



Proposed Silver Springs Minimum Flows and Levels Comments

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Meeting Details

The St. Johns River Water Management District's (SJRWMD)

Silver Springs Minimum Flows Public Workshop

Marion County Commission Auditorium, 601 S.E. 25th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471

March 16, 2017 from 4:30-6:30 p.m.

The Big Picture

- The Floridan Aquifer System (FAS) supplies recharged rainwater to more than 1,000 artesian springs as well as 9 million people in north and central Florida, and many more in Georgia and Alabama
- The principal withdrawals from the FAS are spring flows and groundwater pumping
- The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that groundwater pumping in 2010 from the FAS was 3.5 billion gallons per day (BGD)
- The Florida Springs Institute (FSI) has estimated that historic average flows from Florida's 1,000+ springs totaled 10.5 BGD
- Florida's spring flows averaged 7.2 BGD in 2010, a reduction of 3.3 BGD or 32%
- In 2012, the SJRWMD had 2,357 active consumptive use permits, allocating 1,381 million gallons per day (MGD), and averaging 586,000 gallons per day (gpd) each
- The estimated groundwater pumping in the SJRWMD in 2010 was 979 MGD

Silver Springs Facts

- Silver Springs and the Silver River have the highest state and federal statutory protections, including State Aquatic Preserve, State Park, Outstanding Florida Water, and National Natural Landmark
- Silver Springs flows started departing from normal in the 1970s
- Silver Springs average flows have declined by 185 MGD (36%)
- Scientific research has found that a flow reduction of 6% is significantly harmful to the ecology of Silver Springs
- Silver Springs is officially impaired due to excessive nutrient pollution
- The ecology of Silver Springs is declining as evidenced by reduced wildlife populations, proliferation of noxious algae, and reduced water clarity

The SJRWMD Plan

- Despite these facts, the SJRWMD intends to allow further flow reductions at Silver Springs (10 MGD more in addition to the current 185 MGD)
- Existing flows at Silver Springs have been below the SJRWMD's recommended minimum average for 15 of the past 16 years
- The SJRWMD relies on an inaccurate model to justify additional flow reductions and issuance of more groundwater extraction permits
- The SJRWMD MFL rests on the false assumption that the growth of submerged aquatic vegetation growing in the Silver River is reducing flows, while actual groundwater pumping totals in the District fully account for the observed flow declines

FSI Conclusions

- Due to excessive, human-caused flow reductions and nutrient pollution, Silver Springs is already impaired
- The State of Florida has not adequately protected Silver Springs and the Silver River from significant harm
- No additional impacts to Silver Springs and the Silver River are acceptable
- The SJRWMD must adopt a prevention and recovery plan for Silver Springs to return up to 30% of its historic flow (recommended MFL = 750 cfs)