



RESPONSE TO HOUSE PASSAGE OF HB 7003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GAINESVILLE, FL – The Florida Springs Council (FSC) does not believe that enactment of the provisions in HB 7003 would measurably improve prospects for protection or restoration of Florida’s springs. The bill as passed does not substantially improve existing Florida law or regulations related to springs protection and restoration. Rather, HB 7003 relies on current regulatory tools (TMDLs, BMAPs, MFLs, BMPs, etc.) in selected springsheds. These tools have proven ineffective for restoring springs in the past, and in fact, are allowing continuing and increasing impairment at most of Florida’s springs. It is likely that continued application of these existing regulatory tools, even at an accelerated pace, will have little positive effect in restoring Florida’s springs.

Meaningful springs restoration cannot be accomplished until the following issues are addressed by the State: weak groundwater models, agency unwillingness to confront various interest groups, political interference, and the high bar facing any legal challenge by the affected public.

The FSC concludes that tinkering with the current regulatory regime will be unproductive and that new tools need to be provided to reach the goal of meaningful springs restoration. The FSC has developed several recommendations for the Florida Legislature to consider as they attempt to make meaningful and timely improvements at Florida’s springs:

- Require monitoring and reporting for all groundwater consumptive use permits
- Make approval of new consumptive use permits contingent on establishment and maintenance of spring MFLs and/or reservations
- Rescind unused consumptive use allocations
- Mandate advanced BMPs that can achieve the spring numeric nutrient standard for nitrate-nitrogen
- Curtail the most polluting and depleting activities affecting the aquifer and springs by use of conservation easements and/or fee simple purchase of springsheds
- Collect aquifer protection fees for all groundwater and fertilizer uses
- Designate spring restoration focus areas and immediately begin to implement reductions of groundwater extraction and nitrogen fertilizer use in those springsheds
- Re-constitute the Florida Springs Initiative and Florida Springs Task Force to identify, prioritize, and implement the most effective use of public funds
- Fund alternative groundwater models that are peer reviewed by independent experts
- Emphasize water conservation for all water uses
- Include public trust language in water laws

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