

# Regional plan doesn't hold water

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Jim Gross, OSFR advisor , director of Florida Defenders of the Environment, geologist, ex-water manager in Florida, has sounded off in the [Gainesville Sun](#), online, but not the hard copy yet.

We have read and posted comments from several different individuals and organizations, and have submitted our own. It seems that all of them say: use less water. That is

unfortunately what the districts do not want to do. They are committed to supplying all who request water.

Read the entire article [here](#).

Thanks to Kris Cathey for the info.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

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

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Jim Gross: Regional plan doesn't hold water

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By Jim Gross Special to the Sun

I have a peeve. I'm tired of government agencies talking about our water resources crisis as a future problem. Even well-meaning environmental organizations sometimes step into this trap. Make no mistake. It is a carefully calculated trap.



Jim Gross

The crisis is now. But the fix isn't near if we continue talking about the problem as a future crisis. Arguably, we have been enduring a crisis of indecision for years, even decades in some

parts of Florida. The crisis in North Florida has been known at least since 2008, when the St. Johns River Water Management District realized that pumping within its boundaries was causing impacts within the Suwannee River Water Management District to the west.

The Suwannee and St. Johns River water management districts recently unveiled their draft North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan, a joint effort nearly nine years in the making. The front and center language in the draft plan is predictably obscure: "... fresh groundwater alone cannot supply the projected 117 million gallons per day increase in water demand during the 20-year planning horizon without causing unacceptable impacts to water resources." Zzzz €; The reader will be sound asleep before ever understanding this deceptive poppycock. Wake me up when we run out. I'm sure I'll want to know then.

But read on: "... the current distribution of water use has already exceeded the sustainable yield of the fresh groundwater system." Well, hallelujah! I was worried we were pumping too much from the aquifer. Good to know it's just the distribution of use. Get that distribution fixed, guys. I'm going back to sleep now.

Fortunately, our situation is much simpler to understand. We can use clear and unambiguous language. We must put a ceiling on overall pumping from the aquifer if we intend to protect our freshwater resources.

If we are committed to protecting the minimum flows and levels that have already been established, the ceiling must be lower than what we are pumping today. If we are committed to protecting minimum flows and levels that are mandated by state law but not yet established, the ceiling will need to be even lower.

The draft North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan does not identify a ceiling on overall groundwater pumping as a potential option, now or in the future, much less recommend one. This is the most glaring deficiency in the plan.

There are other technical and legal issues with the draft plan, but the bottom line is this: Water is a finite resource. We must quit pretending otherwise. This draft plan does little to dispel the myth that Florida has unlimited freshwater at hand.

Florida, we have a problem. Water management in our state is broken. But the good news is that we have the tools to fix it. We have economic tools, market tools, fiscal tools, policy tools and regulatory tools.

We will need all of these tools to protect our water resources in perpetuity while protecting and enhancing our economy. We will also need bright and imaginative people working collaboratively with the public.

We can do this. Who's with me?

*– Jim Gross is the executive director of Florida Defenders of the Environment.*