



**Florida Springs Council Organizing Demonstration at North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan Meeting in Alachua**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALACHUA, FL – The Florida Springs Council (FSC)—an independent nonprofit coalition of 40 non-governmental organizations representing over 155,000 Floridians—is organizing a demonstration against the draft North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan (NFRWSP) on Tuesday, January 17, at the Alachua City Hall, 15100 NW 142nd Terrace, Alachua, FL 32615. The demonstration and press event will begin at 10 a.m. At 11 a.m., governing board members for the St. Johns River and Suwannee River water management districts (WMDs) will take public comment and vote to adopt the plan.

The Districts, along with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), have been working collaboratively since 2012 to develop the NFRWSP. The NFRWSP encompasses 14 counties, including Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Suwannee, and Union. The purpose of the partnership was to develop a collaborative plan to address natural resource and water supply issues in north Florida. The NFRWSP was prepared to identify the finite limits of water supply availability and to lay out a cost-effective plan that can attain a sustainable water future for north Florida.

Over the past four years, the agencies coordinated 36 Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings, two public workshops, and various outreach meetings to engage stakeholders, in order to discuss their concerns regarding water supply. Stakeholder members who actively participated in the SAC meetings included two environmental representatives, as well as a dozen representatives from commercial and agricultural interests. Additionally, a technical team consisting of experts in the field of groundwater modeling, developed the North Florida Southeast-Georgia Regional Groundwater flow model, generally referred to as the NFSEG

model. The NFSEG Model was used to assess potential resource constraints, should all projected reasonable-beneficial demands be met by fresh groundwater.

“Neither the NFRWSP nor the NFSEG Model were substantially influenced by the small number of environmental representatives or responsive to requests for a greater focus on water sustainability, improved model configurations, or inclusion of public interest concerns, said FSC Board member, Dr. Robert Knight. “The results of this lop-sided process are apparent in highly flawed output in the NFRWSP and from the NFSEG model. The NFRWSP makes no effort to quantify a safe yield of water from the Floridan Aquifer and does not call for any reduction in the existing high rates of groundwater pumping. Instead it relies on questionable and expensive engineering solutions and conservation measures with an estimated price tag of about \$390 million dollars to satisfy a projected increased water demand from 490 million gallons per day (mgd) in 2010, to about 607 mgd by the year 2035. The plan pays no attention to restoring depleted spring flows, preventing the continuing rate of region-wide lake and wetlands dehydration, and spreading saltwater intrusion in the drinking water aquifer.”

The joint governing board meeting is the best opportunity for the affected public to influence the water future of north Florida. Floridians need to substantially reduce our reliance on water from the Floridan aquifer if we wish to restore and protect the region’s springs, rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

“The NFRWSP is a blueprint for disaster,” said Knight. “The future of the environment and the human economy of north Florida is bleak if this plan is adopted and followed to completion.”

Bring signs for the demonstration and make your voice heard in Alachua on Tuesday, January 17!

For more information about the demonstration, call Dan Hilliard at 352-527-0023 or Bob Knight at 352-538-6620.

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