



## Springs Water Quality Hearing Begins Next Week in Tallahassee

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 3, 2019, Tallahassee, FL: The administrative hearing over ineffective water quality plans (Basin Management Action Plans or BMAPs) for 15 Outstanding Florida Springs will begin at 9:00 am on September 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Division of Administrative Hearings in Tallahassee. The hearing is scheduled for the weeks of September 3 and September 9.

The unprecedented legal challenges, originally filed on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, cover the Santa Fe River, Suwanee River, Silver and Rainbow Springs, Wekiwa and Rock Springs, and Volusia Blue Spring basins. The challenges were brought by seven local conservation organizations and three individuals who are adversely affected by the impaired condition of these once world-class springs and the failure of the BMAPs to provide a credible path to meeting water quality goals.

“This may be the last chance we have to save the springs for both people and manatees,” says Save the Manatee Club staff attorney Anne Harvey. “The State has been talking a good game, but the failure to create meaningful BMAPs reveals a lack of will to address nutrient pollution at the source.”

The petitioners include Friends of the Wekiva River, Save the Manatee Club, Sierra Club, Rainbow River Conservation, Silver Springs Alliance, Ichetucknee Alliance, and Our Santa Fe River, as well as Tom Greenhalgh, Jim Tutum, and Paul Still. With the assistance of the Florida Springs Council, they have assembled an experienced team of attorneys, scientists, and experts to prove that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection failed to meet its legal obligation to create a pathway to clean water for Outstanding Florida Springs.

“Those of us who depend upon, and live along, Florida’s springs and rivers cannot accept water quality plans that are designed to fail. We filed this challenge to force the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to do its job and create a plan that truly achieves water quality goals,” says Our Santa Fe River president Mike Roth.

The Florida Springs and Aquifer Act, passed in 2016, required the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to adopt BMAPs for 24 impaired Outstanding Florida Springs. The BMAPs must achieve water quality goals within 20 years of their adoption, account for future growth, and contain information on projects and strategies to reduce nitrogen pollution. Unfortunately, DEP failed to meet these requirements and kicked the can down the road to be solved by future administrations, if not generations.

In the case of the Rainbow River BMAP, DEP’s plan only reduces 23% of the nitrogen loading necessary to meet water quality goals for the spring and river, even if it’s fully implemented and effective. Likewise, the Suwannee BMAP reduces only 52% of the nitrogen necessary to achieve the Total Maximum Daily Load, a gap of more than two million pounds of nitrogen pollution per year. This gap is the equivalent of pouring a large dump truck of pure nitrogen fertilizer in the Outstanding Suwannee springs every day of the year.

"The plan for the Suwannee may not even keep up with future growth in nitrogen pollution from agriculture and septic tanks, much less restore our already impaired springs. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection must do better," says Whitey Markle chairman of the Suwannee – St. Johns Sierra Club Group.

“The folks who brought this challenge have nothing to gain but clean water, yet have dedicated their money, time, and reputations to fight on behalf of everyone who cares about Florida’s springs and rivers,” states Florida Springs Council executive director Ryan Smart. “I believe this hearing will be a turning point for the future of Florida’s springs.”

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The Florida Springs Council is the leading advocate for the restoration of Florida’s world-class springs and the protection of the Floridan aquifer. Find out more about FSC at [floridaspringscouncil.org](http://floridaspringscouncil.org).