

Along the WaterFront

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Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Inc.

August, 2019

Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association Inc. is a non-profit, grassroots organization dedicated to the protection of Lake Santa Fe as designated by the State of Florida as an Outstanding Florida Water

Letter from our President

Greetings SFLDA Members and Friends,

As the month of August arrives, we begin to look toward the end of summer, the beginning of the school year, and perhaps, some cooler weather in the not-too-distant future! It is also time for the **Santa Fe Lake Dwellers and Friends General Membership Meeting on August 23rd at Trinity Episcopal Fellowship Hall at 7:00 p.m.**

Our annual election of the Board of Directors will be held, after which we will share and learn about area news and issues. Please mark your calendars and plan to come and support your Association.

Our speaker will be **Ryan Smart, Executive Director of the Florida Springs Council (FSC)**. He will inform us about the Council's work to address the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's inadequate restoration plans for the Santa Fe Basin. Ryan has spent his career working with some of Florida's most influential non-governmental organizations in helping to craft sound environmental policy. Yes, he has worked in Tallahassee and knows how the sausage is made! Please see Ryan's article on page 2 for more details, and plan to come hear from one of our state's most dedicated and experienced environmental activists.

Many people believe that because of our frequent rains our aquifer has recovered and is at healthy levels again. Unfortunately that is not the case, attested to by the continued historic low flows in our springs, the windows to our aquifer. This is not a problem that will be solved quickly, and we are grateful that the FSC is bringing their science-based expertise into the struggle for effective restoration strategies.

SFLDA has faced many challenges in the 40+ years we've been around, and we are prepared to continue our strong protection of Lake Santa Fe and our area's natural resources. But we need your support and involvement as we move forward. If you haven't paid your dues for 2019, **now is the time to renew your membership**. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting, and bring a neighbor or friend. All are welcome!

Sincerely,
Jill McGuire

Blind Mosquitoes

by Nancy Germano

Seen in and near bodies of water, you can find swarms of aquatic midges or Chironomids as they are scientifically called. Around Lake Santa Fe we call them blind mosquitoes. Most years in the past, they have "bloomed" maybe once or twice in the spring, and some years not at all. This abundance of midges has increased and this year we experienced seven full blooms of them. Thank goodness they don't bite, but they are a messy nuisance. They gather on docks, boats, cars and houses. They are attracted to light and love bright white and silver things.

The cycle of the Midge starts with large groups of eggs in jelly-like sacs on the water. When they hatch, they begin a larval stage. They grow so quickly that they have to shed their exoskeleton several times. Sometimes, you can see these shells on docks and logs around the water. After four stages in the water, they emerge with eyes, legs, and wings. Large swarms of them can be seen all at once and they stay around for about three days. In this time, they mate, lay eggs over the water, and die.



RV Park Update by Tom Germano

On March 28th, 2019, the District Court of Appeal, First District denied the motion filed February 15, 2019, for a rehearing and request for written opinion. This effectively ended our efforts to stop the RV Park from being built at the corner of SR100 and CR21B. No reason was given for the denial.

After hearing concerns from many residents regarding the dangerous intersection of FL 100 and CR 21B, Gary Faircloth and Tom Germano, both Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Board Members, organized a meeting with Representative Bobby Payne, his assistant Tammy Still, a representative from Florida DOT, and Sheriff Gordon Smith. District 4 Commissioner Danny Riddick, County Manager Brad Carter and County Atty Will Sexton were also in attendance. In addition, there were 2 other FDOT employees on a speaker phone.

Gary and Tom pointed out, for the record, several concerns regarding the intersection.

- The intersection does not currently have a Stop Light.
- CR 21B does not squarely meet with SR 100 and causes problems viewing oncoming traffic in both directions.
- Current acceleration and decelerat-

ing lanes would not support Recreation Vehicles entering and exiting SR100.

- The entrance and exit County Dump can cause significant traffic backup on to SR100.
 - Sherriff Gordon Smith has stated that this intersection is the third most dangerous intersection in the Bradford County.
 - The County Residents should not be responsible for the costs related to intersection improvements or for the addition of a stop light.
- FDOT has already begun a study the intersection and will provide a report in late August or September. That report will include Traffic Counts, Crash Statistics and vital recommendations to improve the safety of the intersection!

While County Officials wanted to help fund the improvements through county money or grants, FDOT pointed out the it is reasonable and customary practice for the landowners to cover any costs related to the study and any needed improvements.

Our county officials have also agreed to review the portion of the County Road (21B) that will be affected by the future opening of an RV Park.

Blind Mosquitoes,

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Thanks to Declan McCabe, a biology professor at St. Michaels College, the internet is a wealth of information on these critters. The reason for my interest is simple and selfish. Lakes in Florida with poor water quality are known for these insects. Do we now fit in that category? The midges can be responsible for respiratory and allergic reactions. They thrive where there is abundant organic matter and algae. The biggest contributors to this pollution are failing septic systems and phosphorus rich fertilizer use on lawns that leach into the lake.

As the increase in Midge blooms are a sign of degrading water quality, please have your septic system checked and repaired if necessary. Also refrain from using fertilizers with high concentrations of phosphorus and nitrogen. Our natural environment is much prettier and healthier than that "Golf Course" lawn you may seek!

Remember, water is our most precious resource! -NG

As DEP Plans to Fail, Springs Groups Act to Protect Santa Fe River and Springs

Last year, the Florida Department of Environment Protection (DEP) published 13 water quality restoration plans, called Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs), covering the springsheds of 24 impaired Outstanding Florida Springs, including the springs of the Santa Fe River Basin.

The Santa Fe BMAP describes an ecosystem in crisis, with little hope for recovery in the absence of significant changes to how we address nitrogen pollution. Current nitrogen loading in the Santa Fe Basin must be reduced by 65% (1.85 million lbs./year) to achieve water quality goals. The major source of nitrogen pollution is from agricultural operations; however, septic tanks and urban fertilizer are responsible for approximately of 20% of the basin's nitrogen pollution.

Rather than creating a plan to restore our springs, DEP succumbed to the interests of polluters and planned to fail. By DEP's own admission, the BMAP for the Santa Fe would only reduce nitrogen by a quarter of what is necessary to restore healthy springs and a healthy river.

Faced with DEP's malfeasance, the Florida Springs Council (FSC) organized administrative challenges to five of the most egregious BMAPs across the state, including the Santa Fe. FSC member organizations stepped up to challenge the Santa Fe BMAP on the basis that it fails to achieve water quality goals, does not account for future growth, uses flawed science and assumptions, and does not meet other basic requirements under the law. This is the first time that a BMAP has been challenged in Florida. Our hearing is set for September 3rd in Tallahassee and its outcome will likely determine the future of the Santa Fe.

The Santa Fe Lakes are the headwaters for the Santa Fe River and the members of Santa Fe Lake Dwellers have a special role in the river's protection. In addition to doing your part to prevent septic tank and fertilizer pollution, please consider supporting FSC's legal challenge to protect and restore the Santa Fe.

- Ryan Smart,
Executive Director of the Florida Springs Council

A Tale of Two Counties

The United States is the world’s third largest producer of phosphate rock, and 65% of that is mined in Florida. There are two large concentrations of phosphate rock in Florida – Bone Valley, which is centered in Polk County, Florida, and the Florida Hard Rock region, which is centered in Hamilton County and includes deposits in Union and Bradford Counties, among others. Mosaic has long been mining phosphate in Polk, and Nutrien has long been mining in Hamilton. Now, along come four wealthy landowners in Union and Bradford, looking to open a mining operation on 11,000 acres of their land. These plans caught the two counties, with inadequate Comprehensive plans and Land Use Regulations to properly oversee an operation of this magnitude, off guard.

One might argue that any landowner has the right to do anything they want with their property. If my neighbor wants to spray lethal poison into the air in his property, that is his business, but if that poison wafts into the air surrounding my property, one might argue that I have standing to complain and the right to force a negotiation with my neighbor.

The environmental problems with phosphate mining are legion. The mining itself is extremely destructive of natural systems, turning large swaths of beneficial canopy into moonscapes, using vast amounts of water and turning large areas of groundwater into surface waters subject to massive evaporation, unearthing uranium deposits which decay into odorless tasteless and carcinogenic radon gas, and depleting the earth of minerals that cause land “reclamation” to be an anemic

version of its original state. The processing of phosphate rock into fertilizer is an even more disruptive event, creating a highly acidic, radioactive byproduct – phosphogypsum – which contains toxic heavy metals including arsenic, barium, lead, mercury and others, and must be stored in mountainous stacks hundreds of acres wide and hundreds of feet tall. These stacks release toxins into the wind and are at risk of leaking into the groundwater – the Floridan aquifer – which is the primary source of drinking water for nearly 10 million people. There are numerous recorded incidents of sinkholes and dam breaks releasing the toxic stew into our waters.

Interestingly, Union and Bradford Counties responded in completely different ways. Union County, aware of the dangers to its citizens, determined to revamp their Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulations, establishing a moratorium on mining permit applications while the documents were updated. Immediately engaging the assistance of the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, they had to extend the moratorium two times while the governing documents were shored up to protect the public interest. For this foresighted and courageous decision to protect its citizens, it has been sued by the mining company for almost three hundred million dollars of “lost revenue”. Of course, if one were to deduct the potential cost of mitigating the damages caused by the mining, it is anyone’s guess as to who would owe whom. That litigation is still pending.

Bradford County took another direction – they shunned the moratorium concept and accepted the application which, even though the application was in

“preliminary” status, put the matter into quasi-judicial status, which had the effect of insulating the county commissioners from having to discuss the issues directly with the constituents they were elected to protect. Recognizing that they weren’t technically able to properly assess the application, they hired a consulting firm to evaluate the plan with respect to its consistency with their existing Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulations. That report, originally due in September 2018, has been repeatedly delayed as the consultant expanded the scope to help the mining company revamp its (still) preliminary plan to conform to the documents and pass muster with the Department of Environmental Protection. They are apparently having problems with this, as the report is still incomplete as of this writing in late July 2019. A less than promising initial assessment by their chosen hydrologist may have something to do with the delay.

It’s time for this madness to end. In a perfect world, the mining interests would recognize the potential harm that they will be creating for their neighbors and would withdraw their plan. In that same world, Bradford commissioners would return the mining application as incomplete, enact a moratorium as its sister county did, and revamp its Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulations to protect its citizens. Also in that world, the Union County commissioners would be commended for meeting the obligation that they were elected for and the lawsuit would go away. In a perfect world.

- Michael Roth, President
Our Santa Fe River, Inc.

Newsletter contributors:

Jill McGuire
Nancy Germano
Tom Germano
Ryan Smart
Michael Roth

Along the WaterFront

is a publication of the
Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association
P.O. Box 1268, Melrose, FL 32666

www.lakesantafe.org

Yes, I support the Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association

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*Please make your tax-deductible payment payable to SFLDA, Inc., and bring with you to the Annual Meeting, or mail to **Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Assoc. P.O. Box 1268, Melrose, FL 32666**
The Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) organization and all contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

An update from the

Suwannee Fe River Water Management District

The minimum flows and levels (MFLs) for lakes Santa Fe and Alto will be adopted in the 2020 fiscal year. That means that the levels will be specified in Chapter 40B-8 of the Florida Administrative Code by September 30, 2020.

The SRWMD is selecting contractors, per responses to Request for Qualifications, General Engineering and Environmental Services (RFQ 18/19-025 AE). This will result in the selection of a contractor to complete the MFL development for lakes Alto and Santa Fe. The initial contractor, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc., did such an excellent job with data collection, analysis, and reporting, that subsequent firms should be able to seamlessly continue and bring the work to fruition in a timely fashion.

During the January 2019 Santa Fe Lake Dwellers' meeting, SRWMD staff appreciated the attendance of a patient audience. Of the many topics discussed were recommendations for enhanced hydrologic monitoring to improve lake water budget model performance. The current model performs to standard based upon long-term climate data and various parameters that affect runoff and recharge. The model also relies upon assumptions that may be mitigated through the collection of additional data, such as:

- Gauging of water elevations and flows in the Santa Fe-Alto canal and the culverts beneath CR1471. (The latter is where water exits the Santa Fe Swamp and flows towards the Santa Fe River.)
- Longitudinal and cross-sectional elevation surveys, and soil particle analyses in/from the Santa Fe-Alto canal
- Elevation and soil surveys of the Santa Fe Swamp.

In order to gauge the Alto-Santa Fe canal, Alachua County has applied to SRWMD for cost-share monies available through Regional Initiative Valuing Environmental Resources (RIVER) grants (<http://mysuwanneeriver.com/374/RIVER-Cost-Share-Program>). Grant awards are pending.

You are invited to attend the

Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association's

Annual Meeting

7:00 to 900 pm Friday, August 23rd

Trinity Episcopal Parish Hall on S.R. 26, Melrose

Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Assoc., Inc.
P.O. Box 1268 Melrose, FL 32666
www.lakesantafe.org

The Program will feature

Ryan Smart,

Executive Director of the Florida Springs Council and the University of Florida's 2017 Bob Graham Center Young Floridian of the Year will present

"Protecting the Santa Fe"

a discussion of legal efforts to protect and restore the Santa Fe River and how you can get involved.



*Santa Fe
Lake Dwellers*

Association, Inc.