

## **BUILDING A BETTER BASIN MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN FOR THE SANTA FE RIVER**

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Senate Bill 552, passed in 2016, requires the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to assess water quality in 30 Outstanding Florida Springs (OFS) and adopt a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) capable of achieving water quality goals within 20 years for each impaired OFS.

Three OFS systems within the Santa Fe River and Ichetucknee River Basin were determined to be impaired by excessive nitrate pollution, requiring FDEP to draft and adopt a BMAP capable of reducing nitrate loading by about two-thirds in these springsheds by 2038. To achieve water quality goals in the Santa Fe would require significant reductions in agricultural pollution, which accounts for approximately 70% of nitrate loading within the Basin.

FDEP's Santa Fe BMAP, however, relied on the same agricultural best management practices that have been shown to have no benefit to water quality in the Santa Fe basin. As a result, the Santa Fe BMAP only proposed approximately one-quarter of the nitrate reductions necessary to achieve water quality standards. Additionally, and incredibly, the BMAP predicted no increase in pollution from development or agriculture over the next 20 years. Because the Santa Fe BMAP did not meet the minimum requirements of Florida Statute, it was challenged by two non-profit organizations and two individuals. Those petitioners prevailed in the 1<sup>st</sup> District Court of Appeals which overturned the Santa Fe BMAP in 2023.

In order to demonstrate that creating a credible plan for achieving water quality goals is possible, the Florida Springs Council created a "Better BMAP for the Santa Fe River." This presentation highlights the shortcomings of FDEP's proposed BMAP and the findings and recommendations of our "Better BMAP", including ways to reduce agricultural, urban fertilizer, and wastewater pollution within the Santa Fe Basin to achieve state water quality goals while addressing future growth in nitrate pollution.

PRESENTER BIO: Ryan Smart is the executive director of the Florida Springs Council and president of Three Rivers Trust. Bob Palmer is the treasurer of the Florida Springs Council. He was formerly staff director of the U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.