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<http://www.HomosassaRiverAlliance.org>

### **Message From the President**

It is hard to believe that another summer has come and gone along the Homosassa River. The passing of summer brings with it the promise of fall, and some very good news and a few issues affecting the river not yet resolved at the time I am writing this letter. First, the good news: Crumps will be up and running better than ever after the tremendous fire which destroyed the main Tiki Bar and food truck. The Halls River Bridge will be completed after months of delays, and the Homosassa River Restoration Project is very close to implementing the first steps in its efforts to restore and clean the headwaters of the river. The sewer project on the south side of the river has started a long 10-year project to eliminate pollutants flowing from old septic tanks into our river. .

Issues not yet resolved are county boat ramp fees and an additional increase to the current MFLs now in place for our spring. First, we know that without designated funds for additional parking and ramps, no improvements will be made to current facilities. Also, any increase to current MFLs for our spring have the potential to harm the entire health of the river, most importantly, the blue waters. I have spoken to and written to both our county commissioners and SWFWMD in hopes that these issues can be resolved with the future health of the river in mind. We will know the outcome by mid October.

We are very excited about our newly designed membership and sponsorship decals featuring both the old and new Alliance logo – (Please see page 3) - A lot of work went into developing these decals which are made of the very best materials and should last for years. My wish is to see every member purchase a decal for their car, truck, boat or golf cart. They are a great way to get future members interested in the work of the Alliance. We are selling membership decals for only \$5 each and giving a free decal to sponsorship/benefactor or anyone donating \$50 or more to the Alliance. If you cannot make it to a meeting to purchase a decal, just drop us a note and we will send one to you. Please include the number of decals needed, along with a current mailing address to Homosassa River Alliance, P.O.Box 124, Homosassa, Florida 344448.

This year's Seafood Festival will be held on Saturday, November 9, and Sunday November 10. Please stop by our tent for a quick visit. We will again be featuring our

Voice of the River T-Shirts along with a newly designed logo tote bag which holds a bottle of water and a pen. We will also be handing out River Alliance floating keychain bobs generously donated by one of our members, Matt Spriggs.

Remember, you can and do make a difference. Please make every effort to attend the Alliance meetings and contribute to the future health and well-being of our river.

Last but not least - for the first time in our history, the Board of Directors has found it necessary to increase dues by \$10 a year. We have also added a new category of membership for next year., one for business and benefactor sponsorship. Next year's dues and categories will be as follows:

- (A) Benefactor/Business sponsorship \$50 yearly(decal included)
- (B) Family Membership \$30 yearly (plus additional \$5 for decal)
- (C) Single Membership \$20 yearly (plus additional \$5 for decal)

This increase will only cover current operating expenses such as insurance, website design, printing, newsletter and more. The Alliance is still very dependent on additional donations to help us continue our work and provide scholarships to deserving students in our community.

Looking forward to seeing everyone,  
**Frank Kapocsi, President HRA**

**ATTENTION MEMBERS**

**HOMOSASSA RIVER ALLIANCE ANNUAL FUNDRAISER**

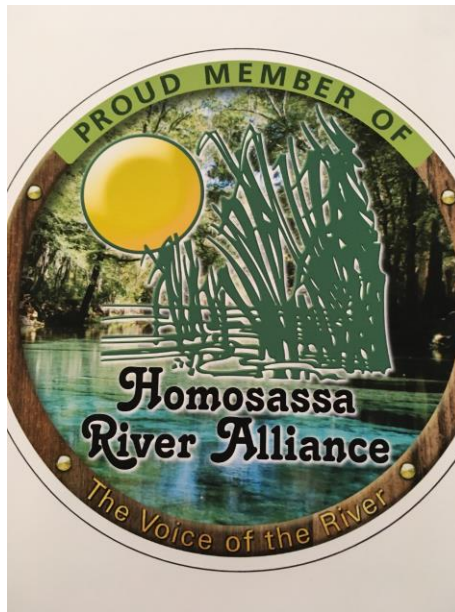
The Homosassa River Alliance will be partnering with the Homosassa Civic Club once again for our Annual Fund Raiser which takes place in conjunction with the Old Homosassa Seafood Festival. The festival will be held this year on November 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>.

Please be watching your mailboxes for an envelope which will contain information explaining how you can purchase raffle tickets to win a gift package. You will have the opportunity to choose from 8 packages. The 8 packages will be listed on the back of the Raffle Letter. Each envelope will hold 8 tickets at \$2.00 each.

The drawing for the winning tickets will take place on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at the Homosassa Seafood Festival at 4 p.m.. You do not need to be present to win.

This is our main fundraiser and we hope you can support our organization. These funds help us continue in our efforts to save our waters from further degradation.

If you have any questions, please contact Rosey Rendueles at 628-5116.



This is our new decal – we cannot show it in color in this newsletter. They can be purchased via mail\*, at the Seafood Festival or other events where the Alliance has a booth and at monthly meetings. The actual size is 5 inches in diameter. If you would like to see it in color, you can go to the HRA website, which is [www.HomosassaRiverAlliance.org](http://www.HomosassaRiverAlliance.org).

These decals can be placed on your car bumper, golf cart, business window, etc. They are of excellent quality. This is a fundraiser for us and we certainly appreciate your support.

\*River Alliance, PO Box 124, Homosassa, FL 34487

### **A VALUABLE PERSON/MEMBER LOST**

Bill Garvin, who was a member of the River Alliance and lived in Homosassa, passed away recently. Bill was passionate about how the Homosassa River was treated and spent many hours and days making sure that he could be a voice for the river. Bill spent many years in water testing for Lakewatch, taking photos of around the river and was on the board of the Planning and Development Review Board of Citrus County.

We will miss Bill and our thoughts are with his wife Janet.

### **CLEAN-UP OF RIVER BEGINS**

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

Frank Kapocsi, President  
Steve Minguay, Vice President  
Iris Rose, Secretary  
Rosey Rendueles, Treasurer

Gordon Colvin                      Terry Green  
Jake Jacobs                         Patricia Kapocsi  
Brad Rimbe

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[ibrosefla@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:ibrosefla@tampabay.rr.com)

The Homosassa River Restoration Project Inc. began as a 501c3 three years ago this November and has finally received the state funding necessary to begin restoration efforts. FDEP has awarded HRRP a \$2,000,000 grant and we have begun the process of drawing up the contracts. This is the result of countless hours of work and the determination to help this river recover. The many contributions we received from this community, allowed us pay for the initial 25 acres of permitting and more importantly showed Tallahassee that the community was supporting our efforts. THANK YOU!!! That commitment from the community proved to our legislators that we were serious about restoring our river and worthy of the tax dollars it would take to make it a reality. Without the support of Senator Wilton Simpson and Representative Ralph Massullo it is doubtful we would have ever seen the funding.

So what now? Our intent has always been to begin at the headsprings of the river and move downstream as far and as quickly as funding allows. That means we will set up our work-site and begin actual operations on the east side of Fishbowl Drive bridge and hopefully get in front of the Homosassa State Park observation deck with this first set of funding. Negotiations are in progress with the Homosassa State Park to use the empty lot at the corner of Halls River Road and Fishbowl Drive (where the convenience store used to be) as a work-site. Once the site is set we can begin the removal of Lyngbya and years of accumulated muck and begin the installation of grasses.

The amount of in-water work which can be accomplished during manatee season is extremely limited and begins very soon so the majority of work will have to wait until spring. Meanwhile we will continue to seek our next round of funding to move operations further downstream and will also begin the process of permitting the next 25 acres of river and canals. The next permit would get us to the confluence of the Homosassa River and Halls River. Remember that this is a multiyear project and we can only go as fast as the money is allocated.

Once again we could not have accomplished this without your support. Keep in mind that HRRP is completely volunteer and a non-profit corporation. None of our board has or ever will accept a salary and we have always covered our own expenses when traveling and staying in Tallahassee. **BUT** there are day to day expenses to operating any 501c3 and even though we strive to keep them to a minimum they do tend to add up. Remember that 100% of the state funding goes to river restoration and cannot be used to cover the organizations expenses. ***Please also remember that this is Public/Private venture and without the 501c3 (the Private) there is no restoration project.*** We need your continued support. Please help us if you can. The address is below and we could use any donation you can send our way.

Homosassa River Restoration Project Inc.  
P.O. Box 591  
Homosassa Springs, Fl 34447

Steve Minguy, President HRRP

**Homosassa & Chassahowitzka MFLs**  
**Revisited**

Brad W. Rimbey

Florida law (373.042) requires Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to set Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) for all water bodies within the District. MFLs are intended to prevent “significant harm” to ecosystems via human related (anthropogenic) water uses. SWFWMD has adopted a policy which defines “significant harm” as any anthropogenic flow or water level reduction which causes a 15% loss of the affected ecosystem. The unilateral application of 15% harm as “significant harm” has repeatedly been questioned by SWFWMD's peer review panels.

Both Homosassa and Chassahowitzka were designated as Outstanding Florida Waters in 1993. Additionally, both of these coastal rivers were designated as Outstanding Florida Springs in 2016. These designations were intended to protect these waters from permanent degradation via anthropogenic activities. SWFWMD's current proposed MFLs continue to ignore these protective designations as they have opined a 15% degradation of these supposedly protected waters as acceptable.

In 2013, SWFWMD's Governing Board (GB) adopted MFLs which would allow only a 3% natural flow reduction for the Homosassa and Chassahowitzka Rivers. The Homosassa MFL was set at 3% based on predicted salinity changes in the Homosassa over 20 years. The Chassahowitzka MFL was based on maintaining a manatee thermal refuge at the eastern boundary of the

Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge. For Chassahowitzka, SWFWMD's GB rejected staff's MFL recommended 9% natural flow reduction and adopted a 3% flow reduction to match Homosassa's MFL. SWFWMD 's GB applied common sense over SWFWMD staff's “science based” recommended MFLs.

In 2013, SWFWMD staff opined that approximately 1% of the natural flow had been taken from both the Homosassa and Chassahowitzka due to anthropogenic water extractions in these springs-sheds. SWFWMD's GB instructed staff to gather additional data to support their flow reduction recommendations within six years. Little has been done in that regard.

Six years have now passed and SWFWMD has released its draft peer review MFL reports. In the 2019 MFL peer review draft reports for Homosassa and Chassahowitzka, SWFWMD now opines that 1.9% of the natural flow has been taken from Homosassa and 1.4 % has been taken from Chassahowitzka. SWFWMD further predicts that only 3% of Homosassa's natural flow will be taken by 2035 and 2% will be taken from Chassahowitzka by 2035. Therefore, they conclude that no limit to future groundwater withdrawals from these spring-sheds is required for the next two decades.

The latest Homosassa and Chassahowitzka MFLs are focused on snook thermal refuge habitat. These water bodies are at northern range of snook habitat and snook could not exist here if not for the winter thermal refuge of our springs. If snook habitat is so important, how does it make sense to

reduce spring flow via these MFLs? Are snook an endangered/threatened species like manatees?

As groundwater pumping and sea level rise continues to increase, the salinity of our spring-fed coastal rivers increases. Sea level rise is a worldwide occurrence and there is little we can do locally to avert this. However, we can and should do something to reduce groundwater pumping that adds to the destruction of our coastal springs.

SWFWMD's peer review panel is currently discussing the draft reports. These drafts can be found on SWFWMD's website <https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/projects/mfl/documents-and-reports>. All SWFWMD documents on this matter are available to the public as required by Florida public records law. You can also follow the peer review conversation at <https://swfwmd.discussion.community/?forum=708493>.

### **More on Minimum Flows and Levels**

President Kapocsi attended a SWFWMD meeting regarding MFLs. People spoke up expressing their concerns but SWFWMD has its own ideas. After the meeting Frank made the following points to Dr. Gabe Hendrick:

What happened to the SWIM plan which is a conservation and management plan for the river? How does further reduction work in conjunction with that plan?

Won't withdrawal reduce the velocity of water coming out the spring thus reducing water column drag?

With reduced drag, won't particles coming into the river drift to the bottom thereby causing additional sedimentation encouraging additional algae (lynbyga)?

Doesn't additional sedimentation stop light from reaching new or old vegetation?

So how does further reducing the flow of the river protect the river? We know that the river will not benefit from this withdrawal of water.

### **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE**

Dr. Herrick of SWFWMD answered some of our questions recently. I know many of us have some of the same questions.

Q. How do you know how much water is used with wells, especially residential wells, which are not metered?

A. We feel we can fairly estimate what people are using.

Q. Where are these wells?

A. All throughout the county.

Q. What communities benefit from withdrawal?

A. Mostly Citrus County. It does not benefit the Villages as many think. Nothing farther East than the Withlacoochee River.

Q. How do we protect this county so we don't look back with regret?

A. We learn from the past. Water management districts did not exist until the 1960's. We are in a much better place now.

**Elected Officials Need to Hear Your Voices.**

**Note:** Dr. Herrick said that said that sea level is the problem, not withdrawal. Less visitors and less water use would also help. Email him at [watmatters.org](mailto:watmatters.org) with comments. Although we all have our opinions, we have to realize that our river has changed drastically and it's probably due to a multitude of reasons.

**SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

This is a water community and many of us have moved here because of the river . We need to protect it. However, we need to remember that when we blow newly mowed grass clippings into the water they take with them fertilizer and insect killers..

**DEP GUEST SPEAKERS**

Mike Lynch and Anthony Pidala were speakers at our June meeting. They work for the Department of Environmental Protection Southwest District (DEP). Their office is involved with the permitting process of construction on or over waters. They enforce environmental laws working with ordinary citizens, not municipalities (commercial), making sure that a project has the least amount of impact on the environment.

So what does a person do when they notice a violation in construction on water and wetlands was one of the questions asked. Call their office at 813-470-5777. They try to resolve cases as best/soon as possible. It does take time but they try to close a case within 60 days. Make sure to get a complaint ID number to refer to if you need to call again. You can also email them at [SWerp@floridadep.gov](mailto:SWerp@floridadep.gov).

**P OCTOBER GUEST SPEAKER**

**The October meeting will be held on Thursday, October 10 at the Old Homosassa Civic Club at 7 p.m. Guest Speaker will be Representative Ralph Massullo.**

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The Homosassa River Alliance did not meet during the summer months but was busy planning for the new year.

We are working hard to meet our goals.

Some of our accomplishments last year were:

- Participated in Citrus County Science Fair by judging and presenting awards to three area students.
- Hosted many meetings with speakers who brought us information to help us continue our quest to improve our area waters.
- Have a new website up and running.
- Reaching out into the community by participating in local events such as Shrimpapalooza and the annual Seafood Festival.
- Participated in Save Our Waters Week.
- Worked with FWC to distribute diver down flags to boaters.
- Distributed hundreds of rack cards to visitors coming to the area encouraging safe and healthy water habits.

**Join Us in our Efforts. We are the Voice of the River.**