

# So Don't Hold Your Breath. . .

May 31, 2017



In the [Lake City Reporter](#), May 31, 2017, we see that Rum Island Park will not likely get much-needed restrooms any time soon. Just this past weekend the park was closed to vehicles because there was simply no more room to park.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

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

---

Rum Island restrooms on TaxWatch 'Turkey' list

By TAYLOR GAINES

tgaines@lakecityreporter.com

The Rum Island restroom construction project gave Columbia County a “turkey” of its own in this year’s

state budget, according a Florida Tax Watch report. Every year, Tax Watch releases its Budget Turkey Watch Report, an analysis of the transparency and accountability of the state budgeting process.

Tax Watch looks for “turkeys,” items that are added to the appropriations bill – usually for local projects – that circumvent the established competitive review process. An item being designated a “turkey” is not necessarily a comment on its value of worth, according to Tax Watch Vice President of Research Kurt Wenner.

He said it is simply a comment on whether the appropriation received proper scrutiny or adhered

to established review and selection processes. The \$150,000 Rum Island restroom construction project found its way into Tax Watch’s report because it bypassed the established competitive process specific to that type of project, Wenner said.

Every year, the Department of Environmental Protection reviews and ranks hundreds of local park grant

applications and submits the approved projects to the State Legislature in its budget request.

This year, the House and Senate budgets each had \$3-5 million for these types of grants, but the

funding was removed from the budget.

Wenner said it was replaced with a handful of local parks projects that were not vetted through the DEP's funding process.

"That means they were funded over the hundreds of parks that submitted grants and followed the rules," Wenner said in an email.

The Columbia County project would require about \$150,000 to install new restrooms at Rum Island

Spring and Park, according to the report. "We are not calling replacing the restrooms at Rum

Island a waste of money or a bad project," Wenner continued. "But there are questions as to whether

local projects that mostly benefit one area of the state should be funded when so many statewide needs are underfunded."

Gov. Rick Scott can still veto line items in the bill.