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Proposal steams TOO FAR president



Commissioner Dennis Damato and Chairman Gary Bartell, both members of Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority, said they favor a regional approach to water use and conservation.

WRWSA plans call for water transfers from Citrus to Hernando counties

MIKE WRIGHT
Chronicle

It is a simple dotted oval on an engineer's map, but to Al Grubman, it's the start of something big and bad.

Grubman, president of the water-watchdog group TOO FAR,

told county commissioners Tuesday that regional plans call for water transfers from Citrus to Hernando counties.

That wasn't news to three commissioners who are members of the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority, or WRWSA, which is developing a

master plan on a variety of issues in the four-county district.

Grubman said the authority board on June 16 will consider several recommendations from WRWSA Executive Director Jack Sullivan, including developing plans for a new well in Citrus County that includes pipes to a new well and an existing well in Hernando County.

He provided a district map showing five current wells, represented by solid oval lines, and

four proposed wells in dotted oval lines. The Citrus County well is near Meadowcrest.

"The most bad, insulting, nasty thing is the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority is piping water to Hernando County," Grubman said.

The water authority, which serves Citrus, Hernando, Marion and Sumter counties, is recommending four new public wells in the district. It also recommends

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water piped from an existing well in Belleview to The Villages in Sumter County.

Grubman said Citrus officials should oppose any transfer of water from Citrus to Hernando County.

Commissioners did not address the issue during Tuesday's meeting. During breaks in the meeting, however, Commissioner Dennis Damato and Chairman Gary Bartell, both members of the authority, said they favor a regional approach to water use and conservation.

"The Legislature is crystal clear in saying regionalization is how we've got to look at water resources," Bartell said. "We're all in this together."

Bartell said piping water to Hernando County does not violate the state Local Sources First law, which requires communities to ex-

haust conservation measures before receiving water piped from elsewhere.

Bartell said Local Sources First prohibits water transfers between regions. He said keeping water within the authority's four counties is not a water transfer.

Damato stressed the authority's plan is little more now than words on paper.

"The biggest thing to remember is it's a plan, it's a concept," Damato said. "It may happen, it may not happen."

Damato said the water authority is looking at developing a well site near the Withlacoochee State Forest, where Cardinal Street intersects with County Road 491.

"I think it's still conceptual," he said. "It needs a lot more discussion."