



UPSTREAM DOWNSTREAM



Summer 2016

“Preserving the Nature Coast”

SPRINGS COAST SWIM TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

MEETINGS BEGIN

By Brad W. Rimbey, PE

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In 1987 the Florida Legislature created the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Act to protect, restore and maintain Florida’s highly threatened surface water bodies. Under this act, the state’s five water management districts identify a list of priority water bodies within their authority and implement plans to improve them.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District’s (SWFWMD’s) SWIM Program is administered through the Natural Systems & Restoration Bureau, which is responsible for many of SWFWMD’s water quality and natural systems initiatives. With the help of state agencies, local governments and other organizations, the SWIM Program focuses on water quality and habitat restoration projects to accomplish these department initiatives.

In 2014, SWFWMD added the Weeki Wachee, Chassahowitzka, and Homosassa rivers to their SWIM priority water bodies list. Other SWFWMD SWIM priority water bodies which were already listed were Tampa Bay, Rainbow River, Crystal River/Kings Bay, Lake Panasoffkee, Charlotte Harbor, Lake Tarpon, Lake Thonotosassa, Winter Haven Chain of Lakes, and Sarasota Bay.

In January 2016, SWFWMD began conducting SWIM Technical Working Group meetings to gather input for the Weeki Wachee, Chassahowitzka, and Homosassa rivers. The intent of January’s Technical Working Group meetings was to “define issues and drivers and set quantifiable objectives”.

Suffice to say a broad range of topics were discussed during the January Technical Working Group meetings. The issues discussed included Nitrate Enrichment, Changing Salinity, Bacterial Pollution, Decreased Water Clarity, Petroleum Product Pollution, Reduced Flows, Hydrologic Alterations, Altered Aquatic Vegetation, Muck Accumulation, Altered Shorelines, Altered Benthic Substrate, and Changing Channel Morphology to name a few.

The output from January’s Technical Working Group meetings was provided as input to the Springs Coast Management Committee on February 10 to set “management actions to support quantifiable objectives”. The representatives of the Springs Coast Management Committees are

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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Springs Coast SWIM (cont.)

Agency	Representative
City of Crystal River	Dave Burnell
Citrus County	Ken Cheek
Hernando County	Alys Brockway
Marion County	Flip Mellinger
FDEP	Rick Hicks
FFWCC	Kevin Kemp
FDACS	Jessica Stempien
SWFWMD	Michael Molligan
Agriculture	Curt Williams
Public Supply	Richard Owen
Environmental	Charles Lee
Regional Planning Council	Maya Burke
Industry	Dave Bruzek
Academia	Dr. Mahmood Nachabe
State Parks	Rick Owen

The output from the Springs Coast Management Committee was provided as input to the Springs Coast Steering Committee on April 6 to “approve projects that support management actions”. The representatives of the Springs Coast Steering Committee are

Agency	Representative	Title
City of Crystal River	Robert Holmes	City Council Member
Citrus County	Dennis Damato	County Commissioner
Hernando County	Nick Nicholson	County Commissioner
Marion County	Stan McClain	County Commissioner
FDEP	Tom Frick	Environmental Assessment and Restoration Bureau, Chief
FFWCC	Shannon Wright	Northeast Regional Director
FDACS	Darrell Smith	Office of Ag Water Policy, Assistant Director
SWFWMD	Michael Babb	Governing Board Member, Chair

These meetings are open to the public and stakeholder participation is encouraged. More information on the Springs Coast SWIM meetings can be found on SWFWMD’s website <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/springs/springs-coast/>.

Major Malfunctions

Dan Hilliard 3-22-16

It happens. Disputes lead to debates, tempers heat up a bit and at the end of the day nothing is accomplished other than to generate more fodder for the Citrus Chronicle.

It makes one pause.

A great country reduced to pathetic discourse over a potential race between blonds for the Oval Office. Not to say blond is an inherent defect, but in this case the current leaders of each party’s primary race are caricatures of a long litany of such jokes.

A state with party agendas so entrenched, even within the dominant party, that one branch pouts and takes the ball home before the session ends. To add insult to injury they can’t even get along with their own governor.

A county with theatrics in the commission chambers that only a script writer could truly appreciate.

America, where art thou?

This debacle is viewed through the eyes of the voters. Here in Florida we have something of an anomaly in our constituency. We are older than most, and we have a very large segment with past and present military experience who committed themselves to defending an ideal and a land once great. Such commitment led many to leave their blood on distant battle fields. The investment leads to questions. What happened to America? How do

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Major Malfunctions (cont.)

we fix this? Do WE need to fix this, or is this something younger generations need to fix themselves?

Can we now understand why Bill the Cat says "ACK!"?

It can be healed.

Not with insults and certainly not with absurd postulates such as having Mexico fund the building a wall on the Southern Border. Sorry Donald, good luck with that.

Hillary, with minor respect, It cannot be healed by barking like a dog either. These problems we face can be fixed with the very simple act of setting personal dogma aside and working together in behalf of The People. They can be fixed with determination, innovation and perhaps more significantly, with collaboration. It is a target rich environment: Terrorism, porous borders, unemployment, welfare run amok, corporate flight to foreign shores, loss of essential manufacturing base and ongoing degradation of natural resources.

It can be fixed.

I say to the Florida Legislature, set the theatrics aside and do your job in context of caring for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the state. Care for the well being of those that elected you and pay your salary. It is your only responsibility. If caught on the horns of dilemma regarding fidelity to your constituents and special interests which rained money on your campaign do the honorable thing and tend to your flock first. Your allegiance, first and foremost, is bound to The People. Failure to do so will result in not only the demise of your aspirations, but those of your party in the long view. It's pretty simple actually, just like remembering to duck when you're getting shot at. Don't over think this concept; doing so is a path to perdition.

You can smooth the road for generations to come.

On a local level we need to stop bickering over minutiae and look instead to the future. Personal agendas have no place in the house of the County Commission. Theatrics wear thin very quickly. Disruptive behavior is far more transparent than the instigators might imagine. Too, even though the tide goes out, it always comes back in and sometimes to a higher stage than yesterday.

A common vision is the uncommon cure it seems. We have many issues here in Citrus County, not the least of which are water related resources, lack of quality job opportunities, and no clear path to the future. It is a mistake to imagine that we can, as a people or a representative, control the future. If we are thoughtful and do our homework we will be able to shape the future and little more. This shaping can be successful, or non-existent. The choice is ours. One thing for certain, we need to sit down and talk it over, figure out where we are headed and maybe turn the steering wheel a little. It's called VISION. It's ours to create.

Waiting passively under the guise of dealing with day to day issues is a certain recipe for a future gone awry. We need a plan, a long range plan. Vision should be the first and foremost measure of a candidate's or sitting political representative's worthiness.

It is time to step outside the box.



MALFUNCTION JUNCTION

Dan Hilliard 3-22-16

Today's workshop exercise before the County Commission was a curious exercise on several levels. Mostly it presented as an exercise in obfuscation. Probably that's being too kind.

Scene 1: The workshop is called in response to complaints from residents indignant with the application of bio-solids in close proximity to their homes. Other than the stench and respiratory ailments which resulted, there is no particular reason they should object to having a sense of what the fine citizens of Clearwater had eaten over the last several weeks or perhaps months?

Scene 2, Act 1: Our leadership convened the workshop fully staffed with experts prepared to give qualified testimony on the merits of the activity. But first there was a video wherein folks from another place and time detailed their objections to application of bio-solids on adjacent agricultural lands for a myriad of reasons. It was, in some parts, less than pleasant to watch.

Scene 2, Act 2: County staff presented a brief review of current affairs and site locations where this is underway. FDEP presented a detailed explanation of the legal framework used to regulate the activity. A Doctor of science from the University of Florida delved into the minutiae of pathogens, metals, and touched on other chemical and pharmaceutical pollutants entrained in the waste and suggested it would take centuries before local concentrations would exceed harmful levels.

There were a few questions from the Commissioners along the way. Without intent to sound unkind, the questions struck this writer as contrived to dance around the issues at hand. Of course that is just an opinion.

Scene 3, Act 1: The public input segment of the workshop began. It was noted by the Board Chairman that this was a workshop and there

would be no vote on the matter. There were early questions and comments delivered without emotion by the first few speakers. Perhaps one awkward question was directed at the point of the county allowing import of bio-solids from other county and municipal jurisdictions. It was, after all, one of the early issues at hand (Scene 1) and had not been addressed until that time.

At that point a number of speakers that are directly impacted by this activity addressed the board. They were polite but quite forceful. Credit to them for their politeness, for they had every justification for flagrant outrage. Again, that is just my opinion. I too have smelled the Citrus County welcome station along US19 just south of the Barge Canal. Ah, the joys of a westerly breeze are too numerous to count.

I noticed that despite their polite presentations they managed to fire a full array of torpedoes in the general direction of the Commission, FDEP and the good Doctor from Gainesville. Olfactory and respiratory insult is an excellent motivator.

Scene 3, Act 2: The commissioners spoke, one at a time. They carefully explained why they found no reason for additional regulation, that farmers were good people, that FDEP was doing a fine job and oh, by the way, there was no reason for additional regulation, though one said his heart went out to the aggrieved constituents. One of the Commissioners suggested that future complaints would be responded to within 30 minutes. There were a lot of folks in the audience shaking their heads in disbelief.

Scene 4: It has yet to be written, but perhaps you can be a part of the script writer's guild this fall; more precisely, around November. It would be a welcome change in Citrus County if our elected officials actually listened to their constituents from time to time. It would be akin to galactic upheaval if they took action on behalf of those folks to protect the health, safety and welfare.

Whenever you find yourself in a hole, the first thing you should consider is to stop shoveling.

Spending on ineffective projects won't save springs

By: Robert L. Knight

Over the past 50 years, Florida policies have fueled private investments based on the myth that cheap, clean groundwater is infinite.

Developers built cities from coast-to-coast with excessive reliance on the Floridan Aquifer, while water managers blissfully ignored the fact that green lawns and septic tanks pollute springs, lakes and rivers. Farmers have expanded their agricultural operations throughout the springs heartland with the promise of ample groundwater for irrigation, while their excessive fertilizer applications pollute the underlying aquifer.

The public has been duped by state government into thinking that Florida's underground aquifers are so vast that the day of reckoning can be put off forever. But the reality is that we are well past that day of judgment.

As early as 2000 the state's best scientists and engineers, working as the Florida Springs Task Force, developed a viable plan to move the state towards a sustainable groundwater future by reversing the unmistakable decline in springs' water quantity and quality. Their plan was gaining momentum in 2007 before it was quietly tossed into the state's waste basket.

But good ideas don't die easily. By 2011, well-informed citizens were lobbying all levels of state and local governments to put the brakes on the permitted activities that were killing springs by the proverbial "death by a thousand cuts." Educated by private non-profits and a press corps who publicized these environmental atrocities, concerned citizens joined in the demand that Florida's government end this groundwater crisis. By 2013 the message from the caring public was clear: "Government, do your job and enforce Florida's laws that were intended to protect our aquifer and springs."

In response to this public outcry, the 2014 Florida Legislature authorized \$25 million for springs protection that was ultimately amplified to \$69 million for springs projects. In 2015 the ante was raised by a legislative authorization of \$45 million that was subsequently multiplied to over \$100 million in cost-share springs projects. And this year the spending continues. Last week, Gov. Rick Scott signed the 2016 state budget that includes a 20-year "Legacy Florida" funding stream of a minimum of \$50 million per year for "spring restoration, protection, and management projects."

While the allocation of public money for springs conservation grows each year, the springs continue to lose flows and are choking on more algae. Springs cost-share projects funded over the past three years have had no visible, lasting successes.

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Spending on ineffective projects (cont.)

Either the public expenditures are being poorly spent and not accomplishing their stated goals, or the status quo of issuing new groundwater pumping permits that in turn facilitate the use of more nitrogen fertilizer, are increasing the springs’ problems faster than the public’s money can be spent.

Regardless of which explanation is correct, it is clear that a more effective process is needed to prioritize and select springs restoration and protection efforts. Springs funding decisions and successes need to be publicly vetted and not conducted in bureaucratic secrecy.

If public leaders decide to act in society’s best interests, namely to follow a path to groundwater sustainability, then the monetary costs of springs restoration could be relatively minor. There is minimal public cost for legally mandating across-the-board reductions in groundwater consumption and reduced fertilizer uses. In fact, collecting aquifer protection fees based on groundwater and fertilizer use would provide a flexible funding tool for controlling excessive springs impairments without the need to pick financial winners and losers.

Saving Florida’s artesian springs from ruin will require more than throwing vast sums of taxpayers’ money at ineffective projects. Enforcing and strengthening existing laws that protect groundwater quantity and quality has the potential to save our springs at minimal cost to the public.

Springs restoration, if achieved, will be based on collective social enlightenment. A revolution in public thinking is necessary that prioritizes the long-term benefits of healthy springs and clean drinking water for all citizens, over short-term profits for a few. Florida is at a crossroads where either the long view prevails or we continue to slide down the slippery slope of dying springs



Photo by Ursula Schwuttke

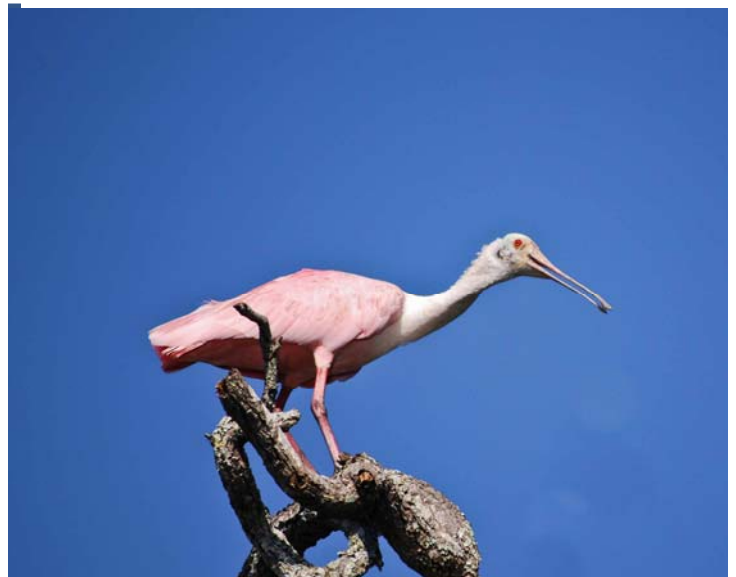


Photo by Ursula Schwuttke



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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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