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Upper Suwannee River springs restoration completed



Eagle Lake Upper Suwannee River springs project completion ceremony August 25, 2016. Pictured left to right: Randy Ogburn, Chair, Hamilton County Commission; Brian Mimbs, Regional Director Office of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio; Ryan Matthews Director, Office of Water Policy, FDEP; Bill Donohue, General Manger, PotashCorp White Springs; Representative Elizabeth Porter; Raef Sully, President Phosphate & Nitrogen PotashCorp; Judith George, Senior Director Environment PotashCorp; Noah Valenstein, Executive Director, SRWMD; Rhett Bullard, Mayor, White Springs; Marcia Mathis, Legislative Assistant to Senator Bill Montford.

LIVE OAK, FLA, August 25, 2016 — The first large scale springs enhancement project in the Suwannee River Water District is complete. Funding from the Florida Legislature and Governor Rick Scott made this project possible. The Eagle Lake / Upper Suwannee River Springs Enhancement project is a public-private partnership between the Suwannee River Water Management District (District), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and PotashCorp. The Legacy Florida Bill, by the Legislature and Governor Scott provides \$50 million in recurring funding for restoring and protecting our springs.

The project significantly reduces the amount of groundwater withdrawn from the Floridan Aquifer which will benefit springs along the Upper Suwannee River, such as Bell Springs, White Sulphur Springs and Blue Sink Spring. Additionally, this public-private partnership project will reduce nutrient loading to Swift Creek and the Suwannee River.

PotashCorp has been committed to the installation, operation and long term maintenance of the Eagle Lake project. PotashCorp voluntarily took the initiative to engage the District and FDEP to partner in this effort. These actions go well beyond regulatory requirements. The project began in 2015 and on August 25, 2016, a ceremony was held to officially recognize the completion of the enhancement project.

“This is a great example of public-private partnerships with the state of Florida, water management district and other agency partners. This is truly environmental stewardship in action” said Michael Williams, manager, Public Affairs, PotashCorp.

"Those of us in North Florida know how important and precious springs are to our region," said Senator Bill Montford. "This project demonstrates the importance of the Legislature's commitment to provide funding for springs restoration and protection projects."

“This project represents a fine example of a public/private partnership. I am grateful to the Potash Corporation and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as well as the Suwannee River Water Management District for working together to bring the Eagle Lake/Upper Suwannee Springs Enhancement project to fruition” said Representative Elizabeth Porter. As always, I am pleased to be of service to this district when it comes to putting our water resources first.”

This public-private partnership resulted in the reduction of nutrient loading to the Upper Suwannee River basin by up to 140,000 pounds per year of total nitrogen and up to 110,000 pounds per year of total phosphorous. Surface water pumps were installed at Eagle Lake that re-circulate water back to two mining operations.

“The District is proud of this public-private partnership that results in significant benefits to the Upper Suwannee River basin and numerous springs,” said Noah Valenstein District executive director. “The Eagle Lake project accomplishes significant groundwater withdrawal and nutrient loading reductions that will help protect the surrounding resources as well as the recreational and tourism benefits they bring to our region.”

Eagle Lake is located approximately six miles northwest of the Town of White Springs. The lake is a part of a reclaimed mining site that receives the majority of the surface water runoff from PotashCorp’s mining operation. The water then discharges through Swift Creek to the Suwannee River.

The collaborative investments totaled \$3,600,000, of which the Florida Department of Environmental Protection contributed \$3,070,000; PotashCorp contributed \$230,000; and Suwannee River Water Management District contributed \$300,000. All future maintenance and operation costs will be under the purview of Potash Corp.

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