



# UPSTREAM DOWNSTREAM



Winter 2015-2016 "Preserving the Nature Coast"

## GOT PROJECTS?

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By Dan Hilliard

Well, yes we do as a matter of fact. In 2012 the Executive Board opened discussions with Wetland Solutions, Inc. (WSI) on the matter of our river's health in hopes of determining what had gone wrong and what remedy might be had. It has been an interesting journey.

### Lower Withlacoochee River Environmental Assessment

The project came about due to the realization that things had gone missing from the river; from our river. Our community borders both shores and the health of the river is central to our well being and future. The most obvious things missing were otters, alligators, bass and a rather broad array of other creatures easily described as apex predators, or the top of the food chain. It was and is unsettling.

Our initial discussions with WSI brought forth a proposal for limited data collection in consideration of our limited financial resources. Thanks to one of our Board members with background experience in water quality analysis that proposal was rejected and replaced with something likely to generate a solid data set which would be actionable with the state in the promotion of remedy. So our proposed project costs escalated from \$16,000 to \$234,000 in the blink of an eye. Suddenly it went from a simple one shot sampling to a two year schedule of quarterly samplings involving specific water quality components such as metals, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, sediments and so forth. It is a long list of analyte components to be sure.

Well, we still needed to raise funds, but we knew what the goal was and that makes for a sure focus. The Felburn Foundation contributed sufficiently to allow us to proceed with the first of three phases in the study and that was completed in the fall of 2013. We submitted a funding request to Levy County through the Restore Act Advisory Committee with intention of using funds intended for restoration for that purpose. We did not imagine how perfectly the bureaucratic process would slow our march forward.

Desperate circumstances can lead to unexpected alliances. In the hopes that

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### Our Mission

To implement civic action and to promote the common good of residents of the community with a focus on public awareness and responsible stewardship of regional water sources, the basis for all the natural systems that define /Florida's Nature Coast

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### Got Projects? (cont.)

we could reduce the financial liability and move forward we contacted the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and Southwest Florida Water Management District for assistance. They agreed to participate and requested further modification to our project format. Another blink of the eye and our project now carried an estimated total cost of nearly \$400,000, but with their participation the fiscal liability to WAR was reduced to less than \$150,000. We were moving in the right direction...finally.

Well, there comes a time when desperation leads to success. Likewise, there comes the realization that a perception borne of narrow focus is not always valid. We approached the communities of Yankeetown and Inglis with the faint hope of small funding assistance and learned we were not alone. We learned that our angst was shared across the landscape to a degree that was humbling. We realize in retrospect that if there were to be only one thing that unites the communities it is our river. We received sufficient funding to launch the second phase on November 12, 2015 and for the next two years will be out on the river each month to collect the samples which will ultimately lead us to understand what has gone amiss in the river that runs through our community.

### Natural Shoreline Project

Next thing on our plate is the developing project intent upon restoring submerged and shoreline aquatic vegetation to the lower river. We are coordinating with the Ash Group, Inc. as contractors to formulate permit applications to the US Army Corps of Engineers and FDEP which will allow us to reintroduce aquatic vegetation once common to the river but now missing. Both styles of vegetation are critical components of biological productivity in a riverine system. They are prevalent on Lake Rousseau. While we do have shoreline vegetation on the Lower River, the number and distribution of species is limited. SAV

is entirely absent.

We are evaluating and formulating restoration alternatives for both. The permitting process is anticipated to take 3-6 months. We have received funding assistance from Felburn Foundation in the amount of \$5000 to initiate this project.

Stay tuned folks, it's going to get interesting!

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## Nutrient TMDLs for Chassahowitzka and Homosassa

By Brad W. Rimbey, P.E.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has adopted nutrient Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the Chassahowitzka and Homosassa Rivers at 0.23 mg/L. Thankfully, the adopted nutrient TMDLs of 0.23 mg/L are substantially below the State's default value of 0.35 mg/L for spring-fed riverine systems. Whether 0.23/mg/L is low enough to save these Outstanding Florida Waters from biologic collapse remains to be seen by future generations.

According to the Florida Geological Survey, the pre-anthropogenic baseline for nitrate levels in the Floridan aquifer was ~0.05 mg/L. Despite request, FDEP has provided no data which suggests the spring-fed Chassahowitzka and Homosassa Rivers had pre-anthropogenic nitrate levels above 0.05 mg/L.

According to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), the current (as of April 2015) nitrate pollution level for Chassahowitzka is 0.62 mg/L and 0.68 mg/L for Homosassa (see SWFWMD's springs dashboard website). The end result of FDEP allowing a nitrate pollution level of ~360% above natural levels is unknown. Based on current trends, no one reading

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### Nutrient TMDLs for Chassahowitzka and Homosassa

this today will live long enough to see any improvement in water quality on these rivers.

FDEP must set TMDLs which are legally defensible. There is certainly no shortage of parasitic attorneys and fertilizer salesmen (take that as you wish) who will distort the facts to line their pockets. We must encourage FDEP to stand up to these charlatans. We, the people, must support FDEP’s efforts to protect our beautiful and unique rivers for future generations.

FDEP must continue the work of Dr. Sean King regarding the relationship between algal impairment, nitrate concentrations, and reduced flow rate (aka increased residence time) in Florida’s spring-fed riverine systems. The obvious disconnect between FDEP and Florida’s water management district’s continues to defy all logic.

Both FDEP and the water management districts are well aware of the relationship between flow rate and algal impairment. Nonetheless, in 2013, the SWFWMD adopted Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) rules which will undoubtedly contribute to the continued degradation of water quality via algal impairment on both of these Outstanding Florida Waters.

Last October, under State mandate, Citrus County’s Commissioners unanimously adopted the State’s meaningless model fertilizer ordinance. This ordinance does virtually nothing to address the root source of nitrate pollution in our State’s spring-fed rivers. The pandering behind the State’s decision to allow local politicians to make decisions regarding the protection of Florida’s Outstanding Waters is obvious. Pontius washes his hands and another problem is seemingly solved. We’ll see about that.

Citrus County has the greatest concentration of historic first magnitude springs and Outstanding Florida Waters of any jurisdiction in Florida. Under the blind eye of FDEP and SWFWMD, all of these OFWs have found their way onto FDEP’s 303

(d) impaired waters list for excess nutrient (algal mat) impairment.

Despite the hoopla regarding the recent \$1.3 million spent on the Chassahowitzka “springs restoration”, there is not one shred of evidence that anything aesthetic or environmentally meaningful was actually accomplished as a result of this project. We need to move past the political rhetoric and start focusing on what really needs to occur if any of our beautiful spring-fed rivers are to be saved.

Florida’s endeavor to circumvent the mandates of the Federal Clean Water Act is simply disgusting. Our Outstanding Florida Waters are dying and our elected/appointed representatives seem clueless.

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## No Longer Silent

By Toadly Ossum

The following message is of mysterious origin and somewhat sublime. It came in melancholy fashion; quiet as the flow of water yet more profound than sunrise.

Time had no meaning; the days saw little change. Florida was beneath the sea. Creatures both small and very large lived and died here, leaving remains that slowly built the limestone bedrock that is your foundation today. About 25 million years ago warm currents posing as the Gulf Stream swept away the sediments; leaving behind the purest limestone foundation on Earth. Then the seas receded.

Our genesis began as a geological process that continues endlessly. The sea level dropped, exposing the limestone bedrock to weather and rain. A seep here, a leak there; add acidic rain and decaying plants, pinholes became conduits, and trickles became rivulets. Sea water in the limestone was flushed by freshwater from rainfall. Thus were We created.

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## No Longer Silent

**A**daptation is the golden chalice. The freshwater flowed, limestone continued to dissolve, and the rate of drainage in the limestone plateau increased steadily. Our circulatory system grew, evolved and with each passing millennia came more definition of the domain and a more finely tuned relationship between freshwater and life. Flow from the depths increased, plants and animals adapted, and a new order became entrenched in and around the Florida peninsula.

**D**uring these times little interfered with our affairs. Oh, the seas advanced and retreated several times; an ice age came and went, but these are little things. Each component of the larger system kept filtering the fresh waters through miles of limestone and discharging it in enormous volume to form rivers. Some are small, but others gush millions of gallons of crystalline water every day. This gift is spectacular and provided with no conditions. It is a window into the underworld and all mysteries therein.

**L**ately, there has been change; both good and bad. Understand this: Our gift is unconditional. It matters not if you care, or protect. Do as you please. You may pump the fresh groundwater which is our lifeblood and we may vanish. You may pollute our clear water until it turns green in your face. If it is change you seek, change you shall have. If you wish to pass a legacy of joy and prosperity to future generations, it is your choice. Caverns and water hold no opinion. Look deeply into the vents from which our bounty flows and you will only see infinity.

**Y**ou should make up your mind, nonetheless. Small messes are easier to clean up than large. In either case, this mess will not resolve itself. You may clean it up, or continue your chosen path. It is entirely up to you.

**O**ccasionally in times past We were viewed as sacred sites. Some visit our shores to join the magic of clear spring pools nested in deep forests, to cool themselves on a hot summer day or watch children frolic. Some see economic fountains and industry joins in the ritual. We are viewed in many ways, yet We see the same faces, time and time again during the brief spans of your presence. Why is this?

**S**ometimes visitors leave behind nothing but sweet farewells. Others leave trinkets for which We have little use. Trinkets do little to enhance our grace. Frankly, it is a puzzle that will take another million years to unravel, this giving of gifts. It is a mystery deeper than the source of all waters.

**S**omeday, perhaps after years pass and introspection envelopes you, an epiphany may strike that you have or have not done well for your world and fellow travelers. What you do today can give you a smile when that time arrives; or send a chill. The choice is yours. You will know how the scale balances even if you do not wish to acknowledge such things. Did you leave but a footprint, or trinkets?

**U**sually there are reasons for making a choice. To be perfectly clear, the choice is yours. We will be here when you are gone. There are reasons to tread lightly, and rationales to do otherwise, but the choice is not ours. Simply put, your legacy hangs in the balance.

**M**ight you wonder who We are? We are the springs. We are thousands strong. We are historians and your footnote is not yet written. We are Nature's gift and have been here for eons, crafting the magic of clear water over a bottom of white sand amidst the shade of ancient trees.

Not long ago a visitor came to our shores. A small plate on the front of her conveyance said what so many think about Florida's springs. That thought is found within this message, before your own eyes.

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## Tall Trees and Nervous Horses

By Dan Hilliard 5-24-15

I have a friend out in Arizona who lives at The Rusty Iron, just outside of Tombstone. A metal smith and general jack of all trades, he has lived a life best described as that of a modern day cowboy. He dresses in that style, talks the talk and is very much prone to getting to the point. As illustration, his comments on justice are almost always brief and succinct. "Short ropes and tall horses," he says. He has a wry sense of humor to say the least.



Now humor is one of my most cherished gifts. With the strength of youth fading I find it the most effective path to making a point. I've had several points to make of late and have been in good company.

It seems to be what seniors do, this making of points. Having survived the adventures of adolescence and the drudgery of labor, we are in a position to do something not just for ourselves, but for children and grand children. They are our future.

So we have former Executive Directors of our water district railing about our current employees in the Florida Legislature who apparently have forgotten they are employed by us and paid by us. We have editorial opinion beseeching the legislature to stop acting like a dope, and I'm thinking about tall trees and nervous horses. The difference between Florida and southern Arizona is largely the lack of trees out there. Those that exist tend to be not so tall. But I digress.

Having a fair number of opinion pieces published here in the past as a functionary of a local 501.C3 corporation, I wish to make clear this is not one of those pieces. I speak from my heart and in my own fashion on topics that may be indirectly related but mostly not. I'm here to assist in the endeavor of informing you of my views, in hopes that you will know me better and what my interests and dreams are made of, for better or worse. You can label me an activist if you wish. I am not an environmentalist in the normal sense, but rather focused on the economics of the water resource and what it means to Citrus County specifically, and the state in general. I am not of liberal persuasion. In fact if my views on fiscal responsibility and foreign policy were on a billboard, I'm quite certain you would find

Attila the Hun a rabid liberal in comparison. I come from the violent crucible that was war in younger years and followed with a highly technical profession that spanned nearly three decades. If you have ever flown a commercial jet into or out of Florida recent decades your life was in my hands.

Last November, we the People set forth an Amendment to the Florida Constitution regarding our waters and environment. In general terms the legislature has ignored us. With a great deal more specificity, the Florida House of Representatives has flipped us off. They have done so by trying to figure every angle there is to obfuscate the intent and pervert it into something more precious to their personal or party agenda. Reminds me of Gollum in *Lord of the Rings* in a way, hey? Apologies to Gollum, I know that was harsh.

To be clear, I'm not here to endorse a political candidate; quite the contrary actually. I'm here to say to you and the other 75% of voters that supported Amendment 1 that if you want to fire them I'm really OK with that idea. It is what business owners do

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### Tall Trees and Nervous Horses

to non-productive employees. It is what I do to businesses that fail to perform. They have failed to enact Amendment 1 in the fashion intended. They have in the past and as I write; schemed to further the destruction of our single most valuable resource, water.

Their actions are transparent. Such is the magnitude of their arrogance. I have no faith in politicians, but have an abundance of faith in you and the rest of Florida's citizens. They need to be reminded of who is boss.

I'm pretty handy with rope. Any suggestions as to where a fella could find some tall nervous horses?

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## HEY, IT'S OUR WATER!

by Toadly Ossum\*

Mark Twain said once that "Whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over." There surely is some truth in those words.

I'm not old enough to remember when the Seminoles and other tribes before them wandered this land, but they did it as much by canoe as by foot if the history books are true. We were once up to our backsides in water here in Florida but not anymore. I'm not convinced that's a good thing to tell the truth.

It seems that a long while back when the bubbas up in Washington discovered Florida was awash in water they were jealous, impetuous, or just plain simple minded when they decided to drain it. Next thing you know alligators were homeless and we were invaded by Yankees the second time. This was mostly after the War of Northern Aggression.

Well, we all sorta got used to the new dryer Florida

and it was pretty good until about the time that Florida jumped into a great big slobbering love affair with Mickey Mouse and urban sprawl. There was a Governor back then called Bob Graham that figured we could have both and who managed to get some of the best laws on the books we've ever had to protect our natural resources. Don't know those laws were perfect but it was a start. What followed was one of the biggest periods of growth and prosperity ever seen in Florida. New policy agendas are gutting those laws and how's this economy working for you these days anyway?

So here we are today. A fella can't eat more than a meal or two a month of fresh water fish from some of our lakes and rivers because of mercury pollution. Well, actually you can, but it might make you simple minded like me, or worse, make your kids simple minded like me. But first you got to catch 'em and it's not as easy as it used to be since it seems like all the lakes and rivers are a mess with algae. Mostly that's from everybody using fertilizer and septic tanks and we all know water isn't the only thing that flows downhill. My daddy taught me to always drink from upstream of the town when I was a boy, but that's nigh well impossible anymore. So I don't drink from streams. Heck, I don't even wash up in streams. Makes no sense to me to try getting' clean with dirty water. Something else he told me; "Son, when your number is up, your number is up. If you do stupid stuff you get a low number."

Heck, there be a whole lot of things not makin' any sense these days, but in my once-in-awhile humble opinion this is one of the most important reasons to roll up your sleeves and get a little dirt on your hands. Now I'm not sayin' you and me got the same things pushing us down the path of life, but there can't be a lot of argument about what that trail will be like without clean water. You only have to look to India, Africa and some of the other lands without a good supply of water. First World or Third World, that's the choice as I see it. You get to vote for your kids and grandkids 'cause they're so young.

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**HEY, IT'S OUR WATER!**

So here's what you do. Most of you have your own ideas and I'm guessing some of them are really great. Our cousins in Tallahassee need to hear them so take a minute or three and send some common sense to our Governor and the rest. Lord knows they need a transfusion of common sense up there. One of the places where they get confused is when they get to lookin' at the little details and forget about the big picture as I see it. The big picture is pretty simple to paint when you think about it. Tell Tallahassee that we are all downstream of their little town and they are downstream of our votes.

Thanks for your time neighbor!

Toadly Ossum





**Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration [W.A.R., Inc.]**  
 Preserving The Nature Coast  
 a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

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**Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration  
a 501 (c) (3) Corporation**

**Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration  
[W.A.R., Inc.]**

Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration is a 501(c)(3), not for profit charitable organization incorporated in 1984. Our underlying principal is promoting the social welfare and common good of the residents of our communities. Current focus is on coordinating with other public advocacy groups that share our interests in preserving and restoring the quality of the Withlacoochee River and associated ecosystems. Withlacoochee Area Residents, Inc. is engaged in improving state decision making oversight practices that continue to contribute to degradation and depletion of increasingly scarce potable groundwater that is the foundation for the survival of our communities. Withlacoochee Area Residents, Inc. is responsible for the designation of the Withlacoochee River as an "Outstanding Florida Waterway", and contemplates future actions to provide an umbrella of Federal protection over the river basin and associated estuary.

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