



FLORIDA SPRINGS COUNCIL ASKS FOR PUBLIC WITNESSES AT UPCOMING
SJRWMD SLEEPY CREEK/ADENA SPRINGS PERMIT DECISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GAINESVILLE, FL – The Florida Springs Council (FSC)—a consortium of 29 springs advocacy groups that have a total membership of more than 100,000 Floridians—needs your help.

On July 14, 2015, the Board of Directors of the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) will decide whether to give Frank Stronach's Sleepy Creek Ranch (formerly Adena Springs Ranch) a permit to withdraw 1.46 million gallons of water a day from the Floridan aquifer. If this permit is granted, it will result in further injury to Florida's iconic Silver Springs, the most endangered large spring in Florida.

According to the restoration plan prepared by the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, Silver Springs has already lost more than 30 percent of its historic flow and is contaminated by nitrate-nitrogen at a concentration more than 3,100 percent higher than natural nitrate background levels. This combination of reduced flow and increased pollution, coupled with the presence of the Rodman Dam that blocks fish and manatee migration up the Ocklawaha River, has resulted in explosive algae growth, substantial reductions in fish and wildlife populations, and deterioration of the aesthetic appeal of this National Natural Landmark and historic Florida spring.

Florida law requires that in order for a water use permit to be granted, that permit must be in the public interest. The FSC does not believe that the water use permit request for Sleepy Creek Ranch, which lies less than 10 miles north of Silver Springs and within the Silver Springs springshed, meets that qualification. Consider:

- There is clear evidence that the combination of sinkholes and cattle on the Sleepy Creek property represents a danger to our drinking water. Many of the wetlands

surrounding those sinkholes have been cleared, so there are no barriers to exclude cattle and to prevent their manure from becoming a source of nitrate pollution. Since these sinkholes are direct conduits to the Floridan aquifer, they allow manure and fertilizer nitrogen to enter the aquifer that not only feeds Silver Springs but also provides our drinking water. Further degradation of Silver Springs and pollution of our drinking water is not in the public interest.

- During a public comment session in the administrative hearing about this permit, a landowner who is a neighbor to Sleepy Creek Ranch produced video evidence of highly polluted runoff entering her property from the ranch through a small stream. The landowner stated that this runoff travelled through her property and into nearby water bodies. Pollution of neighboring waters is not in the public interest.
- The full amount of the existing water use permit for the Sleepy Creek property has not been used. The requested permit amount is six times higher than the current allocation. Increasing water use that siphons water away from Silver Springs—when we know that the springs have already lost approximately one-third of their historical flow—is not in the public interest.
- Staff members of SJRWMD have found that the district has over-allocated the Floridan aquifer in the vicinity of Silver Springs by 30 million gallons a day. If the district's water budget is already overdrawn, how does it serve the public interest to permit more water withdrawals? It is not in the public interest to allow over-allocation of water from the aquifer—upon which we all depend—so that one landowner can make a profit.
- The SJRWMD knows that issuing the Sleepy Creek water use permit will cause further damage to the Floridan aquifer, which over time has declined by up to 20 feet within the district. In order to offset this one permit for Sleepy Creek Ranch and its resulting aquifer damage, the SJRWMD has proposed over \$25 million in costs for alternative water supply projects. The citizens of Florida will be expected to fund those projects through their taxes. Is it in the public interest to expect the public to pay to ensure one person's private profits?
- Approximately 100 private citizens attended the public portion of the Sleepy Creek Lands administrative hearing; not one citizen spoke in favor of issuing the permit. It is not in the public interest to grant a water use permit for a project that has little or no public support.

If you agree with the Florida Springs Council that granting this water use permit is not in the public interest, we ask that you join us at 10 a.m. Tuesday, July 14, 2015, to publicly oppose the SJRWMD Board's decision to grant this permit. The meeting will be held at district headquarters, 4049 Reid Street, Palatka 32177.

Those unable to attend the meeting are encouraged to submit their comments to the SJRWMD Governing Board by selecting the “I oppose this application” option on the District’s e-Permitting site. Click the following link to [submit your comments](#).

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