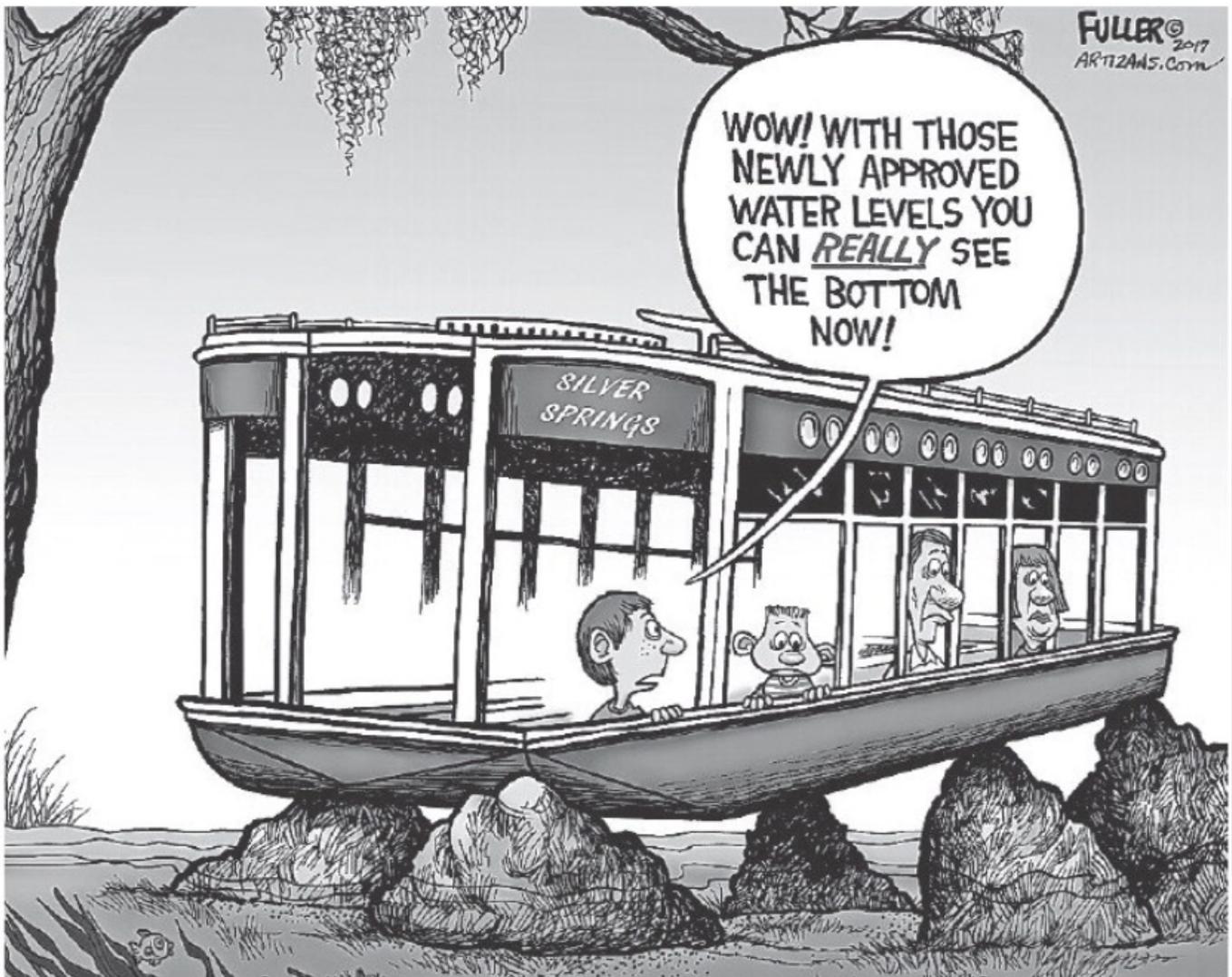


A Disgusting and Insulting Performance By Our “Leaders”

March 19, 2017

ACCORDING TO JAKE



Thanks to Jake Fuller for permission to use his apt and accurate drawing in today's, March 19, 2017 [Gainesville Sun](#). "According to Jake" is accurate because it shows precisely how Silver Springs will be in the future if our water leaders continue to draw down our aquifer, little by little and bit by bit. Each time it is deemed not "significant," but each time they allow

another small percentage. And each time the springs and river are diminished.

There is nothing more boring than to sit through a long, protracted explanation of pseudo science and formulae designed to hoodwink the public into believing that the percentage the district water scientists have chosen will not cause "significant harm."

Your writer has sat through far too many of these, and after the first one it becomes totally disgusting and insulting. These people hoodwink no one, and it seems incredible they can keep their composure when trying to ram it down our throats.

Proof that they are allowing the demise of our springs is the continued increase in turbidity and algae and reduction in flow and the disappearance of wildlife. This is constant and it is on their watch. So how can they expect us to believe them when they tell us with a straight face that this new reduction will not "significantly harm" the river and springs?

Below is a somewhat dated yet not out of date opinion piece by Margaret Spontak which appeared in the [Ocala Star Banner](#). In this article note her "Timeline of Shame," aptly named, but ineffective here as these people who manage our springs have no hint as to the meaning of the word "shame."

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

[.](#)
Springs and the Silver River

Posted Jan 15, 2017 at 2:01 AM Updated Jan 17, 2017 at 9:45 AM

By Margaret Spontak Special to the Star-Banner

The following timeline and written comments have been provided to the St. Johns River Management District at their Jan. 10 board meeting in Palatka. The author was the director of the office of policy and planning at SJRWMD from 1994 to 2000. During that time, the planning team developed the first District Water Management Plan. Spontak advocated at that time that Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) for Silver Springs needed to be a priority. Establishing MFLs was mandated in 1972 as a tool for water resource managers to prevent significant harm to water bodies and natural resources as a result of excessive water withdrawals. Decades later, rigorous MFLs have not been established for Silver Springs and the Silver River, as the springs' flow continues to be diminished.

Evidence indicates that the St. Johns River Water Management District has failed to establish Minimum Flows and Levels for Silver Springs and the Silver River for 16 years since it was added on the SJRWMD priority list, and 45 years since the state first mandated that MFLs be established for priority water bodies in 1972.

The fault does not totally fall on the water district, but also on the state, which has dramatically reduced SJRWMD budgets and slashed water district scientific staff and consultants statewide. It also falls on a governor who has targeted SJRWMD employees for removal that did not rule favorably on permits submitted by his supporters. Water decisions need to be made based on good science and not made under the fear of retaliation.

And, as the district and the state have failed at their duty to protect what was once the largest artesian spring in the world and a significant source of water supply for the people and

ecosystems of North Central Florida. The flow of this spring has been reduced by at least 50 percent. Before allocating this latest expansive request for water use, SJRWMD must determine the MFLs for the Silver River and Silver Springs, which will probably demonstrate the need for a recovery strategy. Issuing a major new consumptive use permit before this is done is not in the public interest.

Instead of doing the above, after decades of delay, SJRWMD staff has rapidly created a new model in less than a year, without the rigor of established MFLs. This hastily created model, developed due to political pressure, shows a significant withdrawal to the aquifer will not further reduce the flow of this critically important water body.

It is my hope that the hearing officer assigned to the Sleepy Creek Lands Consumptive Use Permit 91926-4 will rule that the water district cannot continue to issue new allocations of water from this already damaged system. It is the duty of SJRWMD, and has been for decades, that they establish scientifically-sound MFLs and necessary recovery strategies for priority water bodies such as Silver Springs and the Silver River. This must happen before this permit is granted. This could end this "Timeline of Shame" that has resulted in potentially irreparable damage to one of the states' most significant water resources.

The Timeline of Shame:

1972 – State mandates that water management districts establish Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) for priority water bodies.

1993 – Appellate court rules that SJRWMD ignored the state mandate by setting MFLs for only two water bodies in 20 years.

1994-1999 – The lawsuit settlement leads SJRWMD to launch a process to set MFLs for 46 lakes and springs between 1995 and

1999. Setting of critical water bodies continued to lag.

1996 – SJRWMD's first District Water Management Plan set goals and policies for MFLs.

More Video: Samantha Jameson – Uber Driver

2000 – SJRWMD District Water Supply Plan describes the Ocklawaha River site near Silver Springs as “a location favorable for surface water supply development. Silver Springs is the largest spring in SJRWMD, with a long-term average discharge of about 876 million gallons per day (mgd). It accounts for about 93 percent of spring discharge in the Ocklawaha River watershed and about 60 percent of the total outflow from Rodman Reservoir, located just upstream of the St. Johns River.”

2001 – SJRWMD added Silver Springs to the priority list for MFLs to be finished by 2004.

2003 – SJRWMD updates its MFLs' priority list pushing back Silver Springs to 2006. The 2006 date was delayed again.

2012 – SJRWMD releases a report that indicates Silver Springs' flow rate was on a clear downward trend. In 2012, the lowest minimum daily flow recorded by the USGS was 347 cubic feet per second.

2012 – Florida DEP issues a memo on the Timing of the Development of Minimum Flow and Level Recovery and Prevention Strategies. It says that “MFLs are an important tool for ensuring that the current and future water supply needs of the state are met in a manner that protects our critical natural systems.”

2013 – SJRWMD board votes “to begin the process to set minimum flows and levels for Silver Springs and the Silver River to help prevent significant harm to those important water resources.”

Target date is 2014.

2016 – SJRWMD Consolidated Annual Report indicates that MFLs for Silver Springs targeted for 2014-2015 were delayed once more. Completion now targeted for 2017.

Jan. 8, 2017 – USGS station near Silver Springs on Jan. 8 registered that the daily discharge was 421 cubic feet per second. This was after a weekend of heavy rainfall.

– Margaret H. Spontak is longtime environmental activist and currently is director of education at Master the Possibilities.