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Legislative funding helps protect our area's many first-magnitude springs, like the one shown above at Ichetucknee Springs.

Legislative Funding “Fights” For Florida’s Springs

LIVE OAK, FLA., Aug. 07, 2017 – The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) will receive additional funding to fight for the future and sustainability of springs. Almost one-third of the state’s legislative funding for springs restoration and protection will go to the District for spring restoration and protection.

Under the leadership of Governor Rick Scott, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) announced a suite of 40 projects that will receive nearly \$50 million from the Fighting for Florida’s Future budget to improve water quality, reduce nutrient loading, recharge water supply and protect habitat in Florida’s iconic spring systems. This includes a state

investment of more than \$16 million to protect springs within the District, including Ichetucknee, White, Blue Sink, Madison Blue, Hornsby, Poe and Santa Fe springsheds. Combined with match funding from the District, four other water management districts and local partners, the investment in springs projects statewide will total more than \$100.7 million during the 2017-18 fiscal year.

“Thanks to the continued commitment of Governor Scott and the Florida Legislature in securing a dedicated funding source for springs restoration and protection, we can continue to focus on completing strategic acquisitions and projects that will produce real benefits for our spring systems,” said DEP Secretary Noah Valenstein. “I look forward to continuing to work with the Governor and Legislature, the water management districts and partners in the environmental, agricultural and local communities to conserve and protect Florida’s iconic springs.”

“As the District with the highest concentration of freshwater springs in Florida, the health and preservation of our springs and other water resources is our top priority,” said District Executive Director Hugh Thomas. “We are grateful for a Governor who shares this priority. This funding makes it possible for us to carry forth our mission to protect north Florida’s water through several highly impactful projects.”

The project development process is a collaborative effort among the department, water management districts, community leaders and local stakeholders. Projects are selected based on pollutant reduction, water conservation, cost effectiveness and available matching dollars.

The following highlighted projects are three of the eight selected projects within the District, benefiting Ichetucknee, White and Blue Sink springs.

Ichetucknee Springs - *I-75/SR 47 Cannon Creek Sink Public Wastewater Improvement Project (Phase 1)*: A total of \$3.4 million in collaborative funding will be used to eliminate septic tanks from 30 businesses and five residences in the area. Future phases, if completed, will eliminate up to 900 septic tanks and reduce up to 64,600 pounds of nutrient loading per year within the Santa Fe basin management action plan area (BMAP).

White, Blue Sink - *I-75/CR-136 Wastewater Improvement, Septic Elimination*: A total of \$3.3 million in collaborative funding will be used to construct a new wastewater treatment plant with wetland treatment/aquifer recharge for effluent disposal, eliminating 32 existing commercial septic tanks. It is estimated that this project will result in a nutrient reduction benefit of 39,785 pounds of total nitrogen per year, and 109 pounds of total phosphorus per year in the proposed Suwannee BMAP area.

Precision Agriculture: A total of \$2.5 million in collaborative funding will be used to provide cost-share funds to agricultural producers within FDEP BMAP. The cost share program will help producers implement precision agricultural management technology to allow for increased efficiency and conservation of nutrients, impacting many springsheds across the district, with priority given to Florida Outstanding Springs areas. It is estimated that this project will result in a nutrient reduction benefit of 7.5 million pounds of total nitrogen per year.

A complete list of the springs protection projects funded by the Fighting for Florida’s Future budget can be found [HERE](#). These projects will be considered by the water management district

Governing Boards as part of their upcoming budget hearings. More information is also available on springs projects funded during the [FY 16-17](#) year and [FY 15-16](#) year.

The mission of the Suwannee River Water Management District is to protect and manage water resources using science-based solutions to support natural systems and the needs of the public. The District holds true to the belief of water for nature, water for people. Headquartered in Live Oak, Florida, the District serves 15 surrounding north-central Florida counties.

For more information about the District, visit www.mysuwanneeriver.com or follow us on Facebook and Twitter, search @SRWMD.