

ANNOUNCING THE FORMATION OF THE FLORIDA SPRINGS COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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January 1, 2015

GAINESVILLE, FL – On December 4, 2014, seven representatives from various Florida springs advocacy groups – Friends of Warm Mineral Springs, the Ichetucknee Alliance, the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, the Kings Bay Springs Alliance, Our Santa Fe River, Inc., Save the Manatee Club, the Wakulla Springs Alliance, and Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration, Inc. (formerly Withlacoochee Area Residents, Inc.) – met as the Organizing Committee for the Florida Springs Council. This *ad hoc* organization will be comprised of representatives from all Florida organizations that focus all or part of their group's energies on springs issues and, by extension, issues that affect the Floridan aquifer that feeds the springs. No one springs advocacy organization can hope to tackle the regional threats to springs, develop new and creative solutions to problems that affect the springs, and ensure that the state's leaders are held accountable for improving springs health. The mission of the Florida Springs Council is to ensure the restoration, preservation and protection for future generations of Florida's freshwater springs and the Floridan aquifer that sustains those springs and provides our drinking water. The Florida Springs Council will provide a coordinated alliance of the many thousands of Floridians who think that our state's priceless springs and aquifer have already suffered too much from the avoidable impacts of human development. The Florida Springs Council will focus its efforts on springs education, legislation, and remediation.

The Florida Springs Education Committee will augment the efforts of the Florida Springs Institute to prepare and distribute technically sound educational resources for the general public, environmental agency staff, and elected leaders. Dr. Katie Tripp, Principal Scientist with Save the Manatee Club, is the first chair of the Springs Education Committee.

The Florida Springs Legislative Committee will coordinate and lead statewide efforts to pass comprehensive springs legislation during the 2015 and future sessions of the Florida Legislature. Dr. Bob Palmer, member of the Board of Directors of the Florida Springs Institute and member of the Ichetucknee Alliance advisory board, is the first chair of the Springs Legislative Committee.

The Florida Springs Action Committee will prepare for, direct, and implement both legal and non-legal challenges to new and existing Consumptive Use Permits, Water Supply Plans, Minimum Flows and Levels and Recovery Plans, and Basin Management Action Plans that are not truly protective of the state's groundwater and springs natural resources. Rob Williams, Esq., counsel to the Center for Earth Jurisprudence, member of

the Board of Directors of the Wakulla Springs Alliance, and advisor to the Florida Springs Institute is the first chair of the Springs Action Committee.

Florida is entering a new era of water and springs awareness. The work of authors like Cynthia Barnett and Bill Bellville, photographers like John Moran and Mark Long, artists like Margaret Tolbert and Annie Pais, cinematographers like Wes Skiles and Mark Emery, newspaper editors like Ron Cunningham and Nathan Crabbe, and long-time advocates like Jim Stevenson and Helen Spivey, are making a real difference in raising the public's awareness of the decline of Florida's springs and the Floridan aquifer that our springs depend upon for sustenance. The informed public is demanding better of their elected officials and paid environmental managers and calling for an end to the denial that there are springs crises of shameful proportions.

It is our hope that formation of the Florida Springs Council will expand upon the work that has been done by our springs champions and lead to greater awareness of and respect for the largest concentration of freshwater springs on the planet. The Florida Springs Council will focus the energy of the springs-loving public on two of the main problems at hand, excessive groundwater withdrawals and pollution by nitrate nitrogen. Once those two accelerating problems are stopped and reversed, the Florida Springs Council and member organizations will turn to the laborious effort of springs restoration by eliminating the many physical impairments that plague our springs and maintaining the renewed health of our springs into the indefinite future.

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." --Helen Keller

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." --Henry Ford

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