

AI Summary: Water First North Florida Causes SRWMD Reps to Hightail Out of NCFRPC Meeting"

At February's North Central Florida Planning Council meeting, Deputy Director Amy Brown of the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) briefed officials on regional drought, but technical glitches — broken microphone and botched slides — blunted the presentation.

Growing opposition to the **Water First North Florida** initiative dominated discussion.

The controversial plan proposes pumping 40 million gallons per day of treated wastewater from Jacksonville (via JEA) into the Suwannee River Basin, ostensibly to recharge the Floridan Aquifer and restore spring flows.

Critics — including commissioners, residents, and activists from multiple counties — argue the plan shifts urban waste burdens onto rural, impoverished communities while risking contamination from PFAS, nitrates, chromium, and other pollutants.

Commissioner Rick Davis (Madison County) led the opposition, announcing his county's formal letter against the initiative and urging others to follow suit.

Residents from Alachua, Columbia, Hamilton, and Clay Counties voiced concerns about public health, environmental degradation, lack of local oversight, and the availability of alternatives like desalination.

The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) drew criticism when its Deputy Executive Director and Public Information Officer left the meeting before public comment — a move the article characterized as "not a good look."

Relevant Quote:

"I would challenge you to drink a cup of it. I don't believe that it's safe for our community." — Commissioner Rick Davis, highlighting skepticism about the wastewater's safety.