

# Water Supply Plan Workshop

November 3, 2016



Cathy Still, Jim Gross, ST Johns rep Scott Laidlaw, President Pam Smith



Carlos Herd,  
Suwannee

The second and final workshop regarding the North Florida Regional water Supply Plan (2010– 2035) was held today, Nov. 3,

2016 in Live Oak at Suwannee River Water Management District (District) headquarters. This plan, nearly five years in the making, is a joint project between the SRWMD and the SJRWMD and is mandated by law in Florida.



John  
Fitzgerald,  
St. Johns

At well over 400 pages, it is comprehensive and detailed. Since the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers are in recovery, this means that the current use of water has exceeded the sustainable amount of groundwater available. Projects indicate an additional 117 MGD increase in deficit by 2035.

The goal of the plan is to project ways to fulfill the demand. The two districts look mostly to increased reclaimed water and conservation to meet this need.

Representatives from both districts were present at the workshop, with Carlos Herd from Suwannee and John Fitzgerald from St. Johns presenting the overview. Time was given the attendees to view the displays and ask questions about the projections and plans and then a public comment period was entertained.



Jim Gross  
addresses  
meeting

OSFR president Pam Smith and your writer were in attendance, but our view was officially presented by advisor Jim Gross. He will study the report and write a critique with recommendations to give the District. The gist of his brief comments today was that he believed that the only way to achieve the goals was to draw out less groundwater. He noted that hoping to get more water by tapping into the Lower Floridan aquifer, or by drawing out brackish water from the aquifer would accomplish nothing, as these layers are still the aquifer, which will re-establish its own levels.

Since geologist Jim Gross will represent OSFR's official input on the plan, your writer offered comments as Jim Tatum, riparian land owner, and not as OSFR. His two main points were, first, that all water users, including agriculture, must pay for water. If the farmer must raise prices because he pays for water, the consumer must share the cost. The current practice of distributing free water to users with consumptive use permits, and then paying these users to use less, is absurd.



Dr. Still

offers his  
comments

The second point is that the districts' statement that "Current permits and laws limit the scope of regulatory actions that can be taken to impose specific solutions on users."(p. 61) is simply untrue. Current laws exist which allow curtailment or retraction of new and existing CUPs. The District and DEP should not be afraid to utilize its legal counsel. Litigation will inevitably ensue from some of the tough and controversial changes which will be necessary, but we, of necessity, must acquire a new mindset and new laws in order to sustain our groundwater withdrawals and admit increased population in Florida. This will of course not come easy but it is imperative.

It is also his belief that, while we all know that the answer to our crisis is fewer withdrawals and reduced nitrates, we lack the will to implement the remedy. This remedy will only be put into place by new leadership in Tallahassee and by litigation. Unfortunately, this will probably happen only after true environmental disaster has come to Florida and much of our resources are destroyed or substantially diminished.

The only other public input was from Dr. Paul Still, of Bradford Co. Soil and Water Conservation District. Dr. Still basically praised the plan as a good work, with a few minor suggestions, but his main concern is that the Lower Santa Fe would not be improved substantially within the twenty-year period unless more plans were put into effect than are currently only the board. He pointed out that the potentiometric surface levels of the aquifer remained much the same in the 2035 projection as it is now.

Lucinda Merritt from Ichetucknee Alliance was present but did

not offer comment. Few others were in attendance, and no other environmental group of whom your writer was aware.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

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

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