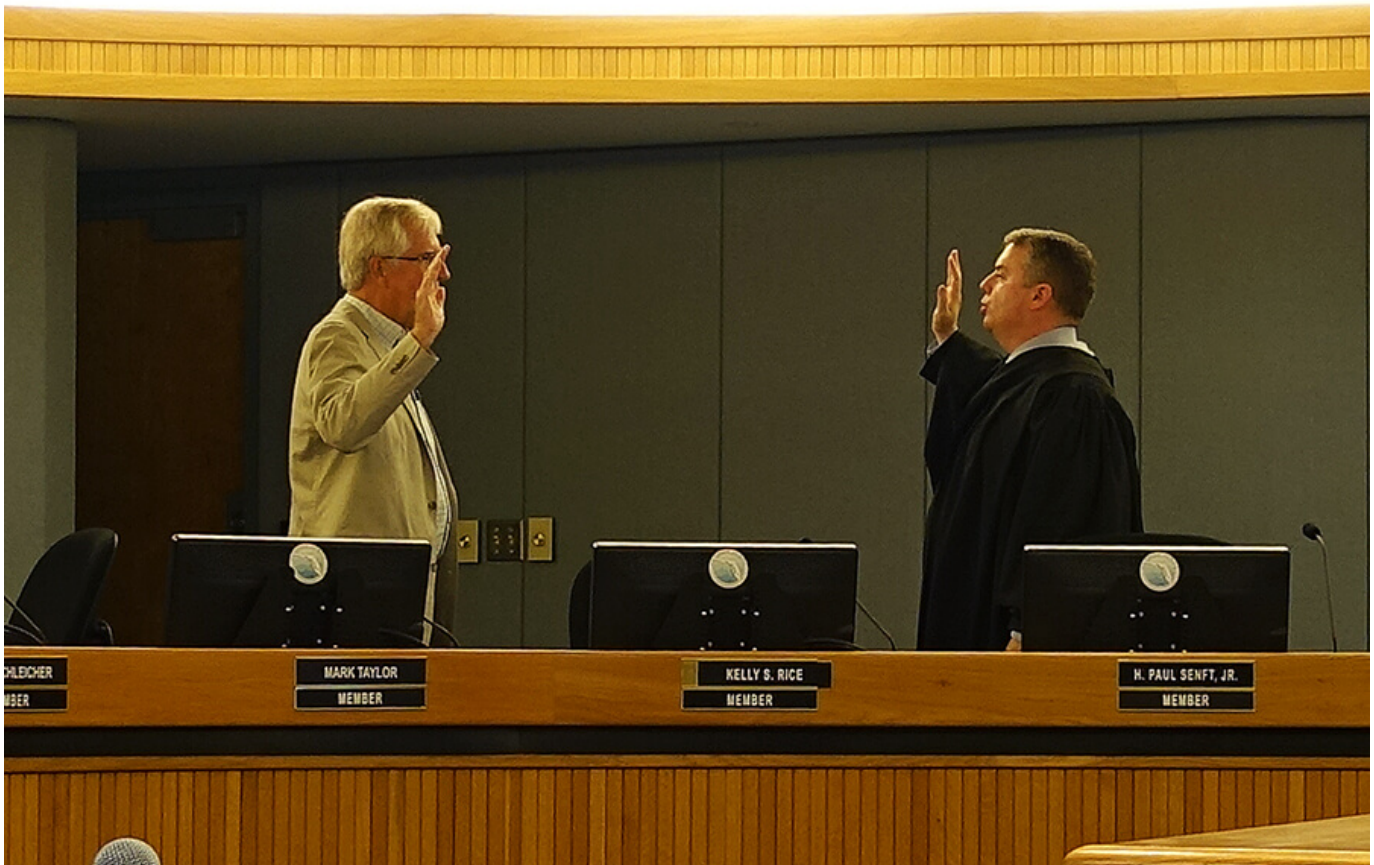


# Bob Knight: The next fatality in Florida's springs pandemic?

August 14, 2020



Bob Knight being sworn in for hours of testimony at the Rainbow River MFLs hearing. Photo by Jim Tatum.

Keep in mind that the ills of the Rainbow River are those of the Santa Fe, Ichetucknee, Suwannee and most of Florida's rivers.

Bob Knight tells us who can save the Rainbow: *"Florida's governor and his appointed directors at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Southwest Florida Water*

*Management District have the power to turn this crisis around and put the Rainbow on a road to recovery.*

So why don't they? Because there would be push back by those responsible for harming the river: *"...poorly regulated development. Too much groundwater pumping. Too much farm and yard fertilizer. Too many septic tanks. Too much insufficiently-treated animal and human wastewater. And too many people loving the springs and river to death."*

You see, that would cost these people money and inconvenience.

So, will those with the power to protect act before the river is gone? At what stage of death must the river be before they decide to act?

A letter to DeSantis, Valenstein and the SWFWMD Board of Directors would get no action but it might plant a seed. We wonder if 18,500 letters could crack minds enclosed in concrete.

Read the entire article here in the Gainesville Sun.

Thanks to Bob Knight for telling the truth in contrast to those who lie to cover up their shortcomings and keep their jobs.

*Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.*

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*– A river is like a life: once taken,  
it cannot be brought back © Jim Tatum*

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**Bob Knight: The next fatality in**

# Florida's springs pandemic?

Posted at 12:01 AM August 14, 2020

Rainbow Springs, located in southwest Marion County, long nourished the Rainbow River with over 450 million gallons per day of cool, clear and clean groundwater. During Florida's inevitable droughts, Rainbow's reliable groundwater discharge historically supported productive fisheries in the lower Withlacoochee River and Withlacoochee Bay.

Ongoing monitoring has documented a catastrophic decline in flows in the Rainbow River and in the downstream water bodies. Based on analysis of the long-term flow records, the Florida Springs Institute has concluded that these flow reductions are primarily the result of excessive groundwater pumping throughout Florida's Springs Coast Basin.

Rising nutrient pollution in the groundwater feeding the springs and rivers is a second major stress on the environmental health of these Outstanding Florida Waters. Nitrate nitrogen concentrations in the groundwater feeding the Rainbow Springs have risen by more than 4,500% and are nearly 600% higher than the state's legal limit to protect healthy springs. In fact, there is enough nitrate in drinking water in southwest Marion County to increase the risk of certain human cancers by 3 to 5 fold.

Excessive recreational pressure is the third major stress impacting the future of this natural aquatic wonderland. Hundreds of thousands of people are attracted to the Rainbow River each year to enjoy the cool and clear water – tubers, scuba divers and boaters – all with an unintentional but very real environmental footprint.

Rainbow's problems – reduced flow, nitrogen pollution and

excessive recreation – are not new or unique. They have been documented by Florida's governmental scientists for at least 25 years. More than 80% of Florida's 1,000-plus artesian springs are suffering from this pandemic of declining flows and increasing nutrient pollution.

Florida's springs are showing the symptoms of a life-threatening disease – altered or lost native vegetation, massive growths of filamentous algae, reduced water clarity, marked reductions in populations of native fish and other wildlife, and the resulting decline in their aesthetic qualities.

Florida's environmental laws prohibit human activities that result in springs and groundwater pollution. Florida lawmakers long ago (in the 1970s) mandated the maintenance of adequate water flows to protect healthy environmental systems. Florida law also provides our environmental agencies extensive power to control excessive recreational impacts in state parks and aquatic preserves.

Florida's governmental officials are ultimately responsible for allowing the continuing death spiral at Rainbow Springs and the Rainbow River. Florida's governor and his appointed directors at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Southwest Florida Water Management District have the power to turn this crisis around and put the Rainbow on a road to recovery.

This river is polluted and depleted because of poorly regulated development. Too much groundwater pumping. Too much farm and yard fertilizer. Too many septic tanks. Too much insufficiently-treated animal and human wastewater. And too many people loving the springs and river to death.

All of the problems plaguing Florida's springs can be resolved through the actions of a responsible government representing an

ethical and engaged public. Until Florida's government expeditiously and fully enforces the existing laws that were intended to protect Rainbow Springs, there should be no additional permitted activities along the river and in the springshed that will make bad conditions even worse.

*Dr. Bob Knight is the founder and director of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute with offices in High Springs. The Florida Springs Institute recently published Dr. Knight's "Death by a Thousand Cuts – A Springs Opinions Anthology," a collection of his opinion pieces penned over the past 12 years of springs advocacy. Visit [www.floridaspringsinstitute.org](http://www.floridaspringsinstitute.org) to find FSI's detailed restoration action plan for the Rainbow Springs and River. In the Rainbow Springs Priority Focus Area, FSI recommends that state and local governments enact a moratorium on any and all new development that will increase groundwater pumping, nutrient pollution or increased recreational use affecting Rainbow Springs and the Rainbow River.*