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From: "Sew Nature" <sewnatureart@gmail.com>
Subject: flow protections for the Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers
Date: Sep 5, 2024 at 12:47:39 PM
To: "OWP_rulemaking@floridadep.gov" <OWP_rulemaking@floridadep.gov>

EXTERNAL MESSAGE

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Dear Department of Environmental Protection,

I'm a Florida native who has enjoyed the Florida springs for 57 years. And I've watched them go downhill quite a bit in those years. I love our Florida waters so much I studied Limnology at UCF for my bachelor's and then went on to UF for a Masters in Soils and Waters specializing in Wetlands. I love restoring aquatic systems so much I spent 30 years replanting lakefront and pond littoral zones, building wetlands and restoring pond ecology.

I bought property near the Santa Fe and Ichetucknee so I can enjoy these beautiful rivers. I paddle them often and I would like to see their health improve not degrade.

I find it very sad when I go to a Spring and it is covered with algae. Poe Springs off the Santa Fe is green and the Ichetucknee has more algae than Submerged aquatic vegetation in places. As a freshwater ecologist I know it shouldn't be there and as a native I know it didn't used to be there. And, it's very frustrating knowing this is completely preventable! The laws that are set in place to protect our springs and rivers need to be obeyed.

Flows are important for lowering tannic levels and allowing SAV to grow in Santa Fe. Increasing flows in springs reduces algae.

And this all can be done and still allow for some development, it just needs to be sustainable. Homeowners don't need an irrigation system if they don't have St. Augustine grass and exotic vegetation that consume lots of water. Development can use Bahai grass and native vegetation. This will not only reduce water consumption but will reduce or eliminate fertilizer and also provide for pollinators and birds. This can be a win win, the government just needs to educate and require this change.

New irrigation wells should be prohibited in the MFL and in companion rules to close current loop holes.

Local governments should be permitted to adopt irrigation restrictions stricter than the state. DEP needs to not only allow this but applaud and encourage this.

What the DEP is doing doesn't make any sense. Just like the park proposal that luckily was leaked so the public could protest it.

As the Department of Environmental Protection this is your job to protect our environment, not let

developers exploit it!

Laura Parkel
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