

RiverWatch



Visit our website at www.Stewardsonline.org

Spring 2001

Our Mission:

To restore, preserve and protect the waters of the St. Johns River and its tributaries for current and future generations.



Troubled Waters

Since Congress passed the Clean Water Act a quarter century ago, nearly everyone involved has argued about how to go about actually cleaning up the nation's waterways. For years, the least controversial solution was to do nothing - even though the law required states to draw up a list of polluted waterways. Finally, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund won a lawsuit forcing the Environmental Protection Agency to do its job. Waters must first be listed as impaired before they qualify for another assessment called a TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) that could limit the amount of pollution allowed.

However, when Florida's Department of Environmental Protection realized how many waterways would actually make the list as impaired, they set out to change the definition of pollution. The first attempt to delist 200 rivers, lakes, streams and bays as not polluted was met with so much hostility from those who know and use the waters that DEP Secretary,



David Struhs, agreed to put the 200 waterways back on the list until a new ruling could be adopted.

However, the Impaired Waters Rule Draft has numerous ways to limit the data necessary for water quality improvements.

Data, that taxpayers have funded for all the years since the Clean Water Act went into effect, can not be used if it is more than 7.5 years old.

Data is excluded if it occurred from a known pollution event, such as a sewer line break, contaminant spill, or a point-source violation due to a discharge upset. Only accidents with no know cause count. Finally, none of the data will count if a polluter can *thinks* they can attain water quality standards in the future, but that time frame is unlimited.

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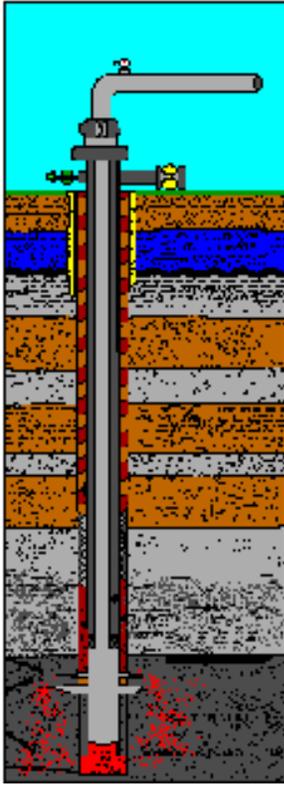
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Injection Well



Why risk aquifer contamination?

by Carol Matthews



In the last legislative session, the senate proposed the Aquifer Storage and Recovery Bill, and although it died before the session's end, both the bill and water shortage concerns will be back. The bill is controversial because of the scary implications it holds for contaminating our drinking water.

This bill is an attempt to use unproven technology to inject potentially polluted water into the aquifer for later removal. It will be touted as a method for meeting the water needs for a 50 percent increase in population growth expected by the year 2020.

In theory, the water is not supposed to mix with surrounding water forming a bubble, although the movement of pathogenic bacteria and viruses is even less predictable. Aquifer storage provides for the legalization to contaminate drinking water sources expressly forbidden by the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

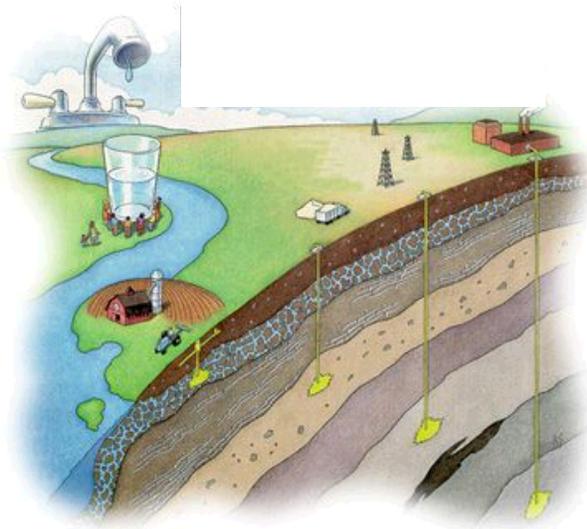
Groundwater resources supply more the 90% of Florida resident's drinking water. The state ranks fifth in the Nation for groundwater withdrawals, and

exempting our drinking water from legal accountability for pollution could have serious consequences.

In a related move, the St. Johns River Water Management District is looking into using injection wells to dispose of the mineral salts generated from reverse osmosis - a process that can take brackish groundwater, surface water or seawater and convert it into drinking water. Again, a few are banking that the contaminated water will not mix with high quality water, although salt water intrusion has been a concern for a number of years. Hydrologic conditions and saltwater intrusion water levels in the Floridan aquifer in northeast Florida are already 1.78 feet higher than last year.

What happens if we are wrong? It is not worth the risk of contaminating groundwater when good alternatives exist. Demineralization salts could be treated at wastewater treatment facilities or they could be commercially reused. Currently the state discharges 20 million gallons per day of brine from 29 facilities into surface waters. Large

(continued on next page)



scale dumping of dumping can alter the salinity of waters beyond the tolerance of marine organisms who have a very narrow range for change.

Because Florida is so dependant upon groundwater resources, we should do everything we can to protect our drinking water. We are very fortunate to have a huge aquifer when many states are water deficient throughout the year. Both of these attempts to risk the contamination of our groundwater resources is short-sighted. We do not have the technology to clean up an accident or unexpected event of the magnitude that this could cause. Encourage your legislators and District officials to go back to the drawing board for safer alternatives.

Troubled waters .. from page 1

Locally, the St. Johns River from the ocean to Julington Creek is listed as impaired and due for cleanup - but only if it remains on the list of impaired waterways.

Stewards have signed on with 40 other environmental groups to object to DEP's proposed listing methodology rule. Other states are watching Florida to see how we list our impaired waterways. It is particularly important that Florida does not set a precedence for other states to follow in undermining the Clean Water Act.

Other local tributaries on the impaired list include:

Arlington River	Little Black Creek
Big Davis Creek	Little Trout Creek
Butcher Pen Creek	McCoys Creek
Cedar River	Moncrief Creek
Durbin Creek	Nassua River
Fishing Creek	Ortega River
Goodbys Creek	Pottsburg Creek
Guano River	Amelia River
Hog Creek	Strawberry Creek
Intercoastal Waterway	Trout River
Julington Creek	Unnamed Run
	Williamson Creek.

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RiverWatch

P.O. Box 54123, Jacksonville, FL 32245
www.Stewardsonline.org

RiverWatch is a publication by the Stewards of the St. Johns River, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to serving as a voice for the St. Johns River and its tributaries since 1990. The newsletter is published quarterly.

We welcome comments from our readers. Please share our message with your friends. Invite them to become a Steward.

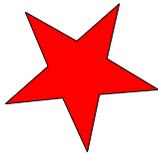
**NEWSLETTER
 EDITOR
 Carol Matthews**

Member of River Network
 National Environmental Group

A **TASTE OF** **Jacksonville Society**

Jacksonville Society of Clubs hosted a gala fund-raiser to benefit the Stewards. The party, held February 2 at the University Club overlooking the river, was a tremendous success. The gala raised \$15,500 for the Stewards and increased our membership by 120. Thanks to everyone - Jacksonville Society of Clubs, the chefs and especially our members and guests, for making this a great evening!

Mary Baer of WJXT-TV4 and Arthur Crofton of WEJZ-FM were the MC's for the evening's silent and live auction.



Chefs from the University Club, Deercreek, Queen's Clubs cooked up their specialty fares for guests

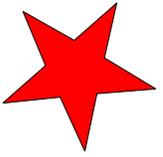
Doug Matthewson and daughter, try to find which champagne flute contains a gemstone. Jim Wang donated 400 glasses that were monogrammed with a gold, Society logo. A jeweler was on hand to identify which lucky guest had purchased a flute containing a genuine diamond instead of a cubic zirconia. Cheryl Alleman went home with a diamond worth over \$2500.





Laura Matthewson and K.C. Duncklee are thanked for organizing the event. Kathy Hill, Orange Park CC member and Society Board member, arranged the silent auction.

Mayor Delaney is given an award from Steward's Chair, Carol Matthews and Jacksonville Society's Chairman Doug Matthews, for his work in preserving the river.



Three hundred guests dined and danced to the music provided by a DJ Alan Franco.

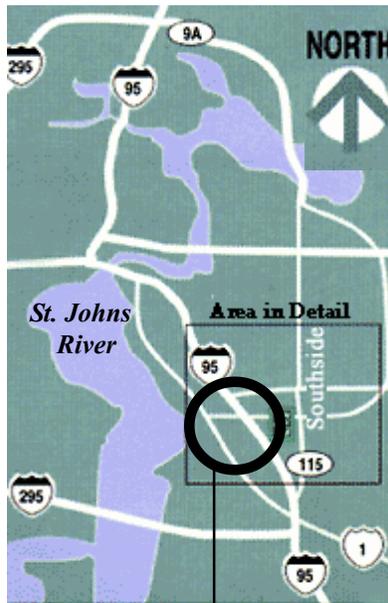
Freedom Commerce Center Proposal Draws Opposition

The proposed Freedom Commerce Center, located north of the Avenues Mall and south of Baymeadows Road between US-1 and I-95, is a multi-use development that will impact approximately 265 acres of wetland within the 615 acre parcel. This tract is truly an island in a sea of commerce. The Environmental Protection Agency says in a letter that “on-site observations of these wetlands indicate that they are surprisingly functional considering their location .. in what is now urban Jacksonville, FL.

The developers states that there were no other available parcels of sufficient size or location between major thoroughfares, that would support this type and magnitude of development. The fact that this parcel was available may stem from “too many unresolved concerns” as far back as 1980 when other developers were dissuaded.

Objections to this projects stem from the destruction of wetland areas that form the headwaters of both Julington and Pottsburg Creeks. These tributaries feed into the St. Johns River and provide an exit to the ocean for species who begin their lives in

wetland areas. Wetlands are important because they provide storage for storm and flood waters, stabilize sediments, absorb runoff, aid in maintaining water quality, uptake nutrients, and provide breeding and nursery habitats for organism commonly associated with wetland communities. Even the EPA admits that a “headwater system for two major stream systems, would be difficult to replace.



Freedom Commerce Center

The developer has a four-part mitigation plan that includes donating 951 acres of a site called St. Marks Pond, which is inconsistent with mitigation policy that requires functional replacement *in basin*. Other

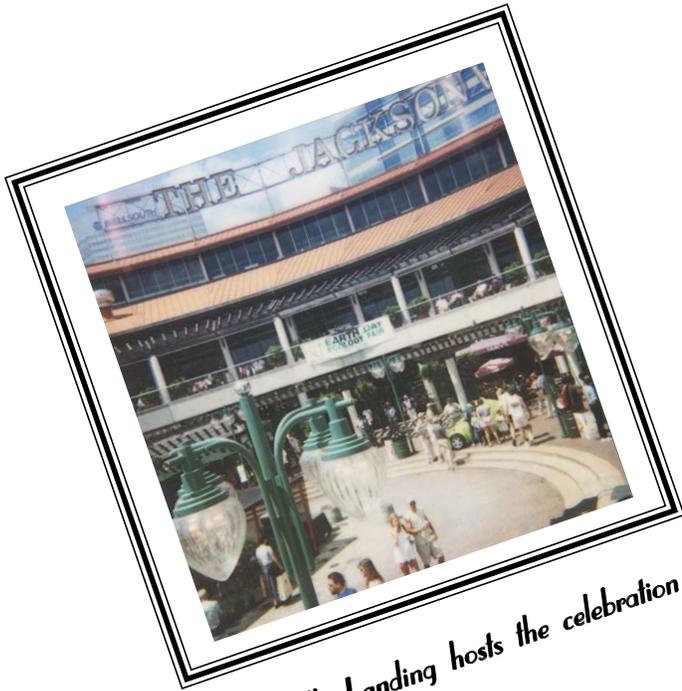
parts of their proposals include contributions of money to the Preservation Project, reserving 18 acres used for an entrance, and purchasing a 232 acre parcel called the pyramid parcel for reserve. None of these address water quality issue improvement that should be part of the package.

Opposition to the project has been extensive with negative comments and recommendations for denials by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, The Army Corps of Engineers (Atlantic Permits Branch), U.S. Department of Interior: Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric National Marine Fisheries, and the Sierra Club.

The United States is still losing the equivalent of 12 football fields an hour, every day of the year. This project is another setback in achieving the goal of no net loss of wetlands that continues to be unmet nearly a decade after it was declared a top priority by then-President George Bush.

Water qualities issues will be very important as this project tries to make its way through the system.

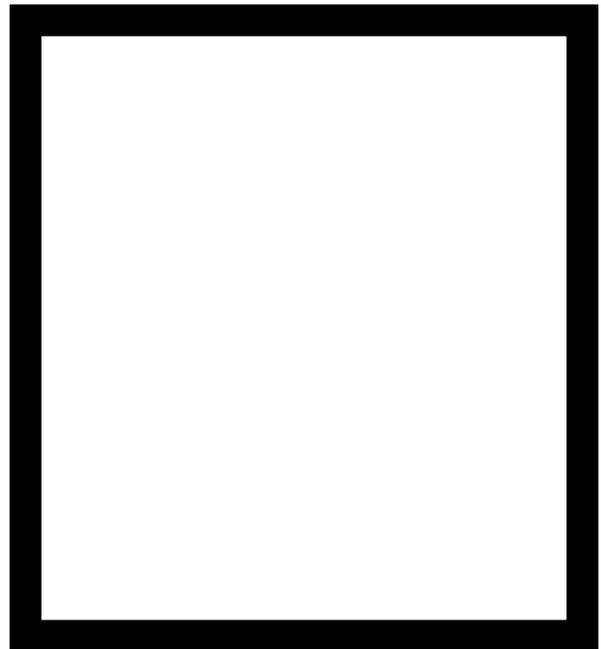
Earth Day Fun



Jacksonville Landing hosts the celebration



Drippy says "Save Our Water"



Stewards took pictures of Drippy with Earth Day visitors. Drippy is the mascot for the Environmental Protection Board.



Bolles students, Whitney Hendricks, Adam Lohrbauer, and Lockwood Holmes listen to Ms. Robbin Bach sing

Help Wanted

Part-time Director for the Stewards:

Write newsletter

Involve and recruit volunteers

Keep minutes of monthly meetings

Can work at home if you have a computer, with hours to suit your schedule. Call the Hotline.

YES! I want to join the Stewards of the St. Johns River and serve as a "voice for the river". Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Small Business | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustaining | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Patron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Captain | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Admiral | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

My area of interest is in _____

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RiverWatch Hotline

800-338-7757

E-Mail us at: info@Stewardsonline.net

For all communication, such as reporting spilled fuel, sewage discharge, illegal dumping or any hazards. Call to volunteer or request meeting times and date. A Steward will provide information, or direct your call to the proper authority and follow up.

STEWARDS OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER, INC.
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