

For Immediate Release

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****PRESS RELEASE****

Legislators & Water Advocates Unite to Oppose Nestle Water Grab

Suwannee River Water Management District ignored public interest in approving Seven Springs/Nestle water use permit

Like Oak -- The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) Governing Board approved a consumptive use permit application to provide water to Nestle for bottling and sale. The permit applicant is Seven Springs Water Company, which is owned by the operators of the popular Ginnie Springs recreation site along the Santa Fe River.

The water use permit will further degrade the Santa Fe River - an Outstanding Florida Water - which is already experiencing significant harm due to over-withdrawals from large water users. Approximately 20,000 Floridians have submitted written comments in opposition to the water use permit. Today, dozens of Floridians provided comments in-person and over-the-phone asking the SRWMD governing board to follow the law and deny the consumptive use permit because it is not in the interest of the people of Florida.

At a virtual press conference hosted by the Florida Springs Council, State Representative Anna Eskamani, State Representative Joy Goff-Marcil, Alachua County Communications Director Mark Sexton, University of Florida Professor Emeritus Joe Little, Our Santa Fe River President Mike Roth, and Food and Water Watch Campaign Director Mary Grant spoke out to protect Florida's springs and waters from exploitation by multinational corporations who only care about their bottom line.

“Giving away Florida’s water does not make sense and is dangerous long-term. We need political courage to do something about it as a legislature and I am not going to stop until we place a value on this public

good so that corporate decisions are made with a sense of responsibility to the people of Florida and our waters.” said State Representative Anna Eskamani.

State Representative Joy Goff-Marcil said, "Having access to clean water is imperative to the health and safety of our state. That access needs to be prioritized for residents, visiting families and individuals, the flora and fauna of the area. Not to those wishing to package and profit from the water, ship it out of the area, and deplete what is available to the people and wildlife that live here and depend on it."

Our Santa Fe River President Mike Roth said, “We told the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board to consider the 19,000 objections and 400,000 petitions they received objecting to this permit, but they refused to listen. Our Santa Fe River is committed to restoring the health and vibrancy of our river and its springs. Regardless of today’s outcome, we are prepared to take any steps necessary to continue our mission.”

Attorney Joe Little said, “The water that is being pumped out of the aquifer is owned by the people of the state of Florida, but we receive no benefit from its use by a water bottling company. The people of Florida are entitled to be paid for the monetary value of the water being pumped. Florida Defenders of the Environment and Our Santa Fe River have filed a petition to protect the interests of the people of Florida and the Santa Fe River.”

"Community-based organizations like Our Santa Fe River have scared Nestlé out of most of its North American bottled water business,” says Food and Water Watch Campaign Director Mary Grant. “But now our waters face a new danger as private equity vultures swoop in on this dying industry. Let us be clear: Wall Street must not control public water resources. Water belongs to the people.”

Press Resources: Video footage from today’s in-person rally/press conference at the Suwannee River Water Management District, b-roll, and a copy of the virtual press conference can be downloaded here: <https://www.floridaspringscouncil.org/press-resources>

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