

SRWMD promotes recycled water through reuse program

Submitted

LIVE OAK, FL, May 12, 2011 – Florida Governor 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 (District) joins the State in promoting 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 ben-

efit 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 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.

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RAINFALL IN APRIL IS BELOW NORMAL

LAZARO ALEMAN
ECB Publishing
Senior Staff Writer

The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) overall received less than average rainfall in April, while certain areas within its boundaries continued to experience significant deficits.

The district's latest hydrologic conditions report shows that the average rainfall was 2.62 inches in April, representing 79 percent of the historical average of 3.32 for the month.

The report states

that 80 percent of April's total rainfall came during two fronts that swept across the region on the 5th and 28th of the month, dropping heavy concentrations of rain in Suwannee and Lafayette counties and less than half of the normal rainfall in the Santa Fe Basin.

"The average 12-month deficit of 1.49 inches was near the long-term average of 54.68 inches," the report states. "However, significant deficits nearing or exceeding 20 inches persisted in the upper Aucilla, Suwannee and

Santa Fe Basins."

The report shows that Jefferson County received 2.83 inches of rainfall in April, compared with the April average of 4.04 inches. The county has received 12.86 inches of rainfall during the last three months and 47.19 inches during the last 12 months.

Madison County, meanwhile, received 2.55 inches in April, compared with the April average of 3.23 inches. Madison County has received 12.26 inches during the last three months and 50.26 inches

during the last 12 months.

River levels generally varied across the district. The Suwannee and its tributaries ended the month with flows below the 10th percentile of

April records; flows at the Alapaha and Withlacoochee rivers improved slightly by the end of the month; and conditions in the coastal

Please See **RAINFALL Page 4A**



Rainfall

Cont. From Page 1

basins declined but flows remained in a range considered typical for the season.

Levels at monitored lakes dropped an average of 0.2 feet, with 15 of the 16 lakes below their historical average level, according to the report. Groundwater levels, meanwhile, fell 69 percent in monitored wells of the upper Floridan Aquifer, dropping an average of 1.5 inches

since the previous month.

The district continues the phase-one water shortage advisory urging voluntary reduction of water consumption. The district reminds homeowners and others whose water use is not regulated by a permit that they are required to limit landscape irrigation to two days per week between March and October.

The SRWMD com-

pletes 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.

Tallahassee Democrat Saturday, June 4, 2011

Audubon director: Cuts hurt water projects

The executive director of Audubon of Florida says the state will no longer be able to protect its natural resources under Gov. Rick Scott's plan to cut the water management budget by 30 percent.

Audubon's Eric Draper said Friday at a public forum on water in Orlando that the state's water management districts will have a tough job performing their jobs with the \$218 million in cuts.

But the new executive director of the South Florida Water Management District says she isn't concerned since the districts still will be able to fund critical projects. Melissa Meeker says the cuts will come from shaving the salaries of top managers, eliminating inefficiencies and reducing employee benefits.

The forum was sponsored by Associated Industries of Florida and the American Water Works Association.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2011

■ SUWANNEE DEMOCRAT/LIVE OAK

SRWMD Governing Board meetings

On Tuesday, June 14, the Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board will meet at 9 a.m. at District headquarters, 9225

CR 49, Live Oak. The meeting is to consider District business and conduct public hearings on regulatory and land acquisition matters. A work-

shop will follow the Governing Board meeting.

On Monday, June 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.

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Sun
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EDITORIAL

Doctoring the data

On May 10 the St. Johns River Water Management District granted a major new water consumption permit to Jacksonville. In doing so, the district seems to have overlooked evidence that Jacksonville's water withdrawals are already harming springs, lakes and rivers in the neighboring Suwannee River Water Management District.

Last month, David Still, executive director of the Suwannee district, accused the Jacksonville Electric Authority of making "gross misrepresentations" in order to justify its request to pump even more water. Still cited a U.S. Geological Survey study which found "evidence indicating groundwater withdrawals to the east...have diverted groundwater that formerly flowed toward the Ichetucknee River..."

"The manipulation of information we observed during the (May 10) meeting does not serve the efforts that both our Districts have made toward addressing future resource impacts," Still said in his letter to St. Johns Executive Director Kirby

Green.

Further indication that the Jacksonville permit approval was not based on sound scientific data comes from Robert L. Knight, director of the Florida Springs Institute.

"If groundwater users in northeast Florida continue to increase the net consumption of Floridan Aquifer water, the problems in our springs (as well as in the hundreds of lakes, wetlands, and streams that are also affected) will continue to worsen," Knight warned in a May 18 letter to the Jacksonville Electric Authority. "This inevitably results in lost ecosystem services and economic harm in north central Florida."

Florida's water management districts were created on the expectation that they would make decisions about the state's water resources based on science, not politics. If the St. Johns District overlooked or downplayed evidence that consumption in Jacksonville is siphoning away the Suwannee region's water, it should reconsider its decision.

Water district says road was built illegally

Staff report

About a year ago, the Suwannee River Water Management District said it discovered an illegal road built across sensitive wetlands near Cedar Key.

The District sent a letter to the alleged offender, Scott McNulty. A month later, McNulty's attorney sent a letter to the District claiming the road was exempt from any required permitting, claiming it to have been "grandfathered in" because of when it was built.

At the District's last governing board meeting, board members voted 5-1 in favor of sending another letter to McNulty in hopes that the matter

could be resolved without going to court.

Board Member Guy N. Williams, of Lake City, was the only member to vote against the matter, stating it was an issue that should be taken up by the county, rather than SRWMD. Williams said he was concerned about the money the District might have to spend in litigation.

John Dinges, a representative from SRWMD, said he didn't believe the county wanted to get involved. "We're trying to leave the county out of this," he said. Dinges said he did not believe the current statutes exempted the road's construction.

District Director David Still said the board is required to protect wetlands.

"Mr. McNulty decided not to go through the (county's) permitting process," Still told the board. And now, according to Still, the District needs to enforce the rules.

"Mr. McNulty was fully aware that those were wetlands," said Cedar Key resident Kathleen Walz at the meeting.

Walz, who said she was once co-owner of the land McNulty built the road across, said McNulty was told by a judge to stop what he was doing. She said the road, built in 2008 from fill McNulty had dug from a pond, restricts water flow into the Gulf. The property is located in the Cedar Key Heights subdivision, in Levy County.

THE JASPER NEWS, Jasper, FL THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 2011

SRWMD Governing Board meeting

Submitted

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The Levy County Journal June 9, 2011

SRWMD Governing Board Meeting June 14

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Find beauty on Aucilla, Wacissa, Econfina rivers **RIVERS**

By Liz Sparks
Special to the Democrat

The "Rivers of AWE" — the Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfina — flow through a surprisingly rugged and sparsely populated slice of Florida's Big Bend region as they meander to the Gulf of Mexico. Anglers, paddlers and boaters exploring these beautiful, spring-fed rivers discover shady woodlands, wildlife and dramatic limestone sinks and outcroppings nestled in 47,622 acres of the Aucilla Wildlife Management Area, just southeast of Tallahassee.

So that young people, first-timers, visitors and residents can enjoy these three gems, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's Office of Recreation Services produced a detailed map/guide, in partnership with the Suwannee River Water Management District.

People long have been attracted to these rivers, and hunting and fishing always have been part of

the land's history. State archaeologists have found a treasure trove of pre-historic records in these rivers and along their shores. In 1993, archaeologists from the University of Florida recovered a 7½-foot mastodon tusk from a site along the Aucilla River. Eight long cut marks at the point where the tusk emerged from the skull indicated it had been removed by humans. Radiocarbon dating showed the tusk to be 12,200 years old, one of the earliest records of human activity in North America.

All three rivers offer unique opportunities for modern-day visitors.

Fun on the Wacissa

Encourage your kids to leave their electronic devices at home and experience an outdoor adventure on the Wacissa River, a state-designated canoe trail and one of the most pristine rivers in North Florida. This is a wonderful place for beginning paddlers or families with



DAVID MOYNAHAN/FLORIDA FISH & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
The limpkin, now absent from many of Florida's rivers, is still abundant on the Wacissa. The presence of limpkins is indicative of good water quality.

children.

Outfitters rent kayaks and canoes at Wacissa Springs County Park, and it's just a short paddle to Big Blue Springs, a great swimming spot on a hot

day. Try visiting in the mornings and evenings when crowds are sparse. Quiet observers are rewarded with an impressive variety of wildlife.

From the Wacissa, pad-

dlers can access the historic man-made Slave Canal. The canal was dug during antebellum times in an attempt to join the Wacissa and Aucilla rivers and create a means of moving cotton to the coast. This short paddling excursion can be challenging, depending on water levels and the number of dead trees in the water.

Try the Aucilla

The beautiful Aucilla River is a blackwater river that originates from artesian springs in Georgia and flows about 90 miles to the Gulf of Mexico. The water becomes "black" from acidic swamp discharge and surface runoff below the headwaters. The dark, tannic waters pass between high limestone banks and dense hardwood forests in some sections, and swampy areas of cypress and gums in others.

The Aucilla is also a state-designated canoe

See **RIVERS**, Page 3

From Page 1

trail and offers a limited number of access points for small fishing boats. Some rocky shoals and a short stretch of rapids make this trip moderately strenuous for paddlers (depending on water levels). It's best to paddle when the water level is between 48 and 50 feet at the bridge gauge near Lamont on U.S. 27.

Splendid solitude

The Econfina is a river seldom visited by paddlers but popular with bank fishermen. There are multiple access points for hand-launching canoes or kayaks, and a few are suitable for launching small johnboats. Wildlife viewing is excellent as you travel over dark waters beneath a dense canopy. The stretch from U.S. 98 to the Econfina River State Park can be strenuous, with dead trees to portage over. It's not a suitable route for beginning paddlers.

All you have to do to start exploring the "Rivers of AWE" is grab the new guide, read it and plan your adventure. "Aucilla/Wacissa/Econfina: An Explorer's Guide to North Florida's Region of Rivers" is a two-sided, 22-by-26-inch guide, printed on water-resistant, durable paper. It includes detailed maps, highlights of the three rivers, GPS coordinates, mileage, shuttling directions for different trip options, photos and access locations. For each river, the guide recommends several popular excursions and includes mileage, time estimates and general descriptions.

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— Liz Sparks is a recreation planner for FWC. Contact her by calling 922-6160 or emailing Liz.Sparks@MyFWC.com.

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EDITORIAL

Environmental politics

The Florida Department of Environmental Politics wishes to announce, with regret, that the state can no longer afford to protect Florida's best known and most impressive springs. Due to hard economic times the DEP will no longer fund the Wakulla, Rainbow, Ichetucknee and Silver Springs working groups.

But fear not. Department of Environmental Politics assures us that "Our interest in restoring these springs is not diminished..."

This is standard boilerplate from a state government that has abandoned all pretenses to environmental protection.

Gov. Rick Scott's regime is so intent on protecting the right of septic tank owners to contaminate the groundwater, fighting federal efforts to keep Florida's water clean and making life as easy as possible for agricultural

and industrial polluters that springs protection ranks very low on Tallahassee's "things to do" list.

The idea behind the working groups was to get stakeholders — citizen activists, agriculture and dairy interests, business people and so on — personally involved in springs restoration efforts. The negligible amount of money DEP spends to support those groups wouldn't cover the cost of Gov. Scott's public relations machine.

Florida's system of fresh water springs ranks as one of the wonders of the natural world. But our springs are under stress from excessive groundwater pumping, chemical and agricultural runoff and the impacts of poorly planned growth.

Florida can't afford healthy springs? Only in a state where environmental protection has bowed out to environmental politics.

Try Something New; Experience The 'Rivers of AWE'



Photo By Liz Sparks, FWC

The mysterious Aucilla River offers excellent paddling opportunities for users of all abilities.

The "Rivers of dramatic limestone AWE" – the Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfina – flow through a surprisingly rugged and sparsely populated slice of Florida's Big Bend region as they meander to the Gulf of Mexico. Anglers, paddlers and boaters exploring these beautiful, spring-fed rivers discover shady woodlands, wildlife and

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Take the Aucilla challenge. The beautiful Aucilla River is also a state-designated canoe trail and offers a limited number of access points

for small fishing boats. Some rocky shoals and a short stretch of rapids make this trip moderately strenuous for paddlers (depending on water level).

Experience solitude or fish on the Econfina, a river seldom visited by paddlers but popular with bank fishermen. There are multiple access points for hand-launching canoes or kayaks, and a few are suitable for launching small johnboats. Wildlife viewing is excellent as you travel over dark waters beneath a dense tree canopy.

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Photo By Liz Sparks, FWC

Paddling is challenging on Wacissa's historic Slave Canal.

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State, national spotlight shines on local rivers

Three of the Big Bend's brightest natural treasures, the "Rivers of AWE"—the Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfina—are flowing into the spotlight at both the state and national level.

On Monday, county commissioners unanimously agreed to send a letter of support to the U.S. Department of Interior in support of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) application to have the three

rivers designated as a national recreational trail.

Liz Sparks was at Monday's meeting to request the letter, saying the designation, which is competitive, would increase the river's public exposure and would benefit the local economy by encouraging additional tourism.

Those visitors would benefit from a new detailed map/guide of the rivers, recently produced by FWC in partnership with

the Suwannee River Water Management District.

"The 'Rivers of AWE' flow through a surprisingly rugged and sparsely populated slice of Florida's Big Bend region as they meander to the Gulf of Mexico. Anglers, paddlers and boaters exploring these beautiful, spring-fed rivers discover shady woodlands, wildlife and dramatic limestone sinks and outcroppings nestled in 47,622 acres of the Aucilla

Wildlife Management Area," FWC officials said.

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River guide features detailed maps

RIVERS OF AWE

Continued from page 1

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Permit brings water concerns bubbling up

Jacksonville's utility was recently granted a 20-year water permit

By Christopher Curry
Staff writer

Leaning forward in his chair, Don Brookshire pointed across Keystone Beach to the grassy island that bisects Lake Geneva. Brookshire said when he moved to Keystone Heights in 1998, the water's edge reached another 20 feet further up the beach, and none of the grassy islands or spits that now jut into the

water were visible. "It's a pitiful sight and it's just going to get worse," he said. "I don't see them fixing it."

Now, after the severe drought of a decade ago and the ongoing current drought, which has rainfall in Clay County 18.74 inches below average for the past 12 months, docks around the lake stand high and dry.

To Brookshire, the lack of rainfall is a significant factor. But groundwater pumping by utilities is

another source of concern.

The St. Johns River Water Management District last month approved a 20-year permit for Jacksonville's utility — which could eventually allow groundwater pumping of up to 163 million gallons a day (mgd) — has once more stirred up concerns like those Brookshire expressed over water supplies and drying lakes, springs and rivers.

The permit for the Jacksonville

WATER on Page 7A

WATER: Debate on groundwater pumping

Continued from 1A

Electric Authority came with three lakes in the Keystone Heights area — Geneva and Lake Brooklyn in southwest Clay County and Cowpen Lake in western Putnam County — already below their adopted minimum flows and levels, which are used to establish the point from which any future withdrawals or reductions in levels will do environmental harm to a water body.

"We've got the perfect storm right now with the drought and groundwater pumping," said Vivian Katz, president of the Keystone Heights-based environmental group Save Our Lakes.

With the approval of the JEA permit, debate also resurfaced over the impact groundwater pumping in northeast Florida has on water bodies within the jurisdiction of the Suwannee River Water Management District — including the Suwannee River, the upper Santa Fe River, the Ichetucknee River and White Sulphur Spring.

'Gross misrepresentations'

In a presentation to the St. Johns district's governing board at the May 10 meeting when the permit was approved, a JEA representative stated that the utility's groundwater pumping had no adverse effects on water bodies within the Suwannee district. Reduced levels and flows were attributed to rainfall deficits and, in the case of White Sulphur Spring, to the PCS phosphate mine in Hamilton County.

On May 27, nearly three weeks after the permit approval, Suwannee River Water Management District Executive Director David Still sent a letter to Kirby Green, the executive director of the St. Johns district, alleging that the JEA presentation included "gross misrepresentations."

Still wrote that he attended the meeting with the Suwannee district's governing board chairman because of "our conviction that the water resources and future economic well being of the SRWMD have been impacted and are under continued threat from withdrawals from the Floridan aquifer system in northeast Florida."

The letter stated the "most obvious misrepresentation" was an altered map taken from the Suwannee district's website.

The original map showed fluctuation in groundwater levels in the Floridan aquifer, a measurement Still wrote was useful in showing areas of the aquifer that are influenced by surface water levels.

At the May 10 meeting, a JEA representative showed an altered version of the map and described it as showing the "drawdown" in the aquifer from groundwater withdrawals. That map, the JEA representative said, demonstrated that pumping in South Georgia, not in northeast Florida, was causing a drawdown at a monitoring station in Hamilton County.

In his letter, Still said the groundwater level fluctuation was due to the effects of flooding and drought had on the nearby Alapaha River.

Still also argued that the presentation omitted information in the Suwannee district's long-term water supply plan and U.S. Geological Survey report concluding that flow reduction in the Ichetucknee River and the reduced flow in White

Sulphur Spring were due to "groundwater withdrawals east of the study area."

Still did not request that the St. Johns district's governing board reconsider the permit application. Jon Dinges, Suwannee's director for Water Supply and Resource Management, stated the intent was instead to "set the record straight." He noted that JEA's permit application had been under review for more than three years before the presentation at the May 10 meeting.

White Springs Town Councilman Walter McKenzie, who has seen the flow in White Sulphur Spring cease, said he believed the permit approval was based, at least in part, on inaccurate information.

"It's deception to me and they made the decision at least in part on information that was either altered or, at the last, intentionally overlooked," he said.

JEA spokeswoman Gerri Boyce wrote in an email that, given the lengthy period of application review, "we're surprised at the content of the letter."

"We are confident based on thousands of hours of rigorous review that the permit approved by the St. Johns River Water Management District has considered all of the environmental resources — irrespective of their location," Boyce wrote. "It's important for people to know that JEA will provide users water for the next 20 years with an exemplary 88 gallons per capita per day. That is among the lowest in Florida and well below Water Management District targets and mandates."

'Conservation-conscious'

Katz, the president of the Keystone-based Save Our Lakes, said she would have preferred a delay in the vote on the JEA permit until restoration plans for the three area lakes could take shape. But Katz said she was encouraged that the St. Johns district did include conditions showing a more "conservation-conscious" approach.

Among them, JEA will participate in the restoration planning process for Cowpen Lake, Lake Geneva and Lake Brooklyn and mitigate the "cumulative impacts" its pumping has on those water bodies.

The permit also calls for the utility's use of reclaimed water to more than triple over the next 20 years — from 13.12 mgd to 43.76 mgd in 2030.

Teresa Monson, a spokeswoman for the St. Johns district, said the utility's ability to increase its pumping is tied to a substantial increase in use of reclaimed water. The newly approved permit begins by allowing withdrawals of 122.14 mgd this year.

That is below the 155 mgd previously approved under the slew of permits that JEA had held and the St. Johns district consolidated. But it is above 116 mgd JEA actually used in 2010.

The permit allows gradual increases in withdrawals up to approximately 142 mgd from 2021-2031. But withdrawals would be allowed to reach 155 mgd if JEA meets targets for the use of reclaimed water and 162 mgd if it exceeds those targets.

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

Suwannee River Race held May 21

The Brown Lantern and Suwannee Yes! Committee donated \$500 to the Great Suwannee River Race for the Live Oak Kiwanis Club and Live Oak Rotary Club to use for community service projects at the end of the race May 21. Pictured left to right Kiwanian Monja Slater, the Brown Lantern's Clara and Raleigh Brown, Suwannee Yes! Committee member Robin Young and Rotarian Myra Regan. Photo submitted

The second Great Suwannee River Race sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Live Oak and the Rotary Club of Live Oak was held Saturday, May 21. More than two-dozen rafts, canoes and kayaks started just up river from Little River Springs on the historic Suwannee River and ended at Ivey Park in Branford. The first canoeists came in in just under an hour after paddling nearly 5 miles.

The race will be held the third Saturday in May next year, so get your canoe, kayak or raft ready to go.

Photos available online at suwanneedemocrat.com, click on Photo Gallery in the navigation bar.

Race t-shirts are still available, contact Monja Slater at 386-362-1734 to get one today.

Thursday, June 16, 2011

Page 4 **Cedar Key Beacon**

Opinion

Letters

Mad about road

Regarding the article from June 9, citing alleged "illegal road construction in Cedar Key Heights." I would like to correct the following information.

1. The article stated that SRWMD said I claimed the road was grandfathered in because it was built in 2008. It should have read that the road was platted in 1928 and is considered pre-act, not subject to present-day permitting. The only laws it is subject to are those that were in existence in 1928.

2. The road does NOT block access to the Gulf of Mexico. The "wetlands" have been inspected by SRWMD representatives, and components of the road's construction were carried out under their directives.

3. In response to the statement "I was told by a judge to stop construction," In no time was I ever issued a stop order by a judge. In fact, I was ordered by the judge to complete construction of the road, which provides the only legal access to numerous properties in the area. This is a permitting issue, not a wetland degradation issue, as the comments by SRWMD suggest.

This article was the result of grossly incomplete facts, and I was not contacted for comment.

Scott McNulty
Cedar Key

Letters to the editor

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**Campfires
currently
prohibited on
SRWMD lands**

Campfires are prohibited on Suwannee River Water Management District (District) lands until further notice, due to increased fire danger resulting from drought conditions.

Open campfires are normally allowed only for those canoe camping along rivers.

The District urges persons recreating on District lands to exercise caution during all outdoor activities. Sparks from vehicles, equipment and cigarettes can start a wildfire.

Drivers on District roads are encourage to pay special attention to vegetation conditions. Tall grass and vehicle exhaust systems are a volatile mixture and a fire can start in a matter of minutes.

Persons spotting a wildfire on District lands should call 911.

Union County Times • Thursday, June 16, 2011

**Water restrictions
in place for Union**

BY TAMMY WILKERSON
Times Editor

Union County, along with 14 other counties governed under the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), is under a Phase I Water Shortage Advisory. The advisory, which asks residents to voluntarily reduce water consumption indoors and outdoors, is in response to

the long-term drought conditions.

In addition, homeowners and others within the SRWMD are required to limit landscape irrigation based on a water conservation rule that is in effect. The rule limits irrigation to two days per week during daylight savings time and one day per week during standard time, but irrigation should not occur between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. This is a year-round, mandatory rule aimed at long-term conservation.

Prairie Creek is drying up

Gainesville, wake up and try something different to preserve our water.

By Melanie Richard
Special to The Sun

Recently, while riding our bicycles on the Gainesville-Hawthorne Rail-Trail, we stopped at Prairie Creek, as we always do. We were very saddened to see the effect the drought is having on the creek.

Only a large puddle survives at this time, with tiny catfish — small fry — clinging to the surface of the water for air. Several schools of small fry were trying to survive.

If we are allowing Jacksonville to use our precious resource water due to false data, and Gainesville is suffering from this drought, as is so obvious to anyone traveling to La Chua Trail or the Hawthorne Trail, we are losing a badly needed resource. Paynes Prairie is also very dry; if you walk out to the



SPECIAL TO THE SUN

platform you can see there is no water.

Is there anything being done to preserve the creeks and our water systems?

When I recently visited Cozumel, Mexico, I noticed the community awareness in public bathrooms, where toilets were not flushed for every use, and paper was put in trash-bins next to the toilets. I was proud of the Mexican community for their efforts. I've seen this also done in the Mojave Desert to preserve precious water.

I took pictures of the low

water levels of Prairie Creek. We even noticed four tall gentlemen walking to the creek to fish and turning around upon seeing the low water levels. Very sad.

Gainesville, wake up and try something different to preserve our water. I know I'm going to try to save more water.

Can we see some leadership in Gainesville on this issue? What can we do to make a difference?

Melanie Richard lives in Gainesville

THE JASPER NEWS, Jasper, FL THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 2011

Campfires currently prohibited on SRWMD lands

Submitted

LIVE OAK, FL, June 9, 2011 – Campfires are prohibited on Suwannee River Water Management District (District) lands until further notice, due to increased fire danger resulting from drought conditions.

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FWC: Try something new; experience the 'Rivers of AWE'

Submitted

The "Rivers of AWE" – the Aucilla, Wacissa, and Econfina – flow through a surprisingly rugged and sparsely populated slice of Florida's Big Bend region as they meander to the Gulf of Mexico. Anglers, paddlers and boaters exploring these beautiful, spring-fed rivers discover shady woodlands, wildlife and dramatic limestone sinks and outcroppings nestled in 47,622 acres of the Aucilla Wildlife Management Area, just southeast of Tallahassee.

So that young people, first-timers, visitors and residents can enjoy these three gems, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Office of Recreation Services produced a detailed map/guide, in partnership with the Suwannee River Water Management District.

All three rivers offer unique opportunities: Find family fun on the Wacissa. Encourage your kids to leave their electronic devices at home and experience an outdoor adventure on the Wacissa River, a state-designated canoe trail and one of the most pristine rivers in North Florida. This is a wonderful place for beginning paddlers or families with children. Outfitters rent kayaks and canoes at Wacissa Springs County Park, and it's just a short paddle to Big Blue Springs, a great swimming spot on a hot day.

Take the Aucilla challenge. The beautiful Aucilla River is also a state-designated

canoe trail and offers a limited number of access points for small fishing boats. Some rocky shoals and a short stretch of rapids make this trip moderately strenuous for paddlers (depending on water level).

Experience solitude or fish on the Econfina, a river seldom visited by paddlers but popular with bank fishermen. There are multiple access points for hand-launching canoes or kayaks, and a few are suitable for launching small johnboats. Wildlife viewing is excellent as you travel over dark waters beneath a dense tree canopy.

All people have to do is grab the new guide, read it and go exploring. "Aucilla/Wacissa/Econfina: An Explorer's Guide to North Florida's Region of Rivers" is a two-sided, 22- by 26-inch guide, printed on water-resistant, durable paper. It includes detailed maps, highlights of the three rivers, GPS coordinates, mileage, shuttling directions for different trip options, photos and access locations. For each river, the guide recommends several popular excursions and includes mileage, time estimates and general descriptions.

To order a copy online from the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, go to <http://shop.wildlifeflorida.org>. The foundation suggests a \$5 donation to cover the costs of printing and distribution, so that more of the funds it raises can go toward preservation of Florida's wildlife resources. For more information, contact Liz Sparks, FWC Recreation Planner, at 850-922-6160.

LEVY COUNTY JOURNAL

The County Seat Newspaper • Est. 1923



Vol. 87, No. 50 June 16, 2011

50 cents

No More Campfires in SRWMD Until Further Notice

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The Levy County Journal June 16, 2011

The 2nd Great Suwannee River Cleanup Gearing Up Now

Hello, Friends of the Suwannee! It's Suwannee season once again! We hope you will join us for the 2nd Great Suwannee River Cleanup and build on the success of last year's event. As last year, the cleanup will consist of many small cleanups all along the river during a three-month window from September through November. If a few need to happen in late August or early December, that's fine, too. However, this year we have designated the sections by milepost and GPS coordinates. You must sign up for one or more of these sections as designated. This year, the spreadsheet information will automatically go to the map and should make it much easier for others to decipher. To view the map, go to <http://tinyurl.com/3wadbd4>. If your wanted section is taken, call and talk with me about it at 352-264-6827. If your group would like to register for one or more sections of the river (from one boat ramp to the next), please register online. It's extremely simple. Just fill in the boxes in the online form. Hit "Submit" and you're all set. If you don't know the GPS start and finish points, don't worry about it. They're optional. Repeat for another section, if you are taking more than one.

The spreadsheet link is <http://tinyurl.com/44zt218>. We will let each local group decide how best to run their respective cleanup. And please let us know if you would like to borrow any of our supplies, such as buckets, grabbers or scales. We will also have plenty of bags to provide for all cleanups. Each cleanup group will weigh the trash collected and report the figure to Current Problems. We will need to know the number of volunteers who participated and how many hours your group worked. Our totals will eventually be included in the International Coastal Cleanup and National River Cleanup totals. Photos are always wanted, too. We will be having a Kick-off Celebration September 10, at the Ivey Memorial Park (Branford boat ramp). We'll have food for all. Details about the celebration will be forthcoming later on. We will be looking for businesses and organizations to help sponsor this celebration. Please let me know if you can help out with this event. Should you wish to discuss this further or if you have any questions at all, please call me (Fritzi) at 352-264-6827 or e-mail aar@currentproblems.org.

Floodplain management course scheduled for July 18-22 in Live Oak

Governmental officials, engineers, and others associated with the floodplain management industry will have an opportunity to receive training in floodplain management through a 4-day course offered at the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Office, 9225 County Road 49, Live Oak, Florida 32060. The class is scheduled for July 18-22 from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

The class, Managing Floodplain Development through The NFIP (EMI Course Code: L273), offers the opportunity for participants to become a certified floodplain manager or to maintain certification. The course is an organized training opportunity for local officials responsible for administering their local floodplain management ordinances. It will focus on the National Flood Insurance Program, the concepts of sound floodplain management, Flood Insurance Rate Maps and Flood Insurance Studies, ordinance administration, and the relationship between floodplain management and flood insurance.

Seating is limited to the first 40 people and participants are encouraged to reserve a seat soon.

The course is provided

by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), sponsored by Florida Floodplain Managers Association (FFMA), and hosted by the District.

The cost is \$100.00 (\$50.00 for FFMA individual members). Participants must register by June 27. Applications are available at <http://training.fema.gov/Apply/75-5.pdf>. Please send payment and applications to James Linkogle, CFM, 600 General Harris St.

Longboat Key, FL 34228, or E-mail to: jlinkogle@longboatkey.org

After the course, the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) Certified

Floodplain Managers (CFM) exam will be offered. The exam will be offered on July 22 from 9 a.m. to noon. The course is for enhancement and/or refresher only and not intended to teach the exam.

The cost of the exam is \$340.00 (\$100.00 for ASFPM individual members). Participants must submit payment and a completed application by July 1. Applications are available at http://www.floods.org/acefiles/documentlibrary/CFM/ASFPM_CFM_Application_10_1_09.pdf.

Drought already severe, may get worse

Officials say 93 percent of Florida is now experiencing drought conditions.

By Karen Voyles
Staff writer

The calendar may tell us this is 2011, but the drought conditions make it look a lot like 1998, according to the state's top agriculturist.

Adam Putnam, commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, told the governor and Florida Cabinet on Thursday that Florida's drought is nearly identical to the drought of 1998.

Officials have determined that about 93 percent of Florida is now experiencing drought conditions. To

make matters worse, aside from a 50 percent chance of rain forecast for Saturday, there is no immediate relief in sight. In fact, the situation is expected to get worse in the days ahead.

The weekend forecasts for Gainesville and the rest of North Florida include only a slim chance of showers and thunderstorms today and Sunday, and no chance of the prolonged rainfall that officials say is needed to restore groundwater levels.

The National Weather Service has designated the Suwannee River basin as being in a severe drought.

As in 1998, the hot, dry weather

has spawned and prolonged wildfires. Smoke from several large fires was apparent in many places on Thursday morning. According to the meteorologists at the National Weather Service Office in Jacksonville, the smoke was worse east of a line extending between Lake City and Ocala.

That same area will likely be the smokiest area again today and through the weekend.

Actual temperatures are forecast to be in the mid-90s, but meteorologists said the heat index — the feels-like temperatures — for the weekend will hover around 100 degrees. The high on Thursday at Gainesville Regional Airport was 95 degrees, and the trend of highs of 94 to 95 degrees is forecast through

Inside

■ Storm keeps Santa Fe Swamp fire in check, see Page 2B

WEATHER on Page 5B

WEATHER: 9th driest May since 1932

Continued from 1B

Monday.

In a report released this week by the Suwannee River Water Management District, senior professional engineer Megan Wetherington said months of below-average rainfall has led to record-breaking low flows on the upper Suwannee River. Wetherington also noted that gauges on the upper Santa Fe River show water has stopped flowing there.

"We had the ninth driest May since 1932, and the upper Aucilla, Suwannee and Santa Fe basins experienced rainfall deficits of nearly 25 inches compared to an average year," Wetherington said in a news release about the drought report.

The water district encompasses all of Columbia, Dixie, Gil-

christ, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union counties, along with portions of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Jefferson, Levy and Putnam counties.

The district also monitors wells and found that levels have fallen in 92 percent of the monitored wells. The levels were in the 22nd percentile in the Suwannee River basin, which means that about 78 percent of the time the levels are higher than they are now, Wetherington said.

In December, the district issued a water shortage advisory, according to the district's director of Water Supply and Resource Management, Jon Dinges.

"The advisory simply calls upon all of us to take voluntary steps to reduce both indoor and outdoor

water use during times of drought and until conditions recover," Dinges said.

District officials said that once water levels increase, the advisory may be canceled, but if the situation gets worse — the water levels fall further — it is possible the district could impose restrictions on water use.

Property owners are also being reminded of the Landscape Irrigation Rule that was adopted into Florida's Administrative Code 18 months ago.

Under the rule, lawn and landscape watering is limited to two days during daylight saving time and one day per week during standard time and irrigation should not be done between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

SRWMD Urges Water Conservation As Drought Persists

As drought conditions continue to worsen, the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) urges all water users to eliminate non-essential uses of water.

"We had the ninth driest May since 1932, and the upper Aucilla, Suwannee and Santa Fe basins experienced rainfall deficits of nearly 25 inches compared to an average year," said Megan Wetherington, District senior professional engineer.

Several months of below-average rainfall has led to record-breaking low flows on the upper Suwannee River, including the Suwannee River at White Springs with records going back to 1906. Gages on the upper Santa Fe reported that flow has ceased. Coastal rivers fell to much below normal after five months of near-normal flow, and all 16 District-monitored lakes were below their historical average level.

Groundwater levels fell in 92 percent of monitored wells. Levels in the Santa Fe Basin were near the 15th percentile for the period of record, meaning that almost 85 percent of the time they have been higher than they are now. In the Suwannee River basin, levels fell to the 22nd percentile.

According to the most recent drought report, the National

Weather Service classified drought conditions in the Suwannee River basin as severe. The Florida Division of Forestry estimated the fire danger for most of the area as high or very high.

The District has taken the following actions to urge the public to cut back on water use:

Water Shortage Advisory: Declared by



the District's Governing Board in December 2010, the advisory asks all users to voluntarily reduce water consumption indoors and outdoors until further notice.

"The advisory simply calls upon all of us to take voluntary steps to reduce both indoor and outdoor water use during times of drought and until conditions recover," said Jon Dinges, District director of water supply and

resource management.

Once drought conditions improve and groundwater and surfacewater levels rebound, the governing board may cancel the Water Shortage Advisory. Should conditions worsen, however, the governing board may impose mandatory water-use restrictions.

Landscape Irrigation Rule: Adopted into Florida

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

For more information, contact the District at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only).

PULLOUT

The District offers the following tips to conserve indoors and outdoors:

- 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.
- Turn off tap while brushing teeth, shaving, or washing dishes.
- Water lawns and landscapes only one day per week and not between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- 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.

Administrative Code in January 2010, the rule requires homeowners, businesses, and others to limit lawn and landscape watering to two days during daylight saving time and one day per week during standard time. Irrigation should not occur between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

"The landscape irrigation rule is a year-round conservation measure aimed at stretching our water supplies for the long term," Dinges said.

The advisory and irrigation rule applies to residents within the District's boundaries, which means all of

Aquifer Protection Ordinance Back; Set For July 21 Hearing

LAZARO ALEMAN

Monticello News

Senior Staff Writer

The proposed aquifer protection ordinance that commissioners had to pull from the agenda at the last minute in mid April because it overstepped the county's jurisdictional authority has been revised and is slated for reconsideration by officials next month.

Attorney Scott Shirley informed the Jefferson County Planning Commission on Thursday evening, June 9, that the problematic parts of the ordinance had been corrected and the document was scheduled for review by the Jefferson County Commission at

Please See AQUIFER Page 6A

Jefferson County Journal

Friday, June 17, 2011

Cont. From Page 1

its Thursday evening meeting on July 21.

Shirley said the revised ordinance remained essentially unchanged, with the exception of two key provisions that replaced the language that previously was found objectionable.

He said one new provision addressed the county's right to regulate the installation of infrastructure, including infrastructure associated with bottling operations. He said the second required that any development having anything to do with water bottling must receive a supermajority vote from the commission for approval, meaning four

of the five commissioners must vote for it.

"The ordinance will do exactly what the other did but in a different way," Shirley said.

Shirley explained to the *News* that where the county had run afoul of the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) previously was that the original ordinance had sought to regulate the consumptive use and transportation of water, powers granted exclusively to the water management districts by state law. But the county was well within its rights to regulate land-use activities under its Land Development Code,

Shirley said. And that was exactly what the new language accomplished, he said.

Was the SRWMD satisfied with the revision?

Shirley said the SRWMD attorney had worked with him on the changes and was satisfied that they addressed the district's concern.

Originally scheduled for a public hearing on April 21, commissioners pulled the ordinance from the agenda at the last minute because of a protest from the SRWMD, which noted that the regulation of water use was its exclusive right.

The proposed ordinance originally stated

that the county would not approve any development activity that involved the removal of surface or ground water from the county's geographic boundaries for outside use, absent a supermajority vote of the Board of County Commissioners.

It also stated that surface and ground water withdrawals in all Future Land Use Map (FLUM) districts would be limited to those that were necessary "to serve uses of land that were otherwise allowable designated land uses in the FLUM district where such water withdrawals were located, and (that the with-

drawals) should not exceed the amount of water necessary to serve such lawfully designated land uses."

Another of the deleted provisos in the original disallowed "water pumping stations and distribution facilities that provided or transported water for resale or distribution outside the geographic boundaries of Jefferson County."

At the heart of the issue is the controversy surrounding Nestlé Waters of North America and the testing it is conducting of the Wacissa River for possible water bottling purposes.

Wednesday, June 22, 2011

GOV. APPOINTS COLE TO BOARD OF WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT



Newly sworn members of the SRWMD Board of Directors are, from left to right, George Cole, Kevin Brown and Donald "Ray" Curtis III.

Jefferson County resident and Planning Commission Chairman George Cole has been appointed to serve on the Board of Directors of the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD).

Cole was one of three SRWMD board members sworn into the office

on Tuesday, June 14. The other two were Kevin Brown, of Alachua County, and Donald "Ray" Curtis III, of Taylor County. Governor Rick Scott appointed Cole and Brown and reappointed Curtis to the SRWMD board earlier in June.

Please See COLE Page 4A

Curtis reappointed to SRWMD governing board

Dr. George Cole of Monticello; Kevin Brown of Alachua and Donald "Ray" Curtis III of Perry were sworn in as members of the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board on June 14.

Gov. Rick Scott appointed Cole and Brown, and reappointed Curtis, to the board in early June.

Curtis, who filled a vacant seat on the board in 2010, will represent the Coastal River Basin. His term expires March 1, 2015.

Curtis is an attorney whose law practice (Howard & Curtis, P.A.) is located in Perry.

Prior to establishing his own law firm, Curtis was an attorney with the Third Circuit Office of the Public Defender in Perry.

He received his Juris

Doctorate from Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville after earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration with a minor in agricultural law, from the University of Florida.

Curtis serves as a member of the City of Perry Zoning and Planning Board and the City of Perry Board of Adjustment.

Currently he is chair of the City of Perry Code Enforcement Board and is a member of the Perry Rotary Club.

Cole, who succeeds Dr. Linden C. Davidson will represent the Aucilla River Basin. His term began June 3 and ends March 1, 2015.

Cole holds a doctorate in geography with an emphasis on wetland hydrology and is a registered professional engineer and a registered professional

land surveyor.

Brown succeeds N. David Flagg and will represent the Santa Fe and Waccasassa river basins for a term that began June 3 and ends March 1, 2015.

Brown is a native Floridian and attended the University of Florida (UF) where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture. He is a graduate of UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Natural Resource Leadership Institute.

The remaining governing board members are Donald J. Quincey Jr., chairman; Alphonas Alexander, vice chairman; Heath M. Davis; James L. Fraleigh; Carl E. Meece; and Guy N. Williams. Curtis who serves as the board secretary/treasurer.



(L to r) Dr. George Cole, Kevin Brown and Donald "Ray" Curtis III were sworn in as new members of the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board on June 14.

North Florida Focus

June 22 & 23, 2011

www.nflaonline.com

Serving Hamilton, Lafayette and Suwannee Counties

SRWMD employee recognized for 10 years of service

Linda Welch, of the Suwannee River Water Management District (District), was recently honored for 10 years of outstanding service. District Mission Support Director Melanie Roberts and Governing Board Chairman Don Quincey congratulated Welch at a governing board meeting June 14.

Welch joined the District in June 2001, working in the

environmental resource permit program and later in the water use permit program within the department of resource management. She was also involved in rule development and assisted with the adoption of the water use rules that were updated in 2010.

She currently works within the department of mission support where she serves as the District's rules and con-

tracts coordinator, as well as the governing board coordinator.

Welch is certified as a paralegal through the National Association of Legal Assistants and holds an Advanced Paralegal Certification for Contracts Administration/Contracts Management.

Chiefland Citizen

Thursday, June 23, 2011

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PHOTO PROVIDED

SRWMD Mission Support Director Melanie Roberts, left, and Governing Board Chairman Don Quincey, right, present an award to Linda Welch for 10 years of service.

Springs protection delayed again

Proponents say plan doesn't affect farmers

By MARK SCOHER

news2@chieflandcitizen.com

Gilchrist County commissioners have again stalled on a decision to create two springs protection zones in the county, stating Monday afternoon that language in the plan would have to specifically exempt agriculture from any of the rules.

Marvin Weaver, a county extension agent representing the Gilchrist County Agricultural Advisory Committee, told commissioners that the committee was unanimously opposed to the plan the way it is written. The committee was asked to review the plan at the commission's May 16 meeting for fear that it would not sit well with area farmers.

"All committee members agreed it covered too much of our area," Weaver said. Members feel enforcement of the plan would create a tax burden, he said. Members also feel that they are already being regulated enough by the Suwannee River Water Management District.

At the May 16 meeting, County Planner Stacey Winfield told the commission that the plan, which would help protect the 206-square-mile springshed that supplies water to Fanning Springs



PHOTO BY MIKE CAPSHAW

Visitors to Blue Springs in Bronson take turns jumping off the dock last weekend.

and the springshed that feeds springs along the Santa Fe River, mostly affects developers and heavy industry, not farmers. The only agriculture the plan would affect, Winfield said, would be instances where a permit from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection was required.

Annette Long, a representative from Save our Suwannee Inc., reiterated Winfield's statements at Monday's meeting. The springs protection zones don't pertain to agriculture, she said. They pertain to development and real estate. Farmers are already regulated,

and the springshed that feeds

developers are not, she said. "This will give you control when farmers decide they don't want to be farmers anymore, when they turn to development."

Weaver, earlier in the discussion, said the agricultural committee didn't think future development was an issue. Considering the current state of the economy, members of the committee do not believe development will take place in the next decade, he said.

Long also challenged the idea that the plan, as stated by members of the agricultural commit-

Thursday, June 23, 2011

Chiefland Citizen

SPRINGS

Continued from 1A

tee, would raise taxes. A comprehensive land use plan does not do that, she said.

Pete Butt, a local water resources specialist, agreed with Long. "I'm concerned about development ... this is not about agriculture." Springshed protection is not only important for the springs, he said. It's important for farmers.

"You guys can set a legacy here and join Levy County and Alachua County. And again, it's about protecting this resource."

At the May meeting, Butt told commissioners that the area known as the Suwannee Basin is particularly sensitive to pollutants above ground because of the high rate at which water on the surface makes its way underground. "Water moves very fast in this area," Butt said.

The basin is mostly made up of porous rock and sand known geologically as karst topography. It's one of the reasons sinkholes and other similar conduits are especially common in the area. Pollutants from streets, farms, industries and septic tanks have had a drastic affect on area springs, especially Manatee and Fanning. Both have seen a steady increase in nitrate pollution since the

1950s. Manatee Springs, once full of blue water and blanketed with native eelgrass, is now green and carpeted with thick mats of algae. The algae is fed by the nitrates, which become more potent as the flow of water coming out of the springs is reduced, another factor plaguing the springs in recent years. Fanning Springs is one of the most polluted in the state, with nitrates ranging between 5 and 6 milligrams per liter. The state has set a healthy nitrate target at .35 milligrams per liter.

Jacki Clark, a Gilchrist County resident, reminded the commission that county residents at a visioning meeting for the county's comprehensive plan were in favor of protecting area springs.

"Overwhelmingly, protection of natural resources, particularly protection of the springs, was included," she said. "That's your constituency. I don't see the county ever turning against agriculture, but we have to protect our water."

Commissioners Tommy Langford and Randy Durden both said they were concerned that naming an area as a springs protection zone could cause problems with state lawmakers in the future.

"We're not sure what's gonna' happen coming down from, supposedly the experts, in Tallahassee," Durden said. Creating springs pro-

tection zones could force area residents to comply with laws concerning septic tanks, he said. A statewide septic tank law is not a good idea, he said. "Septic tanks differ from county to county. It's not one size fits all."

Beth Murphy, another Gilchrist County resident at the meeting, said, "If we're not aggressive about protecting our own interests, Tallahassee will make the decisions for us."

Long said springshed delineation is based on scientific data, which, more often than not, will be recognized by the state.

"That's a little bit what concerns me so much," Durden said.

Clark said, "If we don't put this in writing, anybody could come in here and start taking over."

The agricultural community and the people who want to protect the springs have the same fears, she said. Both are just coming at different angles. "You really need to listen to what the voting public said."

Murphy said she believes developers would definitely come to the area. Florida real estate "is being gobbled up," she said. "We don't need it in writing for ourselves. Why we need it in writing is for the developers who come in and may not take care of it properly."

Commissioner D. Ray Harrison

said Gov. Rick Scott has been in favor of letting developers come in and do whatever they want. The commission might not have a choice in the matter, he said.

Despite the issue of what developers may or may not do in the future, Durden, at the end of the discussion, asked agricultural committee member Scott Tucker if the committee would be willing to sit down and come to an agreement over the language in the springs protection zone plan regarding agriculture.

Tucker said he was willing, adding that the "ambiguous" language needed to be addressed. "There's a lot of shalls in here," he said.

County Attorney John McPherson said, "I think we can come up with language that clearly exempts agriculture."

Durden asked McPherson to do so, though no official time was set to address the matter in the future. "This is fairly simple to do," McPherson said, adding that it wasn't necessary to get the agricultural committee involved any further.

After the meeting, Long said she was disappointed that the decision was put off again. "Everybody wants to protect the springs," she said. "But nobody wants to do what they need to do to protect them."

See SPRINGS 15A

SRWMD urges water conservation as drought persists

LIVE OAK, FL, June 15, 2011 – As drought conditions continue to worsen, the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) urges all water users to eliminate non-essential uses of water.

“We had the ninth driest May since 1932, and the upper Aucilla, Suwannee and Santa Fe basins experienced rainfall deficits of nearly 25 inches compared to an average year,” said Megan Wetherington, District senior professional engineer.

Several months of below-average rainfall has led to record-breaking low flows on the upper Suwannee River, including the Suwannee River at White Springs with records going back to 1906. Gages on the upper Santa Fe reported that flow has ceased. Coastal rivers fell to much below normal after five months of near-normal flow, and all 16 District-monitored lakes were below their historical average level.

Groundwater levels fell in 92 percent of monitored wells. Levels in the Santa Fe Basin were near the 15th percentile for the period of record, meaning that almost 85 percent of the time they have been higher than they are now. In the Suwannee River basin, levels fell to the 22nd percentile.

According to the most recent drought report, the National Weather Service classified drought conditions in the Suwannee River basin as severe. The Florida Division of Forestry estimated the fire danger for most of the area as high or very high.

The District has taken the following actions to urge the public to cut back on water use:

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duce water consumption indoors and outdoors until further notice.

“The advisory simply calls upon all of us to take voluntary steps to reduce both indoor and outdoor water use during times of drought and until conditions recover,” said Jon Dinges, District director of water supply and resource management. Once drought conditions improve and groundwater and surfacewater levels rebound, the governing board may cancel the Water Shortage Advisory. Should conditions worsen, however, the governing board may impose mandatory water-use restrictions.

Landscape Irrigation Rule: Adopted into Florida Administrative Code in January 2010, the rule requires homeowners, businesses, and others to limit lawn and landscape watering to two days during daylight saving time and one day per week during standard time. Irrigation should not occur between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

“The landscape irrigation rule is a year-round conservation measure aimed at stretching our water supplies for the long term,” Dinges said.

The advisory and irrigation rule applies to residents within the District's boundaries, which means all of Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union counties, and portions of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Jefferson, Levy and Putnam counties.

For more information, contact the District at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only).

PHOTO

The Suwannee River at Suwannee Springs at its lowest flow ever recorded. Several months of rainfall deficits have led to historical low flows on the upper Suwannee River.

PULLOUT

The District offers the following tips to conserve indoors and outdoors:

- 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.
- Turn off tap while brushing teeth, shaving, or washing dishes.
- Water lawns and landscapes only one day per week and not between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Take shorter showers; staying under 5 minutes can save 1,000 gallons per month.
- Don't use toilet as a waste basket.

KEETCH-BYRAM DROUGHT INDEX (KBDI):

The Keetch-Byram drought index (KBDI) is a continuous reference scale for estimating the dryness of the soil and duff layers. The index increases for each day without rain (the amount of increase depends on the daily high temperature) and decreases when it rains.

The scale ranges from 0 to 800.

Madison- 672 (+7) Severe

Taylor- 632 (+8) Moderate/Severe

Lafayette- 598 (+9) Moderate/Severe

Dixie- 671 (+7) Severe

SRWMD Employee Recognized For Ten Years Of Service

At right, SRWMD Mission Support Director Melanie Roberts, left, and Governing Board Chairman Don Quincey, right, present an award to Linda Welch for 10 years of service.



Linda Welch, of the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), was recently honored for ten years of outstanding service. District Mission Support Director Melanie Roberts and Governing Board Chairman Don Quincey congratulated Welch at a governing board meeting June 14.

Welch joined the District in June 2001, working in the environmental resource permit program and later in the Water Use Permit Program within the Department of Resource Management. She was also involved in rule development and assisted with the adoption of the water use rules that were updated in 2010.

She currently works within the Department of Mission Support where she serves as the District's Rules and Contracts Coordinator, as well as the Governing Board Coordinator.

Welch is certified as a paralegal through the National Association of Legal Assistants and holds an Advanced Paralegal Certification for Contracts Administration/Contracts Management.

Governor Scott Appoints Three To SRWMD Governing Board

Dr. George Cole of Monticello, Kevin Brown of Alachua and Donald "Ray" Curtis III of Perry were sworn-in as members of the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board on June 14. Governor Rick Scott appointed Cole and Brown and reappointed Curtis to the Board in early June.

Cole, who succeeds Dr. Linden C. Davidson will represent the Aucilla River Basin. His term began June 3, 2011 and ends March 1, 2015.

Cole holds a Doctorate in geography with an emphasis on wetland hydrology and is a registered professional engineer and a registered professional land surveyor. He has had a lengthy career in surveying and mapping and is currently a part-time adjunct professor at Florida State University.

Some of the posts he has held over the years include Bureau Chief for the Florida Department of Natural Resources, professional engineer administrator for the Florida Department of Transportation, and president of a private engineering and mapping firm.

Brown succeeds N. David Flagg and will represent the Santa Fe and Waccasassa River Basins for a term that began June



From left: Dr. George Cole, Kevin Brown, and Donald "Ray" Curtis III were sworn-in as new members of the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board on June 14.

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Brown is a native Floridian and attended the University of Florida (UF) where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture. He is a graduate of UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Natural Resource Leadership Institute. He worked through college as an agricultural technician at UF and currently serves as an advisory board member for the Conservation Trust for Florida.

Brown has a background in botany, agronomy and soil science and has experience in real estate and finance. He is a state-certified general real estate appraiser and has served as chief appraiser for Farm Credit of Florida since 1990.

Curtis, who filled a vacant seat on the board in 2010, will represent the Coastal River Basin. His term expires March 1, 2015.

Curtis is an attorney whose

law practice, Howard & Curtis, P.A., is located in Perry.

Prior to establishing his own law firm, Curtis was an attorney with the Third Circuit Office of the Public Defender in Perry. He received his Juris Doctorate from Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville after earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration, with a minor in agricultural law, from UF.

Curtis serves as a member of the City of Perry Zoning and Planning Board and the City of Perry Board of Adjustment. Currently he is chair of the City of Perry Code Enforcement Board and is a member of the Perry Rotary Club.

The remaining Governing Board members are Chairman Donald J. Quincey, Jr., Vice Chairman Alphonas Alexander, Heath M. Davis, James L. Fraleigh, Carl E. Meece, and Guy N. Williams. Curtis serves as the Board secretary/treasurer.

The Great Suwannee River Cleanup 2011

In 2010, Current Problems formed a partnership with the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail Working Group and the Suwannee River Water Management District to coordinate a cleanup of the Suwannee River from the Georgia state line to the Gulf of Mexico. The cleanup was a huge success! More than 500 volunteers removed almost 30,000 pounds of trash! We hope you will join us for the Second Great Suwannee River Cleanup and build on the success of last year's event.

The 2011 cleanup will occur during a three-month window from September through November. Businesses, civic clubs, fishing and boating groups, churches, government agencies, non-profits, chambers of commerce and groups of friends are all encouraged to participate. Go to the event map at <http://tinyurl.com/3wadbd4> to determine your section based on mileposts and GPS coordinates. Then register your group, the date of your cleanup, and your river section online at <http://tinyurl.com/44d3obr>. Shortly after registration, your cleanup will appear on the event map.



Current Problems is available to assist you as you plan your cleanup and to provide supplies (grabbers, buckets, trash bags, etc.). If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Current Problems' Executive Director Fritzi Olson at 352-264-6827 or e-mail her at aar@currentproblems.org. Pete Butt is coordinating dive cleanups and he can be reached through Fritzi Olson.

If you can't participate but would still like to support this effort, the partnership is looking for sponsors to help out with expenses and will gladly accept in-kind donations. Call or e-mail Fritzi to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.

A kickoff celebration will be held at Ivy Memorial Park in Branford, Florida, on September 10th from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Come out and join the fun as we celebrate the beginning of the Second Annual Great Suwannee River Cleanup!

SRWMD Urges Water Conservation As Drought Persists

The Suwannee River at Suwannee Springs at its lowest flow ever recorded. Several months of rainfall deficits have led to historical low flows on the upper Suwannee River.

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Campfires Currently Prohibited On SRWMD Lands

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Open campfires are normally allowed only for those canoe camping along rivers.

The District urges persons recreating on District lands to exercise caution during all outdoor activities. Sparks from vehicles, equipment and cigarettes can start a wildfire.

Drivers on District roads are encourage to pay special attention to vegetation conditions. Tall grass and vehicle exhaust systems are a volatile mixture and a fire can start in a matter of minutes.

Persons spotting a wildfire on District lands should call 911.

Ichetucknee's a window to state water woes



Pat Hazouri, a reader from Neptune Beach, called and asked: "Have you been down the Ichetucknee recently?"

I was almost embarrassed to admit it, but I had never been down the Ichetucknee.

I was well aware that tubing down the spring-fed river northwest of Gainesville was one of those iconic North Florida activities, a rite of summer for generations. I've been saying for years I was

going to do it. But until last weekend, I just never got around to it.

Talking to Hazouri and others with decades of Ichetucknee memories gave me the push.

Hazouri, 58, grew up in Jacksonville and vividly recalls tubing down the river in the 1970s when she was a student at the University of Florida. She describes a scene that brings to mind Paul Simon's "Kodachrome." Those nice bright colors, the greens of summer and, most of all, the blues of the spring water.

"It was crystal, crystal clear," she said. "I couldn't imagine being anywhere more beautiful."

She has been a lot of places since then. And she still can't imagine anywhere more beautiful. But she says that to see that place now, she has to imagine it. Because it's gone.

"It has changed so much," she said. "It's sad."

With this in mind, we made a family trip to the Ichetucknee on Saturday. And if the place has changed, it certainly hasn't scared away the people. It was like rush hour on the river, with bumper-to-bumper tube traffic.

It also was beautiful.

But that's the perspective of a first-timer. The long-timers look at the place and can't

WOODS continues on C-3



Mark.Woods@jacksonville.com

Tubing the Ichetucknee Springs remains a popular activity, especially on weekends, but the water flow is down 20 percent. Observers of the springs say the water color has changed and some vegetation has disappeared.

WOODS

Continued from C-1

help but think of what it once was, worry about what it will be — and fear what that means.

"This is the canary in our coal mine," said Annie Pais, executive director of Florida's Eden, a nonprofit citizens' initiative focused on North Florida's natural riches.

We're sitting on the largest concentration of springs in the world. And they are much more than watery playgrounds. The late Wes Skiles, a Jacksonville native who became

a famed underwater photographer, called the springs "windows" into our aquifer.

And if that's the case, scientists and advocates say some of those windows are cloudy and cracked.

At the Ichetucknee, the flow of water bubbling up from the aquifer is down 20 percent. The eel grass is dying. And the water has a brownish tint to it.

"Everybody sort of has a straw in the aquifer," said Pais, pointing out that one of the largest straws is in Jacksonville's mouth. "And once the aquifer goes down to a certain level, it's done."

While Pais and others are reacting to this with a sense of urgency, the state's politicians are not.

When Jeb Bush was governor, an initiative was set up to study, protect and restore the springs. Funding has been dwindling since. And it was eliminated by the current leadership in Tallahassee.

Robert L. Knight, director of the Howard T. Odum Springs Institute

in Gainesville, can point to all kinds of statistics to illustrate why we should be worried about the springs. But that isn't what compelled me to get to the Ichetucknee. It was hearing Pat Hazouri describe her memories of the place.

I wanted to make some memories of my own, before it was too late.

mark.woods@jacksonville.com,
(904) 359-4212

EDITORIAL

The public interest



THE ICHETUCKNEE RIVER/SUN FILE PHOTO

Bob Knight, director of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, is a leading authority on the state's groundwater resources. By his estimate, some 50 billion gallons of water is annually being lost from the Suwannee River region as a consequence of water pumping in the Jacksonville area.

It's clear that Suwannee River Water Management District officials were caught flatfooted when the St. Johns River Water Management District issued a new consumption permit to Jacksonville. For their part, St. Johns officials either ignored or accepted a warped interpretation of historical data showing the full impact of northeast Florida water withdrawals on the Suwannee region.

Seeing the need for clarification, Knight has offered to host a public workshop that will allow "the experts to present and explain the technical issues associated with the shifting groundwater divide and its impact on springs flows in an open and public forum."

It is exactly that sort of environmental stewardship that the institute was created to perform. But apparently an outside, "expert" review of the data is of no interest to the people in charge of water management.

David W. Fisk, assistant executive director of the St. Johns district, told Knight in an email this week that "a 'public' workshop" on these issues is premature. He explained that the two districts will review the data in-house. "When that work is complete we

will reconsider the need for and/or participation in 'public workshops,'" Fisk said.

Suwannee district officials, meanwhile, have not responded to Knight's offer.

No surprise. The water management districts are under tremendous pressure from Tallahassee to contract, not expand, efforts to preserve and protect Florida's water resources.

The last thing the bureaucrats need is to get involved in a public discussion about massive water diversions from one district to another.

The good news is that Knight doesn't think public involvement is the least bit "premature."

"The Florida Springs Institute will continue with its plans to organize a public workshop to better define the extent of the problem and to discuss what can be done to begin to reverse the apparent continuing westward movement of the groundwater divide between the SJRWMD and the SRWMD," Knight told Fisk. "You and your staff will be invited to participate."

Clearly, water management officials do not wish to rock the boat while Gov. Scott's anti-regulatory enforcers are breathing down their necks. But the loss of 50 billion gallons of water a year from the Suwannee region ecosystem is a matter of considerable public interest, and the public will not be shut out as crucial allocation decisions are made behind closed doors.

Water management districts cope with Tallahassee-mandated budget cuts

By Christopher Curry
Staff writer

The area's two water management districts are re-evaluating their operations and programs in response to Tallahassee-mandated cuts that target land conservation purchasing, property tax revenues, regulatory activities and staffing levels.

All five water management districts in the state face similar directives and caps on property tax revenues that Senate Bill 2142 will impose on a sliding scale and district-by-district basis.

For the St. Johns River Water Management District, a required cut of 26 percent, or approximately \$30 million, will reduce property tax

revenues to about \$85.3 million, district spokeswoman Teresa Monson said.

Approximately \$12 million in cuts to salary and benefit costs likely means the elimination of 120 to 140 positions at a district with about 700 employees, she said.

For the Suwannee River Water Management

District, which has a far smaller jurisdiction and tax base, the mandated reduction is 8 percent. That means an approximately \$500,000 decline from the \$5.9 million budgeted this year to \$5.4 million, said Melanie Roberts, the district's director of Mission Support.

She said layoffs are not expected at the district, which has had 68 positions for some 20 years. But vacancies will go unfilled, some contracts — possibly including those for water monitoring — will be eliminated, travel will be curtailed and vehicle replacements delayed. Funding cuts have also eliminated state funding sources for land conservation purchases and reduced funding for the management of conservation properties, Roberts added.

Regulatory staff will shift focus to a district priority — the establishment of minimum flows and levels for lakes and rivers, she said.

In a June 16 memo to the five water management districts, Jon Steverson, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's special counsel on

policy & legislative affairs, wrote that, with state residents "struggling to find work and provide for their families," tax dollars should be spent wisely.

Review of the water districts' tentative fiscal year 2011-12 budgets by the DEP and the Governor's Office, which has authority over water management district spending, would have new conditions, Steverson wrote. There should be no new debt incurred and no purchases of conservation properties unless a district was already contractually obligated.

A review of staffing should look to reduce the number of employees as well as salaries and benefits, Steverson said. Regulatory staffing levels should be reduced and all capital projected would require new documentation to justify their need as districts focused on their "core mission," Steverson said.

"Most environmental groups see land conservation as a core issue for the protection of water resources," Charles Pattison, president of the environmental group 1,000 Friends of Florida, said of the DEP memo.

David Flagg, an Alachua County resident and Suwannee district board member until recently, said he felt the DEP memo made a "political issue" of water when, in a time of diminishing supplies, the resource should be treated as a "public survival issue."

"This sort of bureaucratic control over what are supposed to be independent policy-making boards relating to water management is the major reason I did not apply for reappointment by Gov. Scott ... I do not want to be a part of what I consider the beginning of the dismantlement of our five WMDs' authority and responsibilities," Flagg wrote in an email.

In late May, Scott signed into law the bill restricting water management district property tax revenue. On Wednesday he had a ceremonial bill signing at the West Palm Beach offices of the South Florida Water Management District Office, which will have a required 30 percent reduction.

In a press release, Scott described the bill as property tax relief that would reduce taxes by some \$210.5 million statewide. In a statement,

Scott said the bill would allow families and businesses to use "hard-earned money in the way they see best, rather than having to send it to a government agency."

A Democratic legislator from that area, state Rep. Jeff Clemens, D-Lake Worth, took issue with the scheduling of the ceremony at district offices where employees faced layoffs. In a statement, Clemens argued that Scott "displayed a serious lack of leadership and behaved insensitively."

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

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- Turn off tap while brushing teeth, shaving, or washing dishes.

- Water lawns and landscapes only one day per week and not between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- 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.
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THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2011

THE MAYO FREE PRESS, Mayo, FL ~ PAGE 5A

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Wednesday, June 29, 2011

MAY IS NINTH DRIEST MONTH IN 79 YEARS

LAZARO ALEMAN
ECB Publishing
Senior Staff Writer

It will probably come as no surprise to many that May was an unusually dry and hot month. Indeed, it was the ninth driest May since 1932 when the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) began keeping such records.

This according to the latest hydrologic conditions report released by the SRWMD on June 7. The report indicates that the average rainfall in May was 1.35 inches, which represents 39 percent of the historical May average of 3.32 inches.

Meanwhile, the average 12-month deficit increased to 5.4 inches; and "deficits nearing 25 inches persisted in the

upper Aucilla, Suwannee and Santa Fe basins".

"Localized areas along the coast saw almost no rain, while parts of Union, Bradford, and Alachua counties had near normal totals," the report states.

The report shows Jefferson County received 1.25 inches of rainfall in May, compared with the May average of 5.88 inches. The county has received 11.23 inches of rainfall during the last three months and 44.28 inches during the last 12 months.

Madison County, meanwhile, received 1.39 inches in May, compared with the May average of 4.73 inches. Madison County has received 10.60 inches during the last three months and 47.30 inches dur-

ing the last 12 months.

River levels for the month were generally low and near record lows in some instances. Meanwhile, levels at 16 monitored lakes fell an average of five inches, putting all at below their historical average levels. And groundwater levels dropped 92 percent in the monitored wells of the upper Floridan Aquifer, meaning that each dropped an average of three inches since April, according to the report.

The report notes that the U.S. Geological Survey categorizes the Suwannee River and its tributaries as being in severe hydrologic drought, and other basins in the district as being below normal.

Please See *DRIEST MONTH* Page 4A

Driest Month

Cont. From Page 1

The SRWMD continues its phase-one water shortage advisory urging voluntary reduction of water consumption. It reminds homeowners and others whose water use the district doesn't regulate via a permit that they are required to limit

landscape irrigation to two days per week between March and October.

The district compiles the hydrologic conditions report using water resource data collected from radar-derived rainfall estimates, groundwa-

ter 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.