

OSFR Sabal Trail Op-Ed in Ocala Star Banner and Citrus Co. Chronicle

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Ted Yoho takes Sabal Trail Walk, May 15, 2016. Standing: Debra Johnson, Deanna Mericle, Ted Yoho, Chris Mericle. Photo by Thomas Lynn from the Suwannee Democrat.

SpectraEnergy/Sabal Trail still does not have approval to bring their unneeded pipeline into Florida. Georgia has wisely denied them permission to bore under rivers, and the Army Corps of

Engineers has yet to issue their permit. [The Ocala Star Banner](#) and the [Citrus County Chronicle](#) has run OSFR's editorial, which will also appear soon in the *Gainesville Sun* and perhaps other newspapers along the proposed route of the pipeline.



Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson and Jim Tatum: Pipeline is a needless threat to Florida

By Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson and Jim Tatum



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Andrea Grover's article in the Star-Banner, "Sabal Trail pipeline won't impact quality of water," (May 15) is a denial of the threat caused by the Sabal Trail pipeline. Her statements in almost every paragraph can be easily countered.

There is no need for the pipeline, other than possibly to sell the gas in Martin County and export it. Gov. Rick Scott-appointed Public Service Commission members approved the pipeline, in which Scott also has a \$108,000 money interest.

Yes, the Federal Regulatory Energy Commission (FERC) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, accurately called "rubber stamp agencies" by the Star-Banner, did approve

the pipe, to no one's surprise. FERC's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was based on Sabal Trail's input, which was notoriously inaccurate and, we think, intentionally misleading. We choose the words "notoriously" because, at this writing, news of Sabal Trail's misleading trickery has spread far and wide, so much so that various counties and municipalities, including Marion County, have formally expressed their concern in letters and statements to the Army Corps of Engineers, calling for an objective study.

Many environmental groups also have called attention to Sabal Trail's omissions, and employed two independent geologists who gave information on critical issues which directly contradict Sabal Trail's geologist.

We choose the word "intentionally" because any layman can see that the closest first magnitude spring to the Suwannee River crossing is not Madison Blue, but Lime Run, less than a mile away. On May 15, 2016, several state and national environmental groups led a Sabal Trail Walk on the site of the river crossing, observing the survey stakes marking the pipeline corridor, which Sabal Trail claims has sinkhole issues no closer than 750 feet. All those in attendance on the walk saw one center stake right on the edge of a sinkhole depression, and the area through which the corridor was marked, was riddled with depressions.

Among the most serious and potentially dangerous flaws in Sabal Trail's EIS is the statement that the Falmouth Cathedral Cave system is about 100 feet below the crossing, and that there is little or no flow beneath the river. Two independent geologists say the cave roof is about 30 feet below, giving almost no leeway in boring under the river. Dye tests prove that water flows beneath the riverbed, and that various conduits interconnect among several springs.

So if any or all the groups mentioned by Grover actually checked the information given in the EIS, their silence is indeed a mystery. Suwannee River Water Management District Executive Director Noah Valenstein was on the walk and observed the sinkholes in the corridor.

Grover states that Sabal Trail is "... well equipped to construct and operate the pipeline in karst areas." It is a fact that Sabal Trail and co-company SpectraEnergy have an abysmal safety record.

"From 2006 to date, the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration recorded 25 incidents that caused more than \$12 million in property damage along Spectra's main line," the Florida Bulldog reported.

Furthermore, Sabal Trail has no viable recourse plan in case of accidents. Their solution to breaking into a sinkhole is to fill it with concrete grout, ignoring the fact that sinkholes are often connected underground, making it difficult or impossible to fill, and likely having the undesirable and illegal result of stopping underground water flow to the springs. Neither are the rural areas through which the pipeline would travel equipped to handle a serious catastrophe or explosion of the magnitude already experienced by SpectraEnergy.

Florida does not need this threat to our environment and Sabal Trail should not be allowed to construct the pipeline.

– Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson is policy director for Our Santa Fe River, and Jim Tatum is its historian. Both live in Fort White.