



Board of County Commissioners Executive Office

110 N. Apopka Ave., New Courthouse, Inverness, Florida 34450
(352) 341-6560 • Toll Free From Citrus Springs/Dunnellon • (352) 489-2120
Fax (352) 341-6584 • Website: www.bocc.citrus.fl.us

November 9, 2009

Honorable Governor Charles Crist
Office of the Governor
State of Florida - The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Christ:

In my role as a county commissioner in Citrus County, I have reviewed the "Interim Report 2010-114, Chapter 373, F.S., Water Resources" issued by the Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation staff. To say we in Citrus County are disappointed with the recommendations contained within that release would be an understatement. I feel the unsupported opinions published by the committee staff could be so damaging to the water policy of the state, that I felt I needed to bring it to your attention, as well as to the attention of the members of the committee, to whom I am copying this letter.

Let me address specific points as they appeared within this document. On page 8, there is a description of what occurred last year with House Bill 1111. It was to have been (in the words of the committee staff) "a non-substantive reorganization of the relevant sections"...of Chapter 373 of the Florida Statutes. Somewhere along the way, the bill was hijacked and very substantive changes were made. As the committee staff has correctly stated, it had substantive changes, including the proposed doing away with "local sources first." Because the committee staff seems to think that the committee should take the lead on rewriting Chapter 373, our question would be, who in the committee is absolutely committed to monitoring the next proposed rewrite to assure that it is just "a non-substantive reorganization of the relevant sections?" Given what occurred last year, how can we trust that the committee will follow through if it comes up again this next legislative session?

On page 9, the committee staff states that "the unintended consequence of this policy [local sources first] and state water management at the district or regional level is counties and regions believe that water in their region is 'their' water." What source do they use to conclude that this was an "unintended consequence?" I can assure you, that those of us who backed this meant exactly that. The thousands from this district who rallied at a meeting in Chiefland, Florida a few years ago at a senate meeting made

that unequivocally clear. Regional waters should be utilized in that region first and other regions should not have access to it until they have exhausted their alternative resources. That is what the statute states, and we strongly disagree with the staff's opinion on this issue.

The staff issued four recommendations. The first was the rewrite of Chapter 373. As we stated above, we are quite apprehensive as to what it will actually be.

The second was that annual funding should be restored for alternative resources. While we endorse the concept, the committee staff went well beyond any reasonable analysis in stating that "Alternative water supply projects benefit the state as a whole and the cost should be borne by all."

Indeed, for years citizens of Citrus County have paid the same ad valorem rate to their water management district which has spent large funds on alternative water resource projects in areas to the south. Our Citrus County citizens have paid for these and have yet to receive direct benefit to their region. If the rationale is that they must pay tribute to keep overgrown regions away, I would submit that this logic is likely do more political damage than help.

Then their third recommendation is that local sources first should be reappraised. "Successes and failure of the policy should be examined and evaluated to identify inefficiencies and possible alternative solutions. This statement is unsupported by any footnote. Without any known successes or any known failures, how can the staff conclude that this topic needs to be readdressed?

Finally, the committee cites differences in the way the various water management districts govern as proof that a single "water czar" is needed. This is misguided. It raises the question angry taxpaying property owners have raised: Should there be one standard for how many times a week you can irrigate if one region has had a shortage of rainfall (and low aquifer levels) while another has had adequate rainfall (and adequate aquifer levels)?

If one region can manage its growth and serve its citizens with its existing supply of water and have no adverse consequences if they use 150 gallons per person per day and another region can only allow 100 gallons per person per day to protect their environment and resources, should the two have the same per capita target consumption levels?

No. Our state is diverse and one size does not fit all. Regional problems are best managed regionally, not with a central chair. That was the original wisdom, and it still holds true. The heads of the water management districts meet routinely and discuss what is going on in their regions. They and their staffs compare notes, methods and rules. Where differences exist, they are reviewed to assure they are soundly based.

While we can't vouch that we would have decided exactly as each of the water management districts has regarding their differences, we are certainly comfortable with the fact -- and the need -- for different districts to govern, at times and under certain

circumstances, differently. The committee staff has misconstrued the reality of the situation and come up with an unwarranted recommendation. This was the conclusion just last year by the Water Congress - that a central water czar is unwarranted and unneeded. Nothing has changed since then.

Finally, though not in the recommendation, but contained within the "*St. Petersburg Times*" article on this issue, was a falsehood that masqueraded about last year. The Committee of 100 paraded members of the American Water Works Association as "representing utilities in the state." They represent no utilities in Citrus County and I am unaware of them representing any utilities anywhere in the state. So I would hope no one will fall for this subterfuge.

I hope we have your support in dealing with the facts regarding these issues and your help in refuting such unsupported opinions as expressed in the document issued by the senate committee staff.

Sincerely,

Gary Bartell
First Vice Chairman
Commissioner, District 2
Citrus County Board of County Commissioners

Enclosures

CC: Brad Thorpe, County Administrator, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners
Senator Lee Constantine, Chair of the Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation
Senator Eleanor Sobel, Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation
Senator Nancy C. Detert, Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation
Senator Paula Dockery, Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation
Senator Dennis L. Jones, D.C., Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation
Senator Nan H. Rich, Senate Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation