



Florida Springs Council Members File Unprecedented Legal Challenges to Protect Springs

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On January 4th, seven Florida Springs Council (FSC) member organizations filed administrative challenges to five Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs or Plans) covering fifteen impaired Outstanding Florida Springs and hundreds of smaller springs in north and central Florida. The five BMAPs being challenged, listed below along the member groups challenging, were selected because they fail to meet even the most basic requirements of law, including identifying a plan and projects to meet state water quality goals.

Attorney John Thomas explains “While the Basin management Action Plans appear to represent substantial and impressive efforts, when analyzed more closely they are revealed to be just more smoke and mirrors, with little hope to accomplish the statutory ends – restoration of water quality in Florida’s outstanding springs as soon as possible, but at least within 20 years.”

The Basin Management Action Plan program is the primary regulatory program in Florida for restoring water quality in polluted waters. Following the passage of the Springs and Aquifer Protection Act in 2016, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) was required to adopt by July 1, 2018, Plans to restore 24 impaired Outstanding Florida Springs. FSC members met with state agencies on numerous occasions expressing our concerns and requesting revisions to the draft BMAPs prior to their adoption. Despite our efforts, the plans were not significantly modified prior to adoption, forcing our members, primarily small local springs groups with limited resources, to take the monumental step of filing the first Basin Management Action Plan challenges in Florida history.

There are a number of common defects in the plans, including questionable modeling, inadequate clean-up plans for septic tanks, failure to account for future growth, and failure to include legislatively mandated details about corrective projects.

“If allowed to go into law, these plans will sanction the demise of fifteen of Florida’s most ecologically and economically important springs. By filing these challenges, springs groups are banding together and standing up to save their local treasures,” says Florida Springs Council Executive Director Ryan Smart.

Friends of the Wekiva River Secretary Mike Cliburn explains, “We are challenging the Wekiwa & Rock Springs BMAP because the plan will not restore and protect our springs, and it will give a false sense of security to local decision-makers and the Florida legislature that the springs are on the road to recovery. The Wekiva is too important to not fight for its future.”

BMAP	FSC Organizational Challengers
Santa Fe River	Ichetucknee Alliance; Our Santa Fe River
Silver Springs & Rainbow Springs	Rainbow River Conservancy; Silver Springs Alliance
Suwannee River	Sierra Club (Suwannee – St. Johns Group)
Volusia Blue Spring	Save the Manatee Club
Wekiwa & Rock Spring	Friends of the Wekiva River

###Composed of 47 member groups and representing over 360,000 Floridians, the Florida Springs Council is the leading voice calling for the restoration of Florida’s world-class springs and the protection of the Floridan aquifer.