We certainly would not allow anything to happen to the river."

### A long process

If Nestle applies for a consumptive use permit, water management district officials say it will take at least 18 months for them to review it and make a recommendation to their nine-member, gubernatorial-appointed board.

While Nestle suggested in an informational question-and-answer letter that it may try to get pumping approval under its existing Madison Blue Springs permit, water use specialist John Kruse said permits are site specific and such a move would not be allowed.

"It's not a blanket permit," he said. "It just doesn't work that way."

Kruse said staff members evaluate consumptive use permits based on a variety of criteria, including impact on the environment and if the proposal is a "reasonable and beneficial use" of the water resource. The approval process is time-consuming and arduous.

"It takes a long time to look at those things," Kruse said. "If it were easy, everyone would be doing it."

Just this month, district staff members recommended to the water management board that it deny a bottling permit request at Lilly Springs in Gilchrist County because the applicant failed to show the plan was in the public's interest and likely would hurt nearby springs.

Since Nestle, which applied for its use permit at Madison Blue Spring in 1998, opened its plant in 2004, required impact studies have shown no detrimental effects to the spring flow or organisms downstream.

Similarly, the Northwest Florida Water Management District, which regulates pumping by Nestle and a subsidiary at Cypress and White Springs, has seen no ill effects, said the district's Angela Chelette.

When Nestle first applied for its permit at Cypress Spring in Washington County, Chelette said there was strong grass-roots opposition to the plan. But when the company applied for its renewal five years later, "there was not a peep," she said. Since acquiring Cypress Spring, Chelette added, the company has actually improved conditions at the spring.

In Madison County, Suwannee water district board member Jay Fraleigh said he's heard no complaints about Nestle's bottling operation at Blue

Spring, which, brought 145 jobs to the rural county.

"No news means, obviously, there is no disgruntlement," he said.

### Deep concerns

In Wacissa, however, residents and area environmentalists are anxious and upset. Jefferson County Commissioner Danny Monroe said his phone has been constantly ringing with questions and calls of concern.

"I'm concerned too, everybody needs to be concerned," Monroe said. "You can get a hole in the road and fix the road, but if we get a water shortage, we can't fix that."

Some worry worn-out roads is all Jefferson County would get out of the deal. Nestle's preliminary plans call for 60 to 70 tanker-trucks a day, for limited periods of time, filling up at the spring source and rumbling down county roads. Judging from experience at other satellite spring sources, Koptiuch said that would likely occur three or four weeks a year, but could happen more if company needs and a permit allowed.

Depending on land-use needs, county approval may not be needed. And, since Wacissa would serve only as a pumping station, direct economic benefit likely would be limited to tangible property taxes on on-site equipment.

"We don't see ourselves as having any role to play in permitting a facility or restricting the water from being moved out of the county," said Jefferson County Coordinator Ray Schleicher. "We'd have virtually nothing to do with it. The only thing we would have here is a space to turn tractor-trailers around."

Schleicher said Nestle has promised to address the road issues and Koptiuch said the company would be willing to contribute to other county needs, such as improving public access at the river's headwaters.

At this point, however, Brumbley and others who live near or play on the river aren't buying Nestle's assurances that the area will be protected. Awareness events are being planned. More "no Nestle signs" are being printed.

"It's like my daddy used to say, 'You can't pee in my ear and say that it's raining,'" Brumbley said.

He pointed to a line in the company's literature that says it won't go ahead with any plans for pumping at Wacissa Springs without community support.

Nestle, he said, already has its answer: "We already object and we'll continue to object."

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Friends of Wacissa will host a community picnic and awareness day from 1 to 4 p.m. Nov. 7 at the Wacissa River headwaters at the end of Highway 59. Bring a picnic lunch, lawn chairs and refillable drink containers. For more information, visit [www.savethewacissa.com](http://www.savethewacissa.com).

For information on Nestle Waters of North America, visit [www.nestle-watersna.com](http://www.nestle-watersna.com).

### **Nestle plan could prove harmful to Wacissa**

We should not just sit by and think that there's nothing we can do or, worse still, think that it doesn't matter that a company is going to be allowed to pump and bottle water from the most pristine

river in North Florida, the Wacissa.

The Wacissa should be protected and be a source of pride for all of us in the area, and especially the people of Jefferson County. It is free, for now, from development, and most people who use it treat it with respect. The springs that feed it are all within a mile of one another and are, for sure, connected. Pumping from any of the springs will reduce the river's flow. The land around the river is very flat, and a small change in the water level will effect the swamps that line the river and all the animal life that's in them.

The canal that connects the Wacissa with the Aucilla River was dug in the 1830s, before Florida became a state. The canal is a link to our past and should be considered a historic site. To canoe or kayak through this wilderness canal and see the limestone along its bank, placed there more than 170 years ago by the slaves who dug it, is one of this area's great paddling experiences. The apple nail, limpkin, salamanders, turtles, alligators, plants and fishes that depend upon a steady supply of fresh spring water cannot speak out about this, but we can. Contact the Suwannee River Water Management, the Jefferson County commissioners, the governors office, Nestle, and anyone else that can help stop this.

**KERMIT M. BROWN**  
kermitbz1@msn.com

# Bottled water is bad for Wacissa and the Earth

**N**estle Corp. wants to harvest the Wacissa River's water to sell for profit.

It is in the exploratory stages and has established test wells along one of the 13 known springs in the upper stretch of the Wacissa River. The international food giant, headquartered in Switzerland, wants to remove approximately 450,000 gallons of water per day. This water pulled from the aquifer would travel by way of tanker trucks traveling from Jefferson County's small rural community of Wacissa to the current Deer Park bottling plant in nearby Madison County. Nestle has estimated 50 to 60 tanker trucks per day would travel this route.

The majority of Wacissa residents oppose this. Residents want to preserve their quiet community and rural lifestyle. Wacissa neighbors are collectively standing tall to protect their river. Likewise, the regional community of outdoor enthusiasts, kayak paddlers, air boaters, hunt-

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Georgia Ackerman, a Tallahassee resident, is an outdoors enthusiast and recreational trip leader, and also co-owner of The Wilderness Way, a nature-based recreational business. Contact her at [georgia@savethewacissa.com](mailto:georgia@savethewacissa.com).

ers and hikers alike are aghast at such an idea — an international corporation sucking water from the aquifer to sell for millions in profit.

There are countless reasons to oppose Nestle's bid for Wacissa's water. Saying "no" to plastic bottled water is chief among them.

The nature-based tourism industry has long been a partner in the movement to reduce plastic water bottle consumption, citing the numerous growing environmental challenges caused by the production and disposal processes.

We cannot simultaneously trash the planet and sell people hiking, biking, bird-watching and kayaking trips. We cannot admire a river's magnificent wild-

life, majestic trees, and vast wilderness while concurrently packing landfills around us with endless dumpster loads of plastic, Styrofoam and wasteful disposable products. This is bad business sense.

Ecotourism leaders are expected to be legitimate stewards of the environment. Nature-based tourism partners must protect a river and its fragile ecosystem for the health of a sustainable ecotourism industry. But far more importantly, ecotourism operators and recreational leaders must protect their rivers, oceans, swamplands and forests on behalf of the planet. It's the only one we've got.

Preserving the integrity of this pristine river and its ecosystem is vital to the recreational passions of the community and the encompassing region. The Wacissa River and its surrounding wilderness are Jefferson County's ecotourism jewels. Insist that Jefferson County protect the Wacissa River by rejecting Nestle Corp.'s bid to set up shop in Wacissa.

**Georgia Ackerman**

My View