

Tallahassee Democrat / NEWS

Tuesday, November 2, 2010

### **View Wacissa River as resource for residents**

Re: "Wacissa residents brace for water war" (news article, Oct. 31).

I'm writing to express my concern with the attempt being made by Nestle to remove water from the Wacissa River. North Florida has a unique resource in our pristine, spring-fed rivers.

Our waterways have been a critical part of our economy since the late 1800s and continue to provide recreational opportunities to a vast array of visitors. There is a considerable untapped resource in the expansion of low-impact, nature-based tourism.

Rather than remove a resource for the benefit of a multinational corporation, we should consider ways to enhance the use of that resource for the benefit of North Florida's residents and visitors.

Local governments are faced with a demanding task, given our current ecological and economic challenges. The need to look for ways to increase our tax base is strong. I urge our policymakers to consider the viable, low-impact alternatives and the long-term impacts as they evaluate any proposal from Nestle.

**RICK ZELZNAK**  
rzelnak@gmail.com

Wednesday, November 3, 2010

# Nestlé Waters Submits Well Completion Report

LAZARO ALEMAN

Monticello News  
Senior Staff Writer

The contractor for Nestlé Waters has now submitted to the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) the well completion report for its several drillings on the Wacissa River.

But as SRWMD water use specialist John Kruse explained it to the News on Friday, Oct. 29, the report is very standard and preliminary, and represents no more than what the district routinely requires of every drilling, even for residential wells.

Kruse said the Nestlé Waters' report contained only technical data relating to the drillings, such as their locations, depths, types of soil encountered, and such. The report

had nothing whatsoever to do with water quantity or quality, he said.

The latter information would be part of the permit application, and the district had yet to receive an application from Nestlé Waters, Kruse said.

"They're just prospecting," he said of the current efforts on the Wacissa. "They're in the discovery phase, simply collecting data to see if the project is even feasible."

Kruse said a great many factors determined whether a particular site was considered viable for bottling purposes, including the water quality and quantity, the logistics of drawing and transporting the water, land-use issues, comprehensive plan considerations, and other factors.

Please See *Nestlé* Page 6A

## Nestlé

Cont. From Page 1

"A lot of pieces of the puzzle have to come together in a particular location to make it viable," Kruse said. "For example, the quality may be there but not the quantity, or vice versa."

Once the SRWMD received an application, it was his group's responsibility to analyze the scientific data and make a determination whether the project was viable or not, he said. That determination would then be forwarded to the SRWMD governing board in the form of a recommendation for approval or denial of the permit, he said.

Basically, if the application met the conditions of the rules, his group had little

choice but to recommend approval, if often with conditions, Kruse said. But the governing board ultimately decided the issue, based on considerations that didn't necessarily enter into the technical evaluation, such as the gauge of public sentiment about a project and the project's perceived benefit to the public.

Kruse said historically, the district received a bottling water application about every two or three years. He cited one in Gilchrist County in 2007 that had been approved but never developed.

And currently, the district was reviewing another, he said.

Kruse said it took about 18 months on average for the permitting process, from the time an application was submitted until the time it was approved or denied. Accounting in great part for the lengthiness of the process, he said, was the fact that many times applications lacked specificity, which triggered requests from his agency for additional information.

He offered metaphorically that applications were generally submitted in broad strokes, and it was up to his group's responsibility to bring it down to the individual brush hairs, in terms of the details.

# I Am Appalled At The Thought Of Nestle Coming To Monticello

I am writing to express my deep, genuine concern about the recent developments regarding Nestle Corporation's plan to remove water from Jefferson County's Wacissa River. Boldly speaking, I am appalled by such an idea. Somehow, I was hopeful that I was misinformed and there was no such plan or discussion happening. However, our friends along the Wacissa River have told us that it is true. This is

real. Nestle, the international food giant headquartered in Switzerland, wants to sell our spring fed river water for profit.

I travel on the Wacissa River at least once weekly in a kayak. I lead group trips of ecotourists who come from various regions of the state and nation to admire this incredible natural resource, a rich eco-system of plant and wildlife diversity. I have wondered through the swamps admiring

scores of birds, reptiles and mammal species rarely seen on other area rivers. In the summer, our kayak camp youth swim in the springs and celebrate nature. We learn about North Florida's unique geological features. We stare at alligators, collect snail shells, stalk salamanders and jump cannonball-style off the banks. We talk about protecting our fragile planet.

I speak for a team of naturalist guides and

eco-travelers who strongly oppose the development of any infrastructure that removes naturally occurring water from the Wacissa River, for the sake of an international corporation. We do not support Nestlé's bid--or anyone's desire--to remove water from North Florida's river to bottle and sell around the world. This is shortsighted planning on behalf of profiteers. I

am reminded of the long term negative impact of excessive logging of the early 1900's. Removing water will negatively impact the Wacissa River's fish and wildlife for decades to come.

I am hopeful that both the Jefferson County BOCC and Suwannee River Water Management District will explore this issue slowly and carefully with thorough input for the immediate commu-

nity and surrounding region.

Please do not allow Nestle to move forward and set up shop along the Wacissa. For the sake of the community and future generations of North Florida residents, protect our river. Protect the pristine Wacissa River from this current threat by Nestle Corporation.

*Georgia Ackerman*  
Tallahassee, Florida

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Nov. 4, 2010

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***The Levy County Journal***

**SRWMD Governing Board meeting**

The Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet at 10 a.m. Nov. 9 at the Cedar Key Library, 460 2<sup>nd</sup> St. in Cedar Key. The meeting is to consider district business and conduct public hearings on regularly and land acquisition matters. A workshop will begin at 1:30 p.m. In addition, a governing board teleconference meeting will be held at district headquarters in Live Oak beginning at 1 p.m. Nov. 29.

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Thursday, November 4, 2010

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**THE NORTH FLORIDA HERALD**

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## During election week, let's give a little praise

As we write this early on election week, the Nov. 2 elections have not yet happened, so we figured this would be a good time to take a step back and look at some of the recent actions by people already in office.

### **Alachua's Water & Fertilizer Restrictions**

In certain communities, there are political hot potatoes that the elected leaders try to avoid. After all, if you take on one of these hot, political issues, you risk not being elected (or re-elected, as the case may be).

But last week, the city of Alachua took a bold step forward in agreeing with the Suwannee River Water Management District by imposing new water and fertilizer restrictions. These new rules are tough.

Soon, you will only be able to water your lawn once a week, and if you're thinking of using fertilizer, you can't use it within 10 feet of any body of water and you can't put fertilizer down if heavy rain is on the way.

Keep in mind that the single biggest neighborhood political force in Alachua is the private neighborhood of Turkey Creek, which is known for its plush, green, manicured lawns. Of course, if most of the homeowners can only water their lawn once a week and fertilizer gets limited, too, those lawns may not be so green in the near future.

In fact, you may see some homes using less grass and planting more drought-resistant plants, fundamentally changing the "golf" look of the community.

It's possible that angry residents of Turkey Creek could rise up and vote out next year whoever's up for reelection and who voted for the tough restrictions. We certainly hope that the conservation moves by the commissioners are not something they have to worry about.

We hope that Turkey Creek embraces the new ideas and becomes a model for other communities on how to make the transition from ultra-green lawns to more natural, more environmentally friendly landscapes.

# Lake Louise project likely on last legs

**DECISION TIME** Next BOCC meeting is Nov. 16.

By Jeff Waters  
jeff.waters@gafnews.com

The Lake Louise project is hanging by a thread and may well

come to an end when newly elected board members take their seats at the Nov. 16 county commission meeting.

Sandra Grinnell and her attorney,

M.B. Adelson IV, were back in front of commissioners Tuesday asking the board to return property at the lake that Grinnell deeded to the county in 2007.

Adelson urged the board at the

**SEE LAKE LOUISE, PAGE 12A**

Continued From Page 1A

Oct. 19 meeting to honor a reverter clause in the contract granting the land. The pact required certain conditions to be met, mainly construction of a road. Adelson said none of those conditions had been met, and the county should honor the reverter clause.

Commissioners tabled the issue until the following meeting, which was Tuesday.

Suwannee County Attorney Hal Airth had always held that the county was in compliance with the agreement and that construction had already commenced by way of installation of a culvert. Adelson argued that the culvert was placed in a county right-of-way and not on the property. Airth countered that the agreement didn't state where construction had to begin and that "I believe if this

case went to trial, the county will prevail."

Airth cited an affidavit Grinnell signed in April 2008 acknowledging the county has begun construction on the project.

Adelson said that document was never entered into county records and is now void. At the Oct. 19 meeting he said Grinnell had prepared a subsequent affidavit rescinding the April 2008 document and recorded it earlier this year. Airth, however, said Florida law doesn't require documents such as the original affidavit be recorded to be valid.

"Between us and Mrs. Grinnell, she signed that affidavit and she's bound by it," Airth said.

Commissioner Douglas Udell said it's not likely permits will ever be granted to build the project.

"We can put a man on the moon and drill under the oceans but for some

strange reason water management isn't going to permit construction of a boat ramp out there for the public," he said.

Commissioner Billy Maxwell agreed.

"They can permit George and Sheila Burnham's house and a 200-lot subdivision near it, but (water management) sees the powers that be and it can't be permitted," he said.

George Burnham -- along with Clyde Fleming and Phil Oxendine, who will on Nov. 16 be sworn in to replace Udell and Maxwell, respectively -- were present during discussions on the matter.

Udell entertained the idea of purchasing an additional 20 acres of Grinnell's land to go with the three she deeded to the county, in hopes that the Suwannee River Water Management District would be more inclined to

grant the necessary permits with more land available to mitigate any environmental impact.

However, Commission Chairman Wesley Wainwright noted Udell's position had little backing on the board.

He said his position has always been against the project. Commissioner Jesse Caruthers felt the same way.

"My position hasn't changed," he said. "I'm still the position not to go forward with this project."

Udell, clearly defeated, said the board should wait until the next meeting, at which time two new members can vote with Caruthers and Wainwright to give the land back. Caruthers made a motion earlier in the meeting to give the land back but it died for lack of a second.

"If you're going to kill it and the powers that are sitting out here today looking at you, then wait until the next meeting," Maxwell said in response. "You won't have opposition."

The Nov. 16 meeting will begin at 4:30 p.m. at City Hall.

### **The use of bottled water is bad for environment**

I oppose the bottling of water in the Wacissa, Wakulla, Santa Fe, etc. The amount of petroleum it takes to produce and transport just one 8-ounce plastic bottle is equivalent to filling the same bottle one-third to one-fourth full of oil.

These are wasteful businesses. It takes 3 gallons of water to make one consumable gallon of water. The garbage associated with plastic bottles (including the cardboard containers and the cellophane that wraps the products) piles up along our roads, in landfills and eventually in oceans and waterways. These are luxury businesses that mine our public natural resources and make millions from our hard-earned dollars.

The entire world is figuring out what water bottling represents, and so are we right here in our backyards. These corporate giants or local businessmen make lots of money on something that is relatively free from the tap. These businesses pay nothing for each gallon of water they draw from the state or county. They put a hole in the Floridan Aquifer and suck it out. Our delicate ecosystem on the Wakulla and Wacissa rivers begs for protection.

**SUE DAMON**

# LOCAL & STATE

**LOCAL NEWS ON YOUR CELL**

 Take us with you anywhere, anytime at <http://m.gainesville.com> or text **GSALERT** to 22411 for news sent straight to your mobile device.

**UF researchers to study cholera in Haiti, 2B**    **Alachua County Veterans Services director demoted, 4B**

## Board rejects water bottling application

*The applicants sought to pump 400,000 gallons of water per day in Gilchrist.*

**By Christopher Curry**  
Staff writer

A long-lingering application to pump water from wells near Lilly Springs for a bottling operation was unanimously denied Tuesday by the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board.

Applicants Richard Corbin and John A. Barley sought to pump 400,000 gallons a day of water from two wells in Gilchrist County, about a half-mile south of Lilly Springs. Corbin and Barley could not be reached for comment.

The wells would have been on a 3.5-acre parcel at Northeast County Road 340 and Northeast 90th Avenue, just across the Alachua County line and southwest of Poe Springs Park. Governing Board member

David Flaggs said the application was denied with prejudice, meaning any future application would have to be significantly different to be considered. Flaggs said board members approved staff's recommendation of denial with prejudice because the plan was to pump water from within the district boundaries and truck it elsewhere for bottling.

Water management district staff's recommendation of denial stated that the applicants did not show that a pumping

operation was a "reasonable-beneficial use" of the resource or "consistent with the public interest."

Staff stated concerns that the withdrawal would have "unacceptable impacts" on the flow from Hornsby Spring in Alachua County and that the applicants "failed to provide reasonable assurances" that environmental harm would not be done to other area springs, wetlands, the Santa Fe River

**PERMIT** on Page 5B

## PERMIT: Environmental group happy

*Continued from 1B*

and Poe Springs Nature Park.

Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson, president of the Our Santa Fe River, an environmental group formed to fight this application and other proposed water bottling operations, said she was "very pleased" with the denial and, in particular,

the rationale for it.

"The staff gave the board good information, and the board took that information and denied the permit because it was not a reasonable and beneficial use and not in the public interest," Malwitz-Jipson said.

"That's huge. It was based on very important issues that are often overlooked when considering these

types of permits. The citizens do not want these (bottling operations)."

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

R010  
Suwannee River Water Management  
9225 County Road 49  
Live Oak FL 32060-7056



# MONTICELLO NEWS

142nd Year No. 45

Wednesday, November 10, 2010

50¢ 46¢ + 4¢

## RIVER RALLY AIMS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF NESTLÉ WATER

**LAZARO ALEMAN**  
*Monticello News*  
*Senior Staff Writer*

They came together in numbers at the head of the Wacissa River on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 7 -- natives, non-natives, outdoor enthusiasts, and environmentalists alike -- united by a common love of the river and concern about Nestlé Waters' intentions.

Organized by members of the Wacissa community calling themselves the Friends of the Wacissa, and Wilderness Way, a Wakulla-based paddling outfitter, the event was billed as a 'meet

Please See Nestlé  
Water Page 6A



The gathering had the makings of a festive occasion, save for the signs and the serious purpose underlying the rally.



Monticello News Photo courtesy June Campbell, Nov. 7, 2010  
Commission Chairman Danny Monroe, left, speaks with Georgia Ackerman of Wilderness Way, one of the



Monticello News Photos By Laz Aleman, Nov. 7, 2010  
Airboats, canoes and motorboats were much in evidence at the head of the Wacissa River on Sunday, as were anti-Nestlé

nd greet', where supporters could share ideas and concerns, sign anti-Nestlé Waters petitions, explore possible strategies, and generally bring media attention to the issue (Channel 6, the Democrat and the News were there).

As such, the event allowed for little speechmaking or formal presentations, other than the few brief remarks offered by Commissioner Danny Monroe, Wilderness Way owner Georgia Ackerman, and Wacissa resident Roland Brumbley. The three essentially thanked everyone for turning out, encouraged them to stick together and not give up the fight, and urged that everyone make his or her voice heard at Jefferson County Commission meetings.

But largely, the gathering consisted of people mingling, and conversing in small groups, or sitting on the grass and on lawn chairs at the water's edge, and enjoying the free hot dogs and refreshments, the river view and the mild fall weather, all the while making connections and establishing a sense of solidarity. One thing nowhere in evidence were plastic water bottles. In fact, the invitation

announcing the event specifically asked attendees not to bring plastic water bottles but to bring only refillable bottles.

One did, however, see a great many anti-Nestlé Water signs, posted on the grounds or attached to vehicles and boats, as not a few of the attendees arrived in airboats, motorboats and canoes, complete with families and picnic spreads.

And certainly, the event had the elements of a festive occasion, save for the signs and the serious purpose underlying the gathering. The latter point was not lost on longtime county resident Gordon Scott, who was involved in the lengthy, litigious and ultimately successful fight to keep Texaco and Colonial Pipeline Company from locating a fuel terminal and pipeline in Jefferson County in the 1990s. For him, the gathering had echoes of that long-ago struggle, if only in the swelling of popular opposition.

And indeed, the issue of Nestlé Waters' interest in the Wacissa River has been fast gaining momentum ever since it surfaced as a side issue in the Jefferson County Commission's controversial decision in mid June to close Malloy Landing Road. The

Friends of the Wacissa maintain that Nestlé Waters' interests in the river was a large contributing factor in the motivation of the Boland family and two other property owners to petition for the closing of the road - a charge that company spokesperson Jim McClellan categorically denies.

"It didn't have anything to do with us," McClellan told the News on Oct. 11. "It doesn't matter to us if the road is public or private. It won't affect our decision at all."

McClellan - as well as representatives of the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), which would issue the water use permit - point out that Nestlé Waters has yet to apply for a water-use permit; that the company is merely exploring the feasibility of drawing bottling water from the river; and that the permitting process would involve a multitude of considerations, could well take nearly two years to complete, and could ultimately end in a denial.

No matter. As the concerned Wacissa area residents see it, and as Brumbley expressed it to the County Commission on Thursday, Nov. 4, the community needs to

organize and do its homework quickly because it is up against a corporate giant with deep pockets, a slew of attorneys and public relations people, and a significant head start.

"They're already two years ahead," Brumbley said, referring to Nestlé Waters initial plans to begin exploring satellite water sources for its Madison County bottling plant, and its first contact with the Boland family in December 2009 for the lease of the land to install its drilling wells.

"We know it's not yet permitted but we want to get ahead of it before it gets here," Brumbley said. "The community feels we can't sit on our duffs because they're (Nestlé Waters) going 160 miles an hour and they've got high-power attorneys and PR people and they're already two years ahead. We've got our work cut us for us."

Brumbley challenged the commissioners to research Nestlé Waters, as the Wacissa group had done. He said the commissioners would learn that the company preyed on small communities and that it was engaged in similar water drawing efforts in the western United States.

"You'll get a real shock what Nestlé

Waters will do to your community," Brumbley said, adding that the boards of planning and county commissions represented the people's only hope of stopping the company.

Brumbley also apparently had second thought about harsh remarks he uttered at the Oct. 21 commission meeting. He apologized both for carrying an anti-Nestlé sign into the commission meeting (the board has a ban on signs inside the meeting room), and for lashing out at Commissioner Hines Boyd. He promised to abide by the rules and policies and stick to the issues in the future.

Other than the fact of Brumbley's apology, his attack on Boyd bears mentioning only because it's indicative of the highly charged and emotional atmosphere that surrounds the river issue.

Meanwhile, Barbara Brumbley entreated commissioners to consider their decision on Nestlé Waters in terms of the project's long-term impact on the river, its natural resources, the community at large, and future generations. She called water a precious resource that, once lost, could never be recovered.

"It's been proven

that what we do today will live with us tomorrow," Barbara Brumbley said. "It may be five or 10 years, but it will come back to haunt each and every one of us in some form or fashion."

And Tonya Brumbley questioned why commissioners had closed Malloy Landing Road, only to consider an alternative landing that would bring traffic through "a residential area that was established 100 years ago" and where children played.

Commissioners are contemplating leasing Brumbley Landing from the Boland family as a substitute to the closed Malloy Landing. The Boland family offered to allow public access to the Brumbley Landing as a gesture of good will to dissipate some of the community acrimony that the road closing generated.

"This is my issue," Tonya Brumbley said. "If the Bolands want to give the public access to the landing, let them give access through their property, not through ours."

Commissioners did not respond to any of the comments, which were made during that part of the meeting when the public is allowed to address the board on non-agenda items.

# Time Change Brings Reminder to Fall Back to One-Day-A- Week Lawn Watering

Please remember that when you set clock back an hour on Sunday, November 7, that the time change also marks the start of one-day-per-week lawn and landscape watering limits for residents throughout the Suwannee River Water Management District (District).

In January, the District implemented a rule that places limits on lawn and landscape irrigation for all residents within its boundaries. Under the rule, residents may water two days per week in spring and summer (Daylight Saving Time), and one day per week during fall and winter (Standard Time). Watering should not occur between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Residents have the flexibility to choose which day(s) they will water, with the exception of persons residing within the City of Alachua, which has adopted its own ordinance establishing an irrigation schedule based upon addresses.

The District's rule applies to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public and commercial businesses. It does not apply to home vegetable gardens and there are exemptions for establishment of new lawns. It does not apply to agricultural irrigation, which is covered by other District water-use regulations.

The rule applies to those with private wells and to those using public utilities. It applies both to groundwater (aquifer) and surfacewater (rivers, lakes) sources. But it does not apply to the use of reclaimed water or water from rain barrels.

For more information please contact the District's permitting staff at 800.226.1066 (FL toll free) or visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com) <<http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com>>.

DIXIE COUNTY TIMES, CROSS CITY, FLORIDA - THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2010

Nov. 11, 2010

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***The Levy County Journal***

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**SWFWMD Governing Board meeting, Nov. 16**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District's Governing Board will meet two weeks early for its monthly meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 16 at 9 a.m. at the District's headquarters, 2379 Broad Street in Brooksville.

The Governing Board typically meets on the last Tuesday of the month. This month the meeting is being held two weeks early due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

To view the meeting agenda, visit [WaterMatters.org](http://WaterMatters.org) and click on the "Boards, Meetings & Events Calendar" link. To view the Governing Board meeting online, log on to [WaterMatters.org](http://WaterMatters.org) and click on the "Live Video Stream" link.

## Once-a-week watering rules are back in effect

When you set clocks back an hour last Sunday, that also marked the start of one-day-per-week lawn and landscape watering limits for residents throughout the Suwan-

nee River Water Management District.

In January, the District implemented a rule that places limits on lawn and landscape ir-

**SEE ONCE, PAGE 4A**

*Lafayette County's news source*

## Once-a-week watering rules are back in effect

Continued From Page 1A

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For more information please contact the District's permitting staff at 800-2261066 or visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com).

## Time change means 'fall back' to watering lawn once a week

***Under the new rule, water users may irrigate their landscapes only one day per week effective the first Sunday in November.***

The time change marks the start of one-day-per-week lawn and landscape watering limits for residents throughout the 15 counties in the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD). Those counties include Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union.

In January, SRWMD implemented a rule that places limits on lawn and landscape irrigation for all residents within its boundaries. Under the rule, residents can water two days per week in spring and summer (Daylight Saving Time), and only one day per week during fall and winter (Standard Time). Watering should not occur between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Residents have the flexibility to choose which day(s) they will water, with the exception of persons residing within the city of Alachua, which has adopted its own ordinance establishing an irrigation schedule based upon addresses.

The district's rule applies to

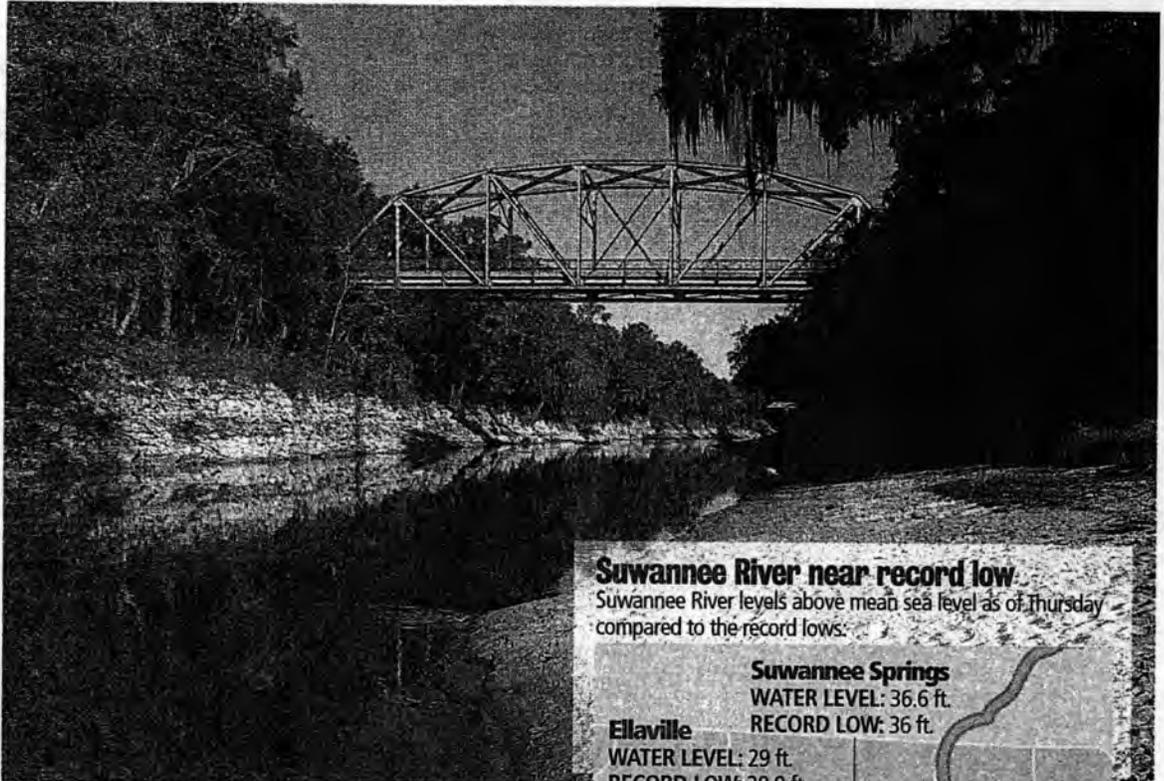
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For more information, please call 1-800-226-1066 or visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com).

# Water level way down upon Suwannee River

No relief in sight as drought expected to continue through winter

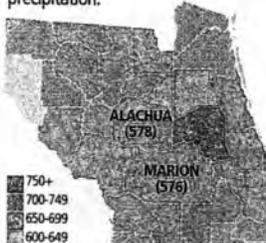


DOUG FINGER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The old Suwannee Springs bridge north of Live Oak on the Suwannee River on Oct. 29.

## Keetch-Byram drought index

A soil drought index that ranges from 0 (no drought) to 800 (extreme drought). Factors in the index are maximum daily temperature, daily precipitation, previous precipitation and annual precipitation.



750+  
700-749  
650-699  
600-649  
550-599  
500-549  
450-499  
400-449  
300-399  
200-299  
100-199  
0-99

■ 400 - 600: Typical of late summer, early fall.  
■ 600 - 800: Associated with more severe drought and increased wildfire occurrence.

SOURCE: Florida Division of Forestry, as of Thursday  
ROB MACK/Staff graphic

By Cindy Swirko  
Staff writer

**B**ig Shoals, a rare bit of Florida whitewater on the Suwannee River north of White Springs, is not exactly raging now.

"I'd describe it as a rock garden with water trickling through it," canoe outfitter Steven Baxter said recently.

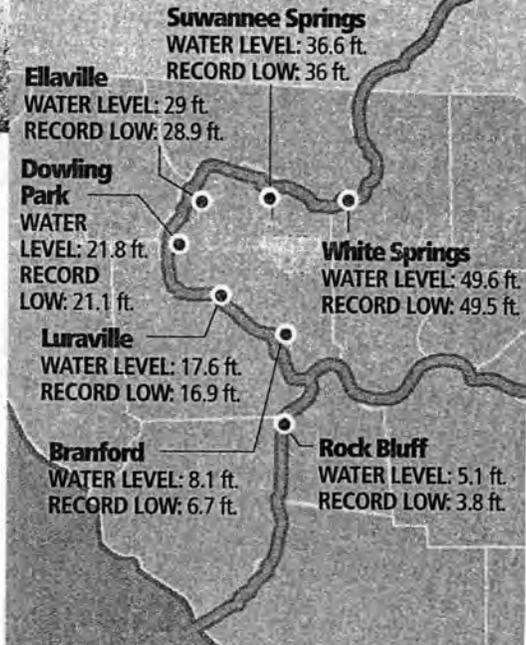
The woeful flow at Big Shoals is a symptom of a falling Suwannee River — the upper river is approaching historic low levels because of a lack of rainfall.

The drought is expected to continue through the winter.

From White Springs in Hamilton County south to

## Suwannee River near record low

Suwannee River levels above mean sea level as of Thursday compared to the record lows:



SOURCE: Suwannee River Water Management District

ROB MACK/Staff graphic

Dowling Park in Suwannee County, the river is within a fraction of all-time lows, according to data from the Suwannee River Water Management District.

"We have a pretty profound deficit, particu-

larly in upper Suwannee and Santa Fe (River)," said water district hydrologist Megan Wetherington. "As groundwater levels drop, we will see less of a contribution from

## RIVER: Upper Suwannee is in worst shape

*Continued from 1A*

groundwater and will see more of a decline to historic lows in lower part of the river.”

Meanwhile, meteorologist Jason Hess of the National Weather Service in Jacksonville said the long-range forecast is calling for continued dryness thanks to La Nina, a cooling of the Pacific in the equator region.

La Nina has the opposite effect of El Nino, a warming of the Pacific that brought more rain than typical to the region last year.

“We are expecting drier than normal conditions this winter. We have a La Nina event set up in the Pacific, so chances are going to be greater that we have below-normal precipitation from December through February,” Hess said. “Right now, the drought conditions and the river levels are expected to continue through the winter-time.”

On Thursday, the Suwannee River at White Springs was at 49.6 feet above mean sea level, a sliver above the record of 49.49 feet set in 2007. At Dowling Park, the Suwannee was at 21.8, nearing the record of 21.12 set in 2002.

The Santa Fe River gets a lot of its water from spring-fed groundwater. While it is low, it is not near record lows yet. The Suwannee River below the confluence with the Santa Fe is not as low as the upper Suwannee.

However, Wetherington said if the drought continues and groundwater levels dip, both the Santa Fe and lower Suwannee will continue to drop.

Dropping with the low levels is the business of Suwannee Canoe Outpost, which is located at the Spirit of the Suwannee Park north of Live Oak.

Baxter, the owner, said there is too little water for trips above White Springs. Multi-day trips on the upper Suwannee are not being done.

“At this time of year, we would typically be renting canoes to



DOUG FINGER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Suwannee River at the U.S. 27 overpass in Branford recently.

groups that would do three- to six-day trips from Fargo, Ga., to our place. Those groups aren't doing those trips right now, so a lot of our business tends to be shuttling around people with their own boats who have enough knowledge of paddling and the river,” Baxter said.

Low water reduces the current to a near standstill and requires portages around areas with no water.

It recently took 19 days for a group of paddlers to make it from Fargo to White Springs, about 50 miles. The trip ordinarily would take about three to four days.

The lack of rainfall also has heightened fire concerns. Ludie Bond, wildfire mitigation specialist with the Florida Division of Forestry Gainesville office, said the drought is setting the region up for a busy spring wildfire season.

“It's certainly something to pay attention to and take seriously when the meteorologists predict La Nina weather conditions,” Bond said. “We know at the Division of Forestry that in the past 17 years, the five most active wildfire seasons came either during or immediately after we had La Nina conditions in the state.”

# Rant & Rave

Continued From Page 6A

■ ■ ■

The *Democrat* is telling it like it is. Sometimes you have to be careful of what you wish for. Several people wrote in and said, let's clean house, throw the rascals out. Wainwright as you say, seems to be OK, with the appearance of standing on his own. Oxendine has not even taken office and has readily admitted to being a puppet. He stated at a forum that he would vote no on the Lake Louise project. Why? Because his money man lives on the lake. What about his constituents? We want the project to go forward. Putting this guy in office, has set the county back 50 years. People complained about good ol' boys before the election. They haven't seen anything yet. By the way, did any of you see the signs erected Tuesday night after it was declared that Oxendine was the winner? The signs read "bye bye Billy," posted by the courthouse and over by Camp Weed. I am betting the courthouse video would show who the immature culprits are.

Thank you.

■ ■ ■

Must say, I find it sad, disappointing and shallow that the voters of Suwannee County would elect decision makers

for the entire County based solely upon their allegiance with the former tax collector to deny the Lake Louise boat ramp. Maybe during County Commission meetings Mr. Burnham can text (to each commissioner) his call on which way the new commissioners should vote on a particular issue. I reiterate, kind of sad.

I would also like to see an investigation as to why the Water Management District ignored the requests for this permit. Something smells rotten in Suwannee County and it is this. I am ashamed to be a citizen of this County.

■ ■ ■

You know, I really don't care what the water management district says about watering my lawn. I'll water my lawn twice a day if I want to. Come get me.

■ ■ ■

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Friday, November 12, 2010

Tallahassee Democrat / NEWS

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### **Nestle plan causes opponents to unite**

History was made Sunday at the Wacissa River head-springs. More than 200 Wacissa residents and folks from outlying communities gathered to show support for this spring-fed river in the wake of Nestle's plan to draw hundreds of thousands of gallons a day from the watershed.

The participants drove cars and pickups, set up tents and grills to share food, and brought their watercraft — airboats, pontoon boats, bass boats, canoes, kayaks. Never had so diverse a coalition rallied around the river.

Friendships were formed on that crisp day that was never deemed possible only a short time before. Paddlers went on chilly airboat rides, while boaters tested their balance on stand-up paddleboards. Young and old drew signs of protest and expressed their love for the river. And whether they were 4 or 80, it was obvious that the Wacissa River had gotten into their blood. Many had spent their entire lives fishing and swimming, boating and paddling, in and on these pristine waters. And to risk any of it for the profits of a few was too much to bear. The Wacissa needed help. It was time to give back.

**DOUG ALDERSON**  
[www.dougalderson.net](http://www.dougalderson.net)

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Saturday, November 13, 2010

Tallahassee Democrat / NEWS

### **Expect Nestle's data to benefit its own plan**

Re: "Good stewardship will help protect the Wacissa" (My

View, Nov. 7).

Kent Koptiuch, of Nestle Water North America (NwNA), wants us to believe that NwNA will provide our local and state governments with "solid data" and "good science" when it provides research regarding the effects of pumping just "0.002 percent" of the water flow of the

Wacissa River.

Anyone with a lick of sense knows that NwNA, as part of the mega-corporation Nestle, exists to create profits for its shareholders. Corporations hire their own scientists to create data that suit their particular needs. The oil and pharmaceutical companies do this all the time; it is part of their culture.

When corporations provide their own "good science" and "solid data," their findings always bolster their goals, which is the highest profit possible. Caveat emptor — buyer beware. I would suggest that one take NwNA's data and toss them out with the bath water.

**ARMAND DuPONT**  
Wacissa

# Gainesville company hired to clean Rainbow River

*Pandion Systems will develop a plan within three years and make a proposal to the FDEP.*

**By Fred Hiers**  
Staff writer

At first glance, the Rainbow River and its springs are pristine.

But a second look shows problems: Algae blooms darken waters downstream; vegetation is disappearing from some areas of the river bottom because of too much human activity; and non-native plants have rooted themselves in the river, where they don't belong.

Nitrate levels have increased 40-fold during the past 60 years from too much farm and residential fertilizer, as well as human and animal waste.

Visibility at the springhead is about 300 feet. That drops to about 50 feet as the river meanders 5.7 miles to the Withlacoochee River in Dunnellon.

The river and spring have deteriorated enough that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has hired Gainesville-based environmental

services company Pandion Systems to help rescue it. The company will help develop a plan during the next three years to clean the river and spring about four miles north of Dunnellon.

At the end of the three-year, \$210,000 project, Pandion will make its proposals to FDEP as to how the improve the river.

The first step will be taken Tuesday, when Pandion holds a public meeting to get input from county residents, Pandion spokesman Pete Colverson said.

"The important purpose on Tuesday is to create a vision for what the restored Rainbow River and spring should look" like, he said.

■ ■ ■

The visioning meeting is important because, considering the amount of development along the river and first-magnitude spring, it may not be possible to reduce nitrate levels to pre-1960 levels, Colverson said.

"Somewhere around 1960, (the nitrate levels) started to rise, and particularly in the past 10 years it dramatically started rising. And the thing is, it's still rising," he said.

Nitrate levels are important in rivers

and springs: Too much of the nutrient causes algae and other vegetation to grow unchecked and change the natural chemistry of the water. As a result, the biological and wildlife makeup of the river also change.

The current nitrate level in the Rainbow Spring is 2 milligrams per liter, according to FDEP and U.S. Geological Survey studies. Sixty years ago it was 0.05 milligrams per liter.

At its current rate of increase, Colverson said, the nitrate levels could double during the next five years.

Among the goals for Tuesday's meeting: determining whether to recommend to FDEP, which is funding the study, that instead of reducing nitrate levels, the state should just keep nitrate levels from increasing any more.

About 80 percent of nitrates that make their way into the Rainbow Springs basin comes from pasture land and animal livestock, studies show.

■ ■ ■

The FDEP contract requires Pandion to submit a draft proposal by June 2011 detailing how to clean the spring and river. It will spend the two following years refining the proposal and encouraging residents to support the plan.

But cleaning the river and curbing development trends that have led to polluting the river and spring will not be easy, Colverson said.

The Rainbow River has been a tourist attraction and collector of pollutants since the 1930s.

Its groundwater recharge area is 470,000 acres, or 735 square miles, covering portions of Alachua, Levy and Marion counties. Some experts estimate that ground water may take as long as 30 years to reach the spring vents from the recharge areas.

Agricultural and residential development account for about 65 percent of the land use that makes up the Rainbow River Basin, according to a 2007 Southwest Florida Water Management District report. To make matters worse, the nature of the soil in the spring and river area is such that rainwater, and the pollutants it carries, rapidly drains into the aquifer.

The quick drainage time doesn't allow for soil organisms to use the nutrients, such as a nitrate, before it makes its way into spring water and the river.

Also a growing problem: the river's flow, which could be diminishing because of increased human demand on groundwater.

Colverson said the visioning meeting Tuesday will help set goals for the three-year project and clarify what residents want of their river and spring.

Contact Fred Hiers at [fred.hiers@star-banner.com](mailto:fred.hiers@star-banner.com) and 352-867-4157.

## Water level down on Suwannee River

Big Shoals, a rare bit of Florida whitewater on the Suwannee River north of White Springs, is not exactly raging right now.

"I'd describe it as a rock garden with water trickling through it," canoe outfitter Steven Baxter said.

The woeful flow at Big Shoals is a symptom of a falling Suwannee River — the upper river is approaching historic low levels because of a lack of rainfall.

The drought is expected to continue through the winter.

From White Springs in Hamilton County south to Dowling Park in Suwannee County, the river is within a fraction of all-time lows, according to data from the Suwannee River Water Management District.

"We have a pretty profound deficit, particularly in upper Suwannee and Santa Fe (rivers)," said water district hydrologist Megan Wetherington. "As groundwater levels drop, we will see less of a contribution from groundwater and will see more of a decline to historic lows in the lower part of the river."

Meanwhile, meteorologist Jason Hess of the National Weather Service in Jacksonville said the long-range forecast is calling for continued dryness.

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# Prepare for a hard battle to stop Nestle

**R**e: "Good stewardship will help protect the Wacissa" (My View, Nov. 7).

Kent Koptiuch wants us to believe Nestle is a good steward of water resources that will protect the Wacissa river ecosystem. A review of Nestle's water-bottling activities in Florida and across the country reveals a very different corporation, one that uses lawsuits and intimidation to get the resources it wants and to silence critics. From Maine to Michigan to California, Nestle has encountered widespread public resistance to its water-bottling efforts, and in many of these cases, the courts have sided with the public, though only after long, expensive lawsuits.

Koptiuch refers to the bottling plant at Blue Springs in Madison County as an example of the positive benefits provided by Nestle facilities. As the *St. Petersburg Times* has thoroughly documented, Nestle's



**Andy Opel**

My View

Blue Springs operation has been a tragedy for the environment and taxpayers alike. For starters, the Suwannee River Water Management District, the same group that oversees the Wacissa River, manages Blue Spring. In response to Nestle's initial pumping application, the scientists at this office recommended reducing the amount of water Nestle could extract from 1.46 million gallons a day to 400,000, over concerns for the local environment.

In January 2003, Nestle sought to override this decision by appealing to the water district's governing board, whose members had been appointed by then Gov. Jeb Bush. Nestle promised to invest \$100 million in Madison County and create 300 jobs only if it could pump the original 1.46 million gallons a day. The board agreed to Nestle's demands, overriding the recommendations of the state scientists charged with safeguarding Florida's water. Nestle then began back-pedaling on its commitments, providing only 145 of 300 promised jobs.

For a \$218 permit fee, Nestle was granted permission to pull 1.46 million gallons a day out of the Floridan aquifer for 15 years. In addition, the state approved a tax refund of up to \$1.68 million dollars for the Madison County plant. This is corporate welfare at work, subsidizing the privatization of our natural resources while the environmental impacts are socialized — spread equally across the climate and ecosystem.

In another instance, when Miami-Dade County released an ad campaign promoting tap water, Nestle threatened to sue the county. In 2008, the county produced a series of radio ads saying local tap water was cleaner, cheaper and safer than bottled water. Nestle was not mentioned by name, yet it threatened to sue the county for false advertising. The ad campaign ended before Nestle could file suit, but the intimidation was a clear signal to other communities that might promote their tap water.

In 2005, residents of Fryeburg, Maine, blocked construction in a residential neighborhood of a water-truck loading station that would ship water out of the area. Nestle sued the town five times, eventually landing the case before the Maine Supreme Court, where Nestle argued that the residents did not have the authority to interfere with its business practices. The Maine Supreme Court allowed Nestle to move forward with its construction plans, overturning the lower court decisions that had supported the residents.

In some cases, citizen persistence has paid off and Nestle has been forced to conform to public pressure. In McCloud, Calif., residents were able to block a Nestle deal that would have granted it unlimited access to groundwater. This effort took six years of litigation and public pressure before Nestle backed off. After a 10-year fight in Mecosta County, Mich., Nestle was forced to cut the amount it would pump in half, down to 300,000 gallons a day

after a judge threatened it with an injunction that would have prevented any water extraction.

As Annie Leonard's YouTube film "The Story of Bottled Water" reminds us, bottled water is a result of "manufactured demand" — where water bottlers have sought to create fear and doubt about tap water while creating a product that is 2,000 times as expensive as tap water and pollutes the planet at every step of the production chain. Over 80 percent of the plastic bottles end up in landfills or even worse, such as in the Pacific garbage gyre, where millions of tons of plastic float in the middle of the ocean.

The Wacissa River is one of the few remaining pristine rivers in North Florida and a valuable asset for local recreation and ecotourism. Any changes to this river should be based on transparent science without political interference that places the ecological and public interests above private profit. Given the track record,

local residents should prepare themselves for a long, expensive fight if they hope to defend this river from Nestle.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Andy Opel is an associate professor in the School of Communication at Florida State University, where he teaches environmental communication and documentary video production. Contact him at aopel@fsu.edu.

## Reports on Nestle's plans need more answers

Re: "Good stewardship will help protect the Wacissa" (My View, Oct. 7).

The *Democrat's* Oct. 31 cover story, and the Nov. 7 My View regarding potential pumping of water near the Wacissa headwaters by Nestle Waters, provided useful information, but the articles' omissions raise questions. In the news story, why was only the Suwannee River Water Management District described as being involved in review of a consumptive-use permit? Was the lack of mention of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission in this process just an oversight, or does it indicate a potential abdication of responsibility by these agencies? The FWC is supposed to help ensure protection of fish and wildlife. DEP has an oversight role in consumptive-use permitting involving springs. Might reductions in water flows have an impact on fish, wildlife and the environment?

In his My View, Mr. Koptiuch of Nestle asserts that the amount to be pumped would be "a maximum of about 0.002 percent" of the river's flow. That sounds like a tiny amount, but it would be clearer to say Nestle wants to pump about half a million gallons a day, or enough to fill 200 swimming pools.

He also noted, twice, that Nestle's operation near Madison Blue Spring created 145 jobs, but neglected to mention that there likely would be no permanent jobs generated in Jefferson County.

And while it sounds nice to say Nestle has a lighter carbon footprint than other packaged beverage companies, Nestle is also a lot smaller than companies such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Sometimes, what is left out of stories is as important as what is included.

JOE FOLLMAN

joefollman@gmail.com

Tallahassee Democrat

Sunday, November 14, 2010

## Residents won't back down on Wacissa River

I would like to thank the *Tallahassee Democrat* for coverage of the Wacissa water war. It is evident by the outpouring of people concerning the issue that Nestle is not wanted in Wacissa.

I moved here from Wakulla 10 years ago, after marrying a Wacissa native who introduced me to this slice of heaven. Since he was a baby, his dad took him on this river and introduced him to an unspoiled love of nature and habitat.

Now that we have two kids of our own, we allow them to enjoy this environment every minute possible. I can remember going fishing on the river at 5:30 a.m. back in January, and it was well below 20 degrees on the river. At first I was apprehensive, sleepy and just downright cold. But once I got on that river, every negative thought I had just disappeared.

Unfortunately the negative thoughts I have right now about what may happen to the river are not going to disappear. Florida water should not be bottled for sale to commercial enterprises so that other individuals who are already rich can get richer. The profit is millions for this company. So what if it's only a small percentage of water. We need to protect the state and the region from others taking what is not theirs. Please continue to provide coverage on this issue. We are not backing down.

CHERYL ANDREWS  
Wacissa

## Plum Creek a prime conservation player

It is largest private land owner in county, state, nation

By Anthony Clark  
Business editor

**P**lum Creek is little known to most of Alachua County, but the Seattle-based timber company is a giant in conservation circles and is poised to become a major area developer.

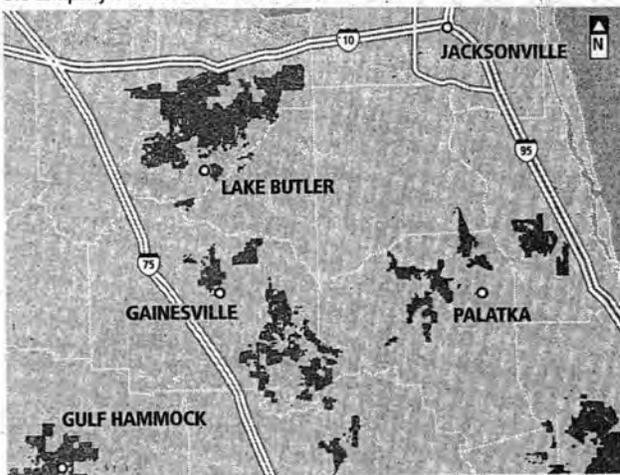
A transaction little noticed locally in 2001 made Plum Creek the largest private landowner in Alachua County when the real estate investment trust merged with Georgia-Pacific's 4.7 million-acre timberland division.

With that came 70,000 acres of forest in Alachua — covering 14 percent of the county. That and a subsequent purchase of 56,000 acres in northwestern Florida — while the St. Joe Paper Company has divested some of its timberlands — made Plum Creek the largest private landowner in the state, with about 600,000 acres in 22 counties, 90 percent of it in timber production.

In fact, Plum Creek is the largest private landowner in the nation with 7 million

### Plum Creek land

Seattle-based Plum Creek is the largest private landowner in the nation with 7 million acres in 19 states, and 1.3 million acres in conservation. Below is the company-owned land in North Florida:



ROB MACK/Staff graphic

acres in 19 states, with 1.3 million acres in conservation.

Although Plum Creek is the largest local company in land mass, working in the woods doesn't make it the best known. But as Florida director of real estate Todd Powell points out, it has more conservation land here than Paynes Prairie at 24,000 acres — land that people use every time they bike the Gainesville-Hawthorne Trail or

use city water from the Murphree Well Field in northern Gainesville.

The company moved its Florida headquarters to Gainesville in 2006, with an office in Tioga Town Center that houses three real estate people, two supervisors who manage 22 foresters statewide, and a community relations manager.

Powell said the company selected Gainesville to be

**LAND** on Page 5A

# LAND: Conservation efforts earn praise

Continued from 1A

close to the University of Florida and its agricultural research. UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences currently is conducting a study on eucalyptus trees growing on Plum Creek property in eastern Alachua County.

The bulk of Plum Creek's business is in selling timber and pulpwood to saw and paper mills. Of \$1.3 billion in revenue last year, \$520 million was from timber sales, while the rest was split between real estate transactions, manufacturing at lumber and fiber mills in the Northwest and royalties from mineral mining.

In Florida, Georgia-Pacific continues to be one of Plum Creek's largest customers, with pulp going to the Palatka paper mill and timber to the Hawthorne saw mill, though its largest customer is the Smurfit-Stone Container Corp. pulp and paper mill in Fernandina Beach.

## Conservation

Real estate deals also have been a big part of Plum Creek's business in Alachua County, though to date most have not been the kind that make environmentalists cringe. To the contrary, the company's transactions have included selling land outright for conservation purposes or selling conservation easements that protect the land from development while Plum Creek retains the timber rights.

The local conservation efforts started under Georgia-Pacific by many of the same people still in Plum Creek today. Greg Galpin, senior manager of planning, was with G-P when it sold

10,300 acres near Lake Lochloosa to the St. Johns River Water Management District in 1993 to form the Lochloosa Conservation Area.

Two years later, G-P sold the first conservation easement in the state, an adjoining 16,600 acres to the water district while retaining the timber rights.

On a recent tour of the property, Galpin pointed out a gopher tortoise preserve behind a low enclosure of fabric as a shy tortoise ducked back into its hole. Last year, Plum Creek was the first to take advantage of state incentives to create such a preserve, setting aside 570 acres to take in tortoises rescued from construction sites and converting nearby plantations to longleaf pine, the tortoises' preferred habitat.

Also nearby is the 640-acre Phifer Flatwoods conservation land that includes part of the Hawthorne Trail and fronts State Road 20. As part of a periodic auction of properties, Plum Creek rejected the highest bid from a Louisiana developer and instead sold it to the Alachua Conservation Trust in 2005. The trust then sold it to Alachua County.

"They bent over backwards to make that property a success," said Robert "Hutch" Hutchinson, executive director of the trust. "I think their local folks really love this community and saw the cost/benefit of selling to a developer versus a conservation organization and made it work for us."

Hutchinson said he would like

to see Plum Creek forestland conserved to guarantee a nearby supply of fuel for GRU's planned biomass plant.

Galpin said the company has not been part of the biomass discussion, but "any market for forest products is good."

In 2000, G-P sold the 7,200-acre Murphree Wellfield conservation easement in northern Gainesville that includes five Gainesville Regional Utilities water wells and rights for a sixth to the St. Johns and Suwannee River water districts and the city of Gainesville.

Not included in the easement was 1,800 acres of "high value" property along both sides of State Road 121 that G-P set aside for future development.

## Development

As a publicly traded investment trust, Plum Creek's strategy is to determine the best value of each parcel of land, said Pete Madden, vice president of operations support who also started at G-P.

In recent years, that has included development projects in Florida, such as a 700-acre industrial park in Palatka.

For the Murphree property, it meant carving out 1,800 acres along SR 121 north of U.S. 441.

Galpin said the company figured Gainesville eventually would grow north toward the Seminole Woods subdivision north of its property — "so we kept this out of the conservation easement for potential long-term opportunities."

That opportunity arose when Plum Creek — then in partnership with LandMar as the builder — came to the city in 2007 with plans for a development with 1,890 homes and 100,000 square feet of retail and commercial space, nearly the size of Haile Plantation. With LandMar out of the picture, Plum Creek now is referring to it as the Gainesville 121 project. The city annexed part of the property that wasn't already in the city limits, and after years of revisions, the City Commission and state Department of Community Affairs signed off last year on a comprehensive land use amendment for the project.

Mayor Craig Lowe, then city commissioner, was the sole vote against its original plan in 2007 but was part of a unanimous final approval in 2009 after several changes, including preserving more than 60 percent of the property.

"My position didn't change so much as their plan changed to where they did incorporate more set-aside of natural areas," he said.

Rob Brinkman, then with the local Sierra Club, also spoke out against the development over concerns about its impact on Turkey, Rocky and Hatchet creeks that originate on the property.

While he said he is not totally happy with the final comp plan, he said Plum Creek is "not as bad as they could be."

Though he said he is at odds with the company's development plans, he takes comfort in

the company it keeps, such as Gainesville land use attorney David Coffey and UF wetlands ecology professor Mark Clark, who worked on the project.

With more zoning and site plan reviews ahead, Powell said it would be late 2012 at the earliest before the company started moving dirt, but that also depends on new housing demand that has been absent in recent years.

Between the 121 project and a 500-acre industrial park approved for Lake City, Powell said Plum Creek's development plate is full and that timber will always be its top priority.

But long term, a 17,000-acre woodland east of Newnan's Lake between State Roads 20 and 26 could become the company's next big development.

About a third of the property is unusable wetlands, while Hutchinson said conservationists would like to see another third conserved to protect Lochloosa Creek and link to other conservation lands.

That leaves another third for possible development.

Powell said there are no such plans and that talk is premature.

But Hutchinson said Plum Creek has laid out maps showing where it could develop a portion of the property with minimal environmental impact.

Galpin said the future of the property will depend on what the public will get behind.

Hutchinson points out that the city and county have expressed a desire to see more economic development in east Gainesville that — unlike other areas — still has the capacity for traffic and schoolkids.

"They're in it very, very long term, and they're large enough that they can be patient with this," he said. "And they're making decent income off the timber, too."

# VIEWPOINTS & OPINIONS

## Letters To The Editor

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

### Writers Say People United In Opposition to Nestlé

Dear Editor,  
Florida's water belongs to its citizen. Likewise, Florida's citizens are capable, confident stewards of the citizens' natural resources. Wacissa River, designat-

ed an Outstanding Florida Waterway, by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is protected by Florida law and its citizens' stewardship. Mr. Koptiuch implies

Nestle Waters will eventually share in the care of our Wacissa River in exchange for withdrawing a "small amount of groundwater near Wacissa." We do not want or need Nestle

Waters, the largest commercial water bottling company in the world, sharing in the "care" of our public water and our natural resources. Specifically, we do not want Nestle Waters commercially harvesting spring water from Wacissa River.

Recreationally speaking, we are kayakers, air boaters, anglers, hunters, hikers, bikers and so on. Politically speaking, we are liberals, moderates, conservatives, and libertarians. Culturally speaking, we

are young, old, black, white and all shades and ages in between. We are farmers, students, state workers, doctors, lawyers, electricians, elected officials, small business owners, teachers and the list goes on.

We stand collectively united on the issue of protecting Wacissa springs. Florida's water belongs to its citizen. We will not fall prey to Nestle Waters corporate persuasion tactics to set up shop in Wacissa-to tap our Florida water, package it, and sell it

back to us for millions in profit. We are united on this front. We strongly oppose Nestle Waters' bid to commercially harvest water from Wacissa springs.

Respectfully submitted,  
*April Reagan,*  
Protectors of the  
Wacissa River and  
Springs (PoWRS) and  
*Georgia*  
*Ackerman,*  
Friends of the Wacissa  
(FTW)

Wednesday, November 17, 2010

### **Bottled water business is harmful to rivers**

Re: "Good stewardship will help protect the Wacissa" (My View, Nov. 7).

I oppose the bottling of water from our precious North Florida aquifer and specifically from the area adjacent to the Wacissa River. The amount of petro-chemical products that it takes to produce, manufacture and transport just a small amount of water in an 8-ounce plastic bottle is equivalent to filling the same bottle up to one-third full of oil.

The bottled water industry is a profit-motivated contrivance of manufactured demand. It is environmentally irresponsible and wasteful of one of our most precious and life-giving resources. It takes three gallons of water to make one consumable gallon of water. The garbage associated with plastic bottles (including the additional packaging of cardboard containers and the cellophane that wraps the products) piles up along our roads and landfills and often ends up in our waterways and oceans.

The bottled water industry extracts this precious commodity from our public aquifers and makes millions of dollars in the process. These corporate giants, such as Nestle, make huge profits from something that is almost free from the tap and is the property of all of us. The delicate ecosystem of the Wacissa River begs for our protection.

**TOMMY THOMPSON**

Regional director  
Florida Paddling Trails Association

## Once-a-week watering rules back in effect

When you set clocks back an hour Nov. 7, that also marked the start of one-day-per-week lawn and landscape watering limits for residents throughout the Suwannee River Water Management District.

In January, the District implemented a rule that places limits on lawn and landscape irrigation for all residents within its boundaries. Under the rule, residents may water two days per week in spring and summer (Daylight Saving Time), and one day per week during fall and winter (Standard Time). Watering should not occur between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Residents have the flexibility to choose which day(s) they will water, with the exception of persons residing within the City of Alachua, which has adopted its own ordinance establishing an irrigation schedule based upon addresses.

The District's rule applies to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public and commercial businesses. It does not apply to home vegetable gardens and there are exemptions for establishment of new lawns. It does not apply to agricultural irrigation, which is covered by other District water-use regulations.

The rule applies to those with private wells and to those using public utilities. It applies both to groundwater (aquifer) and surfacewater (rivers, lakes) sources. But it does not apply to the use of reclaimed water or water from rain barrels.

*For more information please contact the District's permitting staff at 800-2261066 or visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com).*

## LETTERS FROM READERS

### ENVIRONMENT

# Giving polluters the upper hand

A Times-Union front page story, "Activists fret over new crop of lawmakers," made it clear there was good reason for all of us to fret a bit — not just activists.

This article reported the governor-elect's first priority was to write a letter asking the Environmental Protection Agency to delay clean water standards needed to protect the St. John's River and other waterways from excess pollution.

This lets major polluters continue to pollute while taxpayers will continue to be responsible for clean-up costs. While this may save some costs for a few large corporations, it will result in large clean-up costs later for taxpayers and is not the way to cut costs for government.

The same article indicated the first priority of the new Florida Legislature was to delay, and possibly rethink, a requirement to have private contractors inspect septic systems once every five years at a cost that was limited to \$30 per inspection.

Delaying or eliminating this inspection requirement is penny

**... fixing it sooner is  
always better than  
fixing it later.**

wise and dollar foolish.

For a small inspection cost, paid for by those that own septic systems, sources of pollution can be found and fixed to avoid pollution that otherwise could continue for years, resulting in large government clean-up costs.

The article went on to note that state and local governments envision \$130 million in costs to lower bacteria levels in 25 waterways — bacteria that in part is coming from leaking septic systems and leaking sewer systems. Like a leak in your roof at home, fixing it sooner is always better than fixing it later.

The second priority of the Florida Legislature was to pass a bill (H.B. 1565) that would require the

administrative branch of Florida government to bring back to the legislative branch for approval any new administration rules that were required by new legislation.

This introduces an additional legislative step in the process of making new regulatory rules, which will give lobbyists an additional chance to influence the new rules.

Ironically this process can be compared to the recently proposed (and defeated in the past election) Hometown Democracy Amendment 4 process.

Amendment 4 asked for an additional step in the process for local comprehensive plan changes to protect our quality of life in Florida, while the Legislature appears to be planning an additional step in the legislative process at the state level to ensure we don't protect our quality of life.

I think the majority of people who care about the state we live in should begin to fret — not just activists.

**PHILLIP SCANLAN**  
Amelia Island

## VIEWPOINT

# GOP leaders in Tallahassee are fighting with shadows

**T**he Republicans stormed Tallahassee on Tuesday and began the task of tossing out the barbarians.

It reminded me of a fellow getting into a fist-fight with his reflection in the mirror.

**RONALD L. LITTLEPAGE**



After all, the Republicans have been in control in Tallahassee for more than a decade, which makes this assertion by the top Republican in the House, Speaker Dean Cannon, more than just a little ironic:

"Our mission over the next two years is to bring sanity to the government's role in the private sector."

Odd. Cannon has served in the House for the past six years when he and his

fellow Republican inmates were running the insane asylum.

It also was more than just a little ironic that one of the first acts of this ultra conservative Legislature was to jump right back on the federal government's stimulus gravy train, gobbling up an additional \$31 million of Obama money.

Yes, that's the same stimulus money that Republicans criticized so heavily during their campaigns as filthy lucre that threatens the future of our children and grandchildren, and probably is harmful to pets as well.

Cannon's vision of returning to sanity apparently includes getting rid of that pesky checks-and-balances thing, the Florida Supreme Court.

In his opening remarks after assuming the role of speaker, Cannon said recent court decisions were "threats to freedom."

What decisions got Cannon's dander up? The court's removal from the ballot of three amendments the Legislature had approved.

That, Cannon said, amounted to the Legislature's will being "demolished by five un-elected justices in the Supreme Court."

No, what it amounted to was the justices following the law that ballot language for constitutional amendments be clear and unambiguous.

The quick special session following the swearing-in ceremonies gave solid clues as to which direction the Republicans will go on issues so important to Florida such as, say, protecting the state's fragile environment.

Ha. Not if it gets in the way of doing business.

In the slap down of now pariah Charlie Crist, the Legislature overrode eight gubernatorial vetoes. One was of a bill requiring that any administrative rules passed by state agencies that cost more than \$1 million over five years to implement have to come to the Legislature for approval.

That includes just about anything done by the state's water management districts and the Department of Environmental Protection.

And that means lobbyists whispering in the ears of Republican legislators will be in complete control.

Another action by the Legislature should be of particular concern to Jacksonville. Legislators voted to delay implementing a law regulating septic tanks with a promise to try to completely kill it during the regular legislative session.

Just how burdensome was the law? Golly, it required that septic tanks be inspected once every five years and that they be repaired if they aren't functioning properly.

By the way, all of those creeks in Duval County that are severely polluted by fecal coliform, that's right — failing septic tanks.

I guess in the Republican's new version of sanity, that's OK.

ron.littlepage@jacksonville.com, (904) 359-4284

Friday, November 19, 2010

Jefferson County Journal

## *Time Change Brings Reminder to Fall Back to One-Day-A-Week Lawn Watering*

When you set clocks back an hour on Sunday, November 7, remember that the time change also marks the start of one-day-per-week lawn and landscape watering limits for residents throughout the Suwannee River Water Management District.

In January, the District implemented a rule that places limits on lawn and landscape irrigation for all residents within its boundaries. Under the rule, residents may water two days per week in spring and summer (Daylight Saving Time), and one day per week during fall and winter (Standard

Time). Watering should not occur between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Residents have the flexibility to choose which day(s) they will water, with the exception of persons residing within the City of Alachua, which has adopted its own ordinance establishing an irrigation schedule based upon addresses.

The District's rule applies to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public and commercial businesses. It does not apply to home vegetable gardens and there are exemptions for establishment

of new lawns. It does not apply to agricultural irrigation, which is covered by other District water-use regulations.

The rule applies to those with private wells and to those using public utilities. It applies both to groundwater (aquifer) and surface-water (rivers, lakes) sources. But it does not apply to the use of reclaimed water or water from rain barrels.



# October Proves A Very Dry Month In Terms Of Rainfall

LAZARO ALEMAN  
*Jefferson Journal*  
Senior Staff Writer

Only parts of Jefferson and Madison counties in the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) received any significant rain in October; even so, the two counties' respective monthly totals were less than average.

For the rest of the district, the rainfall was negligible, with more than half of the region receiving less than a quarter inch, or less than 10 percent of its average October total of 3.02 inches.

October's average rainfall, in fact, was 0.29 inch, making it the ninth driest month since 1932, according to the hydrologic conditions report released by the SRWMD on Nov. 2.

"The average 12-month surplus was 4.35 inches,"  
Please See *Rainfall* Page 4A

## Rainfall Cont. From Page 1

the report states. "Departures from normal ranged from more than 25 inches of surplus in coastal Levy and Dixie counties, to more than 15 inches of deficit in the upper Santa Fe River Basin."

The report shows that Jefferson County received 1.38 inches in October, compared with

3.69 inches in October 2009 and its historical October average of 3.07 inches.

Jefferson County has received 60.85 inches during the last 12 months.

Madison County, meanwhile, received 0.87 inch of rainfall in October, compared with 2.75 inches last October and its historical October average of 3.24 inches. Madison County has received 61.04 inches during the last 12 months.

The report indicates that river flows generally fell to near or below normal for the month; that lake levels continued to fall, including

Sneads Smokehouse Lake in Jefferson County; and that groundwater levels declined by an average of 6 inches across the district.

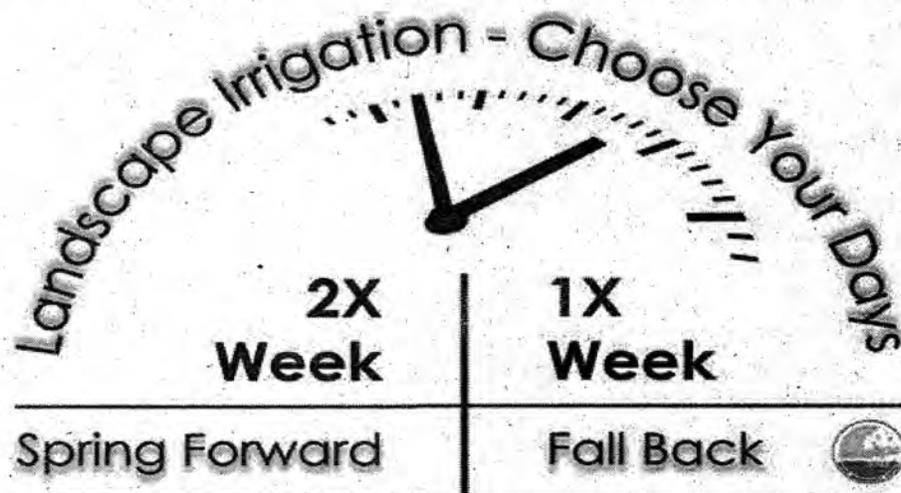
The district reminds homeowners that they are required to limit landscape irrigation to one day per week, based on a year-round water-conservation rule that applies to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public and commercial businesses not regulated by district-issued permits.

The SRWMD compiles the hydrologic conditions report using water resource data collected from radar-derived rainfall estimates, groundwater and surface water levels, and river flows, among other variables.

The SRWMD encompasses all or parts of 15 counties in north-central Florida, including Madison County and the eastern half of Jefferson County.

14 Madison Enterprise-Recorder

# Time Change Brings Reminder To Fall Back to One-Day-A-Week Lawn Watering



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The rule applies to those with private wells and to those using public utilities. It applies

both to groundwater (aquifer) and surfacewater (rivers, lakes) sources. But it does not apply to the use of reclaimed water or water from rain barrels.

For more information please contact the District's permitting staff at 800.226.1066 (FL toll free) or visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com).

# Lake Louise saga over

## Controversial project comes to a quiet end with 5-0 vote

By Jeff Waters

jeff.waters@gafnews.com

The Suwannee County Commission wasted little time Tuesday in disposing of an issue that had been debated, often heatedly, for the

past four years.

Commissioners voted 5-0 to return three acres to the woman who donated it to the county for a boat ramp and park on Lake Louise in 2007.

The vote to give the land back to

Sandra Grinnell had been delayed for several commission meetings, the last one being Nov. 1, to allow two newly elected commissioners address the issue.

Grinnell's attorney, M.B. Adelson IV, had appeared before the board Oct. 19 urging commissioners to return the property.

SEE LAKE, PAGE 3A

Continued From Page 1A

Grinnell granted the property on certain conditions, which if unmet, required the county to return the land to her. Three years later Adelson said none of those conditions had been met, and asked the county to honor the reverter clause.

One condition called for the county to begin construction on the project within 12 months of the signed agreement - something that didn't happen, Adelson claimed.

Throughout the debate, however, County Attorney Hal Airth has stuck by his assertion that the county upheld its end of the agreement, as evidenced by the construction of a culvert on the property and in obtaining permits for the project.

Adelson, however, countered that just obtaining permits wasn't good enough, and that the culvert was placed on a county right-of-way, not on the land deeded to the county by Grinnell.

Commissioner Wesley Wainwright made the motion to return the land to Grinnell after a brief discussion and little response from the audience. Commissioner Phil Oxendine seconded.

"After running for office and meeting

people in my district, I felt it was a waste of money that I thought could be used for things like roads," said Oxendine, in whose district the lake is located. "That's what I've been hearing more about is roads."

With about \$64,000 already spent on the project, Airth said there was no way of knowing how much the project would have ultimately cost.

"If you give it back, you cut the cash cow off," said Airth. "I haven't seen anything that water management is going to get us a permit for this thing, ever."

Grinnell had told the *Democrat* in a previous issue that she would sue the county if the land was not returned.

Resident Bruce Campbell told commissioners the lake isn't owned by the residents whose homes surround it, and said it should have been opened to the public.

"I don't think the board should act on it before the public has a chance to be heard on it," he said. "The people of this county have a right to fish these lakes."

Campbell was one of just two residents to speak on the issue at the meeting.

Grinnell first proposed the deal to the county in 2006.

# PRESCRIBED BURNING PLANNED AT MALLORY SWAMP DEC. 1

US State News  
November 24, 2010

LIVE OAK, Fla., Nov. 23 -- The Suwannee River Water Management District issued the following news release:

Taking steps to avoid a repeat of the 2001 Mallory Swamp Fire that burned 60,000 acres in Lafayette County, land managers will conduct prescribed burns in Mallory Swamp starting December 1, 2010 and extending through Spring 2011.

This activity may temporarily produce smoke or other hazardous conditions. For the safety of recreational users, some roads may be closed and public access may be limited on certain sections of the property including the Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area.

Current drought conditions throughout much of the Suwannee River Water Management District region make areas like Mallory Swamp vulnerable to wildfire. By conducting prescribed burns, land managers are able to:

- \* reduce fuel levels to help lower the intensity of any possible wildfires;
- \* prepare the area for tree planting activities that will occur during the winter months; and
- \* facilitate overall ecological restoration of Mallory Swamp.

The public can monitor the Important Notices page on the Suwannee River Water Management District website at <http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com/index.aspx?NID=61> for more definite burning dates as they become available.

Questions should be directed to Scott Gregor, natural resource specialist, at 386-362-8130. For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at [htsyndication@hindustantimes.com](mailto:htsyndication@hindustantimes.com)

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US State News

Wire News provided by



# SUWANNEE RIVER FLOWING AT NEAR-RECORD LOW LEVELS

October was one of county's driest months ever.

By TONY BRITT  
tbritt@lakecityreporter.com

The flow of the Suwannee River at two area water level gauges has dwindled to near-record low levels.

Suwannee River flows, according to the water level gauges at White Springs and Branford, are below the fifth percentile for the entire record, officials said.

"Ninety five percent of the time since the 1930s, the flows have been higher at these gauges than they are now," said Megan Wetherington, a senior professional engineer with the Suwannee River Water Management District. "It's pretty significant low-flow conditions."

She said the principal culprit behind the low river flows has been lack of rainfall.

"In the last two months we've had a really profound lack of rainfall," Wetherington said. "Columbia County had one of the driest months on record. In October there was only two-one hun-



JASON MATTHEW WALKER/Lake City Reporter

Wendell Hannum, the owner of American Canoe Adventures in White Springs, gazes at the Suwannee River, which is — in some places — reaching its near record low levels. Hannum said that the low levels have affected his business so much that he had to cut down the number of 'put-in' places along the Suwannee River from nine to seven.

dredths of rain recorded at the Lake City gauge — that's among the four driest months on record since 1892 for Lake City."

Thus far in November, Columbia County is at about 50 percent of its normal rainfall.

Wetherington said the past few dry months, combined with just normal rainfall levels during the summer, has caused the rivers to decline, even though they were at normal levels in May and June.

"It's just steadily fallen and now (the flow levels) are close to record low for both the Santa Fe and Suwannee Rivers," she said.

Suwannee River Water Management District officials are concerned with the low flow levels and the potential it has to impact the area.

For people who use the rivers for recreational purposes such as boating or canoeing, Wetherington said more effort may be required in making trips.

"Although at low levels the rivers are very beautiful and there are some very interesting geological features exposed on the banks that don't get seen very often," she said.

The Suwannee River's watershed begins in Georgia, with half of it around Tipton and with the Okefenokee Swamp serving as its headwaters. Two of the Suwannee River's major tributaries, the Alapaha River and the Withlacoochee River, begin north of Tipton.

"The portion of Georgia that affects us has basically been having the same problems we've been having," Wetherington said.

Rainfall predictions

RIVER continued on 3A



JASON MATTHEW WALKER/Lake City Reporter

A tree line is seen in the reflection of the Suwannee River.

## RIVER: Near record-low levels

Continued From Page 1A

through Spring 2011 are not optimistic and officials say there is little relief in sight.

"According to the National Weather Service, their pre-

diction is for a high chance for drier than normal conditions through the spring because of the La Nina conditions in the Pacific that typically produce dry weather

for us," Wetherington said. "According to those long-term forecasts, it's a statistical likelihood that we will not get much relief in the next several months."

## Monticello News, November 24, 2010

**Nestlé Opponents Voice Concerns To Commission**

By Laz Aleman  
ECB Publishing  
[laz@embarqmail.com](mailto:laz@embarqmail.com)

Nov. 23, 2010

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Following on their recent river rally and a flood of letters to commissioners, a group of Nestlé Waters' opponents representing three counties approached the Jefferson County Commission on Tuesday evening, Nov. 16, to register their concerns and ask that the board act to protect the county's natural resources.

Georgia Ackerman, of Friends of the Wacissa (FTW), which describes itself as a regional volunteer coalition of concerned citizens; and April Reagan, of Protect our Wacissa River Springs (PoWRS), a Wacissa based citizens' coalition, jointly headed the group, which consisted of about 20 individuals.

Ackerman offered that the participants' presence at the meeting was both to register concern about a water-bottling operation on the Wacissa River and put faces to some of the letters that the commissioners had been receiving.

"We have concerns," Ackerman said. "We believe that Florida's waters belong to its citizens, not to bottling companies."

Reagan, for her part, asked that the officials be more thorough in their deliberations on Nestlé Waters than they had been on the Malloy Road Landing issue.

"We ask that you thoroughly research the river and Nestlé," Reagan said, alluding to the closing of Malloy Road Landing as a prelude to Nestlé Waters coming here, a charge that the company adamantly denies.

Ackerman and Reagan asked the members of the group to stand and identify themselves and state their places of residences, which were Leon, Wakulla and Jefferson counties. Among the several who chose to address the board individually were Tommy Thompson, a middle school teacher and former international guide; Pam Granger, a Wacissa resident; Mike Mendez, a retired business professional; and Rick Petter, a computer technology consultant.

All urged the commissioners to protect the natural wonder of the Wacissa River and say no to Nestlé Waters.

Thompson told commissioners the Wacissa was as beautiful and exotic as any natural wonder that he had seen the world over; Granger asked commissioners to protect and preserve the river for the sake of its endangered and near endangered species and future generations; Mendez warned of the commercial exploitation of the finite resource of water absent any local economic benefits, akin to a third world treatment of Jefferson County; and Petter talked of the regional impact of whatever decision the commission made relative to the bottling company.

But it was Roland Brumbley, of Wacissa, who brought the issue down to the nitty-gritty, insofar as explaining why the group was focusing its efforts on the Jefferson County Commission, long before Nestlé Waters has completed its testing on the river to determine if the project is even feasible and before it has applied to the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) for a water use permit.

Brumbley told the commissioners that the final decision on Nestlé Waters rested with them, as the opponents of the project had come to understand it.

He said he and others of the group had had a good meeting with SRWMD Executive Director David Still the night before.

"And the general consensus is that the stopping point rests with you," Brumbley said, adding that the board needed to do its research and adopt an ordinance or amend the comprehensive plan or do whatever was necessary to stop Nestlé Waters and protect the county's natural resources.

"It lies in your hands and we're asking you to do the right thing for this county," Brumbley said.

Nestlé Waters North America bills itself as America's largest bottled water company with seven regional spring water brands, including Zephyrhills and Deer Park brands, which are produced in Florida. The company operates a bottling facility at Blue Springs in Madison County and also draws water from satellite springs in Liberty and Washington counties. It is in the early stages of testing and gathering data to determine the viability of the Wacissa River as a satellite spring source for the company's bottled drinking waters.

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2010

DIXIE COUNTY TIMES, CROSS CITY, FLORIDA

## Prescribed Burning Planned At Mallory Swamp

Taking steps to avoid a repeat of the 2001 Mallory Swamp Fire that burned 60,000 acres in Lafayette County, land managers will conduct prescribed burns in Mallory Swamp starting December 1, 2010 and extending through Spring 2011.

This activity may temporarily produce smoke or other hazardous conditions. For the safety of recreational users, some roads may be closed and public access may be limited on certain sections of the property including the Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area.

Current drought conditions throughout much of the Suwannee River Water Management District region make areas like Mallory Swamp vulnerable to wildfire.

By conducting prescribed burns, land managers are able to:

- reduce fuel levels to help lower the intensity of any possible wildfires;

- prepare the area for tree planting activities that will occur during the winter months; and

- facilitate overall ecological restoration of Mallory Swamp.

The public can monitor the Important Notices page on the Suwannee River Water Management District website at <http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com/index.aspx?NID=61> <http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com/index.aspx?NID=61> for more definite burning dates as they become available.

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THE MAYO FREE PRESS, Mayo, FL

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# Wacissa River Is Topic Of Main Street Speakers Series

LAZARO ALEMAN  
ECB Publishing  
Senior Staff Writer

The Wacissa River was the topic of a presentation to a group of county residents at the Wirick-Simmons House on Monday evening, Nov. 15. This time, however, the focus was on kayaking the river, although Nestlé Waters did come up briefly.

Doug Alderson, a naturalist, former editor of Florida Wildlife Magazine, and a published author of several

nature-oriented books, was Main Street's second guest in its speakers' series. Alderson accompanied his talk with a slide show of photos depicting scenes of the river and the wildlife along its banks.

A Michigan native whose family moved to north Florida from the Chicago area in 1968 when he was 11, Alderson has been canoeing — and now kayaking — the Wacissa

**Please See Wacissa  
Page 6A**

## Wacissa

River ever since.

"I've done 200 to 300 trips down the Wacissa since I was 11," Alderson said. "It's my favorite river."

He said unlike the Wakulla, which got developed during the 1980s, the Wacissa remained practically unchanged and relatively pristine, except for some nitrate infiltration. He said the river water's clarity and its fish and wildlife made it a natural gem.

Alderson also briefly touched on the Aucilla River, which he said he tended to lump with the Wacissa, as the two rivers joined via the Slave Canal near the coast. Although the Aucilla was normally navigable below U.S. 27, it was always best to check with the Florida Paddling Trails Association before planning any trip, as the water level tended to vary, he said. It was also advisable to get a detailed map of the river from the Suwannee River Water Management District, he said.

Besides having historical value — mastiff and mastodon bones have been found on the Aucilla, as well as archeological evidence of man's early presence in the region — the river had a few mini rapids that provided a modicum of canoeing or kayaking excitement, Alderson said.

He said above U.S. 27, the river disappeared into a series of sinkholes that resembled a dinosaur's tail. Here were limerock walls and beautiful virgin cypresses that had been spared because they were deemed to have no com-

mercial wood value, Alderson said. He called the setting extremely picturesque.

"It's one of the most scenic places in the state," he said.

Alderson said the site could be reached via the Florida National Scenic Trail, which itself was accessible off Goose Pasture Road. He said the three-mile hike made for a nice and worthwhile outing, especially in fall, when the insect population was down.

Of the Wacissa, Alderson noted that the river started wide, divided into a series of braids midway, and eventually widened again near Goose Pasture, about 10 miles downriver.

He showed photos of some of the fauna and flora that one was likely to encounter on the river, including alligators, apple snails, purple flag irises, snowy egrets, swallowtail kites, wood ducks and the rare limpkin.

"The river has a different character each time," Alderson said, adding that he preferred to kayak it early mornings or late afternoons whenever he got the opportunity, as these were the times when the wildlife was most prevalent and active.

He noted that the river had been used as a canoe trail for thousands of years, and that bison had inhabited the area until the 1800s.

He called the Slave Canal "the wilderness experience of the Wacissa" and "one of the most intriguing places in Florida".

Constructed by slaves in the 1800s as a means of allowing for the shipment of goods downriver to the Gulf,

the canal's commercial viability proved iffy and short-lived at best. Nonetheless, it made for a very wild and beautiful setting today, he said.

Alderson advised canoeists and kayakers to use a guide their first time on the Slave Canal, as finding its entrance could prove tricky, and if the entrance were missed, one could well end up lost in the swamps, he said.

The canal, in fact, was recently mentioned in a *New York Times* article about the seven least paddled rivers in the United States.

Alderson's only comment on Nestlé Waters was that he didn't see any benefit to the community from a bottling-water operation on the river. Interestingly, he noted, opposition to the bottling operation had brought together canoeists and kayakers on the one hand, and motorboat and airboat operators on the other, groups that historically tended to be antagonists.

He ended his talk with what he called the inspirational example of a group of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in central Florida who, worried that the land surrounding their elementary school was slated for development (to the detriment of the native scrub jay population), banded together and started a fundraising campaign that sparked community support and ultimately preserved the land as a wildlife habitat.

Such successes represented "a surge of hope", Alderson said.

"We have to be vigilant; that's the key to keeping the land pristine," he said.