



January 20, 2016
Governor Rick Scott
Plaza Level 05, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

The Florida Conservation Coalition is composed of over 50 charter member and affiliate organizations and a thousand concerned individuals devoted to protecting and conserving Florida's water, land, and wildlife. We are writing you today to ask for your veto of SB 552.

This 134 page bill represents a purposeful effort to weaken protection and management of Florida's water resources. It will result in further corrosion of what was once hailed as the water management standard of the Nation. The extraordinary procedural requirements will not advance, but hinder protection and restoration of our water resources, and the negative results will outweigh the benefits of the bill.

Water, Florida's most precious natural resource, is threatened by over-withdrawals, waste and pollution. Although there are good elements in this bill, they come at too high a cost: provisions blatantly favoring special interests, tying the hands of the Water Management Districts by further weakening current water protections, and largely ignoring the two most important requirements to protect these resources: conservation and stopping pollution at its source. Frankly stated, this bill leaves the people and businesses of Florida unprepared to meet the water challenges of the 21st century.

There are egregious problems with SB 552. For example:

- All significant users of the citizens' water should be required to monitor their use. This bill contains a loophole that will exempt many consumptive water users from monitoring.
- The bill inhibits water management districts from denying consumptive use permits. When statute or rule requires districts to deny a permit, they should not be subjected to new and additional oversight by the Department of Environmental Protection. The bill's potential requirement for multiple complete rewrites of the Regional Water Supply Plan imposes an inordinate administrative and financial burden on districts.

FOUNDER and CHAIRMAN
Bob Graham, Former Governor of Florida and U.S. Senator

VICE CHAIRMEN
Nathaniel Pryor Reed, Former Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Former Chairman SFWMD, Founder and Chairman Emeritus 1000 Friends of Florida
&
Commissioner Lee Constantine, Seminole County Commissioner, Former State Senator and State Representative

CONSERVANCY OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Rob Moher, President
Jennifer Hecker, Director of Natural Resource Policy

FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
Manley Fuller, President
Martha Musgrove, Board Member
Preston Robertson, General Counsel and VP for Conservation

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
Pam Goodman, President

1000 FRIENDS OF FLORIDA
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Victoria Tschinkel, Board Member, former Secretary Department of Environmental Regulation
Roy Rogers, Board Member Emeritus

SIERRA CLUB
Frank Jackalone, Senior Organizing Manager

ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER
Lisa Rinaman, Riverkeeper
Jimmy Orth, Executive Director

INDIVIDUALS
Lester Abberger
John Finlayson, Agriculturist, former Chairman SRWMD
Bill Kerr, Environmental Consultant, former Chairman SJRWMD
Gary Kuhl, Former Executive Director, SWFWMD
Jay Landers, Former Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection, Former Director of the Department of Natural Resources
Auley Rowell, Agriculturist, former Chairman of SRWMD
Sonny Vergara, Former Executive Director, SWFWMD and SJRWMD
Estus Whitfield, Former Principal Environmental Advisor to 5 Florida Governors

- The bill weakens the concept that every district in Florida should aim to be water self-sufficient by easing inter-district transfers. Water Management Districts should not be allowed to unilaterally plunder water from already stressed water bodies in other districts.
- Public private partnerships are lauded throughout the bill, with unclear mandates that such partnerships be cost-effective and in the public interest. Citizens' tax dollars should not be given to private entities without a clear determination that the citizens will benefit.
- Several Florida regions are running out of water. This legislation relies on alternative water supply projects, such as surface water withdrawals, which are unsustainable and damaging to other regions of the state. The only sure and safe source of additional water for environmental protection and economic growth is water conservation.

The current state of Florida's waters is proof that we need stronger controls on pollution now - not decades from now. There is still time. The legislature has barely finished its first week of session. We ask you to stand up for the water bodies and aquifers that provide Florida's drinking water and make industries like Florida's tourism, agriculture and seafood industries possible by sending this bill back to the legislature today.

Governor Scott, demand that the legislature send you a bill that focuses on conserving our finite water resources to meet the demands of Florida's people, industry and agriculture for generations to come. Insist that the legislature send you a bill that controls pollution at its source now, instead of allowing new sources of pollution to continue to degrade our aquifers, lakes, rivers, springs, and estuaries.

Furthermore, we must realize that any effort to restore and protect Florida's waters will require significant investments in scientific research, remediation, infrastructure, agency staffing, and land acquisition. The provisions in this bill are meaningless if they're not adequately funded. For example, sufficient staff will have to be hired to effectively monitor the use of best management practices around the state. Governor Scott, signing this bill will require a review and revision of your budget proposal as it relates to the direct state responsibilities under this legislation and an assurance to Florida's water management districts that they will be allowed to set ad valorem tax rates as needed to fulfill their obligations.

As the annual progress reports required under this bill are sent to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, it will become slowly and painfully apparent that this bill has failed to abate Florida's water quantity and quality problems, which are already severe. The legislators responsible for SB 552 will be out of office long before Florida officially fails to meet the deadlines for success set in this bill. Do not let short-sighted plans be your legacy. Florida, its citizens, and its future deserve more for our most valuable natural resource, water.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Graham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bob Graham, Chairman of the Florida Conservation Coalition

The following organizations, including FCC affiliates, have officially endorsed this letter:

Alachua Audubon Society, Anne Casella, President
Anglers for Conservation, Rodney Smith, President
Apalachicola Riverkeeper, Dan Tonsmeire, President
Audubon Society of the Everglades, Paton White, President
Brevard NOW, Vicki Impoco, President
BullSugar.org, Kenny Hinkle Jr., President
Center for Earth Jurisprudence, Sister Pat Siemen, OP, Esq., Director
City of Seminole Community Garden, Mary Ann Kirk, Garden Secretary
Clean Water Action, Kathleen E. Aterno, National Managing Director and Florida Director
Concerned Citizens of Bayshore Community, Steve Brodtkin, President
“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, Doris D. Hardy, President
E. Allen Stewart III P.E. Environmental and Engineering Consultant, E. Allen Stewart II P.E., Owner
Earth Ethics, Mary Gutierrez, Executive Director
EarthWeb Foundation, Josephine Balzac, Chief Environmental Officer
Environment Florida, Jennifer Rubiello, State Director
Estero Council of Community Leaders, Pete Cangialosi, Environmental Director
Florida Consumer Action Network, Susan McGrath, Executive Director
Florida Defenders of the Environment, Inc., Thomas Hawkins, Executive Director
Florida Native Plant Society, Suzanne Valencia, President of the Conradina Chapter
Florida Springs Council, Dan Hilliard, President
Florida Water Conservation Trust, Terry Brant, Legislative Chairman
Friends of the Everglades, Alan Farago, President
Friends of St. Sebastian River, Tim Glover, President
Friends of Warm Mineral Springs, Juliette Jones, Director
Ichetucknee Alliance, John Jopling, President
Indian River Democratic Executive Committee, Debra Messer, Environmental Chair
Indian Riverkeeper, Marty Baum, Riverkeeper
Izaak Walton League of America, Michael F. Chenoweth, President of the Florida Division
John Kumiski Fishing Charters, John Kumisiki, Captain
Lake Area Water Alliance, Jackie Host, President
Lake Rosa Lake Swan Homeowner Association, Bev Ritter, President
Lobby for Animals, Thomas Ponce, Founder

Matanzas Riverkeeper, Neil Armingeon, Riverkeeper
Miami Waterkeeper, Rachel Silverstein, Ph.D., Executive Director & Waterkeeper
Our Santa Fe River Inc., Pamela I. Smith, President
Preserve Brevard, Vince Lamb, Chairman
Progress Florida, Mark Ferrulo, Executive Director
Putnam County Environmental Council, Timothy Keyser, President
Rainbow River Conservation, Inc., Burt Eno, Ph.D., President
Reef Relief, Millard McCleary, Executive Program Director
Rehab Farm, Carol Ahearn, Owner
Santa Fe Lake Dwellers Association, Jill McGuire, President
Save the Manatee Club, Katie Tripp, Ph.D., Director of Science and Conservation
Seminole United Methodist Church Community Garden, Robert Huttick, Garden Coordinator
Solutions to Avoid Red Tide, Sandy Gilbert, Chairman
Southwest Florida Watershed Council, John Cassani, Chairman
Space Coast Progressive Alliance, Philip E. Stasik, President
Speak Up Wekiva, Inc., Chuck O'Neal, Director
Springs Eternal Project, John Moran and Lesley Gamble, Co-directors
Stonecrab Alliance, Karen Dwyer, Ph.D., Co-founder
Treasure Coast Progressive Alliance, Sharon Lux, President
Tropical Audubon Society, Laura Reynolds, Executive Director