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<http://www.HomosassaRiverAlliance.org>

## **THE RIVER ALLIANCE - TEN YEARS LATER**

### **Our Goals and Game Plan.**

*“Some 2 ½ years ago a small group of citizens in Homosassa got together to form the Alliance. We didn’t know what to do but we knew something had to be done... and soon. We held a few meetings, made a few tentative starts and eventually became a viable group. “ Jim Bitter, 2001 Alliance Newsletter*

That accurately describes our startup. Poor management of the watershed and ill-advised developments had allowed the river to deteriorate. We were pressing for change and we knew citizen education was at the heart of the problem. That is our Goal. In April of 2000 we incorporated and we received recognition as a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and protection of the Homosassa River system.

Our Game Plan is to provide education and information at schools, at the Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, at festivals, thru presentations, thru brochures, thru newsletters and thru the media. We provide a forum for citizens and experts to discuss environmental factors, studies and experiences. And we work with Citrus County Commissioners and planners, with SWFWMD and with the Florida DEP to help develop and apply the best possible practices regarding the watershed, the river and the estuaries.

Looking back over the “Highlights” (p. 7) of our activities shows the many ways we have been involved in the community. Clearly there were many, many people involved. We have been lucky that a strong core of people have stayed with us to provide the leadership for the River Alliance. But we are now ten years older and at a turning point where some new folks will have pick up the task. Come to our meetings... 7 PM, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the Month at the Homosassa Civic Club. Anyone with an interest in protecting our waterways can find a way to help.

**Homosassa River Alliance  
P.O. Box 124  
Homosassa, FL 34487  
Board of Directors**

Jim Bitter, President  
Ron Miller, V.P.  
Bob Jeeves, Secretary  
Tess Cornett, Treasurer

Rolf Auermann	Emily Casey
Tom Clark	Al Grubman
Jake Jacobs	Winston Perry
Georgeanna Phelps	Rosie Rendueles
Iris Rose	Ron Schultz
Charlie Stonerock	Kathy Stonerock
Priscilla Watkins	

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developers whose interests do not coincide with the need for springs protection.

The only bright spot in our visit came from Representative Schultz who is sponsoring a bill which would add additional protection of the Nature Coast; he feels that it has a good chance of being adopted.

While in Tallahassee we also called on Senators Dean and Fasano and Representative Schultz to discuss the aforementioned springs legislation. In addition, we made inquiry into a state fertilizer bill. There is **NO** sign of any legislation addressing this critical issue. It is time for the River Alliance to approach our Citrus County Board of Commissioners to move forward with a local ordinance addressing the fertilizer problem. We will be working on this in the coming months, hopefully joining forces with TOOFAR and the Citrus County Council.

Jim Bitter

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

I joined a delegation from Citrus County in Tallahassee to lobby for a springs protection bill to emerge from the upcoming session of the state legislature. An enthusiastic group converged in the courtyard of the legislative office building and many knowledgeable people gave some excellent input. Unfortunately, there appears to be insufficient support once again to accomplish a meaningful end. Senator Constantine has a bill pending in the upper house, but there is no sign of a companion bill in the lower house. This is an ominous sign that as usual, there will be much hoop-la about the need to protect our springs but in the end, nothing will happen. How sad, and how typical. And how indicative that our legislature is controlled by big

**RIVER ALLIANCE ANNUAL  
PICNIC**

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Members of the community are invited to attend the annual picnic scheduled for Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m. at Bluebird Springs. New officers and board members will be introduced at this time. Please bring a dish to share and join us for an afternoon of good food, friendship and fun!

## **SYNTHETIC NITROGEN: BOTH FRIEND AND FOE**

Since 1939, when the use of artificial nitrogen (ammonia, used in fertilizers) was applied wholesale to the farming industry, it did two opposing things: transformed infertile fields into mega-producers of edible crops and helped the population boom worldwide from 1.6 billion to 6 billion people; then it began, through migration, to be a harmful mega-polluter of our rivers, oceans and atmosphere. The details are in the February issue of Scientific American, which notes that “More than half of the synthetic nitrogen fertilizer ever produced was applied in the past 20 years.”

The solution, according to authors Alan R. Townsend and Robert w. Howarth, is not to eliminate artificial nitrogen, which has been a blessing, but to use it in proper proportion to need.

As currently (over-) used, we are losing biodiversity in our farms and grasslands and creating harmful algae blooms in our streams and rivers leads to coastal dead zones and ozone pollution. Nitrogen pollution is now ranked as one of the top three threats to plant and insect biodiversity in the world. Other studies indicate it may contribute to multiple human health issues of the heart, lungs, brain and circulatory system and stimulate cancers.

Thoughtful use and good gardening practices (few of us coastal folk are land farmers in Citrus County) will reduce the amount of synthetic nitrogen a household uses and lessen harm to the local bio-diverse creatures in both the land and waters around us. Read your labels and use fertilizers carefully, plant cover crops for out-of-season control, tie into a sewage treatment plant, and demand cleaner fuel systems

for both your vehicles and your power source. That should help us all enjoy a better, natural lifestyle.

## **BUCKET BRIGADE A SUCCESS**

On January 11, 2010, thirty-one volunteers came together to complete another phase of a Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) grant project of the Homosassa River Alliance. Labels were placed on five-gallon buckets illustrating how long it takes for certain waste products to disintegrate. The time-line hopefully will increase awareness of all who use the river. The containers have been distributed to all rental boat facilities along the Homosassa River. They are also available to any private homeowner to place on their boats. If interested, please call Bill Garvin at 628-4685.

The volunteers also put keychain rings on placards which have common sense information on how all of us – whether we live on the water or not – can keep our community and waterways clean. Our actions affect land, water, plant life and aquatic animals. These placards, or key rings, are available to anyone at the Homosassa Special Water District Office.

A great big thank you to all who volunteered to help make this project a success.

**Bill Garvin**

## **RIVER ALLIANCE SEEKING NEW SWFWMD PROJECT**

For the past ten years the Homosassa River Alliance has been awarded grants from SWFWMD. We have been asked by this organization to submit a project for the coming year.

This is a real compliment; the Alliance gives serious consideration to projects they submit for funding.

SWFWMD funding was recently used for the bucket and placard project coordinated by Bill Garvin.

We are asking the Alliance membership to submit any ideas they may have which would help to sustain or improve our waterways and systems. All suggestions will be considered. Please contact Mr. Jim Bitter at 628-1563 with your ideas.

### **COME FLY WITH ME**

Southwings is a conservation organization which uses volunteer pilots and small aircraft to protect the natural resources and ecosystems of the Southeast. In February, Alliance members Athena Philips, Tess Cornett and Bill Garvin were taken on a flyover of the coastline from Chassahowitzka to Homosassa. Attention was given to pollution, habitat restoration and invasive species in the Homosassa River, particularly at the mouth of the river. Also included in the flyover was an assessment of the mangroves planted by Alliance volunteers several years ago to determine if they sustained any damage from recent freezing temperatures. Check out their website: [Southwings.org](http://Southwings.org)

### **OUR HARD FREEZE**

The first two weeks of January included ten continuous days of hard freeze hours that proved to be too hard and too long for many of our marine and feathered neighbors. Shorelines have been littered with tons of dead sea trout and snook as well as some sea turtles and birds. Shoreline residents have had to bury them or have them hauled to the

landfill to cut the stench of decay. A hundred manatees have been reported dead from the cold as well in the general area, many of them juveniles.

Captain Rick Burns reported in the Homosassa Beacon (January 22, 2010 issue) that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has closed fishing for snook, tarpon and bonefish until September, and Burns thinks other closures will soon follow. He wrote that following similar prolonged freezes in 1977 and 1989, "it took about five years to recover ..." A sad story for us all. That's all the more reason to keep the pressure up to end the pollution of our rivers and coastlines.

### **CITRUS COUNTY SCIENCE FAIR**

The 2010 Citrus County Regional Science Fair was held on February 3, 2010 at the Crystal River Mall.

River Alliance members who participated in the judging were Rolf Auermann, Charlie and Kathy Stonerock and Dr. Chuck Beyerlein. Members of the River Alliance donated \$500 this year. This amount was divided among five students. One award was presented in the Senior Division and four in the Junior Division. Kaleb Jemison was the Senior Division winner. He is a freshman at The Academy of Environmental Science and was awarded \$300 for his project, "Barnacle Intrusion of the Crystal River."

The four Junior Division winners each received \$50. Katie Colitz's project, "Fertilizer Runoff and Algae Growth". According to Katie, "The project was to determine the effect of varying rates of fertilizer on algae growth." Her project concluded that

even small amounts of fertilizer caused the growth of algae as well as sediment formation. The objective of Jenna Franke's project, "Acid Rain Go Away, Come Again Another Day", was to measure the effectiveness of new scrubbers installed at the coal burning plant at the Crystal River Energy Complex. However, the scrubbers were not active before December 1, so her project will be ongoing. She was only able to test the rain at her locations before the scrubbers were active. Next year she will retest to see how effectiveness of the scrubbers. Lex Lucas' project was titled "How Does Acid Rain Affect Earthworms?". Needless to say, the worms in the acid did not fare well at all. Reece Sisto's project was " 'Lettuce' Test My Lettuce Seeds". This experiment actually dealt with salinity concentrations and their effect on the seeds at different concentrations of salt. Since salt water intrusion is currently occurring in our fresh water rivers, this experiment was highly pertinent.

These young scientists were a joy to interview and the five hours of judging went quickly. The future of this beautiful area is being determined by what is being done today. These students should be encouraged by their awards and to grow up to help this Nature Coast remain natural.

**I'M FROM THE IRS AND JUST CHECKING.....**

Last June the River Alliance was surprised to receive a note from the IRS that they would be stopping by in Homosassa to visit with us. No real motive (hum). Just a friendly examination (their words) to verify the correctness of our records and to assure

that we were operating within the manner and purpose as set forth in our 501c3 charter. Jim Bitter had some background discussions with the IRS and set up a meeting with the Revenue Agent.

The meeting started with the Agent reviewing the need for these Audits. Priscilla Watkins took him through our governing documents, the changes that have been made over the years and our general operating procedures. Bob Jeeves provided Minutes of our meetings and records related to decisions made by the Board of Directors. Bob also discussed the major operations of the Alliance committees. I provided an overview of the springs and waterways of Citrus County and how our educational activities, handouts, newsletters and publications helped our citizens protect these resources. Tess Cornett went through our finances and general ledger. Since the object was to audit our operations, Tess spent the most time with the Revenue Agent. We then gave him a notebook with a composite of all these discussions. We finished with a brief tour of the Homosassa waterfront.

In August we received a letter from the Agent stating that his examination was successful and that the Homosassa River Alliance continues to qualify as a 501c3 for exemption from Federal income tax. He also reminded us of the IRS forms that must be submitted every year

**Ron Miller**

The Save Our Waters Committee met recently to plan the next Save Our Waters Week which will take place in September, 2010.

# WILL WE STAND BY AND WATCH THE HOMOSASSA SPRINGS DIE ?

*The trend of decreasing spring flows should be disturbing to all.*

The key challenge for the future is the protection of spring flow. This is dependent on the conservative use of water by residential, agricultural and commercial users. Ground water withdrawals must be reduced to the lowest level possible. If ground water levels are maintained, then spring flows will also be protected.

The source of spring water is the rain that falls on the springshed. A spring cannot be protected by simply buying it and making it a state park. That would only protect the hole where the water flows, not the water. The Florida Springs Task Force identified the following major concepts that form the foundation of protecting spring flow.

1. A spring is only as healthy as its recharge basin.
2. Activities within spring recharge basins can and do have adverse impacts on the quality and quantity of spring flow.
3. Protection of spring water must occur in the recharge basin before water reaches the spring.

Florida is notorious for standing by and watching the springs die. Kissingen Spring, Hampton Spring, Fenholloway Spring, White Spring and Worthington Spring... no longer flow. The list is long.

Will the Homosassa Springs be the next to be added to this list?

The US Geological Survey and the Southwest Florida Water Management District have been recording

## USGS 02310678 HOMOSASSA SPRINGS AT HOMOSASSA SPRINGS FL

Available data for this site Time-series: Annual statistics GO

Citrus County, Florida  
Hydrologic Unit Code 03100207  
Latitude 28°47'58", Longitude 82°35'20" NAD27

**Output formats**  
[HTML table of all data](#)  
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Water Year	00060, Discharge, cubic feet per second
Period-of-record for statistical calculation restricted by user	
1998	97.8
1999	92.4
2000	83.6
2003	99.1
2004	102.4
2005	101.1
2006	87.6
2007	80.1
2009	75.0

\*\* No Incomplete data have been used for statistical calculation

the daily water discharge at the Homosassa Springs since 1996. As illustrated by the chart the quantity of water discharged has definitely been reduced. The Homosassa Spring is a first magnitude spring that historically flows at about 100 cubic feet per minute. For the past four straight years it has decreased. In 2009 it was down to only 75 percent of its historical flow.

This data taken from [www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov) was presented to the State Legislators at the Florida Springs Rally in Tallahassee, Feb 16, 2010.

# HOMOSASSA RIVER ALLIANCE HIGHLIGHTS

## 10 Years of Action

### AWARDS RECEIVED

FDEP - Florida Springs Protection Award  
Homosassa Elementary School Science Award  
SWFWMD Award of Excellence  
SWFWMD Community Education Grants

### PROTECTION OF THE RIVER

Coastal Conservation Presentations  
FDEP Springs Task Force  
Save Our Waters Week  
Florida Coastal Springs Greenway  
Comprehensive Plan Updates  
Oppose Development in Sensitive Areas  
Homosassa Waterfronts Florida Community  
Nutrient Remediation Planning Committee  
SWFWMD Environmental Advisory Committee  
Citrus/Hernando Waterways Council

### EDUCATION PROJECTS

“Day On The River” for all Homosassa 3rd grad  
Pepper Creek Skimmers  
Clean the River Buckets & Key Rings  
Mangrove Planting on Homosassa  
Water Quality Testing of the Homosassa, Halls River &  
Bluebird Springs  
Fishbowl Drive Traffic Reduction  
Bluebird Springs Restoration  
SWFWMD Video of River Volunteers at Work  
Native Tree Planting Project  
Know Your Springs & River Brochure  
Stormwater Management Demonstration  
Lakewatch Water Testing  
River Tours

### AWARDS GIVEN

Science Fair Awards  
Save Our Water Essays  
River & Springs Photo Contest  
Environmental Warrior of the Year  
River Alliance President’s Award

### “Voice of the River” Newsletter

Up to 4 times a year since 1999

### MONTHLY MEETINGS

7 PM - 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday at Civic Club

### WEB SITE

[www.HomosassaRiverAlliance.org](http://www.HomosassaRiverAlliance.org)

### EXPERT SPEAKERS

Florida Dept of Environmental Protection  
South West Florida Water Management District  
Florida Fish & Wildlife Service  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
US Geological Service  
Florida Yards & Neighbors  
Florida Springs Task Force  
St Martins Aquatic Preserve  
Buffer Preserve State Park  
Homosassa Springs State Park  
University of Florida  
University of So Florida  
Audubon  
Native Plant Society  
Emergency Management  
Developers; Planners; Fishermen; Engineers  
Commissioners; Reporters; Lawyers; Citizens