

**Especially since the Suwannee Basin is not the main cause of lower flows and levels in streams and springs. Jacksonville is.**

According to the St. John River Water Management District (SJRWMD) Board meeting [agenda for November 12, 2025](#), packet pages 20 and 21:

“Impacts due to public supply withdrawals represent up to 6% and 32% of the total impacts for the SRWMD and the SJRWMD portions of the Partnership area, respectively (Tables 5 and 6). The other large use category is agricultural water use; consumptive uses authorized by an individual permit and those authorized pursuant to a general permit by rule account for up to 26% and 2% of the impacts for the SRWMD and the SJRWMD portions of the Partnership area withdrawals, respectively.”

So while agriculture is the biggest groundwater user in the Suwannee Basin, Public Supply is the biggest user in the St. Johns Basin, for the same aquifer. The entire Suwannee River Basin in Florida has maybe 300,000 people. Jacksonville proper (Duval County) has about 1 million people, or 1.3 million in the metro area. That’s 3 or 4 times as many as in the Suwannee Basin. **Jacksonville is the problem.**

**To fix lower flows and levels in the Suwannee Basin, a better solution is to reduce or eliminate Jacksonville’s groundwater withdrawals.**

WFNF only plans on sending 40 million gallons per day (mgd) to the Suwannee Basin. The Texas [Harbor Island Seawater Desalination Facility](#) produces 100 mgd of drinking water. Multiple California desalination facilities produce up to 50 mgd, such as [the one in Carlsbad](#), which dates to 2015. A desalination plant like those would do more good than NFWF.

Florida has more seawater desalination plants than any other state. [Tampa has been desalinating since 2007, and now does 25 mgd.](#)

South Florida had [40 facilities in 2023, totaling 292 mgd.](#) That’s more than twice the [120 mgd](#) JEA says it produces for its entire Water Service Area.

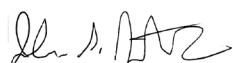
SRWMD says desalination is too expensive. But how do all these other places afford to do it?

With a billion dollar budget and a dozen years, it seems that SJRWMD could implement desalination in economical phases. Which would probably fix the Suwannee Basin level and flow problem. And it would also allow for future population growth of Jacksonville and its industries.

Desalination wouldn’t solve JEA’s wastewater disposal problem. **But why is that the Suwannee Basin’s problem?** There are wetlands in the St. Johns Basin, and other possible methods.

I’d be happy to speak about all this at another meeting.

Thanks for your consideration.



John S. Quarterman, Suwannee Riverkeeper and Executive Director