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My name is Mace Bauer. My family and I live in Columbia County in the Ichetucknee Basin. I have had the pleasure of a long career in agriculture working for UF/IFAS Extension and in private industry. I am a transplant from the Indian River, where I watched Citrus Canker and Citrus Greening decimate the agriculture industry to just a shell of what it once was.

I relocated to the Suwannee Valley in 2005 to work in agriculture irrigation and nutrient management. This is a strong, vibrant agricultural area, where agriculture producers and the neighboring community live in harmony, where agriculture is looked at as an asset for the environment, as opposed to the development and "South Floridization" of the landscape. Put simply, as an agriculture professional, I can see that the proposed MFL and Recovery Strategy have the potential to decimate the agricultural industry not only in Columbia County, but the entire Suwannee Valley.

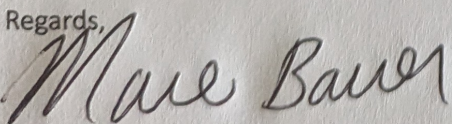
I work with multiple clients as a crop consultant, and I believe these clients could tolerate a 5-10% reduction in water use from their current management. This would be possible through improved management, technology, rotations, cover crops, etc. However, I'm led to believe this rule is targeting a reduction of 30% of water use. This is a level that is untenable and unsustainable, for the agriculture systems we currently employ. Additionally, I have large concerns about the Base Conditions water use and its application towards this rule. I think these base conditions are severely below the current and future water use plans, towards which farmers and landowners have made significant long-term investments.

I feel that discussions with actual water users to discuss the feasibility, and opportunities to achieve these goals have been minimal, if not nonexistent. I don't think the public forums, with a brief comment period are the same as a discussion among stakeholders including large water users working together to find middle ground to reach mutual goals.

I believe that the proposed Recovery Strategy will result in a complete collapse of the agricultural systems, as we know them, in North Florida. The Decision Makers may believe that the risk is worth the reward. However, I am skeptical any elected official or bureaucrat will be comfortable with the loss of the economic lifeblood of the cities and towns in North Florida.

If you would like to discuss these matters in greater detail, I encourage you to contact me at any time.

Regards,



Mace Bauer