

WCTV.TV, December 1, 2010

Conservation Easement Preserves Steinhatchee River Watershed

An easement will protect 6,996 acres of swamp and wetland forests, bogs swamp and hydric hammock.

Reporter: Suwannee River Water Management District Release



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LIVE OAK, FL, December 1, 2010 –

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The property is adjacent to Mallory Swamp and the Eight Mile Creek, an important tributary to the Steinhatchee River, originates on the land. The easement protects 6,996 acres of swamp and wetland forests, bogs swamp and hydric hammock. The remainder of the property mostly consists of planted pine.

Under the terms of the conservation easement, landowners of the property have agreed to keep the property in its current natural state. The agreement restricts harvesting or alteration of forested wetlands. Silviculture activities in non-wetland areas must comply with best management practices to protect the environment.

"The conservation easement continues to be an excellent example of the compatibility of sustainable forestry and watershed protection for the Steinhatchee River," said Joe Flanagan, the District's director of land acquisition and management.

"It's been a good partnership for us; it's allowed us to continue our forestry operations while protecting the environment," said Jim Bailey.

A conservation easement is a perpetual agreement that leaves the basic ownership and management of property with the private landowner but permanently restricts development and prohibits the alteration of wetlands. The District currently protects more than 125,000 acres of water resource lands using this tool.

Looking To Buy A Home In North Florida & South Georgia?



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Now is the time to cut back on water usage so you can save on future bills

WASTEWATER RATES

■ The wastewater rate is determined by taking the average daily water consumption for January and February bills, multiplying that by 30.4 and rounding to the nearest 1,000 gallons.

■ GRU charges \$5.29 for every thousand gallons used, in addition to a \$6.50 customer charge.

The wastewater rates for 2011 will be determined by usage for the next two billing cycles.

By Chad Smith
Staff writer

For most of Gainesville Regional Utilities' residential customers, 'tis the season to be stingy.

Their wastewater rates for 2011 will be determined by their usage beginning with the billing cycle that starts this month.

Called the "winter max," the rates most

Inside

■ Tips to reduce water consumption, 4A

residential customers pay are determined by how much water is used for the January and February bills. And depending on

when their meters are read, whether at the beginning of the month or the end, the dial might start moving today.

Basically, the wastewater rate — since most residents don't have wastewater meters — is determined by taking the average daily water consumption for those two months, multiplying that by 30.4 and rounding to the nearest 1,000 gallons.

WATER on Page 4A

WATER: Irrigation lower at this time of year

Continued from 1A

GRU charges \$5.29 for every thousand gallons used, in addition to a \$6.50 customer charge.

The average consumer uses 5,000 gallons of water a month, down from 6,000 two or three years ago, said Kim Jamerson, a spokeswoman for the city-owned utility.

"Winter months are used to set this winter max ... because the amount of irrigation is typically lower," Jamerson said.

That way, the rates are more comparable to actual usage inside the home.

It appears that consumers have received the message that reducing consumption benefits their pocketbooks — not to

Tips to reduce water consumption

- **Install** low-flow toilets and shower heads
- **Install** aerators to limit water flow from sink faucets
- **Repair** pipe leaks
- **Limit** lawn irrigation and only water in early morning or evening hours
- **Use plants** that need little water in landscaping
- **Run** the dishwasher only when it's full

SOURCES: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Department of Energy; Gainesville Regional Utilities.

mention the environment.

David Still, executive director of the Suwannee River Water

Management District, said that coming off a dry fall into the winter, the driest time of the year, could be problematic for conservation.

At the district's meeting later this month, the board will discuss declaring a Phase 1 water shortage, which means the district will ask residents to voluntarily use less water before more drastic measures have to be taken.

Regardless, he said, the district has received a lot of support from residents since officially limiting irrigation to two times a week in the warmer, wetter months and once a week in the dry season.

"We're getting a lot of compliance with it," Still said. "A lot of people understand the issues."

Conservation easement preserves Steinhatchee River watershed

Submitted

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THE JASPER NEWS, Jasper, FL

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2010

SRWMD Governing Board meeting

Submitted

On Tuesday, December 14, 2010, the Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the R. O. Ranch, 984 SE CR 357, Mayo, Florida. The meeting is to consider District business and conduct public hearings on regulatory and land acquisition matters. Rules 40B-1.706 and 40B-2.025, F.A.C., will be discussed and action is expected to be taken. A workshop will follow the Governing Board meeting.

On Monday, December 27, 2010, 1:00 p.m., a Governing Board teleconference meeting will be held at District Headquarters in Live Oak, Florida.

All meetings, workshops, and hearings are open to the public.

City Seeks Money For High-End Sewer Plant

By Laz Aleman
ECB Publishing
laz@embarqmail.com

Dec. 04, 2010

Although Monticello city officials expect that the new water quality standards that a federal agency recently finalized for Florida will be challenged in court, they are nonetheless pursuing construction of a new treatment plant that will meet the new requirements.

City Manager Steve Wingate said on Tuesday, Nov. 30, that he expected the new standards that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had finalized 15 days earlier would end up in litigation, given the many cities and counties that have constructed new treatment plants and must now upgrade these to meet the new requirements.

It's the representation of opponents of the EPA's action that the new standards will cost Florida as much as \$50 billion to implement. Indeed, it's Wingate's estimate that it will cost Monticello an additional \$400,000 to \$500,000 to construct a treatment plant that meets the new standards. Even so, he said city officials continue seeking about \$5.5 million from Rural Development for construction of an advanced treatment plant that would meet the new standards.

Wingate said the city has already submitted its preliminary engineering and environmental reports to Rural Development and is awaiting word from the agency on what to do next. Rural Development is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Wingate said it was his hope to begin construction on a new treatment plant as soon as six months. The city's current treatment plant has been deemed unsound because of its bowing walls and other structural problems.

The new EPA standards, meanwhile, are intended to reduce the water pollution that causes harmful algae blooms, themselves products of the phosphorous and nitrogen pollution that enters Florida's waterways from the land in the form of livestock manure, fertilizers, stormwater runoff and treated effluent. The new standards set specific numeric limits on the amount of nutrient pollution that is allowed to enter Florida's lakes, rivers, streams and springs.

"These specific limits will provide much needed predictability and clarity to all involved in protecting water quality compared to the current general standards," EPA information specialist Davina Marraccini said on Nov. 15. "Currently, more than 1,900 rivers and streams, 375,000 acres of lakes, and 500 square miles of estuaries are known to be impaired by nutrients in Florida."

The new standards take effect 15 months hence, giving cities, towns, businesses, other stakeholders and the state of Florida ample opportunity to review the new standards and develop strategies for implementing them, according to the EPA.

"After extensive scientific study, multiple rounds of public discussion, and collaboration between the state of Florida and EPA, we're ready to work together to tackle a problem that for years has threatened drinking water supplies, hurt tourism revenue and lowered property values," Peter Silva, assistant administrator for the Office of Water at the EPA, is quoted saying. "Clean water is essential to Florida's environmental and economic health. This rule will allow the people of Florida to take common sense, cost-effective steps to tackle harmful nutrient water pollution."

During the 15-month period before the numeric standards take effect, the EPA promises to work closely with the state to determine the next steps to achieve the standards' objectives.

"The standards do not take a one-size-fits-all approach, but reflect conditions in the different watershed regions and allow for case-by-case adjustments based on local environmental factor while maintaining water quality," Marraccini said. "Government or other stakeholders can seek special consideration in cases where the state and local communities have extensively assessed water bodies and effective measures are in place to reduce nutrient pollution."

Nutrient pollution has contributed to the degradation of approximately 1,918 miles of rivers and streams, 378,435 acres of lakes, and 569 square miles of estuaries in Florida, according to an Integrated Water Quality Assessment conducted in 2010.

The EPA standards result from a lawsuit that the Florida Wildlife Federation filed in 2008 charging that the agency was not enforcing the Clean Water Act in the state. The resulting settlement, reflected in a consent order entered in August 2009, required that the EPA adopt specific or numeric nutrient pollution standards by November 2010. Under the degree, the EPA is also required to issue additional standards for Florida's coastal waters by August 2012.

The EPA's rules have thus far been opposed by the Florida League of Cities and a coalition of agriculture and industry groups. Opponents argue that the new regulations will cost the state's water utilities billions of dollars in upgrades to water treatment facilities. Opponents also argue that the new requirements could stall the state's economic recovery, push up unemployment, and force businesses to pass the costs of the upgrades to consumers.

SRWMD Head Clarifies Issues Relative To Nestlé

By Laz Aleman
ECB Publishing
laz@embarqmail.com

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Concerning remarks attributed to him at a recent Jefferson County Commission meeting to the effect that local officials ultimately would decide the fate of a water bottling operation on the Wacissa River, David Still, executive director of the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), last week clarified his meaning.

Still told the Journal on Tuesday, Nov. 23, that what he had tried to impress on the group of concerned citizens who had met with him earlier in the week was that the land zoning and water permit issues that would determine the fate of the bottling operation were parallel processes that could occur simultaneously.

"Normally, the applicant will meet our rules," Still said. "If that's the case, it's up to the county to make the land-use decision."

He noted that in Gilchrist County, the SRWMD had issued the water use permit for a bottling operation, but then the Gilchrist County Commission had killed the project with a zoning change.

Being that the two processes were parallel and independent, it was sometimes the case that an applicant would seek the zoning change prior to approaching the district for a water use permit, Still said.

In was also sometimes the case that an applicant would then attempt to use the zoning change approval to argue that the project was okay and so the district should approve the water use permit; or vice versa, use the water use permit to argue that the county should therefore approve the zoning, he said.

In the case of the district, such arguments didn't hold water, insofar as convincing the staff to rule one way or the other on the water use permit, Still said, reiterating that the permit was issued strictly on the basis of the scientific data.

Still took slight issue with the representation that the permitting process typically took about 18 months. He said the district could issue a permit as soon as 90 days, depending on the completeness of the application. In those instances where the permit took longer, it was often because the application lacked completeness or specificity and the district had to request additional information, he said.

As for the factors dictating his staff's recommendation for approval or denial of a permit, Still said these factors resided strictly within the scientific data. But he conceded that the SRWMD governing board, which ultimately decides such issues, could choose to accept, reject or amend the staff's recommendation.

Still differed from a view printed in the Tallahassee Democrat that in the case of the Madison bottling facility, the SRWMD scientists had recommended that Nestlé Waters be allowed to extract 400,000 gallons a day from Blue Springs and the SRWMD governing board had upped it 1.46 million gallons daily for political and other reasons.

Still said the way he remembered it, Nestlé Waters had acquired an existing agricultural permit that was for 400,000 gallons a day and the company had asked that the board modify that volume to 1.46 million gallons to make it viable for a bottling operation. He said to his recollection, the SRWMD staff had had nothing to do with the 400,000 gallons.

In a Nov. 7 piece titled My View in the Democrat, Andy Opel, an associate professor in the School of Communication at Florida State University, wrote in part that "In response to Nestlé's initial pumping application, the scientist at this (SRWMD) office recommended reducing the amount of water Nestlé could extract from 1.46 million gallons a day to 400,000, over concerns for the local environment."

"In January 2003, Nestlé sought to override the decision by appealing to the water district's governing board, whose members had been appointed by then Gov. Jeb Bush," Opel wrote. "Nestlé 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 Nestlé demands, overriding the recommendation of the state scientists charged with safeguarding Florida's water."

Report Finds Groundwater Declining In Parts Of Region

By Laz Aleman
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Dec. 04, 2010

A lengthy and comprehensive assessment conducted by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) to determine the availability of its water supplies over the next 20 years points to significant increases in water consumption over the period, at the same time that water resources are already declining in portions of the region.

The findings are part of an 89-page document titled 2010 Water Supply Assessment Report, a draft of which can be viewed online at www.srwmd.state.fl.us/, under the heading Water Supply Planning.

The report projects that the district's total water use will undergo an increase of 10.3 million gallons per day by 2030, based on a low-range projection; and it will undergo an increase of 62.8 million gallons daily by 2030, based on a high-range projection.

The total water use is calculated on the consumption of all major water use categories, which the district identifies as including public supply, domestic self-supply, agriculture, industrial/commercial/institutional, thermo-electric power generation, and recreation.

The report identifies specific areas of the district "where the use of groundwater to satisfy water demands for the (20-year) planning period will cause negative impacts to natural systems", underscoring the point that "nearly all water used in the district is supplied by groundwater from the Upper Floridan aquifer".

The district staff used data from previous and ongoing hydrologic investigations, as well as the North Florida groundwater flow model, to determine the ability of the groundwater to meet the projected demands of the 20-year planning period.

The report defines the North Florida groundwater model as "a predictive tool used to understand how current and projected groundwater withdrawals within the model area affect aquifer and lake levels and flow in springs and rivers". It identifies the model area as including "all of the district, as well as large areas of the St. John's River Water Management District, smaller areas in the Northwest and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts, and the State of Georgia."

States the report: "The results of this analysis indicate that the water resources of the northeastern portion of the district are in decline. This trend is especially evident in groundwater levels of the Upper Floridan aquifer, which declined significantly during the past half century."

The result of the decline, according to the report, translates into a decrease of more than 20 percent, or 1,900 square miles, in the size of the area contributing groundwater to the northeastern portion of the district. And the apparent cause for the significant decrease stems from groundwater withdrawals by the district itself, as well as the St. John's River and Georgia, according to the report.

"The decline in groundwater levels in the northeastern district is suspected to have impacted a number of rivers and springs to the degree that they are not currently meeting their established minimum flows and levels or interim flow constraints, or they are predicted to fall below them during the planning period," the report states.

The district, in fact, is recommending that certain of the affected areas be required to develop water supply plans that rely on conservation and alternative sources, other than groundwater, to meet their future demands; and that these areas also develop water recovery plans. Among the sources that the report evaluated as possible alternatives were river surface water, reclaimed water and brackish groundwater.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations that identify ways the district can enhance its statutory responsibilities to meet water supply demand while protecting the natural systems. These recommendations include enhancing data collection and analysis efforts to gain a better understanding of hydrologic trends; continuing the district's modeling efforts to refine the understanding of the magnitude of existing and projected impacts to water resources; and coordinating with other water management districts, Georgia and the U.S. Geological Survey to develop cooperative strategies to enhance data collection and analysis efforts, identify current and future regional water resource impacts, and recover or avoid impacts.

Among the more specific recommendations, the report advises the designation of the Upper Santa Fe River Basin as a Water Resource Caution Area, and the designation of the Lower Santa Fe River Basin, the Upper Suwannee River Region and the Atapaha River Basin as Water Supply Planning Regions. Meaning, among other possibilities, that within these designated areas, the district would restrict the duration of water use permits to no more than five years until recovery and prevention strategies were developed and implemented; would require all new applicants for water use permits and those renewing permits in excess of 100,000 gallons daily to meter their use; and would encourage new applicants for water use permits in excess of 500,000 gallons daily to use alternative sources of water, if the latter are technically, economically and environmentally feasible.

The bottom line, as SRWMD Executive David Still put it, is that water is a finite resource, and the area can no longer take it for granted.

"We're simply depleting it pretty fast," Still said.

And once it was gone, it was gone forever, he said.

Carlos Herd, a senior hydrology geologist with the SRWMD, essentially made the same point: conservation will more and more have to become a reality in the future.

Herd noted that the projected and already existing water declines were most evident in the eastern parts of the district, largely because of the State of Georgia and the nine counties in northeast Florida that were drawing water from the aquifer. But although water was still relatively plentiful in the western parts of the district, including Jefferson County, it didn't mean it could be taken for granted, he said.

"We need to keep an eye on Valdosta, which could impact the area there," Herd said. "These water issues are encroaching on our region. We have to be careful and manage our resources better. We're going to have to look more at conservation. We're all going to have to conserve and cut back more. We're becoming more aware that water's not an infinite resource."

As for the eastern portions of the district where water declines are already evident, Herd said the SRWMD is trying to coordinate its remedial efforts with Georgia and the other water management districts, at the same time that he conceded the difficulty of the task. Creating the difficulty, he noted, were the economic, political, and other pressures bearing on the different players, and the fact that the aquifer extends beyond the boundaries of any one jurisdiction.

What the SRWMD didn't want, Herd said, was to get in a situation as happened in the western part of the state and in other parts of the country, where the issue becomes mired in litigation.

Friday, December 3, 2010

Jefferson County Journal

SRWMD Head Clarifies Issues Relative To Nestlé

Calls Water Permit & Zoning Parallel Processes

LAZARO ALEMAN

ECB Publishing

Senior Staff Writer

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Please See Nestle Page 6A

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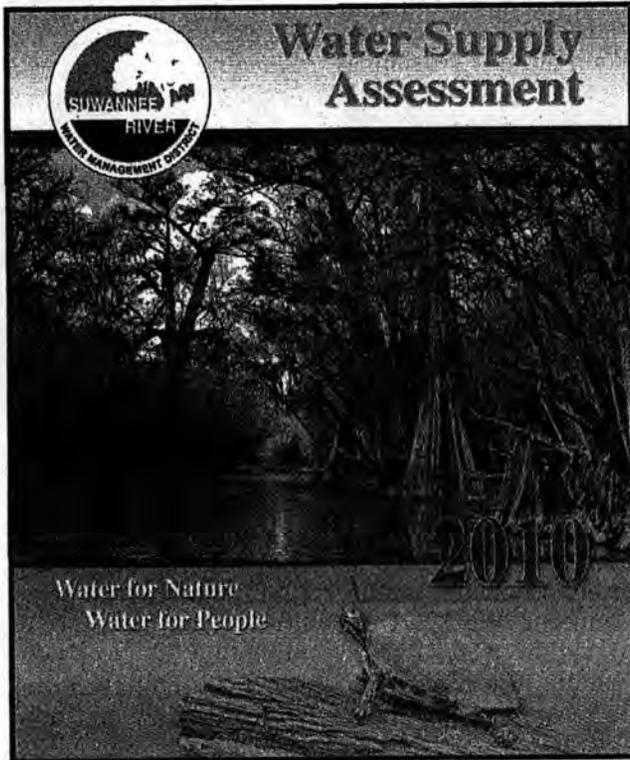
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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2010 THE MAYO FREE PRESS, Mayo, FL

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Continued From Page 1A

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"The conservation easement continues to be an excellent example of the compatibility of sustainable forestry and watershed protection for the Steinhatchee River," said Joe Flanagan, the District's director of land acquisition and management.

"It's been a good partnership for us;

it's allowed us to continue our forestry operations while protecting the environment," said Jim Bailey.

A conservation easement is a perpetual agreement that leaves the basic ownership and management of property with the private landowner but permanently restricts development and prohibits the alteration of wetlands. The District currently protects more than 125,000 acres of water resource lands using this tool.

SEE CONSERVATION, PAGE 7A

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2010

THE MAYO FREE PRESS, Mayo, FL

SRWMD Governing Board to meet in Mayo

The Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet Tuesday, Dec. 14, at 9 a.m. at the R.O. Ranch, 984 SE CR 357, Mayo. The meeting is to consider district business and conduct public hearings on regulatory and land acquisition matters. Rules 40B-1.706 and 40B-2.025, F.A.C. will be discussed and ac-

tion is expected to be taken. A workshop will follow the Governing Board meeting.

On Monday, Dec. 27 at 1 p.m., a governing board teleconference meeting will be held at District Headquarters in Live Oak.

All meetings, workshops, and hearings are open to the public.

Jefferson Journal

county

Live Oak FL 32060-7056



Vol. 4 No. 21

Florida's Keystone County

50¢ 46¢ + 4¢

Friday, December 10, 2010

Issue Of Nestlé & Wacissa River Dominated Lawmakers' Hearing

LIBRARY AID, PUBLIC HEALTH, ROADS ARE OTHER ISSUES

LAZARO ALEMAN
ECB Publishing
Senior Staff Writer

Although not in its entirety, the issue of Nestlé Waters North America and its designs on the Wacissa River dominated a large portion of the legislative delegation's hearing on Monday evening, Dec. 6, with all four lawmakers offering assurances that they would closely monitor the situation and possibly even introduce legislation to affect the outcome.

Indeed, with the exception of the typical local concerns and priorities voiced by elected and other officials of the

city, county and school district, the hearing's greatest emphasis was on Nestlé Waters and the Wacissa River.

Undoubtedly anticipating the topic, all four lawmakers alluded to the issue in their opening remarks and offered statements vouching for their interest and commitment to safeguarding and preserving the region's natural resources and the general environment.

"I can assure you that you're talking to the choir," said Senator Charles Dean, who will chair the environmental preservation and conservation committee in the coming session.

"You have a friend in me," said Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, who has twice previously introduced legislation to tax bottled waters and plans to reintroduce the legislation again in the coming session.

Senator Bill Montford and Representative Leonard Bemby likewise expressed support for protection and preservation of the region's natural resources. But they cautioned that opponents of the bottling operation must remain politically active and engaged in the legislative process if they expected their efforts to prove successful.

Following the delegation's opening remarks, Economic Development Director Julie Conley, speaking as a member of the Jefferson Legislative Committee, welcomed the lawmakers and presented each with a copy of the official booklet detailing the community's priority projects.

Changing hats, Conley asked on behalf of the Economic Development Council that the lawmakers ensure adequate funding in the coming session for rural infrastructure projects.

Roland Brumbley next addressed the delegation, followed by Bill Brooks and Lisa Hayes,

all speaking on Nestlé Water and the Wacissa River.

Brumbley asked the legislators to do whatever

they could to keep "foreign for-profit companies out of our county." He said drawing million of gallons of water from the Wacissa River would threaten the fish and wildlife, as well as lowering wells in the area and potentially creating sinkholes. What's more, the county would reap no benefits from the project, he said.

"I'm here to ask if you will consider some legislation to limit the mining of our water from our state by foreign companies for profit," Brumbley said. "Nestlé Waters' home base is in Sweden. Why should they take something free and sell it for profit? We need to shut them down. If you tax the water in a bottle, it can stop them...Right now, we get no benefits. All we get is hurt. We're asking for your help, not next year but now. Nestlé Waters is already

running wide open with their lawyers and public relations people. They're gathering the data and ammunition to apply for a permit."

Dean assured Brumbley and the several other Nestlé Waters opponents in the audience that the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) had not issued the company a consumptive water permit.

"I assure you that we will work closely with the district," Dean said. "Your issue is not unique. It's an issue that we have in several counties. It's a serious issue and we will be monitoring it throughout. I want to make sure that we don't set a precedent that we'll be sorry about."

Bemby was equally supportive.

Please See Nestle
Page 4A

"Natural resources is a large part of what we have in District 10," Bemby said. "We won't let anybody sell our natural resources for profit. I would be surprised if a permit is issued, but it has to be seen what will happen. I assure you that I will be very plugged into the process and active in protecting what we have in Jefferson County."

Rehwinkel Vasilinda said the issue was likewise extremely important to her.

"It makes no sense to me to allow a company to draw water from our aquifer and sell it for a profit," Rehwinkel Vasilinda said, adding that she had previously introduced legislation to tax bottled water and would do so again in the coming session.

"You have my pledge," she said.

Added Montford, "We don't let people cut our timber and sell it for profit, and the same should apply to water."

But he told opponents of the enterprise that they needed to make their presence felt on the Hill, meaning the state capitol.

"You've got to do your part in Tallahassee," Montford said. "When the other side comes to Tallahassee, you've got to come there also and make your feelings known."

Brooks, a retired helicopter paramedics and former Jefferson County Planning Commission member, called himself a relative newcomer, having lived only 30 years in the county. Yet he had been blessed to marry into a family that owned a large tract alongside the Wacissa River, he said.

Brooks talked of his

connection to the river, and of his having had the pleasure of introducing his son to hunting and fishing. He called the Nestlé Waters project a bad business decision, in that the community would be giving away a finite resource without knowing what the future held in store.

"We seemed to be trapped in an illusion that we're separate from the environment," Brooks said. "Here in north Florida, we know how important the environment is, but much of the population of Florida has lost this connection. Nestlé Waters is an international corporation. It doesn't care about this county, the state or the United States. It cares only about its stakeholders."

He called the campaign against drinking tap water a bill of goods that the water bottling companies had sold to the public. "There is nothing wrong with tap water," Brooks said. But he noted that legislators' task was bigger than simply stopping the water bottling companies.

"If it's not Nestlé's, it will be South Florida warning our water," Brooks said. "What we need to realize is that we can't continue to sustain the lifestyle that we've had in the past...Don't sell our resources for a bag of beads and blankets."

Hayes, for her part, asked that legislators require of Nestlé Waters a series of conditions, including a study on the project's environmental impact, its job creation potential, its impact on the rural infrastructure, and its impact on the aquifer.

By comparison, the

portion of the hearing dedicated to the elected and other officials' requests was brief and relatively absent of comments from the legislators.

Cheryl Turner, director of Wilderness Coast Public Libraries (WILD), a consortium that takes in Franklin, Wakulla and Jefferson counties, asked that the lawmakers support state aid to libraries, which the Legislature has twice previously attempted to eliminate. Absent the funding, Turner said, WILD would cease to exist, and rural libraries and their clients would suffer.

Kim Barnhill, director of the Jefferson and Madison Counties Health Departments, urged the lawmakers to support the funding of the public health system, whose services she said made a critical difference in the lives of rural area residents. Absent her department providing primary and dental healthcare, many low and moderate-income people in the two counties would simply be forced to do without, she said.

Commission Chairman Stephen Fulford asked the lawmakers to hold the line, in terms of continuing to fund existing programs such as the library and health department, and not to adopt legislation that would create a financial burden on citizens and counties. He further urged legislators to support enterprises that would promote sustainable economic growth in the area.

Monticello Mayor John Jones asked the legislators to guard against approving

unfunded mandates; and City Manager Steve Wingate touched on the city's three priority projects, which are construction of a new sewage treatment plant, rehabilitation of the water distribution system, and creation of an ecological/water park.

Sheriff David Hobbs simply greeted the legislators, telling them he had no specific request at the moment, but assuring them that he and other sheriffs would be visiting the Hill in mass when the session started.

Clerk of Court Kirk Reams touched on two programs that he said were near and dear to Jefferson County. The first was the fiscally constrained funding, which assures this county between \$700,000 and \$800,000 annually; and the second was two road improvement funds that together have pumped more than \$17 million into Jefferson County during the last six years for road resurfacing and widening projects.

School Superintendent Bill Brumfield reiterated the request that lawmakers guard against unfunded mandates, and he encouraged the legislators to begin collecting the sales tax on Internet sales, something Rehwinkel Vasilinda has already said she will pursue.

Brumfield also asked that the legislators consider reimbursing the school district for property tax revenue that it loses as a result of the conservation easement amendment.

"The county gets reimbursed for its losses, but the school district gets nothing," Brumfield said.

SRWMD marks 10 years of stewardship for 16,000-acre tract near Steinhatchee river

The Suwannee River Water Management District recently commended the owners of Bailey Brothers, Inc., for a 10-year commitment to water resource protection.

The district purchased development rights on the 16,653-acre tract in Dixie County from Jim and Winston Bailey 10 years ago.

The property is adjacent to Mallory Swamp and the Eight Mile Creek, an important tributary to the Steinhatchee River, originates on the land. The easement protects 6,996 acres of swamp and wetland forests, bogs swamp and hydric hammock, district officials said.

The remainder of the property mostly consists of planted pine.

Under the terms of the conservation easement, landowners of the property have agreed to keep the property in its current natural state. The agreement restricts harvesting or alteration of forested wetlands. Silviculture activities in non-wetland areas must comply with best management practices to protect the environment.

"The conservation easement continues to be an excellent example of the compatibility of sustainable forestry and watershed protection for the Steinhatchee River," said Joe

Flanagan, district director of land acquisition and management.

"It's been a good partnership for us; it's allowed us to continue our forestry operations while protecting the environment," said Jim Bailey.

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The district currently protects more than 125,000 acres of water resource lands using this tool, Flanagan said.

In Mallory Swamp

Prescribed burning planned

Taking steps to avoid a repeat of the 2001 Mallory Swamp Fire that burned 60,000 acres in Lafayette County, land managers are conducting prescribed burns in Mallory Swamp. They started Dec. 1 and will extend through Spring 2011.

This activity may temporarily produce smoke or other hazardous conditions, officials warn. 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 say they 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 Web site 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.

Suwannee water district is calling for conservation

The advisory will remain in effect indefinitely.

Staff report

Citing drought conditions, the Suwannee River Water Management District issued a "Phase I" water shortage advisory Tuesday calling for residents and business owners to implement voluntary water conservation measures.

The advisory will remain in effect indefinitely, and mandatory water use restrictions are a possibil-

ity if conditions do not improve, a district press release states.

District officials said November hydrology reports showed that the flow of water in the Suwannee River and its tributaries was at one of the lowest points since the 1930s.

Total rainfall of 1.33 inches was at the lowest point since 2001 and the eighth lowest point on record since 1932, according to the district.

The district issued the following conservation tips:

- Fix leaky faucets and

toilets.

- Replace older fixtures.
- Water lawns and landscaping only once a week and not from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

The district includes much of northern and western Alachua County and an area of northwest Gainesville.

Groundwater

cont from Page 1A

in the Northwest and Southwest Florida Water Management Districts, and the State of Georgia.”

States the report: “The results of this analysis indicate that the water resources of the northeastern portion of the district are in decline. This trend is especially evident in groundwater levels of the Upper Floridan aquifer, which declined significantly during the past half century.”

The result of the decline, according to the report, translates into a decrease of more than 20 percent, or 1,900 square miles, in the size of the area contributing groundwater to the northeastern portion of the district. And the apparent cause for the significant decrease stems from groundwater withdrawals by the district itself, as well as the St. John’s River and Georgia, according to the report.

“The decline in groundwater levels in the northeastern district is suspected to have impacted a number of rivers and springs to the degree that they are not currently meeting their established minimum flows and levels or interim flow constraints, or they are predicted to fall below them during the planning period,” the report states.

The district, in fact, is recommending that certain of the affected areas be required to develop water supply plans that rely on conservation and alternative sources, other than groundwater, to meet their future demands; and that these areas also develop water recovery plans. Among the sources that the report evaluated as possible alternatives were river surface water, reclaimed water and brackish groundwater.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations that identify ways the district can enhance its statutory responsibilities to meet water supply demand while protecting the natural systems. These recommendations include enhancing data collection and analysis efforts to gain a better understanding of hydrologic trends; continuing the district’s modeling efforts to refine the understanding of the magnitude of existing and projected impacts to water resources; and coordinating with other water management districts, Georgia and the U.S. Geological Survey to develop cooperative strategies to enhance data collection and analysis efforts, identify current and future regional water resource impacts; and recover or avoid impacts.

Among the more specific recommendations, the report advises the designation of the Upper Santa Fe River Basin as a Water Resource Caution Area, and the designation of the Lower Santa Fe

River Basin, the Upper Suwannee River Region and the Atapaha River Basin as Water Supply Planning Regions. Meaning, among other possibilities, that within these designated areas, the district would restrict the duration of water use permits to no more than five years until recovery and prevention strategies were developed and implemented; would require all new applicants for water use permits and those renewing permits in excess of 100,000 gallons daily to meter their use; and would encourage new applicants for water use permits in excess of 500,000 gallons daily to use alternative sources of water, if the latter are technically, economically and environmentally feasible.

The bottom line, as SRWMD Executive David Still put it, is that water is a finite resource, and the area can no longer take it for granted.

“We’re simply depleting it pretty fast,” Still said.

And once it was gone, it was gone forever, he said.

Carlos Herd, a senior hydrology geologist with the SRWMD, essentially made the same point: conservation will more and more have to become a reality in the future.

Herd noted that the projected and already existing water declines were most evident in the eastern parts of the district, largely because of the State of Georgia and the nine counties in northeast Florida that were drawing water from the aquifer. But although water was still relatively plentiful in the western parts of the district, including Jefferson County, it didn’t mean it could be taken for granted, he said.

“We need to keep an eye on Valdosta, which could impact the area there,” Herd said. “These water issues are encroaching on our region. We have to be careful and manage our resources better. We’re going to have to look more at conservation. We’re all going to have to conserve and cut back more. We’re becoming more aware that water’s not an infinite resource.”

As for the eastern portions of the district where water declines are already evident, Herd said the SRWMD is trying to coordinate its remedial efforts with Georgia and the other water management districts, at the same time that he conceded the difficulty of the task. Creating the difficulty, he noted, were the economic, political, and other pressures bearing on the different players, and the fact that the aquifer extends beyond the boundaries of any one jurisdiction.

What the SRWMD didn’t want, Herd said, was to get in a situation as happened in the western part of the state and in other parts of the country, where the issue becomes mired in litigation.

Report Finds Groundwater Declining In Parts Of Region

Conservation Is Way Of Future

By Lazaro Aleman
Special from ECB Publishing

A lengthy and comprehensive assessment conducted by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) to determine the availability of its water supplies over the next 20 years points to significant increases in water consumption over the period, at the same time that water resources are already declining in portions of the region.

The findings are part of an 89-page document titled 2010 Water Supply Assessment Report, a draft of which can be viewed online at www.srwmd.state.fl.us/, under the heading Water Supply Planning.

The report projects that the district's total water use will undergo an increase of 10.3 million

gallons per day by 2030, based on a low-range projection; and it will undergo an increase 62.8 million gallons daily by 2030, based on a high-range projection.

The total water use is calculated on the consumption of all major water use categories, which the district identifies as including public supply, domestic self-supply, agriculture, industrial/commercial/institutional, thermo-electric power generation, and recreation.

The report identifies specific areas of the district "where the use of groundwater to satisfy water demands for the (20-year) planning period will cause negative impacts to natural systems", underscoring the point that "nearly all water used in the district is supplied by groundwater

from the Upper Foridan aquifer".

The district staff used data from previous and ongoing hydrologic investigations, as well as the North Florida groundwater flow model, to determine the ability of the groundwater to meet the projected demands of the 20-year planning period.

The report defines the North Florida groundwater model as "a predictive tool used to understand how current and projected groundwater withdrawals within the model area affect aquifer and lake levels and flow in springs and rivers". It identifies the model area as including "all of the district, as well as large areas of the St. John's River Water Management District, smaller areas

*Please see Groundwater,
Page 3A*

SRWMD issues water shortage advisory

A Phase I Water Shortage Advisory was issued by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) governing board Dec. 14 and will remain in effect until further notice.

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

The advisory calls on all residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial users to voluntarily reduce both indoor and outdoor water use through conservation measures.

The district already has a landscape irrigation rule in place which limits lawn and landscape watering to one day per week during fall and winter, and two days per week during spring and summer. The rule took effect in January of this year and applies to all residents within the district. It is permanent, long-term and requires mandatory landscape irrigation conservation year-round, officials said.

The Phase I Advisory, on the other hand, is issued in response to moderate or severe drought conditions and remains in effect only as long as needed. The advisory calls upon all residents to voluntarily

implement indoor and outdoor conservation measures in addition to those required by the year-round landscape irrigation rule.

Once drought conditions improve and groundwater and surfacewater levels rebound, the governing board may cancel the Phase I Advisory. Should conditions worsen, however, the governing board may declare a Phase II Advisory, which imposes mandatory water-use restrictions.

In November, flows for the Suwannee River and its tributaries fell below the 5th percentile for the period of record, meaning more than 95

percent of the time since the 1930s they were higher for this time of year than they are currently.

Average groundwater levels fell to the 33rd percentile in November, based on records beginning in 1978.

Total rain for October and November was 1.33 inches, the lowest since 2001 and the eighth lowest since 1932. Gauges at Usher Tower (near

Chiefland) and Starke reported no rainfall in October, making it the driest October on record in those areas.

District officials are stressing the need for conservation until conditions improve.

The district offers the following water-saving tips:

- Fix leaky faucets and toilets, which can waste up to 100 gallons per day.
- Replace older fixtures and

appliances with low-flow, water-saving models.

- Water lawns and landscapes only one day per week and not between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

- Equip hoses with automatic shutoff nozzles.

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Water shortage advisories are issued by SRWMD in accordance with Florida Statutes and the Florida Administrative Code, which give them authority to implement water shortage plans.

According to the National Weather Service, the Suwannee River basin is experiencing an extreme drought.

Megan Wetherington, a senior professional engineer at SRWMD, said groundwater and surfacewater levels continue to worsen throughout the district due to below-average monthly rainfall.

"River levels are extremely low

and groundwater levels have fallen steadily since the summer," she said.

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Wetherington said long-term forecasts call for drier than normal conditions throughout winter and spring.

District officials are stressing the need for conservation until conditions improve.

SRWMD issues water advisory

By Mark Schorier, Staff Reporter

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The advisory calls on all residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial users to voluntarily reduce both indoor and outdoor water use through conservation measures.

Parts of Levy and all of Dixie and Gilchrist counties, as well as 12 other counties in the dis-

trict, are affected by the advisory.

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Water continued from page 1

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"With La Nina expected to persist at least through spring, the District may be in for dry conditions for quite some time," she said.

District officials are stressing the need for conservation until conditions improve.

Jon Dinges, the District's director of water supply and resource management,

Water continued on page 12

said the advisory is intended to mitigate any impacts the drought may have on our water supply.

"With the drought conditions we're experiencing, conserving our water resources is more important than ever," Dinges said.

The District offers the following water-saving tips:

- Fix leaky faucets and toilets, which can waste up to 100 gallons per day.
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- Turn off tap while brushing teeth, shaving, or washing dishes.
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- Use Florida-Friendly Landscaping™.
- Equip hoses with automatic shutoff nozzles.
- Wash vehicles infrequently and only on porous surfaces.
- Use a broom or blower – not a hose – to clean sidewalks, driveways, parking areas.
- Take shorter showers; staying under 5 minutes can save 1,000 gallons per month.
- Don't use toilet as a waste basket.

THURSDAY, December 16, 2010

Cedar Key/Beacon CEDAR KEY, FLORIDA

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See **WATER 9A**

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WATER

Continued from 1A

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See SRWMD Water, Pg. 3

SRWMD Water, Cont. From Pg. 1

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<<http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com>>

SRWMD issues water shortage advisory

THE JASPER NEWS, Jasper, FL

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2010

Continued From Page 1A

agricultural and industrial users to voluntarily reduce both indoor and outdoor water use through conservation measures.

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door and outdoor conservation measures in addition to those required by the year-round landscape irrigation rule.

Once drought conditions improve and groundwater and surfacewater levels rebound, the governing board may cancel the Phase I Advisory. Should conditions worsen, however, the governing board may declare a Phase II Advisory, which imposes mandatory water-use restrictions.

Water shortage advisories are issued by the district in accordance with Florida Statutes and the Florida Administrative Code, which give them authority to implement water shortage plans.

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SEE SRWMD, PAGE 2A

With Suwannee River basin in severe drought, water advisory in effect

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The District covers all of Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union counties, and portions of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Jefferson, Levy and Putnam counties.

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Conserve water, drought continues

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See WATER page 4A

WATER

Continued from Page 3A

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The Gainesville Sun

ESTABLISHED IN 1876

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EDITORIAL

Humidity deficit

In the brutal Florida summer we like to say it's not the heat, it's the humidity that's the problem.

This winter we might just as well say it's not the cold, it's the lack of humidity that's the problem.

The lack of rain this very dry season is starting to show. The Suwannee River and its tributaries are as low as they've been since the 1930s. Rain totals these past couple of months were the lowest since 2001. And if our lakes, rivers and streams are down, we don't even want to think about what's going on beneath our feet in the aquifer: Florida's vast limestone water storage bin.

All of the above caused the Suwannee River Water Management District this week to issue a Phase I Water Shortage Advisory. That's bureaucrat-speak for: Please refrain from using any more water than

you have to.

The advisory came with a P.S.: If voluntary restrictions don't work, a Phase II Advisory could be in the offing. That's bureaucrat-speak for: If we catch you wasting water we will fine you.

Saving water is as much a matter of fiscal self-interest as drought-season common sense. The less you use the less you pay.

So don't water your lawn more than once a week, if that. Give yourself a break and let the family buggy stay dirty. Fix those leaky faucets and toilets. Buy more water-efficient appliances if you can. Use a low-flow shower nozzle and take shorter showers.

Because right now, it's not the cold that's the problem but the lack of humidity. Our water's disappearing right before our eyes, and it's foolish to go on behaving as though we're in a monsoon season.

SRWMD issues water shortage advisory

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SEE SRWMD, PAGE 9A

Continued From Page 1A

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Some springs could dry up in 20 years, report says

For The Herald

Alachua, Columbia and Gilchrist counties will see their aquifers get lower over the next 20 years while demand for water increases — meaning there might not be enough water for the population, according to a recently issued regional report.

Springs and streams could even dry up, according to the report issued by the Suwannee River Water Management District.

The 2010 Water Supply Assessment evaluates existing and projected water uses over a 20-year period and the impact of those demands on water resources and natural systems.

The assessment also examines the availability of alternative water supplies and conservation measures to meet water needs.

The low-range water demand projections — based on average population growth and water use trends — indicate that by 2030, water demands will increase District-wide by 10.3 million gallons per day for all water use categories.

The high-range projection, which accounts for a peak growth scenario, indicates an increase of 62.8 million gallons per day.

The assessment shows a decline in groundwater levels in parts of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Suwannee and Union counties.

“The assessment indicates that the northeastern portion of the District may not have sufficient groundwater supplies to meet water demands and protect natural systems, such as stream and spring flows, over the next 20 years,” said Carlos Herd, the District’s water supply project

See Water, Page 6A

Water

From Front Page

manager.

The Alapaha River, Upper and Lower Santa Fe River and Upper Suwannee River basins were identified as water supply planning regions.

Water supply plans will identify strategies to offset projected water resource impacts.

The District is required by law to develop regional water supply plans for areas where groundwater sources are unable to meet demands over 20 years.

The report can be downloaded in its entirety in PDF format with the online version of this story at:

NorthFloridaHerald.com

SRWMD board accepts water supply assessment

The Suwannee River Water Management District governing board on Dec. 14 accepted the district's 2010 Water Supply Assessment, designating four water supply planning regions.

The assessment evaluates existing and projected water uses over a 20-year period and the impact of those demands on water resources and natural systems. It also examines the availability of alternative water supplies and conservation measures to meet water needs.

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

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The assessment is available at online at www.srwmd.org.

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The assessment is available at http://www.srwmd.org/documents/Water%20Resources/Water%20Supply%20Planning/SRWMD_WSAR_120610.PDF

Dixie County Advocate

Publishing News and events for Dixie County, Every Week, Without Fail, Since July 1, 1921

Advocate
dcadvocate.net

Home of the Worlds Only Four-Headed Swamp Cabbage

Thursday, December 23, 2010

Vol. 88, No. 51 12 pages- 1 Section

Preventing another Mallory Swamp Fire

The Forestry Company undertook a 2,300 acre prescribed burn in Mallory Swamp this week. The burn used a specially equipped helicopter to "string" fire from low altitudes, while the perimeters were guarded by ground crews using bulldozers and water pumpers.

According To Don Curtis, President of The Forestry Company, "This was a team effort by our employees with stand-by support from the

Florida Division of forestry's Perry district Office. The goal of the burn is to prevent another major wildfire like the one we experienced in 2001 when 70,000 acres burned in Lafayette County. We also know that prescribed burning improves wildlife habitat and this should be good news to the hunters in the area." The Mallory Swamp fire in 2001 also burned large tracts in Dixie County and caused evacuations

from areas near the swamp.

Mallory Swamp is owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District and photos were provided courtesy of Mr. Edwin McCook. The Forestry Company has been engaged in forestland management since 1996 and is based in Perry. They assist private timberland owners and public agencies with managing forests and wildlife.

SRWMD board accepts 20-year water supply assessment

The Suwannee River Water Management District governing board on Dec. 14 accepted the District's 2010 Water Supply Assessment, which shows a sharp decline in groundwater levels in parts of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Suwannee and Union counties.

"The assessment indicates that the north-eastern portion of the District may not have sufficient groundwater supplies to meet water demands and protect natural systems, such as stream and spring flows, over the next 20 years," said Carlos Herd, the District's water supply project manager.

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The Alapaha River,

SRWMD board accepts 20-year water supply assessment

Continued From Page 1A

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The District is required by law to develop regional water supply plans for areas where groundwater sources are unable to meet demands over 20 years.

SEE SRWMD, PAGE 2A

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2010

THE MAYO FREE PRESS, Mayo, FL

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SEE SRWMD, PAGE 7A

SRWMD board accepts 20-year water supply assessment

Continued From Page 1A

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Jefferson County Journal
Friday, December 24, 2010

Letters To The Editor

An Open Letter To The Board of County Commissioners-Jefferson County

County Commissioners,

As a lifelong county resident, I am strongly opposed to the Nestle corporation's interest in taking even a single drop of water from one of our greatest natural resources, the Wacissa River, much less the thousands of gallons that they would be removing.

The long-term environmental health of the aquifer and the plant and wildlife that depend on it must be protected. We owe it to those who came before us and those who will come after us to preserve this natural wonder which is literally in our own backyard.

The good of the many outweigh the good of a few. The majority of Jefferson County's citizens

will not benefit in any way from Nestle's removal of our water—there will be no jobs, very little tax revenue, and damage to our county's infrastructure.

Nestle's interest in our river's water is selfish and motivated solely by profit for its stockholders.

As our elected officials, you must be equally selfish in defending our county against a foreign corporation with no regard for our community. I hope and trust you will do the right thing and just Say NO to Nestle.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Branch

Greenville Florida

Water Expert Warns Of Challenges Ahead

SAYS NORTH FLORIDA OFFERS LAST CHANCE TO GET IT RIGHT

LAZARO ALEMAN
ECB Publishing
Senior Staff Writer

Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) Executive Director David Still can certainly draw a crowd, evident by the standing-room-only assembly that packed the courthouse at the Jefferson County Commission meeting on Thursday evening, Dec. 16.

The fact that the majority of the audience was there specifically to hear Still's talk became readily clear when the chamber largely emptied following his presentation, as the majority of the attendees followed him downstairs to ask more questions and hear him expand further on his presentation.

Still's talk, you see, focused on water, an issue that touches everyone and that is becoming ever more critical to this region (as his presentation illuminated), and that is particularly dear to those individuals concerned about the Wacissa River and

Please See *Water Expert* Page 4A

Nestlé Waters' presence there.

Still's presentation was intended to cover, and in fact covered, a broader geographic area and issue of concern than simply the situation at the Wacissa, but the audience's questions and interest were clearly focused on the latter, and the presentation in fact affirmed their underlying concern.

Water, i.e. H₂O, what could be simpler? Still asked. Yet the management of water, as his district was charged with doing, was a very complex and complicated matter that entailed balancing and satisfying competing needs while protecting the natural resources, he said.

"We all touched water at one point or other today," Still said. "Water drives everything we do. Water is universal. It's what brings us together."

Still underscored his point with a series of photos depicting various Florida springs near the start of the last century and more recently. The photos showed several once gushing springs that were popular tourist attractions and that today were gone or no more than cesspools, as he described White Springs.

"If you think it can't happen here; these people didn't think it would happen there," Still said.

He said it was the SRWMD's goal to restore White Springs, if at all possible.

"Will we succeed in my lifetime? I don't know," Still said.

He showed photos of Big Shoals in the Upper Suwannee River, one of the few rapids in north Florida and now essentially a dry riverbed because of drought conditions.

"The important thing is that it doesn't stay down over an extended period," Still said. "That's why we manage water."

He explained that the SRWMD encompassed part or all of 15 counties that, unlike other parts of the state, were yet relatively rich in natural resources.

"We have the last natural resources in Florida," Still said. "We're Florida's last chance to get it right."

He showed other photos of multibillion-dollar reservoirs and desalination operations that currently supply the essential water needs of residents in the Tampa area.

"These people are living on life support because they didn't protect their natural resources," Still said.

He mentioned a governor-appointed task force in 2005 that was charged with the statewide distribution of water. Still noted that the task force's message to north Florida at the time was, "Keep your water cold, because we're coming after it."

"I look east, north and south, and I feel like a sitting duck with the guns aimed at me," Still said.

But, in fact, the South Florida threat had largely abated, he said. And the real danger now was coming from Georgia and the Jacksonville area, he said.

"The timeworn assumption is that we have all the water we want," Still said. "But the reality is that we're not as water rich as we thought."

He shared data from a comprehensive water assessment study that the district conducted this year to gauge its ability to meet groundwater demands 20 years out. The data showed that between 1936 and the present, the district had lost 19 percent, or 2,000 square miles, of the area supplying its groundwater. Eastern portions of the district were already experiencing problems, and the report's conclusion was that groundwater would not be able to meet the water demands there by 2030, he said.

Still said the study showed that a significant amount of the district's water was going to Georgia and adjoining Florida water management district over which the SRWMD had no jurisdiction. The SRWMD, in fact, was unique in that its watershed was not contained within its geographic boundaries, which made it extremely difficult to plan for the future or exert control over the water use, he said.

What he didn't want to occur, however, was for the district to get mired in a protracted water war with the adjoining jurisdictions, such as the one between Florida and Georgia over the Apalachicola River, a contest that thus far had benefited only the attorneys, he said. Yet, despite the study's findings, the report wasn't ringing bells, he said.

"Our groundwater is going north and east, but we're having a devil of a time convincing the others that the water is leaving because people don't want to believe it," Still said.

The bottom line was that conservation would have to become more and more a priority, he said.

"We've got to start using our water more effectively and efficiently," Still said. "If we don't get this thing under control, it will limit our growth, our

agriculture, and our economic development. And it has got to be a joint effort to solve the problem."

Among the questions that members of the audience asked:

Given the concerns over water, why did the district allow a local plantation to draw 10 million gallons daily to flood a field so that its guests could duck hunt? Didn't the districts coordinate water use with each other?

Still responded that if the plantation had acquired the appropriate consumptive use permit, it had apparently met the permitting requirements. As for coordination between the water management districts, it didn't exist, he said. Each district was unique and autonomous onto itself, he said.

"We don't talk to the other districts," Still said. "They have their rules, we have ours."

Who made the final determination whether a project was in the public's interest?

The SRWMD governing board made that decision, Still said. But ~~the board was open to~~ public input, he said. And he encouraged members of the public to attend SRWMD meetings and participate in the process.

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Would the SRWMD allow water to be transported from one county to another?

It was the policy of the present SRWMD governing board to frown on any transport of water, Still said. But again, that assessment was based on past practice; he couldn't say what the board might do, he said.

As for the issuance of the consumptive water permit, he said three criteria governed the procedure. The three were: Did the project impact existing legal users; was it a reasonable and beneficial use; and was it in the public good?

"That's the biggy," Still said of the latter.

He explained that his staff could only recommend a project for approval or denial based solely on the merits of the scientific and technological data. But the nine-member governing board alone weighed the public interest component, which could trump the first two considerations if it was compelling enough, he said.

Water Expert Warns Of Challenges Ahead

Dec. 24, 2010 By Laz Aleman

ECB Publishing

laz@embarqmail.com



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Flames sweep Mallory Swamp

Fire rained down on 2,300 acres of Mallory Swamp last week as part of a prescribed burn undertaken by The Forestry Company.

"The burn used a specially equipped helicopter to 'string' fire from low altitudes, while the perimeter was guarded by ground crews using bulldozers and water pumps," Forestry Company President Don Curtis explained.

"This was a team effort by our employees with stand-by support from the Florida Division of Forestry's Perry

→ Please see page 6

Burn's goal: prevent a major wildfire

MALLORY SWAMP

Continued from page 1

district office. The goal of the burn was to prevent another major wildfire like the one we

experienced in 2001 when 70,000 acres burned in Lafayette County. We also know that prescribed burning improves wildlife habitat and this should be good news to the

hunters in the area."

Mallory Swamp is owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District.

The Forestry Company has been engaged in forestland

management since 1996 and is based in Perry. The company assists private timberland owners and public agencies with managing forests and wildlife.

County, SRWMD settle on plan to fix flood gates

BY MARK J. CRAWFORD
Telegraph Editor

Bradford County has entered an agreement with the Suwannee River Water Management District concerning repair of the flow control structure at Lake Sampson.

SRWMD recommended a vendor for the work and is putting up 50 percent of the project cost, or \$3,000, with the county funding the other half and any amount over the projected budget.

The county is under a consent order to deal with the deficiency of the control structure. The structure is actually a gated culvert that can be opened or closed to control water levels in the lake.

County commission Chairman Eddie Lewis retraced some of what has happened with the floodgates when the commission met recently and discussed the agreement with SRWMD.

He said the county responded to a complaint that debris was blocking closure of the flow gate, but discovered that the gate was actually warped. When the water management district was approached for permission to repair the structure, the district actually suggested removal of the

structure. Later, Lewis said, the district was fine with repairing the structure so long as the gates were welded shut, and based its request on maps that supposedly showed Sampson Lake was bit prone to flood.

"Everyone who lives out there knows that's wrong," Lewis said. "We've got to have them (the gates) where we can work them."

The county fought the water management district's recommendation, seeking a compromise. Per the operating permit, the gates are only supposed to be open when flooding is imminent, though that has not necessarily been the case and there have been issues of tampering with the structure, which runs under C.R. 225.

Lewis said the county understood the gates needed to be fixed but had to jump through a lot of hoops before that could happen.

The last time the issue was publicly discussed was January 2009. The district wanted a fixed structure, but one that would allow flow from the lake when water rose too high. Lake dwellers who enjoy the lake recreationally don't want water levels to dip too low, but on the other hand, they fear the county not having some

mechanism for controlling flooding. Some downstream would like to have the structure removed altogether or have the gates open and closed on a regular basis to allow water to flow through the creek on their properties.

Carol Duke addressed gate tampering, wanting to know what would be done to prevent future damage. Lewis said the county was looking at ways to secure the area. Duke recommended a sign stating a \$10,000 fine for tampering with the gate might serve as a deterrent.

Gary Brown wanted to know the protocol for raising and lowering the floodgates. Emergency Management Director Brian Johns talked about the rainfall and lake level data he has been able to collect with the daily help of a Sampson Lake resident and how that information has been helped him know when to open one or more of the gates as well as the effect of doing so.

Residents have also been concerned about a weed growing in the lake, but Johns spoke with someone in fish and wildlife who said winter is the worst time to spray because growth slows down, but paths would be cut in the weed growth to accommodate boaters.

Levy water supply to meet demand

By MARK SCOHIER

news2@chieflandcitizen.com

A new water assessment by the Suwannee River Water Management District projects no water shortages for Levy County over the next 20 years.

"The supply is adequate to meet the demand," said Carlos Herd, SRWMD's water supply project manager.

According to the assessment, the counties that show the greatest reduction in water supply by the year 2030 are Gilchrist, Alachua, Suwannee, Union, Columbia, Bradford and Baker. Herd said the counties lie in the northeastern portion of SRWMD's 15-county jurisdiction.

"Increased pumpage has depleted those supplies in that part of the district," Herd said.

Levy County, on the other hand, has a relatively low population and a lot of recharge to the aquifer from rainfall, he said. Rainfall seeps through the ground faster in Levy County than in some other areas of the state because of the porous nature of the rock underground.

Throughout the district, low-range water demands are expected to increase by 10.3 million gallons of water per day by 2030 for all categories of water use, according to the assessment. The high-range figure projects an increase of 62.8 million gallons of water per day.

Herd said a computer model using data from population counts, groundwater and rainfall levels and land uses, such as agriculture and commercial facilities, was used to make the water assessment, which took about two years.

Four regions within the district, Upper Suwannee River, Upper and Lower Santa Fe River and Alapaha River basins, were identified as areas set for a plan to offset high water demands in the future.

Herd said SRWMD plans to focus on water conservation and reuse to offset those demands. Other options, such as desalination plants and reservoirs, are too expensive.

The Forestry Company Conducts Aerial Prescribed Burn In Mallory Swamp

Prescribed burning can reduce the risk of catastrophic forest fires while improving wildlife habitat.

The Forestry Company of Perry, Florida, undertook a 2,300 acre prescribed burn in Mallory Swamp.

The burn used a specially equipped helicopter to "string" fire from low



altitudes, while the perimeters were guarded by ground crews using bulldozers and water-pumpers.

According to Don Curtis, President of The Forestry

Company, "This was a team effort by our employees with stand-by support from the Florida Division of Forestry's Perry District Office. The goal of the burn was to prevent

another major wildfire like the one that was experienced in 2001 when 70,000 acres burned in Lafayette County. We also know that prescribed burning improved wildlife habitat and this should be good news to hunters in the area."

The Suwannee River Water Management owns Mallory Swamp and photos are provided by Mr. Edwin McCook.

The Forestry Company has been engaged in forestland management since 1996, and is based in Perry, Florida. They assist private timberland owners and public agencies with managing forest and wildlife.

Water stockpiles shrinking

A new study says the groundwater supplies in the Suwannee River Water Management District will not be able to meet future demands in the area.

By Christopher Curry
Staff writer

Even in the rural North Florida jurisdiction of the Suwannee River Water Management District, the possibility of a future water shortage looms large.

Groundwater supplies will not meet future demands within the district's 7,640-square-mile jurisdiction, says a long-term study the district governing board formally accepted in mid-December.

Projections out to 2030 have demands increasing by anywhere from a low range of 11.82 million gallons a day to a high range of 64.19 million gallons a day. Based on usage within the district, South Georgia, and in Duval County and other areas within the jurisdiction of the St. Johns River Water Management District, negative impacts on the flow of springs and rivers are projected in the Upper Santa Fe River Basin, Lower Santa Fe River Basin, Upper Suwannee

SUWANNEE on Page 5B

SUWANNEE: Alternate supplies proposed

Continued from 1B

River Region and Alapaha River Basin.

A decline in groundwater levels is projected in areas of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Suwannee and Union counties.

"The assessment indicates that the northeastern portion of the District may not have sufficient groundwater supplies to meet water demands and protect natural systems, such as stream and spring flows, over the next 20 years," Carlos Herd, the district's water supply project manager, said in a news release.

Against that backdrop, the Suwannee district has started to look at pursuing a series of alternative water sources.

One option broached in the 20-year water supply assessment, which the state requires water management districts to prepare every five years, is the pumping of surface water out of the Suwannee River when water levels are high enough.

That water could be stored in a reservoir or possibly injected into the aquifer for storage.

The Suwannee once was dubbed the "Saudi Arabia

of water" because of the potentially massive supply of the resource the historic river offered, but the final study's release comes with drought conditions pushing water levels on the upper Suwannee toward near-record lows.

The mere contemplation of pumping water out of the river already has stirred some opposition.

"Using surface water as an alternative source doesn't make sense," said Annette Long, with the environmental group Save Our Suwannee. "Whether we take it out of the ground or we take it out of surface water, it's still gone."

Cynthia Barnett, author of the book "Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.," also is skeptical of such a move.

"In many parts of the country, areas that have tapped out their groundwater supplies are now eyeing rivers to make up the difference," Barnett wrote in an e-mail. "But this would seem to ignore the crucial connection between our groundwater and surface waters. Southwest Florida, for example, over-pumped the region's aquifer to the point of crisis, then turned to the Peace River to supply new growth.

"Today, scientists are watching the aptly named Peace go completely dry in places it never did before. If the area's aquifer is in trouble, chances are, the connecting river is, too. The Suwannee is a perfect example — scientists say the river's levels have been negatively impacted by groundwater pumping to the northeast."

Suwannee district governing board member David Flagg said there is no partisan or political debate to counter the fact that groundwater levels in the district, which spans all or part of 15 counties, are declining. The district's study shows that since 1981, groundwater levels have dropped by 6 feet in some areas since 1981.

The area from which the northeastern portion of the district might draw groundwater has, over the course of 75 years, been reduced by more than 20 percent, or 1,900 square miles.

In a rural district that has a total population of 310,000 and has agriculture as the primary water usage of about 127 million to 134 million gallons a day, Flagg said the preferred alternative water sources would be increased conservation measures and an increase

in the use of recycled or reclaimed water.

"There's a smarter use of drinking water instead of using it on our grass," he said.

The plan also includes a recommendation to begin limiting consumptive use permits to withdraw water to five-year approvals. Such permits now are often approved for a period of 20 years.

With this long-term supply-and-demand study in place, Dale Jenkins, a senior hydrogeologist with the district, said the next step is to do more detailed studies for the separate water supply planning areas within the district. Minimum flows and levels also must be established for several rivers, including the Suwannee, and springs.

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

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50 cents

State works to deepen Fanning Springs run for manatees

By Terry Witt
Staff Writer

Scientists working for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recently took core borings in the spring run of Fanning Springs with the aim of deepening the channel for manatees.

Manatees are an endangered species.

Fanning Springs acts as a thermal sanctuary for manatees fleeing the cold waters of the Suwannee River during the winter. The spring waters are a constant 72 degrees all year long. But scientists say the spring run has grown shallower over the years as a result of sediment washing into the spring channel.

The shallower channel could make it more difficult for manatees to reach the safety of the warm spring boil during cold snaps. Manatees are warm-

blooded mammals that can't survive long in the chilly water temperatures of the Suwannee in winter. The animals can suffer or die from cold stress if they are unable to find warm water. Scientists have found no manatees suffering from cold stress in this region of the state.

"When the Suwannee River Water Management District established minimum flows and levels for Fanning Springs, they said there are conditions where they could have access issues," said Ron Mezich, biological scientist with FWC. "We believe sediment has eroded into the spring run."

The Nature Conservancy, an international private conservation group, is funding the feasibility study that will determine how much

sediment can be removed. The state doesn't want to disturb prehistoric sediments that existed before human beings caused sediment to erode into the spring. The cost of the study is about \$25,000-\$30,000.

Mizich said the plan is to remove sediment from the dock area back to the mouth of the spring run.

Fanning Springs has always been a popular swimming hole. A dance hall, bowling alley and other recreational facilities were once built near the spring when it was privately owned. Mezich said FWC believes human activities contributed to the sediment erosion in the spring.

Helicopter gets things started in 2,300-acre prescribed burn

Staff

The Forestry Company recently undertook a 2,300-acre prescribed burn in Mallory Swamp in Lafayette County. What made this operation different was how the blaze was ignited, though -- from above.

The burn used a specially-equipped helicopter to "string" fire from low altitudes, while perimeters were guarded by ground crews using bulldozers and water pumpers.

The aim, according to Forest Company President Don Curtis, was to prevent a replay of 2001, when 70,000 acres burned in Lafayette.

"We also know the prescribed burning improves wildlife habitat and this should be good news to the hunters in the area," Curtis said in a press release.

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DROUGHT PROMPTS DISTRICT TO DECLARE WATER SHORTAGE ALERT

November One Of Driest Months On Record

LAZARO ALEMAN
ECB Publishing
Senior Staff Writer

On Tuesday, Dec. 14, the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) issued a districtwide phase 1 water shortage advisory that's in addition to the longstanding irrigation rule limiting lawn and landscape watering to one day per week during fall and winter and two days per week during spring and summer.

Whereas the irrigation rule aims at conservation in general and is year round, the phase 1 advisory is in direct response to the current drought and will remain in effect only as long as needed.

The advisory calls on residents within the affected area (including Monticello) to implement indoor and outdoor conservation measures voluntarily, in addition to the irrigation rule.

Should the drought conditions worsen, the district is prepared to declare a phase 2 advisory, which would impose mandatory water-use restrictions.

SRWMD Executive Director
Please See *Drought* Page 4A

Jefferson County Journal

Friday, December 31, 2010

Drought

Cont. From Page 1

David Still told county officials on Dec. 16 that the issuance of the phase 1 advisory was an indication that the district was in trouble. He said if the district adopted water use restrictions, it would be up to the local governments to enforce the rules. Not believing in unfunded mandates, however, he said the district would enforce the restrictions.

Still said the practice thus far has been to ask water users to reduce usage evenly across the board during shortages so that everybody gets a share of the resource. But he said the district is giving consideration to the implementation of priority uses, so that certain usages, such as recreational, might be more restricted or completely banned during a severe shortage.

Meanwhile, the latest hydrologic conditions report issued by the SRWMD on Dec. 9 shows that November —

historically the driest month of the year — attained near record-breaking status this year.

The report shows that November's average rainfall was 1.05 inches, which is 44 percent of the long-term average of 2.36 inches.

"Localized areas received up to two inches, but the majority of the district received less than 50 percent of the average rain during four fronts that moved across the area," the report notes. "Total rain for October and November was 1.33 inches, the lowest total since 2001 and the eight lowest since 1932 (when the district started keeping records)."

The report indicates that most river and lakes in the district were below normal in November and that groundwater levels in all but three of 111 upper Floridan Aquifer wells declined an average of 0.7 feet during the

month.

Jefferson County received 1.18 inches of rainfall, compared with 2.90 inches in November 2009 and its November's average of 3.44 inches. The county has received 59.13 inches in the last 12 months.

Madison County, meanwhile, received 0.87 inches, compared with 2.20 inches in November 2009 and its November average of 3.44 inches. Madison County has received 59.71 inches in the last 12 months.

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



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2010

■ SUWANNEE DEMOCRAT/LIVE OAK

A recent TV documentary about water rights in America should stir some gray matter around here. It's about multi national corps. sending our water to Asia in bottles. The #1 corp. involved operates here & is trying to build another plant! 3 of our big employers and water users are owned by Canadian, Brazilian, & Swiss mega-corps. Think the board of directors care much about us? SRWMD has sold out one of our 2 major resources, now the same person is running the school system which declined in ratings promptly. The letter about the value of our kids & water is more accurate than you may think & it looks like the 2 problems might have something in common. Have a look at the salary we pay for this service, way up at the top of the list, well over 100k. Pretty good deal, ya think

■ ■ ■