

# River backers say bill threatens legal-protection bid

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Huge corporations that make part of their money by destroying the environment fear Thomas Linzey and those supporting rights of nature. No sooner than this concept arose in Florida than lobbyist-paid lawmakers in Tallahassee resisted and bills were hurriedly filed opposing it.

This is just one more example of a dangerous trend that has surfaced recently in Tallahassee designed to diminish citizens' rights and the autonomy of local governments. The State of Florida and its greedy lawmakers are jealous of power and are working hard to earn the money gained from their lobbyists who have purchased their loyalty.

Read the complete article by Sarah Nelson [here in the Gainesville sun](#).

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

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By [Sarah Nelson](#)

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Local environmentalists and Alachua County commissioners said Tuesday that if a proposed state law passes, it would threaten any chance for the county to curtail the algae choking some North Central Florida springs.

House Bill 1199, filed Jan. 9, would block local governments from granting legal rights to the environment, which is precisely what some environmentalists have been pressing for: finding a way to give legal rights to the Santa Fe River.

“Not only does Tallahassee refuse to fix the problem, Tallahassee is the problem,” said John Moran, an environmental activist and nature photographer.

A compiled list of protections for the river, called the Santa Fe Bill of Rights, or SAFEBOR, would grant legal protection to the 75-mile waterway that creeps slowly between Bradford and Alachua counties and is connected to many area springs.

Thomas Linzey, an author and co-founder of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, said the rights could extend to the entirety of the river, beyond Alachua County.

Algae from too many nutrients, including farm and residential fertilizers, grows on rocks, aquatic grass and spring beds.

Algal blooms can reduce oxygen needed by fish and other life. Bacteria can convert nitrogen into nitrates, which can affect human health.

Legal protections would give citizens the right to challenge projects that damage the river, on behalf of the river.

Linzey predicted the commission will face a legal battle down the road should it pass SAFEBOR, but argued that environmental protections have become the 21st century equivalent of civil and women's rights.

He pointed to Orange County, which is preparing to possibly place rights of the Wekiva and Eckonlockhatchee rivers on the 2020 ballot.

"I think Alachua County stands in a good position to join them in terms of being first in this," Linzey said.

Commissioner Robert Hutchinson said nature rights is one of the most exciting environmental efforts.

"If we don't do something akin to the bill of rights for nature, we're going to continue down those roads," he said....

Alachua County's Charter Review Commission, which convenes every decade, is scheduled to vote Wednesday on whether to consider including SAFEBOR in the final round of deliberations over proposed charter changes.

The group will vote on a final list of proposed county charter changes that voters will see on the fall 2020 ballot at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday at the county's administration building, 12 SE First St.