



**Florida Springs Council Supports Citizens' Challenges  
to the Proposed Silver Springs Minimum Flows and Levels**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HIGH SPRINGS, FL – On May 3, Putnam County resident Karen Chadwick filed a petition with the State's Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) to invalidate Proposed Rule 40C-8.031(7) – the Minimum Flows and Levels for Silver Springs. Minimum flows and levels are established for water bodies to prevent significant ecological harm as a result of groundwater and/or surface water withdrawals.

The Florida Springs Council (FSC) strongly supports Ms. Chadwick's petition.

Utilizing authority granted in the 2016 water legislation, the St. Johns River Water Management District Board approved both emergency and permanent MFLs on April 11. On April 28, several parties filed a petition to invalidate the emergency MFL. Subsequently, Administrative Law Judge E. Gary Early denied the District's Motion to dismiss that petition.

Ms. Chadwick's petition is aimed at overturning the permanent MFL. DOAH will hear the emergency rule challenge in Palatka on May 11-12, and Ms. Chadwick's petition will likely be heard by DOAH this summer. Ms. Chadwick's petition notes that Silver Springs historically had the distinction of having the highest long-term measured flow of any spring in the U.S.A. But over the past four decades it has lost more than one third of its historic average flow. The Silver River no longer has a white sandy bottom and crystal clear water; flow has diminished so much that what was shimmering white sand 20 years ago is now a bottom covered by excessive growth of submerged plants and filamentous algae. As a direct result, fish populations in the Silver River have crashed and the aesthetic beauty of the springs is greatly diminished. The State's proposed MFL attributes very little of the reduced flow to groundwater pumping, while both challenges

assert that pumping is a significant factor in the flow reductions and overall degradation of Silver Springs.

Both petitioners will challenge the scientific basis of the District's conclusions, as well as the validity of the groundwater models on which the District's conclusions are based. And, given the fact that the adopted MFL for Silver Springs has not been met in 15 of the past 16 years, both challengers will assert that it makes no sense to approve an MFL which would intensify harm to this priceless natural wonder.

Dr. Robert Knight, the Director of the Florida Springs Institute and a Board Member of the Florida Springs Council, has studied Silver Springs for nearly 40 years. "The proposed MFL is a travesty of regulatory capitulation to special interests," noted Dr. Knight. "The only path to restoration of the ecological and economic importance of Silver Springs is a regional reduction in groundwater extractions, not additional excessive depletion of its life blood."

**-End-**