

AI Summary: Water First North Florida, the plan to pipe Jacksonville's wastewater to the Suwannee Basin receives a 12 county thumbs down.

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council (NCFRPC), representing 12 counties (Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union), unanimously rejected the "Water First North Florida" (WFNF) plan. The proposal aims to pipe 40 million gallons daily of Jacksonville's treated wastewater into the Suwannee Basin at an estimated cost of **\$1.1 billion**.

Council Chairwoman Mary Alford, an environmental engineer, criticized Jacksonville for not pursuing adequate water conservation and raised concerns about untreated contaminants such as **PFAS, pharmaceuticals, and industrial waste** that go beyond simple nitrate removal. Union County Commissioner Melissa McNeal noted the lack of input from the project's proponents, calling for more balanced information before decision-making.

During public comment, speakers overwhelmingly opposed the project. A retired environmental crimes investigator urged every local commission to pass similar resolutions. Other residents questioned the project's transparency, feasibility, and potential health risks to communities reliant on well water. Several speakers advocated **desalination** as a cleaner alternative.

The resolution passed unanimously, though the Council did not conduct a roll-call vote, leaving individual attendance at the time of the vote unrecorded.

The resolution signals fierce regional resistance to wastewater transfer, prioritizing local environmental protection over Jacksonville's industrial needs.