

October 15, 2013

Mr. Stephen Cioccia
Watershed Planning & Coordination Section
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
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Mr. Cioccia:

This letter provides background and comments on the draft Draft Wakulla Nutrient BMAP 091313 document.

Many have a personal connection to the Wakulla Spring and River. Mine is a love of nature and fascination with water. I had the privilege of experiencing the river for 11 years as a boat tour guide in the park. I was on the river near the end of its glory days, reveling in the clear water and abundant wildlife.

The steady decline in the health of the river is so obvious. The water is less and less clear. The water now is a sick green color most of the time. After rainfall the color of the water changes to a brown color. Previously wide-eyed visitors would say, "Wow ... Amazing" as they approached the crystal clear spring. Now you often hear them say, "Eeeuuuuuw". Algae is now the dominant aquatic plant. Visitors no longer ask if the water is safe to drink. With algae growing on the sand and diatoms forming thick bubbling mats on the surface releasing a foul odor, visitors now ask if it is safe to swim. I recently completed an analysis of wildlife monitoring data at the park that agreed with my anecdotal observations that animal populations along the river are in decline. And the decrease in the size and number of fish is also apparent. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has failed to protect this one of a kind natural resource.

My assessment of the Draft Wakulla Nutrient BMAP 091313 document is that the plan is a continuation by DEP of apathy and neglect. Within the five-year time span of the plan, no action was identified to restore the river! Every day restoration is delayed lessens the feasibility of restoration. DEP must exert sufficient effort to restore the River by developing a plan with actions that will result in real and measurable improvements in the health of the river, including reduction of nitrates. Time is running out for that critical missing first step. But effort alone will not get the job done. Do the right thing, and protect and restore the Wakulla River.

Sincerely,



Robert L Thompson
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