



Massive Water Withdrawals Threaten St. Johns River

According to the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), Central Florida is reaching the sustainable limits of its predominant source of water, the Floridan Aquifer. As a result, the three water management districts in this five county area created the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) to identify alternative sources of water to meet growing demand. (www.cfwiwater.com/)

Recently, the CFWI released a Draft Regional Water Supply Plan that calls for potentially withdrawing more than **150 million gallons of water a day** from the St. Johns at an estimated **expense of nearly \$1.5 billion**.

In addition, the SJRWMD recently released a Water Supply Plan for all of the 18 counties within its jurisdiction. The District's Plan calls for the withdrawal of an additional **125+ million gallons** of water a day from the St. Johns at an estimated cost of **\$1.8 billion** and more than **85 million gallons** from the Ocklawaha River at an estimated cost of **\$2.1 billion**. (www.sjrwmd.com/DWSP2013/)

St. Johns Riverkeeper Concerns

- ***Massive water withdrawals will worsen existing pollution problems, increase the frequency of toxic algal blooms, further reduce flow, increase salinity levels farther upstream, and adversely impact the fisheries, wildlife and submerged vegetation in and along the St. Johns and its tributaries.***
- Many of these withdrawals would also require treatment by reverse osmosis (RO). The byproduct, or pollutant, that results from RO is called "concentrate". The concentrate has a high mineral and/or salt content and could be discharged back into the river, creating *additional pollution problems*.
- **Withdrawals are being justified based on the findings of a flawed SJRWMD study.** A group of independent scientists and experts from the National Research Council (NRC) conducted a peer review of the St. Johns River Water Supply Impact Study (WSIS), identifying significant shortcomings in the study and expressing concerns regarding many of the conclusions. According to the NRC review: **"the WSIS operated within a range of constraints that ultimately imposed both limitations and uncertainties on the study's overall conclusions."**
- The St. Johns River drops less than 30 feet from its source to its mouth, making it difficult for our river to efficiently flush pollutants and sediments. Removing millions of gallons of water a day from the river will potentially worsen current pollution problems, including toxic algae blooms.
- Both water supply plans downplay the potential of conservation to meet future demand. The Central Florida Plan determined that only "3.9 percent of the projected demand for 2035 can be eliminated by water conservation."
- **Despite the looming water shortages, our state water management districts also continue to issue frivolous consumptive use permits (CUP) that will further deplete our aquifer.** For instance, the SJRWMD staff recently recommended the approval of a permit from California-based Niagara Bottling to nearly double groundwater withdrawals for its water bottling facility in Lake County to 910,000 gallons of water a day – an 88% increase.

Conservation: The Responsible Choice

Unfortunately, our limited public resources are being directed towards new sources of water, such as surface water withdrawals and desalination, instead of addressing the root causes of our water supply problems and exhausting all opportunities to use existing water resources more efficiently.

- In a previous plan, The St. Johns River Water Management District determined that nearly 288 million gallons of water could potentially be saved with a \$1.6 billion investment in conservation.
- According to the American Water Works Association (AWWA), “There is a growing body of research that conclusively demonstrates quantifiable savings from implementation of common practices such as conservation rate structures and equipment and fixture upgrades.”
- Voluntary measures alone are not sufficient. Water pricing strategies and mandatory requirements must also be implemented and enforced to achieve maximum conservation and efficiency benefits.
- **Water conservation and smart growth management practices will realistically save billions of dollars and potentially save the St. Johns and Ocklawaha Rivers from significant harm.**

The bottom line is that water conservation does work, can potentially meet most if not all of our water supply needs, and is *much more cost-effective and environmentally-responsible*.

What You Can Do

1. **Tell the water planners “NO” to water withdrawals!** Instead, ask them to prioritize, implement and enforce aggressive, mandatory conservation programs and policies.

CFWI Regional Water Supply Plan: Comment Deadline - January 31, 2014

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SJRWMD Regional Water Supply Plan: Comment Deadline - February 20, 2014

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2. **Attend an upcoming public meeting.** See CFWI and SJRWMD websites for more information.
3. **Adopt a resolution.** Ask your civic or business organization to adopt a resolution in opposition to water withdrawals and support of conservation. We have sample resolutions available.
4. **Conserve water.** Do your part by conserving and using water as efficiency as possible.
Learn how at www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/river-friendly

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