

# SRWMD Purchases Otter Springs Property

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## SRWMD Closes on Otter Springs Property

LIVE OAK(Oct. 1, 2008)– Two second magnitude springs and over a mile of frontage on the Suwannee River were given a new level of protection on Tuesday when the Suwannee River Water Management District closed on the purchase of the 636-acre Otter Springs property in Gilchrist County.

The \$6.8 million purchase will not only protect water quality and natural communities associated with the river and springs, it will eliminate a 400,000 gallon per day water use permit. Although no plans were on the table, the permit would have allowed the water to be pumped from underground conduits feeding the spring and sent to a bottling plant.

The transaction was also the springboard for a new cooperative venture between the District and the Gilchrist County Commission. On Monday, commissioners voted unanimously to authorize county staff to develop an agreement with the District to assume the immediate management of the property. The parties are to work out a long-term lease of the property which must be approved by both the County Commission and the District Governing Board.

Under the proposed agreements, the county will assume day-to-day responsibilities for the 100-site RV campground on the property and the associated recreational facilities. The District will

continue to assist with the management of the natural areas on the property. The plan will ensure that an outstanding recreational resource will be available to the citizens of the region as well as providing economic development through nature-based tourism.

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