

# SAVING THE SUWANNEE

Newsletter of Save Our Suwannee, Inc.

[www.saveoursuwannee.org](http://www.saveoursuwannee.org)

November/December 2011 January 2012

## FEATURED EVENT JANUARY 24<sup>th</sup> IN LAKE CITY

Cynthia Barnett will be speaking about her new book, Blue Revolution on Tuesday, January 24, 2012 at 7:00 pm at the Main Columbia County Public Library 308 NW Columbia Avenue, Lake City, Florida 32055.

We need to “take a page” from Cynthia’s book and work to organize to let our leaders in Tallahassee know how important our water resources to North Central Florida.



## SOS NEEDS YOUR HELP

Save Our Suwannee needs a few dedicated members to help run the organization. It is time for nominations for the board of directors of SOS Inc. and we need new volunteers now.

We meet 6 times a year as a board and send out 6 newsletters a year. We set up informational booths at local art and music festivals about four times a year. We help fund local school programs in Columbia County to supplement their education with field work at Ichetucknee Springs State Park. We work with a network of clean water advocacy groups on water quality issues.

Our mission is to educate the public regarding the health and quantity of our most precious natural resource—water.

With everything that is happening now--cuts to our water management districts and a push to privatize our water supplies--we need our members more than ever.

If you are interested in helping, please contact Annette Long at (352) 490-8930 or [long5892@bellsouth.net](mailto:long5892@bellsouth.net) for more information.

Please, we need your help now.

## NEW REGIONAL WATER COALITION

The recently formed Water Supply Coalition will meet for the second time on Monday January 23, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. at the Columbia County School Board Complex in Lake City.

This new coalition met for the first time on November 29<sup>th</sup>.

Thanks to our members for responding to the post cards we sent who attended the meeting. The Auditorium was nearly full and many of our members spoke out for the health of our water supply.

The coalition consists of the county commissions from Columbia County, Suwannee County and Hamilton County. All three of these counties have been suffering from near record low groundwater levels in their eastern regions. That is partially due to extensive groundwater withdrawals from the St. Johns River Water Management District.

The Columbia County Commission recently became aware that there was a “drawdown” or cone of water depression stemming from public and industrial water use from the Jacksonville area. This drawdown has been documented to stretch as far west as Lake City and the Ichetucknee Springshed.

On May 10th, the St. Johns Water Management District issued Florida’s second largest consumptive use water(CUP) permit to the Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA). The JEA supplies potable water to over 1 million residents.

There is data that indicates a movement of the boundary a.k.a. the “water divide” between the Suwannee River District and the St. Johns River District. The new boundary is quickly creeping towards Lake City and the Ichetucknee Springs watershed. Water that used to flow to the Ichetucknee Springs and White Springs now flows towards Florida’s east coast.

The JEA’s experts testified that there were no current impacts from the utility’s current groundwater withdrawals. A number of experts, local lake front land owners and environmental groups gave testimony opposing the mega permit, but the Governing Board voted for approval.

Now that the three counties have been made aware that the new water permit has changed the water balance in North Florida, they are bringing in experts to see what can be done to reduce the amount of water that Jacksonville Electric Authority is allowed to withdraw.

Columbia County Administrator, Dale Williams brought in Water Resource Expert Gregg Jones, P.G. and his company Cardno/Entrix for solutions to this problem. Mr. Jones presented an excellent synopsis of the available data and pointed out that there are huge gaps in the information that have allowed JEA to get their new consumptive use permit.

Jones suggested that if this data is collected to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is an in fact migration of ground water boundaries, that the St. Johns River Water Management District would be required to monitor the permit more closely in the future.

Legal experts from Jacksonville, attorney Sidney Ansbacher and Gray Robinson, P.A., told the group that it was too late to protest the permit since the 21 day appeal was over in May 2010.

Senator Charlie Dean and Representative Elizabeth Porter spoke about a new bill they were bringing to committee HB 157 and SB 560 to help with our local water woes.

Senate Bill 560 is moving through committees and details the hierarchy of how the districts are to work together in regions where MFL's have been set by one district and violated by an adjoining district.

Matching House Bill 157 moved to the Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee on January 12.

At the meeting on November 29<sup>th</sup>, Annette Long, President of Save Our Suwannee, offered what help SOS can give to the new water supply coalition. A representative from our group will try to attend every meeting to see if there is anything we can do to help.

### **New Florida Conservation Coalition Urges State Leaders to Protect Florida's Future**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: from the Florida Wildlife Federation Wednesday, November 30, 2011

Senator Bob Graham leads the bipartisan charge to establish strong conservation policies~ Tallahassee, FL - The Florida Conservation Coalition, a non-partisan group of non-profit organizations and concerned citizens led by Senator Bob Graham, two-term Florida governor and three-term U.S. Senator, today urged elected officials, policy makers and candidates for office to protect and conserve Florida's natural resources essential to the well-being and quality of life of the residents of this state and its long-term economic prosperity. The Florida Conservation Coalition's initial focus for 2012 is water resources. "Our water and natural resources are what makes Florida special - the envy of the nation," said Senator Graham. "It is the fabric that holds our state together. Our natural heritage simply can no longer be treated as a commodity with indifference and disrespect as has happened in 2011."

The Florida Conservation Coalition welcomes Governor Rick Scott's announcement earlier this month that restoring the Everglades is a top priority of his administration. We strongly urge him to make all of Florida's environment and natural resources a top priority.

The Florida Conservation Coalition emphasizes the following priorities:

- Restoring reasonable funding for Florida's regional water management districts to provide for water quality protection, adequate water supplies, flood protection, and natural resources protection.

- Funding Florida Forever including acquiring land for water resource protection.

- Reaffirming Florida's commitment to restore the Everglades, upon which South Florida's water supply and quality of life depends.

- Managing Florida's water resources at the regional, not state level.

- Ensuring that growth management laws and policies support sustainable use of water.

- Promoting efficient use and conservation of water.

- Opposing efforts to privatize Florida's water.

"Water is our most vital public resource and as such, should be managed by regional water management districts that understand the unique issues involved in assuring adequate local water supplies," said Republican Senator Paula Dockery. "During my 15 years in the legislature, I was proud to sponsor legislation that protects our natural resources and improves water quality while addressing water supply planning."

Stakeholders from diverse interests in Florida turned out today in support of the principles presented by the Florida Conservation Coalition. Nathaniel Pryor Reed, who served as Environmental Advisor to Republican Governor Claude Kirk and Assistant Secretary of the Interior under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, challenges citizens and state leaders to develop policies that do not undermine long-term growth management. "As stewards of this great state, we must protect and develop policies that prevent environmental damage resulting in costly burdens for our children and grandchildren," said Mr. Reed, Chairman Emeritus of the 1000 Friends of Florida Board of Directors.

Recent legislative changes including funding and staffing reductions diminish the authority of the state's five regional water management districts threaten the ability to maintain local control and provide strategic permitting of water resources (Northwest Florida Water Management District, Suwannee River Water Management District, St. Johns River Water Management District, South Florida Water Management District and Southwest Florida Water Management District).

"We need clear state policies that recognize and incorporate the critical interdependence of Florida's economy and environment," said Manley Fuller, President of the Florida Wildlife Federation. "We are working to bring together the public, economic interests, conservationists and policy makers on behalf of Florida's waters."

The Florida Conservation Coalition is devoted to protecting and conserving our state's natural resources that are essential to preserve our quality of life and our long-term economic prosperity. To learn more about the FCC visit [www.FloridaConservationCoalition.org](http://www.FloridaConservationCoalition.org).

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SAVE OUR SUWANNEE, INC.  
P.O. Box 669  
Bell, Florida 32619



**CYNTHIA BARNETT WILL DISCUSS HER NEW BOOK BLUE REVOLUTION—UNMAKING AMERICA'S WATER CRISIS**

AT 7:00 PM JANUARY 24 AT THE LAKE CITY MAIN PUBLIC LIBRARY (DETAILS INSIDE)