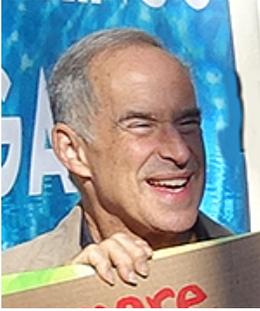


Eliminating bottled water is easiest step to starting springs recovery

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OSFR
President
Mike Roth

Mike Roth's rebuttal of Todd Kincaid's recent op-ed says it all. Our thanks to Mike for clarifying some important points.

Read the original article here in [the Gainesville Sun](#).

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*

OPINION

Eliminating bottled water is easiest step to starting springs recovery

Michael Roth

Guest columnist Nov. 23, 2020

I was disappointed to see Dr. Todd Kincaid, a well-respected hydrogeologist and fellow adviser to the Florida Springs Institute, take a factually correct presentation and bring it to a non-sequitur conclusion [in a column](#) published Nov. 22.

He is absolutely correct in asserting that bottled water is a minor withdrawal when compared to total withdrawals for agriculture, industry and personal use. Sadly, he is correct when he states that most springs are flowing at 30% to 50% of their historical average, and one cannot dispute that nutrient pollution is caused by the overuse of fertilizers and insufficiently treated stormwater.

He is also correct when he states that “every drop of water extracted from the Floridan aquifer reduces spring flows by an equal amount ...” That being the case, why wouldn’t you start a springs recovery by stopping a consumptive use permit that is up for renewal today? Why wouldn’t you start by eliminating an extraction that only benefits a private corporation at the expense of springs that the taxpayers are putting tens of millions of dollars into each year to recover?

I would dispute that stopping bottled water extractions is a “distraction” from the job at hand – it is the first step. It is the easiest step, in fact – agricultural use needs to be reduced, but that has to be done with surgical precision, so as not to overly disrupt our food supply. Additionally, much of the agricultural extraction is returned to the aquifer, whereas most

of the bottled water in the region is shipped out of the area. Considering Nestle Waters North America's business model, it is ludicrous to promote them as allies in efforts to maintain flowing freshwater springs. Their history is one of over-pumping freshwater supplies to depletion, which is one of the reasons that they are looking to transport bulk water from Ginnie Springs to their Madison Blue facility, which can no longer provide that installation with sufficient fresh water to fully utilize its bottling capacity.

Again, Dr. Kincaid is correct when he says that existing management strategies are not filling the bill. Minimum Flows and Levels, when looked at closely, are merely lip service by an agriculture/industry driven government trying to show the public that they are doing something. The problem is to the point where if the public doesn't feel the pinch then strategy is probably insufficient.

Bottled water is a necessity only in crisis environments – and should be retained for that use only. The overwhelming use of bottled water is convenience, one that is becoming increasingly unsustainable, and would be easy to eliminate.

With respect to water quality, nutrient pollution referred to by Dr. Kincaid results in an overabundance of algae, which can be at least partially mitigated by sufficient velocity of flow, which can be only attained with higher (one might say normal?) water volume. Water extraction for convenience obviously goes against any strategy to boost velocity.

Also, Dr. Kincaid fails to mention the tremendous volume of plastics found in the springs as a byproduct of bottled water consumption. Over time, this breaks down into microplastic particles that enter into all living systems with negative health consequences.

Finally, Dr. Kincaid is right when he states that Floridians should "start working toward and voting for the systemic

solutions the springs so desperately need.” There would be no doubt in the mind of any environmentally oriented citizen or legislator that such systemic solutions would start with the elimination of water extractions for the convenience of bottled water.

Michael Roth is president of Our Santa Fe River Inc.