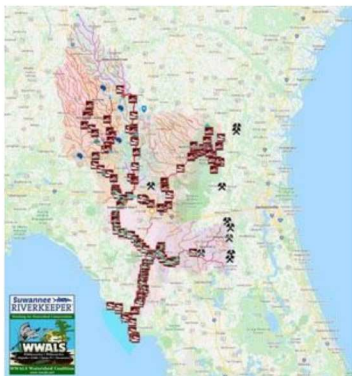


November 10, 2020

To: Noah Valenstein
Secretary, FDEP
Noah.Valenstein@floridadep.gov
Hugh Thomas
Executive Director, SRWMD
Hugh.Thomas@srwmd.org
Sen. Keith Perry
Perry.Keith@flsenate.gov

Cc: Scott R. Koons
E.D., Rivers Task Force
koons@ncfrpc.org



PO Box 88, Hahira, GA 31632
850-290-2350
wwalswatershed@gmail.com
www.wwals.net

WWALS is an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit
charity est. June 2012

*WWALS Watershed Coalition advocates
for conservation and stewardship of the
Withlacoochee, Willacoochee, Alapaha,
Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River
watersheds in south Georgia and north
Florida through education, awareness,
environmental monitoring, and citizen
activities.*

*Suwannee RIVERKEEPER® is a
program and a paid staff position of
WWALS.*



Re: land acquisitions, event invitations, water withdrawals, and water quality testing

Dear Secretary Valenstein, Director Thomas, and Sen. Perry,

This morning I spoke via gotowebinar in the SRWMD Board Meeting. This letter expands on what I said. I offered compliments, a suggestion, and a recommendation on the FDEP press release of yesterday:

“Senator Keith Perry, DEP Secretary Noah Valenstein and Environmental Leaders Tour Critical Land Conservation Projects in the Suwannee Valley”

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/FLDEP/bulletins/2a9c7ca>

Compliments on acquiring land for watershed protection. Last month [I thanked SRWMD for acquiring the Druftner Tract](#) on the Withlacoochee River near the GA-FL line. More thanks for these other acquisitions and their management.

However, I was confused by “Environmental Leaders.” I looked in the picture for Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson, Jim Tatum, or Mike Roth, but could not find them. I thought maybe I took the picture, but I don’t remember being there, either.

The suggestion: when holding such tours, could SRWMD and FDEP invite people from Our Santa Fe River (OSFR), especially for lands along the Santa Fe River? And could you please invite Suwannee Riverkeeper? I’m sure you can think of other environmental organizations who are very interested in watershed protection of springs, creeks, and rivers.

Also compliments on the many good words by Alan Kay of ACT, Hugh Thomas of SRWMD, and Sen. Perry. In the interests of brevity I will just quote a bit from Sec. Valenstein:

“Our springs are a litmus test for Florida’s water quality; they are the barometer of the effectiveness of our land management activities. What happens on the land can affect our groundwater, creating a ripple effect that impacts every component of our environment.”

That is certainly true for land protection. It is even more true for water withdrawals.

As we have for years, at least since before the adoption of the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan, we continue to recommend SRWMD and FDEP should adopt a water budget and start denying some water withdrawal permits, in order to replenish river and spring levels and flows. <https://wwals.net/?p=27688>

A good place to start would be by denying the water withdrawal permit application by Seven Springs and Nestlé at Ginnie Springs on the Santa Fe River. We also continue to ask SRWMD to revisit Nestlé’s permit for water withdrawal at Madison Blue Spring on the Withlacoochee River. We don’t need more profits by a Swiss company to produce more plastic bottles that we have to clean up from our springs and rivers, which continue to flow less and lower because of such withdrawals.

In addition to all that, back on November 4, 2019, we heard from FDEP at the Triennial Review Workshop in Tallahassee, that FDEP has funds for water quality monitoring and is allocating them to geographical areas. <https://wwals.net/?p=50596> It is time to allocate such funds to the Suwannee River Basin to help track contamination episodes such as we have seen recently.

For example, the April 24, 2020, 87,000 gallon raw sewage spill by Quitman, Georgia, quite likely traveled all the way down the Withlacoochee and Suwannee Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico.