

# Funding cut puts Florida rivers at risk

## point of view

Allan Milledge

*Note to readers: As reported by the Palm Beach Post, Florida legislative leaders have agreed to give Gov. Rick Scott one of his tax-cutting proposals — a 25 percent reduction in water management district property taxes.*

As many of us are aware, Gov. Rick Scott has ordered all of Florida's Water Management Districts to reduce their ad valorem budgets by 25 percent.

The St. Johns River Water Management District covers the entire St. Johns River basin from its marshes in Indian River County north to Jacksonville and the state line. And it stretches from the Atlantic Ocean west to include Marion, Alachua and Baker counties.

This is an immensely water rich part of the state whose vast water resources the district manages and protects. It is responsible for flood protection and for protecting our springs, our lakes, our rivers, and our marshes and wetlands.

In the fall of 2004 when our region was lashed by heavy rains from Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Jeanne, the district provided an essential role for public safety by diverting flood waters into the Indian River Lagoon.

It is also responsible for ensuring our water supply and water quality and it is the major player in environmental restoration, restoring the headwaters of the St. Johns River, Florida's longest river.

We all know that times are hard. The district is allowed, by the Florida Constitution, to tax property up to 1 mill per \$1,000 of value. The tax rate is just under 0.42 mills, which raises around \$42 dollars per \$100,000 of property value.

*... do you want to  
jeopardize protection  
of our rivers?*

In the past four years as property values have dropped, this district's revenue from ad valorem taxes has already dropped 25 percent, from \$145 million to \$111 million and necessary projects have had to be deferred.

And now the governor wants to cut that budget another 25 percent. Since the Florida Legislature appears to be going along with the governor, we had better pray that we have no hurricanes in the next decade.

So the question is — do you want to jeopardize protection of our rivers, lakes, springs and wetlands and the protection of our water supply and do you want to defer our environmental projects, in order to save an average less than \$20 per household per year?

What we get from our Water Management Districts is fundamentally our way of life which we tend to take for granted and for which we pay very little. Let's all tell Scott and our legislative leaders that we are doing just fine, thank you, and to leave our district's main funding source alone.

Allan Milledge lives in Flagler Beach and was the former chairman of the South Florida Water Management District during Hurricane Andrew and at the beginning of Everglades restoration. He currently is a member of the board of Florida Audubon.

Wednesday, May 4, 2011

# SRWMD Holding Three Meetings In May

By Jacob Bemby  
*Greene Publishing, Inc.*

The Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 19, will be held in Fanning Springs.

During the meeting, the board will discuss business of the SRWMD, as well as hold public hearings on regulatory and land acquisition matters.

The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. at the City Hall, 17651 NW 90th Court, in Fanning Springs.

Following the meeting, Board members will go on a river tour.

The next day, the Board will hold a workshop at the library, located at 460 2nd Street, in Cedar Key. The meeting is set for 8 a.m.

On May 31, at 1 p.m., the Governing Board will be held at SRWMD Headquarters in Live Oak.

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

## Monticello News

Wednesday, May 4, 2011

### SRWMD Governing Board Meetings

On Thursday, May 19, 2011, the Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the City of Fanning Springs City Hall Assembly Room, 17651 NW 90th Court, Fanning Springs, Florida 32693. The meeting is to consider District business and conduct public hearings on regulatory and land acquisition matters. A river tour will begin following the Board meeting. A workshop will be held the following day on Friday, May 20, 2011, at 8:00 a.m. at the Cedar Key Library, 460 2nd Street, Cedar Key, Florida 32625.

On Tuesday, May 31, 2011, at 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.

5/4/11,c.

Union County Times • Thursday, May 5, 2011

## SRWMD hold meeting

The Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet at 9 a.m. on Thursday, May 19. The meeting will be held at the Fanning Springs City Hall assembly room located at 17651 N.W. 90th Court.

The meeting is to consider district business and conduct public hearings on regulatory and land acquisition matters.

For more information, please call Linda Welch at 386-362-1001.

## Review Team Learns About SRWMD's Largest Restoration Project; Provides Input On Land Management Practices

In the 1950s, when industrial landowners began to convert Mallory Swamp (Lafayette County) to pine plantations by draining water off the property, the swamp lost some of its ability to hold rainwater and gently feed it to the Steinhatchee and Suwannee rivers downstream. In 2001, a strike of lightning ignited the dry land and a wildfire swept through 60,000 acres of the swamp.

Now the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) is in the process of restoring the land back to its natural state and condition. In 1999, the District purchased a conservation easement on the property to protect the land from further development and in 2002 the District acquired full management and ownership of nearly 30,000 acres of the property.

On April 5, a group of about 25 biologists, foresters, parks and recreation specialists, environmentalists and landowners toured Mallory Swamp and other District lands to provide feedback on the District's land management practices. The group, referred to as the land management review team, tours District property annually; their comments are later presented to the District's Governing Board.

Before taking the tour, the group heard a presentation about land management practices and recreational opportunities on several District properties, including Mallory Swamp — home of the District's largest single restoration project.

Beau Willsey, District environmental scientist, gave a presentation on the history of Mallory Swamp.

About 30 years after landowners installed a system of drainage canals, scientists determined that the hydrological alterations were increasing the discharge of water from the Steinhatchee River into the Gulf of Mexico, he told the group.

"The increased flow had the potential to negatively affect aquatic organisms in the river downstream to the gulf," Willsey said.

Such alterations also changed the hydrology of the swamp and affected natural vegetation and related wildlife.

On the tour, the land management review team saw firsthand what the District has done to restore the natural hydrology of the swamp and related natural communities. Members of the team asked questions and made suggestions along the way.

Willsey and Scott Gregor, District natural resource specialist, discussed the extensive network of canals and ditches previously installed to drain the swamp and what the District has done to reverse the effects of such alterations.

A member of the review team, Jack Ewel (ecologist and farmer), praised the District's efforts to install culverts, ditch blocks and other structures to restore groundwater levels and natural drainage patterns.

Land managers have installed 311 culverts, 58 ditch blocks and eight flashboard riser structures to reduce the flow of water into the Steinhatchee and Suwannee rivers and to recharge the aquifer and rehydrate wetlands within the swamp.

Data from groundwater and surface water monitoring devices and the response of vegetation in wetland areas will be used to determine whether restoration goals are being met.

Willsey and Gregor also discussed the correlation between restoring water resources and the health of the ecosystem.

Management activities, such as prescribed burning and reforestation, are tools being used to restore natural plant communities with vegetation

that existed prior to land use alterations.

Plant and animal species on the property are monitored to determine the effects of land management activities on such species and whether the District is successful at returning the land back to its pre-altered state.

Another review team member, Jacqui Sulek (Four Rivers Audubon Society), suggested the District do more extensive monitoring of birds on the property and she offered to provide volunteers from her group to implement that.

"One tool for measuring the quality of a natural community is how many birds or other species are present; it's like if you build it [natural habitat], they will come," said Gregor.

Since 2003, the District has spent more than \$3.4 million on restoration efforts. About \$2.4 million was provided by the United States Natural Resource Conservation Service through the agency's Wetlands Reserve Program.

Restoration efforts at Mallory Swamp are a key example of the District's land acquisition and management goals. The District acquires and manages lands for flood control, water quality protection and natural resource conservation. District lands are open to the public for recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping and horseback riding.

The purpose of the land management review team is to determine whether District land managers are fulfilling their statutory obligations, complying with District policy and improving land management practices. The District is statutorily required to get feedback on its land management practices each year. Invitations are sent to various local governments, agencies, organizations and citizens in order to form a land management review team.

Anyone interested in joining the land management review team may contact Gwen Lord at the District at (386) 362.1001 or (800) 226.1066 (FL only).

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2011

# County says Jax should look elsewhere for water

Joyce Marie Taylor

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The Lafayette County Commission adopted a resolution April 25 in opposition of Jacksonville Electric Authority's application with the St. John's River Water Management District to increase their daily water usage, which would be pulled from the Florida

Aquifer.

Alton Scott, Lafayette County Emergency Management Director, presented the board with the written resolution to sign and approve. The resolution is in opposition of St. John's WMD who has applied for an application to increase their daily water usage for the

SEE COUNTY, PAGE 8A

## County says Jax should look elsewhere for water

Continued From Page 1A

JEA.

The resolution states that the impact of this request for increased water usage on Lafayette County and all of North Florida would be severe and irreversible. The massive increase over the suggested 20-year period would be detrimental to the rivers, springs and groundwater, and would adversely affect recreation and farming industries in the county, officials said.

"Jacksonville has been steadily increasing their water usage from our district," Scott told the board.

Comm. Donnie Hamlin said, "St. John's Water Management is a powerful organization. We think Suwannee River is powerful? That group right there...they're something else. They don't send their representatives to meetings; they send attorneys."

Scott said that the "Jacksonville area al-

ready had requested 155 million gallons a day and they want to increase that to almost 163 million gallons a day."

He stated that the mayor of White Springs said that two of their springs have already gone dry. He said there are other alternatives like desalination that the JEA needs to consider rather than taking water from North Florida.

It took less than four minutes for the board to adopt the resolution.

## Jefferson takes stand against pumping from Wacissa River

BY JENNIFER PORTMAN • TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER • PUBLISHED: MAY 06, 2011 2:00AM

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MONTICELLO — The Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved a resolution Thursday that asks the Suwannee River Water Management District to deny any requests to pump water in the county and transport it elsewhere.

The resolution comes in wake of speculative plans by Nestle Waters North America to pump water from near the headwaters of the spring-fed Wacissa River for use at its Madison County bottling plant.

"It makes it clear that we are asking the (water management district) to help us control this," said Commissioner Danny Monroe.

Nestle has not yet applied for a consumptive use permit for the area, but has been monitoring water quality and quantity at four test wells drilled last summer near the river. Last fall, area residents and outdoor enthusiasts joined together to oppose the company's preliminary plans for up to 70 tanker-trucks a day, for limited periods, to haul water from the satellite source to supplement its bottling operation at Madison Blue Springs.

Since then, the Friends of the Wacissa have waged a grass roots informational campaign to protect the river, which is fed by at least 13 springs that together discharge an average of about 250 million gallons a day, making it one of Florida's 33 first-magnitude springs.

The group also has teamed up with the non-profit Corporate Accountability International, which has assisted other small communities that have tried to stand up to North America's largest water bottler. Thousands of people have signed a petition against any plan to tap the river.

Wacissa resident Kim Gilmore welcomed the commission's resolution aimed at stopping Nestle's plans.

"We think that is one step closer," Gilmore said.

David Stills, executive director of the water management district, said water management board members would take the commission's recommendations seriously.

"Any time a local entity of government asks, I think the board is more than able to sit up and listen," he said.

The board's resolution also calls on the water management district to establish minimum flow and water level standards for the Wacissa and nearby Aucilla River as soon as possible.

In a letter to commissioners, Nestle's Southeast Region Natural Resources Manager Kent Koptiuch said the company supports establishing minimum flow levels and would be willing to share the information it collects about the Wacissa spring area with the water management district.

"Any data that we can get is always useful in setting minimum flows," Stills said.

Koptiuch's letter also stressed that any application to withdraw water should be "fairly evaluated and based upon sound science."

At Thursday's meeting, Ryan Duffy of Ron Sachs Communications, which has been hired by Nestle to help handle public relations, said testing of the potential water source is not yet complete.

Last year, literature distributed by company officials said Nestle would not go ahead with any pumping plans without community support.

"It's going to come down to the science, if it is viable," Duffy said. "Ultimately, we want what everybody in the community wants, clean water."

# Jefferson takes stand against pumping from Wacissa River

By Jennifer Portman  
DEMOCRAT-STAFF WRITER

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See WACISSA, PAGE 2 / LOCAL

## WACISSA

From Page 1 / LOCAL

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# JEA wants more aquifer water

## Some think granting utility permit could hurt region's lakes and rivers

By Steve Patterson  
 steve.patterson@jacksonville.com

JEA could get state permission this week to take about a third more water from Florida's aquifer during the next 20 years than it normally uses now.

But that would be nearly identical to the amount the city-owned utility already has permits to use, and has never fully needed.

Those two ways of seeing the same numbers helped feed a divide over whether rules proposed for the state's second-largest water utility represent water going to waste or a decision to hold the line on more consumption.

The permit being proposed would require JEA

to recycle more water from its sewage plants to supply sprinkler systems or other uses besides drinking water, but the utility says a growing population could still need some added groundwater.

"We have not increased the allocations. And on this permit, we've required a huge increase in reuse of reclaimed water by JEA," said Hal Wilkening, resource management department director at the St. Johns River Water Management District. "That's why for the next 20 years they can live within their current allocations."

The management district's staff is asking its governing board to

## DECIDING JEA PERMIT

The St. Johns River Water Management District is expected to vote Tuesday on approving a 20-year water-use permit for JEA during a meeting at the agency headquarters in Palatka. A committee of the agency's governing board will meet at 10 a.m., and the full board is expected to begin hearing information about the JEA permit around 10:30 a.m.

approve a JEA permit at a meeting Tuesday in Palatka.

Critics say the deal promises JEA too much of a precious resource without spelling out enough requirements for avoiding environmental damage that water managers agree pumping could cause.

"They're water-

## JEA permit could drop lake levels

Water levels in Lake Brooklyn and Lake Geneva in Clay County, as well as Cowpen Lake in Putnam County, could drop, in part due to a water-use permit JEA is seeking from a state agency. JEA could be required to plan ways to make up for water decreases.



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JEA continues on B-2

## JEA

Continued from B-1

hoarding, is basically what they're doing," said Keystone Heights Mayor Mary Lou Hildreth, whose town in southwest Clay County is seeking stronger protections for Lake Brooklyn and Lake Geneva, which have both shrunk for years.

The water agency concluded JEA pumping might worsen falling lake levels near Keystone, as well as lowering aquifer pressure in Duval County and parts of Nassau and St. Johns counties. Cowpen Lake in Putnam County could also be harmed.

At most, JEA could have permission to use about 163 million gallons of groundwater daily in 2031, up from 118 million gallons per day it used last year. The cap on water use this year would be about 122 million gallons daily and

would rise year by year.

JEA says it will need more water to handle a customer base forecast to grow by at least 40 percent over two decades. And the utility points out it already has permits to take 155 million gallons daily. That would make the limit for 2031 just five percent more than the cap now.

Wilkening says the cap after 20 years would really be the same 155 million gallons allowed now, unless it first arranged to deliver reuse water — cleaned, recycled wastewater — to developments and businesses that would agree to stop pumping their own well water.

That would actually help the aquifer, he argued, because JEA would have to deliver 14 million gallons of recycled water to businesses like that to get permission to take 7 million gallons from the ground.

The proposed permit

calls for JEA to gradually distribute more reuse water, eventually almost 44 million gallons daily. That represents 37 percent of the wastewater JEA is expected to process in 2030.

But skeptics argue the agreement could let JEA duck that obligation.

St. Johns Riverkeeper Neil Armingeon points to a requirement for JEA to supply reuse water to all new customers unless it is "economically, environmentally or technologically infeasible."

"Left to their own devices, JEA will always find a way to claim reuse is '... infeasible,'" Armingeon argued in a letter to the management district.

JEA is serious about that pledge and is budgeting \$226 million to expand its water-recycling system, said Athena Mann, the utility's vice president of environmental services.

"We've committed to

some aggressive reclaimed [water] goals and also some aggressive conservation goals," Mann said.

She said the utility's total cost for meeting permit requirements could reach \$288 million.

Armingeon said he's also worried by evidence that water use around Jacksonville has gradually sucked away at the aquifer near parts of the Santa Fe and Suwannee rivers. Management district employees concluded there was "reasonable assurance" JEA's permit wouldn't cause big problems in those areas, but recommended making the utility supply monitoring reports and new analysis of its impact on those areas and others.

Steve Patterson: (904) 359-4263

# Suwannee River Water management district offers real-time data online

It is now easier to get real-time online information about the Suwannee River — and there is also more information to get.

The Suwannee River Water Management District has expanded public access to its water data. The data now will include information from a new, state-of-the-art gauge on a section of the river that previously was unmeasured.

District senior professional engineer Megan Wetherington said the public can use a new portal to get information about the river and

other water data from across the district. Real-time river levels and the new data portal are available at <http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/index.aspx?nid=345>.

"We hope the new format is user-friendly, and we encourage people to browse their area's water conditions and history," Wetherington said.

For example, water levels on rivers in the district can be viewed on a map of each river level gauge.

The newest gauge was installed recently at Noble's Ferry, which is

at the County Road 249 Bridge between Suwannee and Hamilton counties. District officials said the gauge fills a 23-mile gap between the Ellaville and Suwannee springs' gauges.

The new gauge uses radar technology so that the water level in the river can be measured without any equipment actually touching the river, district officials said. By using the new technology, officials said the district saved thousands of dollars in construction costs.

— Karen Voyles

## Monticello News

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

### WATER RESOLUTION NOT INTENDED TO SUPPLANT AQUIFER ORDINANCE

*Measure Still In The Works*

**LAZARO ALEMAN**  
ECB Publishing  
Senior Staff Writer

The resolution that commissioners adopted on Thursday morning, May 5, encouraging the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) to deny any permit seeking to pump water for transport outside the county in no way supplants a proposed county ordinance that aims at the same objective.

Attorney Scott Shirley, who drafted the proposed ordinance, told the *News* on Monday, May 9, that work on the aquifer protection ordinance continues, in conjunction with the SRWMD.

Shirley said he and the SRWMD attorney charged with reviewing the ordinance had worked extensively through the

measure's various provisions to ensure that the county wasn't overstepping its authority.

"We're on track," Shirley said. "I now have another draft of the ordinance. We're trying to avoid regulating in the same area as the SRWMD, which is in the consumptive use of water permits."

He said he believed the new version would accomplish the county's stated goal of protecting the aquifer, without compromising the district's authority.

"I feel that we can achieve an effective level of aquifer protection by focusing on land development and land-use permitting without getting into the area of water consumptive use, which is the sole jurisdiction of the water management district," Shirley said.

As to when he might have the ordinance ready for the commission's review, Shirley said he couldn't say. He said it would depend on how long it took to get the final version completed.

The ordinance originally was scheduled for a public hearing on April 21, but was pulled from the agenda at the last minute, an action prompted by the expressed concern of

**Please See ORDINANCE Page 6A**

### Ordinance Cont. From Page 1

the SRWMD that the ordinance overstepped into the district's jurisdiction. The objection, specifically, was that the regulation of water was a right granted exclusively to water management districts.

The earlier draft made it so that any development activity that involved the removal of surface or ground water from the county's geographic boundaries for outside use would require a supermajority (4/5<sup>ths</sup>) vote of the Board of County Commissioners.

It also limited surface and ground water withdrawals in all land-use

districts to those activities that were necessary to serve the land uses allowed under the designated land-use category where such water withdrawals took place, and it further limited the water withdrawals to only those amounts necessary to serve the lawfully designated land uses.

# Resolutions Aim To Protect Water Resources In Region

Monticello News

**Nestlé Responds With Offer To Share Data**

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

## Water Resources

Cont. From Page 1

LAZARO ALEMAN  
ECB Publishing  
Senior Staff Writer

Separate resolutions that the Jefferson County Commission adopted on Thursday morning, May 5, ostensibly aim to protect the region's water resources and the Floridan Aquifer and Aucilla and Wacissa rivers in particular.

Resolution #1, which the commission initiated, asks the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) to deny any permit that seeks to pump water in Jefferson County and transport it outside the county's jurisdiction. It further asks the district to establish minimum flows and levels for the Wacissa and Aucilla rivers as soon as practicable.

Resolution #2, initiated by the North Florida Economic Development Partnership (NFEDP), asks the St. John River Water Management District (SJRWMD) and the City of Jacksonville to defer action on a water withdrawal permit application that has the potential to significantly impact the Floridan Aquifer and the Suwannee region's water resources.

Resolution #1 cites as its justification the state's declaration that water is a precious resource that warrants managing to ensure its sustainability; and it further cites a 2010 water supply assessment report that found water resources are declining in parts of the SRWMD.

The resolution expresses concern that ongoing attempts

Please See **WATER RESOURCES** Page 6A

to pump groundwater from Jefferson County for bottling outside the county "could have an adverse impact on the county's natural resources, as well as its future water supply."

The resolution takes the position that "any action to pump and transport water from Jefferson County for the purpose of bottling and selling water would not be consistent with the public interest", and it argues that such action therefore fails to comply with certain provisions in state law.

Attorney Scott Shirley, who drafted the document, said that the more important of the resolution's two aims was the request for establishment of the minimum flows and levels for the two rivers.

"Once established," Shirley said of the minimum flows and levels, "the district would be required to deny any permit that exceeded those flows or levels. That's really more important than the transportation of the water."

He further noted that the resolution in no way supplanted a proposed ordinance that seeks to prevent large-scale withdrawals of groundwater for transport outside Jefferson County. (See related story).

Resolution #2 is part of an orchestrated effort by the NFEDP; and as such, the resolution has been adopted by numerous of the organization's public and private members in its 14-county area, including the City of Monticello, the Monticello/Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce, and the Jefferson County Tourist Development Council.

Resolution #2 takes into account the reduced water flows in many of the Suwannee region's springs. It cites studies and technical data showing that increased groundwater consumption may

accelerate the lowering of the region's water levels and deteriorate the water quality. And it takes note that a pending application before the SJRWMD and City of Jacksonville may have an adverse impact on the Suwannee region's already stressed water resources and the many entities that depend on these resources, as well as on the region's economic development potential.

The resolution asks that the SJRWMD and the City of Jacksonville defer a decision on the application of an electricity-generating company that supposedly is seeking to increase its water consumption by 40 percent for cooling purposes. The resolution asks that the permit decision be delayed until the potential impacts of the increased water usage can be determined, and it encourages consideration of alternative water sources, such as reclaimed and desalinated water.

Resolution #1 met with an immediate response from Nestlé Waters North America Inc., in the form of a letter to the commission from Kent S. Koptiuch, the company's natural resource manager for the southeast region. Nestlé Water is currently testing the Wacissa River for possible water bottling purposes.

In the letter, Koptiuch expresses Nestlé Waters' commitment to protecting and preserving the Wacissa River and promoting the sustainability of the area's water resources, and he encourages commissioners to reach out to their counterparts in Madison County and get the latter's "view on Nestlé Waters' commitment to the people, to the community, and to the environment."

More to the point, Koptiuch states Nestlé

Waters' support for the establishment of minimum flows and levels for the Wacissa and Aucilla rivers, and its willingness to share pertinent data the company has collected over the last several years from its evaluation of sites throughout the region "as part of an ongoing effort to identify a high-quality, supplemental source that would serve as an occasional backup to our permitted source at Madison Blue Spring."

"We commend, and fully support, the commission's desire to encourage the SRWMD in establishing minimum flows and levels for the Wacissa and Aucilla rivers," Koptiuch wrote. "We believe the establishment of minimum flows and levels to be a critical undertaking that is vital to the future health of our region's watersheds."

"We further believe that all water withdrawal applications should be fairly evaluated and based upon sound science. Nestlé Waters has always been pleased to share our data as appropriate, and we stand ready to provide assistance to the SRWMD in furtherance of achieving this goal." Koptiuch concluded by reiterating that "water is Nestlé's business."

"Protection of the water and the springs as a resource is vital to the long-term success of our business," Koptiuch wrote. "Sustainable resource management is the cornerstone of our success. Nestlé Waters looks forward to working with the commission and with the SRWMD in conserving Florida's natural springs and to providing the communities we serve with critical information about rainfall, spring flows, river levels, and aquifer measurements."

# SRWMD adds new real-time river gage and expands data access

The Suwannee River Water Management District has added a new gage to its real-time river level network. The Suwannee River at Noble's Ferry gage, located at the CR 249 Bridge between Suwannee and Hamilton counties, fills a 23-mile gap between the Ellaville and Suwannee Springs gages.

"People in the area around Noble's Ferry and the Alapaha River confluence had a bad time during the 2009 flood," said Megan Wetherington, District senior professional engineer.

"(Their) flooding came from downstream when the Withlacoochee and Alapaha backed up the Suwannee River. If they were looking at the Suwannee Springs forecast upstream, the flooding

potential was minor. But it was a 50-year event downstream at Ellaville," Wetherington added.

While the new gage will not be a flood forecast point, residents can compare future floods to the 2009 crest.

"We tracked the crest using a manual gage, so at the very least people can see if future floods are better or worse than the bad one two years ago," Wetherington said.

The gage uses new radar technology which allows the water level to be measured without any equipment actually touching the river, saving thousands of dollars in construction costs.

In addition to the new gage, the District expanded its public access to water data

through its new hydrologic data portal. The portal provides information on past rainfall, water levels, and water quality data collected from more than 300 monitoring sites within a 15-county region.

The new portal uses interactive Google-based maps to display data spatially.

"We hope the new format is user-friendly and we encourage people to browse their area's water conditions and history," Wetherington said.

Real-time river levels and the new data portal are available at <http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/index.aspx?nid=345>. For more information contact Megan Wetherington at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only):

THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2011

## Letter To The Editor

**JEA SPIGOT**

**GOING TO "FULL BLAST"?**

There was a critical vote THIS PAST Tuesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 a.m. at St. John's River Water Management District offices on 4049 Reid Street, Palatka. The St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) was voting on an INCREASE to Jacksonville Electric Authority's (JEA) public water use permit. According to SJRWMD, over 50% of the water used in the district goes to lawn sprinklers for turf grass irrigation.

According to facts and models that have been presented at numerous public meetings, Jacksonville's current water withdrawals are already drawing down our Floridan Aquifer as far west as White Springs in Hamilton County as well as lakes and wetlands in Union and Baker Counties.

Save Our Suwannee is concerned that increasing these water withdrawals will only make the current drawdown more disastrous for those of us to the west of Jacksonville. JEA is proposing to increase its consumptive water use permit to 160 million gallons per day--that is 2-1/2 times the daily flow of a first-magnitude spring like Volusia Blue or Ichetucknee.

White Springs, on the Suwannee River in Hamilton County, used to be a tourist destination/health spa and popular place for public recreation, but has now dried up completely (photo attached). The flow in Ichetucknee Springs is down 23%, and hydrologic data clearly shows that the groundwater divide between the St. Johns WMD and Suwannee River WMD has migrated almost to the edge of the Ichetucknee Spring Watershed.

The rules are in place to protect Florida's water supply from being monopolized by a single entity or urban area. Following the infamous "Water Wars" between Tampa and Hillsborough County's rural neighboring counties, the Florida Statutes were modified to protect surrounding neighbors from excessive urban water withdrawal. The St. Johns River Water Management District and the JEA need to follow the statutes and turn to other techniques such as mandated conservation and water reclamation to meet that region's water needs.

Save Our Suwannee urges the JEA and the SJRWMD to take a lesson from history. Realize that your actions will impact not only your neighbors to the west, but also all Floridians and tourists from throughout the world who visit Florida's springs district. Don't shoot Florida in the foot. Be a good neighbor. Do the right thing for all of us now, and for all of our children in the future.

Contact: Annette Long  
352-490-8930 or  
long5892@bellsouth.net  
Save Our Suwannee, Inc.

**Dixie County Times**

**Thursday, May 12, 2011**

**SRWMD adds new real-time river gage and expands data access**

LIVE OAK, FL, May 6, 2011 - The Suwannee River Water Management District has added a new gage to its real-time river level network. The Suwannee River at Noble's Ferry gage, located at the County Road 249 Bridge between Suwannee and Hamilton counties, fills a 23-mile gap between the Ellaville and Suwannee Springs gages.

"People in the area around Noble's Ferry and the Alapaha River confluence had a bad time during the 2009 flood," said Megan Wetherington, District senior professional engineer.

"(Their) flooding came from downstream when the Withlacoochee and Alapaha backed up the Suwannee River. If they were looking at the Suwannee Springs forecast upstream, the flooding potential was minor. But it was a 50-year event downstream at Ellaville," Wetherington added.

While the new gage will not be a flood forecast point, residents can compare future floods to the 2009 crest. "We tracked the crest using a manual gage, so at the

very least people can see if future floods are better or worse than the bad one two years ago," Wetherington said.

The gage uses new radar technology which allows the water level to be measured without any equipment actually touching the river, saving thousands of dollars in construction costs. In addition to the new gage, the District expanded its public access to water data through its new hydrologic data portal. The portal provides information on past rainfall, water levels, and water quality data collected from more than 300 monitoring sites within a 15-county region.

The new portal uses interactive Google-based maps to display data spatially. "We hope the new format is user-friendly and we encourage people to browse their area's water conditions and history," Wetherington said.

Real-time river levels and the new data portal are available at <http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/index.aspx?nid=345>. For more information contact Megan Wetherington at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only).

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# New SRWMD program speeds up environmental resource permitting process

LIVE OAK, FL, April 22, 2011 – Landowners, developers and others in need of an environmental resource permit (ERP) from the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) now have an opportunity to obtain a permit much faster for certain projects.

The District is offering an accelerated permit review (APR) process, which reduces the time a permit is reviewed from 30 days to two business days. Factoring in the time the application is received, an applicant may have a permit in hand within 3-7 business days. This is provided the permittee follows all guidelines required for the accelerated process.

Non-APR permits are issued within 60 days and longer if the application is incomplete. This process is still available to all applicants; applicants who wish to receive a permit on an accelerated basis can take advantage of the APR process.

ERP projects that qualify for an APR must meet certain criteria, including, but not limited to the following: they must not have wetland impacts and/or require mitigation; they must not require a variance; and they must not require comments or review from the District's attorneys.

There is a \$1,000 charge for APRs, which covers administrative costs. This is in addition to the actual permit fee.

Applicants must still meet all required rules and conditions of issuance as listed in Chapter 40B-4 and 40B-400, Florida Administrative Code.

"The APR program is designed to give premi-

um service for certain projects," said Leroy Marshall, District professional engineer.

Marshall said the program was implemented in response to applicants' requests for an expedited permitting process. It also allows applicants to schedule their permits in advance.

"Knowing when a permit may be issued is particularly helpful to contractors who must meet other development requirements, such as obtaining a zoning change or county building permit," Marshall said. "This service is designed to help commercial ventures get in and out the door."

Those requesting an APR schedule a receiving period – a time frame of up to five days when the application and related documents will be submitted. The two-day review process begins after the five-day period.

Marshall said small- to medium-sized commercial projects, such as the development of a department store, convenience store or fast food restaurant are the type of projects that will most benefit from the program.

Currently, the program is only offered to ERP applicants, but the District may look to expand the program in the future to provide APRs for other permits. Some of the projects that require an ERP include: the development of ponds, boat ramps, and dams; the construction of buildings, subdivisions, and roads; and wetland or stream encroachment.

For more information about the program call Leroy Marshall at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only).

THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2011

THE MAYO FREE PRESS, Mayo, FL

## SRWMD governing board meeting

On Thursday, May 19, 2011, the Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet at 9 a.m. at the City of Fanning Springs City Hall Assembly Room, 17651 NW 90th Court, Fanning Springs, Florida 32693. The meeting is to consider District business and conduct public hearings on regulatory and land acquisition matters. A river tour will begin following the

Board meeting. A workshop will be held the following day on Friday, May 20, 2011 at 8 a.m. at the Cedar Key Library, 460 2nd Street, Cedar Key, Florida 32625.

On Tuesday, May 31, 2011 at 1 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.

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# Our Santa Fe River Inc. will discuss its achievements made in only four years at special meeting tonight

By Derek Gilliam  
For The Herald

Clean, crisp, and never in a bottle, that's the way Merrilee Malwitz-Jipson likes her water.

Malwitz-Jipson is the president of Our Santa Fe River, Inc. and has been a part of the organization since the founding of the group in 2007.

Since then, Our Santa Fe River has been fighting for the quality of water in and around the watershed of the Santa Fe River. Today, Thursday, May 12, the group will have a public meeting in Fort White to discuss the group's progress and goals.

Members said the group has come a long way, and the effort began with a simple idea.

Russ Augspurg, the first president of the organization, said the decision to organize was based on a need to educate the population about what was happening in the community to local water resources.

When the group was originally created, the focus was on one specific problem. Four bottling companies were in the process of obtaining permits to tap into the aquifer and suck billions of gallons of water away from the area.

He said he was worried about

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**The group formed simply to fight bottled water plants but then began taking a more comprehensive look at the river's health. Educating people about the river became just as important as gearing up to fight certain issues.**

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what this would mean for the Santa Fe River and what could be done to stop potential environmental damage.

"We consider water to be a public natural resource," said Malwitz-Jipson. "We believe that no corporation should own our water."

Because the four water bottling companies were spread out between three counties, an organized effort was needed to prevent the permits. Members of Our Santa Fe River attended County Commission meetings in Gilchrist County, Alachua County and Columbia County, preventing all four operations from receiving permits.

Our Santa Fe River didn't celebrate long after halting the bot-

tling companies. Once the group was formed, other problems with water quality became impossible to overlook.

"As more citizens are involved, it becomes obvious that there are other concerns that needed to be addressed," Augspurg said.

The organization started out with nine board members but has grown to have an e-mail list of more than 450 residents and right at 49 members, who pay dues.

According to Malwitz-Jipson, Seminole Electric was trying to build a power plant in Gilchrist County that would have evaporated 5.5 million gallons of water a day from the area. Our Santa Fe River actively campaigned to prevent this from happening.

One of the bigger problems is nitrates from septic tank leakage and over fertilization of agricultural lands contaminating the groundwater. These contaminants eventually end up in the Santa Fe River, said Malwitz-Jipson.

Our Santa Fe River attempted to have legislation passed that would protect the springs from these contaminants. Although the group was able to get a bill passed in the Senate, the legislation was stalled in the House.

With the way the budget is progressing Malwitz-Jipson said, the organization will not be going back to Tallahassee anytime soon.

Instead they are focusing more on what has been successful in the past — local grass-root efforts.

Last October, they sponsored a singer songwriter contest and plan to do the same this fall. The contest's aimed goal was to bring attention to the Santa Fe River.

They also sponsor a Springs Tie-dye Project. In this project, they have members of the organization teach area elementary and middle school students about the needs of water conservation.

In the project, students tie-dye kitchen towels. According to

Malwitz-Jipson, these towels look similar to the springs in color.

"It's a constant reminder that the water that comes into our homes needs to be conserved," she said.

She points out that the Floridan Aquifer is 20 feet below historic levels recorded in 1948, and that the area doesn't have an infinite supply of water.

A discussion of the aquifer, the rivers and the progress of the organization will be held when Our Santa River meets Thursday, May 12, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Fort White Library.

At the meeting the group will discuss their goals and what has been accomplished in the last year.

They also plan to replace two board members.

"We have proven that citizen participation can define a community," Malwitz-Jipson said.

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Comments about this story can be left under the online version of it at *The Herald's* Website. Stories are generally placed online each week by Thursday evening at: [NorthFloridaHerald.com](http://NorthFloridaHerald.com)

**Suwannee River Water Management District  
 Invitation to Bid for LTD, Life, Property and Casualty, Liability  
 and Workers Compensation Insurance  
 Bid Number 10/11-029MS**

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) in Live Oak, Florida, is requesting bids for Long Term Disability, Life, Property and Casualty, Liability, and Workers Compensation coverages commencing October 1, 2011.

Current coverage includes: Long Term Disability for 68 employees with a \$4 million annual payroll; Term Life coverage for 68 employees at \$50,000 for each employee; Property; Comprehensive General Liability; Automobile Liability; Public Official Liability; Employee Dishonesty Liability; Electronic Data Processing Equipment coverage; and Workers Compensation coverage. See additional information below:

Current Coverage	Carrier	FY 10 Premiums (\$)
Life	Standard	9,792
Long Term Disability	Standard	15,960
Auto	PGIT	5,102
Comm. General Liability	PGIT	14,620
Property	PGIT	32,900
Worker's Compensation	PGIT	13,064

In order to assure a uniformity of supplemental and clarifying information that is provided to bidders, and to allow bidders an opportunity to ask specific questions prior to submitting a bid, a **mandatory** pre-bid conference has been scheduled at District headquarters for June 1, 2011, 2:00 p.m., EST. Bid packages will not be available until the pre-bid conference.

**Bid Schedule**

Release of Invitation to Bid	May 18, 2011
<b>Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference</b>	<b>June 1, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.</b>
Bid Opening	July 27, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.
Post Bid Conference	August 10, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.
Governing Board Approval	September 13, 2011 at 9:00 a.m.

If you have any questions on Long Term Disability or Life coverage, please contact Lisa Cheshire at [lmc@srwmd.org](mailto:lmc@srwmd.org). For all other coverages, please contact Leah Lamontagne at [lll@srwmd.org](mailto:lll@srwmd.org). District's phone number is 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (Florida residents only).

# Springs protection plan delayed

By MARK SCOHIER

news2@chieflandcitizen.com

A decision to create two springs protection zones in Gilchrist County was unanimously tabled Monday night by county commissioners out of concern that the policy might not sit well with local farmers.

"I want their input," Gilchrist Commissioner Sharon Langford said, referring to the county's agricultural committee. "I don't want to do anything that will hurt the farmers."

The springs protection zones would help protect a portion of the 206-square-mile springshed that feeds water to Fanning Springs, as well as another portion of the springshed that feeds springs along the Santa Fe River. County Planner Stacey Winfield said the plan is based on recommendations set forth by the Florida Department of Community Affairs and is designed to protect environmentally sensitive areas that include sinkholes, streams and other conduits that feed springs and groundwater.

"Do we have to have a springs protection area?"

asked Commissioner Tommy Langford.

"No, it is not a mandate," responded Winfield. "It was recommended by the state."

Winfield said the protection zone, which if enacted would be part of the county's new comprehensive plan, does little to affect farmers. It mostly regulates big developments and heavy industries, she said. "These will be the main people affected."

Commissioner Kenrick Thomas asked Winfield if agriculture could ever be considered "heavy industrial use."

"It could be," Winfield said, "if a DEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) permit is required."

Local farmer Kelly Philman, in defense of area farmers, said agriculturists in the area have been doing their best to be good stewards of the land.

"The vast majority of our farmers in our county and surrounding counties have adopted BMPs (Best Management Practices)," he told the commission. "As

See **SPRINGS 13A**

## SPRINGS

*Continued from 1A*

far as I'm concerned, for lack of a better word, we're gettin' an 'A'."

Georgia Shemitz, a water resources specialist from High Springs, said, "For me, agriculture is not the issue here. They (farmers) are doing a really great job of monitoring themselves." Development is the issue, she said. "And because farmers are doing such a great job, I don't think it will impact them so much. It's not just about keeping the springs pretty. It's about keeping the water, our water, clean for future generations."

Pete Butt, also a water resources specialist, said a springs protection zone in Gilchrist County is especially important because of the type of geology that exists beneath the ground.

"Water moves very fast in this area," he said. In some places, water can move as fast as a mile a day, a fact demonstrated by Butt two years ago while doing a dye trace at a Chiefland sinkhole. In that study, the sinkhole, fed by runoff from Chiefland streets, was proven to have a direct connection to Manatee Springs.

The sinkhole is typical of the geology of the Suwannee Basin, which exists in three counties. Much of the basin is made up of karst topography, a porous subsurface that often allows water from the surface to quickly move unfiltered into the groundwater below.

The matter is complicated when these types of topographies sit on agricultural lands or areas with a high concentration of septic tanks, both of which contribute high levels of nitrates into the aquifer. Septic tanks are common in the tri-county area, which is also mostly agricultural.

Both Fanning and Manatee springs have seen a steady increase in nitrate levels since the 1950s. Fanning Springs has one of the highest nitrate levels in the state, at somewhere between five and six milligrams per liter. The state has set a healthy target nitrate level at .35 milligrams per liter, which, considering the current levels on pollutants, is a problem for the springs that play such a crucial role in the ecology, not to mention their ability to draw hundreds of thousands of tourists each year.

In the last decade, most of the eelgrass, a favorite food of wintering manatees, and other aquatic plants in Fanning and Manatee have been choked out by nitrate-loving algae. And the flow, as well, has diminished thanks to

bigger draws by industry and agriculture. About 60 million gallons of water per day in groundwater withdrawals are permitted in the Fanning Springs Springshed alone, according to figures from the Suwannee River Water Management District.

Still, agriculture is important in the Suwannee Basin, said Commissioner Chair Randy Durden at Monday night's meeting. Durden, who also sits on the board of the Nature Coast Regional Water Authority, said the commission has been working hard to make decisions that protect water.

"We're trying to find a happy medium in this county," he said.

Annette Long, a representative from Save our Suwannee Inc., was also at Monday night's meeting. Afterward, she said she was disappointed that the decision to create a springs protection zone was stalled.

"Why make the same mistakes they made down south," she said. "Crystal River didn't do this fast enough. The water is pea green. We have a chance to do it now. We need to do it."

Long, who said she's hopeful the plan will eventually be passed, said the protection zone will not affect farmers. There's a law, The Right to Farm Act, that protects them, she said. Unfortunately, she said, many farmers become developers, and developers have a stake in this.

The matter is set to be reviewed again by Gilchrist County Commissioners on June 20. If approved by the commission, it will be sent to DCA for further review.

# SRWMD promotes recycled water through reuse

## Special to the Citizen

Florida Gov. Rick Scott has issued a proclamation declaring May 15-21 as Florida Water Reuse Week to spread awareness and highlight the importance of reclaimed water.

The Suwannee River Water Management District is joining in with the state to promote the benefits of this important alternative water resource.

Reclaimed water is highly treated wastewater that is reused for irrigation, toilet flushing, clothes washing, and other non-potable uses.

"Recycling water allows for more efficient use of wastewater while conserving our groundwater supplies," said Kevin Wright, District professional engineer. "And reducing groundwater

withdrawals has the added benefit of reducing stress on our natural systems."

Using reclaimed water for non-potable purposes means there is more fresh groundwater reserved for drinking and other potable uses.

The District considers reuse of water a proactive approach and an effective tool to solve water supply issues. Reclaimed water

has been identified as an alternative water supply to help meet water demands over the next 20 years.

The District is working with municipal water suppliers within its 15-county region to expand their wastewater treatment plants to gain the capacity to produce reuse water.

The District has provided funding and technical assistance to develop reuse

systems in Lake City, Live Oak, Monticello, Alachua and Cedar Key. To date, about \$7 million from the District's Water Protection and Sustainability Trust Fund has been spent on these efforts.

"These reuse projects collectively have the potential to offset about 5 million gallons of groundwater use per day," said Wright.

The District will expand its reuse program to other areas within its region when funding becomes available.

The District is also looking forward to taking advantage of reclaimed water at its headquarters in Live Oak. The agency is scheduled to receive reuse water from the City of Live Oak for landscape irrigation in the near future.

## Dixie County Advocate

Thursday, May 19, 2011

### SRWMD promotes recycled water through reuse program

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May 19, 2011

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***The Levy County Journal***

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**SRWMD Governing Board Meeting May 19**

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# Conservationists ask Scott to veto budget cut

By Jim Ash  
FLORIDA CAPITAL BUREAU CHIEF

Conservationists called on Gov. Rick Scott today to veto a bill that would slash water management district budgets by \$210 million.

The plea is a long shot, especially considering that the legislation is the result of Scott's own tax-slashing recommendations. The advocates hope to persuade the governor that by increasing their say over water management district budgets, lawmakers are increasing their power at the governor's expense.

The bill would give the Legislature the power to cap the amount of revenue each of the state's five districts could raise through property taxes.

If signed by Scott, the 2011-12 caps would be:

- \$284,901,967 cap for the South Florida Water Management District;
- \$3,946,969 cap for the Northwest Florida Water Management District;
- \$85,335,619 cap for the St. Johns Water Management District;
- \$107,766,957 cap for

the Southwest Florida Water Management District, and;

■ \$5,412,674 for the Suwannee River Water Management District.

The caps represent about a 30 percent reduction in the districts' property-tax revenue, but that is not their only source of income. Much of it comes from federal sources.

Naples Vice-Mayor John Sorey is a member of the Big Cypress Basin Board, which advises the South Florida Water Management District, the largest of the five districts. Sorey warned that the budget cut would threaten environmental restoration in Southwest Florida.

"If we get these resources cut, we're going to end up delaying projects and having a negative impact on quality of life in Naples and Collier County," Sorey said.

Kirk Fordham, chief executive officer of the Everglades Foundation, warned that the cutbacks will endanger Everglades restoration and water-resource development in South Florida.

**The plea is a long shot, especially considering that the legislation is the result of Scott's own tax-slashing recommendations. The advocates hope to persuade the governor that by increasing their say over water management district budgets, lawmakers are increasing their power at the governor's expense.**

Don't expect the environmental groups to rush to court to challenge the new law if Scott signs the bill. Audubon of Florida Executive Director Eric Draper warned that the new legislation could inch the districts closer to the definition of a state agency and state agencies aren't allowed to levy property taxes.

A lawsuit could backfire, Draper said.

"There is that risk because this is not a well thought out proposal," Draper said.

Scott spokesman Lane Wright said it's too early to say what the governor will do.

"The governor will be carefully reviewing that bill, just as he will be reviewing all" legislation, Wright said.

Sen. Don Gaetz, a Republican from Niceville who is next in line to be Senate president, said the legislation is needed to rein in excessive spending at some of the districts. Gaetz was quick to defend the Northwest Florida Water Management District, calling it well managed and efficient.

Any notion that the move is a power grab is simply "hyperbole," Gaetz said.

"The Legislature is supposed to be a last-resort protection for the tax payer if you have a local entity gone wild," Gaetz said. "There are some water management districts that have become huge governments unto themselves."

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# Founder of Florida's Nature Coast Conservancy honored

## Staff Report

If you are walking out to the end of the Railroad Trestle Trail, just off State Road 24 and Grove Street you will see a sign and may wonder about the man it honors.

Former Cedar Key residents Rob Crane and his wife, Connie, were active volunteers in conservation and the arts. Health issues have prompted them to move to The Village in Gainesville, but they have left an important mark on the area.

Rob Crane founded the Florida Nature Coast Conservancy, based in Cedar Key, in 1996 and his leadership brought the attention of both the state and the Suwannee River Water Management District to the environmental threats proposed development could bring.

His first focus was on the original location of Cedar Key — Atsena Otie — across from Dock Street and particularly, the surrounding Gulf waters.

The water district eventually acquired the island from the developer to preserve it, its historic cemetery and building. It is now open to the public and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In addition, with the initiative of the Conservancy, help with applications and with local encouragement, the Florida Communities Trust arm of the Florida Department of Community Affairs acquired

Cemetery Point — the area behind the Cedar Key Cemetery that once was a homesite.

Over the years, the area had been abused by recreational fishermen, people using it as a party place and a dumping ground. On any given day, visitors could find a discarded houseboat complete with a couple of mattresses, dumped appliances and enough discarded food and drink containers to supply a small army.

Today the property is clean and the City and Community Development Agency have fenced it, built a boardwalk for pedestrians, a pavilion for picnics, a small playground and installed a composting toilet. There are also garbage and recycling cans. It is an active area that is used for fishing, picnicking and recreation.

Cedar Key Development, Inc., owned by Ronnie Taylor, gave a trail easement along the old railroad trestle to the Conservancy for the Cedar Key Railroad Trestle Nature Trail that begins on Grove Street. The trail is maintained by the city of Cedar Key and volunteers.

The folks attending the dedication at the end of the trail gathered around the new kiosk on Sunday morning, May 15, to recognize Rob Crane with the dedication of the plaque and appreciation for his contributions to the public lands in and around Cedar Key.

# Water management district votes in favor of conservation

*Will purchase Andrews family land in Cedar Key*

By MARK SCOHIER  
news2@chieflandcitizen.com

The state is purchasing 622 acres of environmentally sensitive coastal lands in Cedar Key, thanks to a unanimous decision from the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board.

The board voted 6-0 on May 19 to allow District staff, who have been negotiating since October, to buy the property for \$3.31million, about \$5,000 per acre.

The purchase will permanently protect the land, owned by the Dennis Andrews family, owners of Andrews Land and Timber Co. and the Andrews Family Trust, from development. The purchase will be funded through the Florida Forever program, which aims to buy land for conservation and recreation purposes.

The property, located near the No. 4 bridge along State Road 24, is important in

**LAND continued on page 7**

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Cedar Key Beacon Page 7

## LAND continued from page 1

protecting fragile coastal wetlands and natural resources, as well as acting as a buffer for nearby Cedar Key Scrub State Reserve and Cedar Key National Wildlife Refuge, according to the District staff. The property is predominantly wetlands, about 85 percent, and will be important in minimizing flooding in the area, as well, according to the District staff report.

"I'm just very excited that this board, in this day and age, is filling in some of the puzzle pieces," said Sue Colson, Cedar Key city commissioner and aquaculture representative at the meeting. "And this is a puzzle piece."

She said the property is important in protecting the local clam industry.

Heath Davis, a Governing Board member and Cedar Key commissioner, said that over the years the District has made a lot of investments in Cedar Key. The district is help-

ing to maintain water quality, he said. In the future, according to Davis, purchases such as this will make the board appear to be "forward thinking."

In 2004, the Andrews family tried to develop the property, wanting to construct homes and neighborhoods on 413 acres of the land, according to minutes from Levy County Commission meetings. It was recommended for approval by the county planning board and approved by the County Commission, though the approval came with a host of stipulations. The land was never developed.

"There was a question of whether or not some of that land could be included in the matrix," Colson said in a Monday phone interview. The developers wanted to include submerged wetlands into the mix when determining the number of houses allowed per acre, even though only a portion of the property could actually support construction.

"If allowed to do what they wanted to do, we would

have problems," she said.

Shellfish are especially sensitive to toxins in the water, she said. The Andrews' property has an effect on aquaculture on both sides of State Road 24.

"It's very fragile," Colson said. "It could've become very polluted."

Most laws aimed at protecting water quality don't regulate at the pristine levels shellfish require, which makes conserving this piece of land even more important, Colson explained.

And, with all the sensitive lands in Cedar Key that the District has purchased over the years, this latest purchase just makes good sense, she said. It helps complete the jigsaw puzzle, she said.

"It's good news for tourists. It's good news for Levy County. It's good news for the environment. It's not just Cedar Key. I think everyone won on this."

# SRWMD adds real-time guage, expands access

*New guage will not be a flood forecast point*

**Special to the Citizen**

The Suwannee River Water Management District has added a new gage to its real-time river level network.

The Suwannee River at Noble's Ferry gage, located at the County Road 249 Bridge between Suwannee and Hamilton counties, fills a 23-mile gap between the Ellaville and Suwannee Springs gages.

"People in the area around Noble's Ferry and the Alapaha River confluence had a bad time during the 2009 flood," said Megan Wetherington, District senior professional engineer. "(Their) flooding came from downstream when the Withlacoochee and Alapaha backed up the Suwannee

River.

"If they were looking at the Suwannee Springs forecast upstream, the flooding potential was minor. But it was a 50-year event downstream at Ellaville," Wetherington added.

While the new gage will not be a flood forecast point, residents can compare future floods to the 2009 crest.

"We tracked the crest using a manual gage, so at the very least people can see if future floods are better or worse than the bad one two years ago,"

Wetherington said. The gage uses new radar technology which allows the water level to be measured without any equipment actually touching the river, saving thousands of dollars in construction costs.

In addition to the new gage, the District expanded its public access to water data through its new hydrologic data portal. The portal provides information on past rainfall, water levels, and water quality data collected from more than 300 monitoring sites within a 15-county region.

The new portal uses interactive Google-based maps to display data spatially.

"We hope the new format is user-friendly and we encourage people to browse their area's water conditions and history," Wetherington said.

Real-time river levels and the new data portal are available by logging on to [www.srwmd.state.fl.us/index.aspx?nid=345](http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/index.aspx?nid=345).

# Water rationing in Williston

**Special to the Citizen**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District has declared a Water Shortage Order (SWF 2010-022) for our district that includes Charlotte, Citrus, DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pinellas, Polk, Sumter and parts of Lake and Levy counties.

Williston is within that part of Levy County that is affected by the order. The order limits lawn watering to twice a week between the hours of 4 p.m. and 10 a.m. Even numbered addresses may water on Thursday and Sunday. Odd numbered addresses may water Wednesday and Saturday.

There are exceptions made for new landscaping and new lawns. The order will be enforced year round or until the water shortage abates.

The Williston City Council will be considering the creation of an ordinance in the near future to bring Williston into compliance with this order. Once they have done so, enforcement will likely fall to code enforcement and police.

When the ordinance has been formulated, the public will be informed and enforcement will begin with warnings and potentially escalate to fines.

For more information about the shortage or the water restrictions, go to [www.srwmd.state.fl.us/](http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/).

# Rainfall, surfacewater down in April

**From staff reports**

The Suwannee River Water Management District released its report of rainfall and surfacewater for the month of April.

Average rainfall was 2.62 inches, which is 79 percent of the long-term average of

3.32 inches. Eighty-percent of the month's total rainfall fell during fronts on April 5 and April 28.

The average 12-month deficit of 1.49 inches was near the long-term average of 54.68 inches.

As for surfacewater, most gauges on the Suwannee

River ended the month with flows below the 10th percentile of April records.

Levels monitored at lakes fell by an average of 0.2 feet with 15 of the 16 lakes in the district coming in below their historic average level. Lake Butler in Union County was the exception.

THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2011 THE JASPER NEWS, Jasper, FL

## Suwannee Chapter of the Florida Trail Association monthly meeting June 13

*Submitted*

The Suwannee Chapter of the Florida Trail Association will hold its monthly meeting on Monday, June 13, 2011 at the Suwannee River Water Management District Office, 9225 CR 49, Live Oak, from 7-9 PM, (on the corner of US 90 and CR 49, 2 miles east of Live Oak. The Public is welcome! Our program will feature: A series of photos taken

by various members during the 2010-2011 hiking and paddling season.

The Suwannee Chapter maintains many miles of the Florida National Scenic Trail along the banks of the Suwannee River in Madison, Hamilton and Suwannee Counties for the hiking public.

Incorporated in 1964, the Florida Trail Association is a 501(c)3 nonprofit volunteer organization

that builds, maintains, protects, and promotes the 1,400 mile Florida Trail, one of only eleven National Scenic Trails in the United States, in partnership with the USDA Forest Service. Our volunteers also build and maintain other trails on public land, known as the Florida Trail System Contact: Chapter Chair, Sylvia Dunnam, 362-3256, [dunnams@windstream.net](mailto:dunnams@windstream.net), or Irvin Chance, 386-330-2424

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<http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/index.aspx?nid=345>. For more information contact Megan Wetherington at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only).

THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2011

THE MAYO FREE PRESS, Mayo, FL

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# BUDGET: Scott took aim at Florida Forever land-buying program

The new Republican governor vetoed more than 150 line items after the GOP-controlled Legislature already had chopped nearly \$4 billion in spending.

Scott's vetoes include some bad news for the University of Florida and Santa Fe College.

They include \$6 million for UF's Research and Academic Center at Lake Nona in Orlando and \$5.3 million for maintenance and repairs of existing facilities, infrastructure and utilities at the university.

UF already has delayed maintenance projects because of previous budget cuts and would have to do so again or find money elsewhere in its budget.

Ed Poppell, UF's vice president for business affairs and economic development, has said that deferring repairs could lead to "a catastrophic failure" in the infrastructure and utilities that keep the campus running.

Another Scott veto eliminated all state funding — \$4.8 million — for public radio and television stations, including a combined \$369,000 for UF College of Journalism and Communications-run WUFT-TV and WUFT-FM.

The money already represented a 30 percent cut in state funding for the stations from the current year, but Scott's veto would eliminate state funding completely.

Randy Wright, executive director of multimedia properties for the college, has said such a move could lead to layoffs or cuts in other station expenses such as programming.

Scott also vetoed \$750,000 for an expansion of Santa Fe College's law enforcement laboratory at the Kirkpatrick Center in Gainesville.

College officials have said that space limitations have forced students to be turned away from programs that include emergency medical technician and law enforcement training.

Other vetoes related to UF include \$500,000 for a statewide brain and tumor registry program at the McKnight Brain Institute, which houses a center for brain tumor research. The governor also vetoed \$34,015 for a health care practice in Archer run by the UF College of Nursing.

UF already is building the Lake Nona center using \$20 million in state funding and now must obtain other sources for the remaining costs. UF President Bernie Machen issued a statement saying that vetoed projects "are important to the University of Florida, and we are disappointed they were not funded."

"However, we recognize the State of Florida is in a very difficult economic situation, and the Legislature and the Governor faced hard choices," he said. "Hopefully, these projects will be funded when the revenues return."

Statewide, the austere spending plan is expected to result in layoffs for hundreds if not thousands of public employees, including teachers. A new

## Vetoes of projects with local ties

Gov. Rick Scott vetoed \$615 million from the state budget, including the following projects with ties to the University of Florida and Santa Fe College:

- UF Research and Academic Center at Lake Nona: \$6 million
- UF utilities/infrastructure/capital renewal/roofs: \$5.3 million
- Law enforcement laboratory and library at Santa Fe College Kirkpatrick Center: \$750,000
- Statewide brain and tumor registry program at UF McKnight Brain Institute: \$500,000
- WUFT-TV: \$307,447
- WUFT-FM: \$61,715
- Southwest Alachua County Primary and Community Health Care Clinic: \$34,015

**Scott believes shrinking government and cutting taxes will help businesses create more private-sector jobs. The spending plan includes \$308 million in tax cuts, mostly in water management district property taxes.**

retirement provision also will effectively cut the pay of those who still have jobs.

Scott went to The Villages, a Central Florida retirement community south of Ocala that's a GOP and tea party stronghold, to sign the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 rather than do it in Tallahassee, home to thousands of public employees.

Sumter County sheriff's deputies escorted about two dozen protesters, some holding signs saying "Pink Slip Rick," from the town square. That's where Scott, a former hospital chain CEO, spoke to about 200 supporters at what one GOP staffer called a private event.

"I came out to support Rick Scott because his ratings are low, but I know that it's not always popular to do the right thing," said Tony LaRocco, a local tea party member who held an American flag and wore a T-shirt with "In God We Trust" on it.

Scott signed the budget a day after a Quinnipiac University poll showed his job-approval rating had sunk to 29 percent.

"We made the hard choices, now let's get to work," Scott told the crowd, echoing his campaign slogan.

Scott's office billed the spending plan as a "historic jobs budget."

Scott believes shrinking government and cutting taxes will help businesses create more private-sector jobs. The spending plan includes \$308 million in tax cuts, mostly in water management district property taxes.

Democrats are calling the budget a job-killer because it

eliminates about 4,500 state positions, most of them filled, and cuts \$1.35 billion from education, which is expected to cause more layoffs in school districts.

Nearly half of the veto total savings came from eliminating funding — \$305 million — for the Florida Forever land-buying program, but those dollars are contingent upon the state selling surplus property for the same amount.

Scott also vetoed about \$165 million in college and university construction projects and eliminated all state funding — \$4.8 million — for public television and radio. Local projects vetoed include \$1 million for a medical and dental program in Lake Wales and \$5 million for a rowing facility in Sarasota County.

Other vetoed appropriations include \$2 million for research on a plant disease that's threatening the state's multibillion-dollar citrus industry, \$10 million for St. Johns River restoration, \$6 million to help the Panhandle's economy recover from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and \$3 million for a disadvantaged youth jobs program.

Scott also signed a budget-conforming bill that will require teachers, state workers and many local government employees to pay 3 percent of their wages into the Florida Retirement System, now funded entirely by taxpayers. Democrats call it an "income tax" for public employees.

*Staff writer Nathan Crabbe and The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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Company 

## District staff go above and beyond the call

My four-year volunteer term as a member of the Suwannee River Water Management Governing Board is coming to a close. I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank the committed, dedicated, professional staff of the SRWMD and the leadership of its executive director, David Still.

These employees have not had a pay raise in three years, yet they remain loyal to their water-management responsibilities. They continue the fight to conserve the quantity and quality of our precious and finite ground and surface water.

Led by chairman Don Quincey, the SRWMD governing board deserves much credit and praise for its constant striving to promote policies of conservation and recycled water applications. I am proud to have been a small part of this ongoing mission and to be associated with the people who make it work.

**David Flagg,**  
*Gainesville*