



HOMOSASSA
VOICE OF THE RIVER
RIVER ALLIANCE



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<http://www.HomosassaRiverAlliance.org>

THE TWO SIDES OF THE RIVER NEED TO WORK AS ONE

Terri Auner

The amazing Homosassa River is like someone with a split personality.

On the south side, we have Old Homosassa. This is an area where commercial fishing was/is the livelihood of generations of families. Once the area was populated with small fishing camps, a store and bait shop. In the late thirties, Mr. Ray Randall owned the Homosassa Inn and was the first to have ice brought in over the dirt roads leading to the river. Over the years, some of the roads have been paved, new homes have been built and the area expanded to tourism. Shops selling and hosting arts and crafts, airboat rides, kayak rentals, fishing tournaments and festivals have been added.

This side of the river still has virtually no sewer system. The county has, under pressure from groups like ours, attempted to put some of the commercial locations on the county system, but there is still a long way to go. This has had a huge impact on the river.

The north side of the river remained marsh land and estuaries until the 1970's when Riverhaven Village was developed. Canals were dug, bridges built, docks added to accommodate hundreds of homes. In the early 1980's Gasparilla Cay was built along the main river and around to the "Grand Canal". They do have a central sewer system. Homes with swimming pools and lush green lawns brought in a new type of home buyer. This also has had an impact on the river. So both sides are quite different but they have one thing in common – how they affect the Homosassa River.

The Homosassa River Alliance has been working with the County and State agencies diligently since 2009 when it came to our attention that diesel fuel began leaking or was being pumped from commercial boats. We were directed to the US Coast Guard whose responsibility is to manage fuel spills. Over a year's time, they were able to order six boats out of the water for repair or replacement. This helped but as soon as no one was looking, the faulty boats were right back in the water. This leads me to come to the conclusion that abuse of the river is not everyone's concern, unfortunately.

The Homosassa, which is classified as an "Outstanding Florida Waterway", has now officially been declared as "impaired" by the Florida DEP. This is very bad news for all of us, in fact for all of the rivers in the area.

So my appeal to everyone who loves this river to think about what I have said no matter which side of the river you occupy. We need to come together for the good of the river. It's that simple.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This spring I was invited to chair the Homosassa River Alliance as its new president. For me, personally, the river has offered an environment which I have found fascinating for over 25 years. We have participated in many Alliance projects from planting mangroves, river cleanups and fund raising events.

At first I spent many hours in the river. Perhaps the event which had the greatest emotional impact on me was the day Diann and I were sitting on a sandbar in what is now the No Entry Zone adjacent to the park. We had been snorkeling when we noticed a manatee with a calf some 15-20 feet from us. We sat and watched the calf suckle. It noticed us and came over to investigate. It rubbed against us – it was curious and wanted contact with us. For the next half hour it would periodically return to its meal and then return to us. During the several trips the mother watched with what we felt was obvious approval. We soon discovered, as time went by, that individual animals would recognize us and us them.

For the past few years in deference to my age, I no longer spend much time in the river but have discovered a new fascination – wood ducks. Many of us have provided nesting sites so they are now in abundance. A half dozen years ago I began feeding them using a floating feeder located a dozen feet off our lot. Each spring we watch the hens with their new chicks enjoy our largess. At one point this year we counted 16 ducklings in the feeder. We are now in our third or fourth generation and each year they become more docile. So as I said, the river is very special for me.

Of course aging for people is inevitable and with age we decline but the river's decline could and can still be halted or even reversed. Since its inception in 1998, the River Alliance has fought tirelessly for the river. Over the past several years the organization has been active in the determination by "SWFWMD" of the minimum levels and flows for our lakes and rivers. We, and other organizations, sought to have special consideration for officially declared "Outstanding Florida Waters" such as those in Citrus County. We challenged the determinations that would allow further diminution and degradation at both the administrative and court levels. Unfortunately this summer the appeals court sanctioned water withdrawals of up to 3% in the Homosassa and Chassahowitzka.

Perhaps our longest ongoing challenge has been the attempt to over-develop the land at the confluence of the Halls and Homosassa Rivers. Four times the owner has sought permission for inappropriate development of the site. Three times this was challenged in the courts. This year the Alliance organized, once again, a challenge before the County Commission. With overwhelming community support against the development of an immense motel on the site the county denied the permit.

So, I now have a new commitment to the river community. The challenges of maintaining adequate clean water flows and the prevention of destructive development will continue. It is a commitment that our community must keep.

RON SCHULTZ

**WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE
COUNTY PLANNING STAFF –
INFLUENCE?**

Priscilla Watkins

Our fact-filled opposition and that of many others against the four-story hotel proposal at Halls River Retreat won the rejection of the plan by County Councilmen in April. We are grateful, but we recognize that Mr. Longacre can come back next year with yet a fourth plan. I hope he hires a 4th grader who can do the correct math.

His grand ideas to profit from buying residential land in 2001 are not really our problem unless he wants to break rules.

What is of continuing serious concern to our county is the job done by county planning staff in vetting the application for this in the first place and again seen in their reasoning when recommending approval to landing a helicopter in Homosassa wetlands.

If comparisons had been made between Longacre's 2002 or 2011 and the 2014 plats and applications, the difference in listed amounts of wetlands would have been obvious. Other numbers didn't add up but were overlooked by staff. Required reports were not received, but who cared?

With the helicopter issue, no effort was made to check the environmental impact on wetlands or to prevent runoff never mind ignoring impact to protected refuges abutting this property.

Residents deserve due diligence from county staff and independent evaluations. What we keep seeing is very poor work, leaving the Board of Commissioners dependent on the public to point out those errors/omissions.

The County Administrator needs to demand complete, efficient work from this Division and advise them to read the Comp Plan, often.

ATTENTION MEMBERS

HOMOSASSA RIVER ALLIANCE
ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

The Homosassa River Alliance will be partnering with the Homosassa Civic Club for our Annual Fund Raiser.

Please be watching your mailboxes for an envelope which will contain information explaining how you can purchase raffle tickets to win a gift package. This year 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 15th, 2015 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 Bob Jeeves at 628-0991.

**RIVER ALLIANCE MEETINGS
ARE HELD ON THE 2ND
THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH
- 7 P.M. - AT THE
HOMOSASSA CIVIC CLUB**

**PAPER MILL WANTS TO DO
DIRECT POLLUTION TO THE
GULF ABOVE THE NATURE
COAST. HASN'T 65 YEARS OF IT
BEEN ENOUGH?**
By Priscilla Watkins

support to stop the insanity of adding
Homosassa River toxic waste to an already stressed
River and gulf.
P.O. Box 124
Homosassa, FL 34487
Board of Directors
Founder: Jim Bitter
(Thanks to the Clean Water
Network newsletter for some of this
information).

The Koch brothers' old pulping
mill in Perry had been dumping toxic
chemicals for decades into the
Fenholloway River, 26-miles upstream
of the Gulf of Mexico, and created a 10-
square mile dead zone just above
the sea grass beds. (I wonder what share
of taxes they pay for doing that.)

Koch bought the Buckeye
Technologies plant last year for 1.5
billion dollars and has renamed it the
Foley Cellulose Mill.

Now the billionaire Kochs want
to pipe 40-60 million gallons per day
(40-60 mgd) of dioxin-contaminated
waste to two-miles short of the mouth of
the Fenholloway on the Gulf to "save
money."

(Wow. Is it okay for them to do
that and let fish-eaters, boaters,
swimmers and commercial boatmen pay
for health issues? What about the
damage to the oyster and grass beds,
livelihoods for fishermen and
manatees?)

It's obvious that more direct
damage to the Gulf there is going to
affect us here. The Fenholloway River
is in Taylor County. Between them and
us on the coast are Dixie then Levy
counties, so not very far away. You
probably drive through Perry on your
way north.

Not too many people live in Taylor
County, its mostly trees, with about 18
persons per square mile compared to
Citrus at 180 persons per square mile.

Maybe the residents and
fishermen need some out-of-county

Ron Schultz, President
Joanne Bartell, Vice President
Jeff Auner, Secretary
Rosey Rendueles, Treasurer
Priscilla Watkins, Corresponding Secretary
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**TAMPA BAY SEAGRASS PROJECT
A SUCCESS**

After just 23 years, by May 2015,
Tampa Bay Estuary Program had
surpassed its 25-year goal with a total of
38,000 acres of new grass beds in the
Bay.
Brad Rimbey

This is good news and a resource
for our efforts to restock the Homosassa
River. Our last proposal to SWFWMD
for such a project was given to King's
Bay to augment their removal of
Kongbya. We also wish them well and
look forward to restoring the Homosassa
to its original clarity and sea grass
growth.



**SAVE OUR WATERS NOW (SOS)
ATTORNEY FILES FINAL
ARGUMENT – DECISION NOT IN
OUR FAVOR**

On May 26, 2015, SOS NOW attorney for Homosassa River Alliance et al filed the final response to our Appeal from DEP's final order on our demand they consistently apply Clean Water Act regulations to Outstanding Florida Waters through Minimum Flow Levels (MFLs). The Case was heard in Tallahassee's First District Court of Appeal.

In DEP's response to our original challenge to the Board vote by SWFWMD being inconsistent with anti degradations laws as applied to Outstanding Florida Waters, DEP declared that anti degradation law did not apply. We showed that not only had state and federal courts upheld it, it was validated by the Supreme Court decision in PUD No. 1 of Jefferson County, 511 U. S. at 718-720 in 1994; and that St Johns River Water Management District has been requiring compliance for decades.

Stating that DEP is not entitled to "cherry-pick" the rules it wishes to follow, or provide an interpretation of regulations that differs from the adjudicated definition, attorney John Thomas presented a masterful case against DEP's final order. We wondered if the LAW or politics matters more in the state of Florida.

The case was heard in August and the judge had a one word response – **rejected**.

Priscilla Watkins, Director of HRA and appellant in the case.

***Members please mark your
calendars for next year's Save
Our Waters Week***

Cindy Minguy

This was our 2nd year of participation in the Save Our Waters Week River Clean-up and it was fun and rewarding.

Next year the Save Our Waters Week (9/17/2016) will be the 27th annual Lakes, Rivers and Coastal Cleanup. Volunteers are needed.

You can put together a group or join ours for next year. Each person is required to sign up and fill out a hold harmless form. One representative is required to attend a short safety meeting the week prior. You are provided with hats, T-shirts, gloves, trash bags and water and all paperwork needed. This cleanup can be done by walking along shorelines, cleaning from your boat or kayak or any method you choose. Items collected need to be listed and trash dropped off at a collection point. There is a WESTSIDE VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION COOKOUT lunch served at noon. Sponsored by and located at American Pro Diving Center, Crystal River.

Visit

www.citrusbocc.com/waterres/conservation/ for an application. For more info, call (352) 527-7684 or email Debra.Burden@citrusbocc.com.

Thanks for your help. Cyndi Minguy
321-689-7878 cminguy77@aol.com

What is a TMDL? A **T**otal **M**aximum **D**aily **L**oad is a calculation of the maximum amount of a [pollutant](#) that a [waterbody](#) can receive and still meet water quality standards.

FDEP ADDRESSES NITRATE POLLUTION IN THE CHASSAHOWITZKA AND HOMOSASSA RIVERS

Brad W. Rimbey, P.E.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has adopted nutrient Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the Chassahowitzka and Homosassa Rivers at 0.23 mg/L. Thankfully, the adopted nutrient TMDLs of 0.23 mg/L are substantially below the State's default value of 0.35 mg/L for spring-fed riverine systems. Whether 0.23/mg/L is low enough to save these Outstanding Florida Waters from biologic collapse remains to be seen by future generations.

According to the Florida Geological Survey, the pre-anthropogenic baseline for nitrate levels in the Floridan aquifer was ~0.05 mg/L. Despite request, FDEP has provided no data which suggests the spring-fed Chassahowitzka and Homosassa Rivers had pre-anthropogenic nitrate levels above 0.05 mg/L.

According to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), the current (as of April 2015) nitrate pollution level for Chassahowitzka is 0.62 mg/L and 0.68 mg/L for Homosassa (see SWFWMD's springs dashboard website). The end result of FDEP allowing a nitrate pollution level of ~360% above natural levels is unknown. Based on current trends, no one reading this today will live long enough to see any improvement in water quality on these rivers.

FDEP must set TMDLs which are legally defensible. There is certainly no shortage of parasitic attorneys and fertilizer salesmen (take that as you wish) who will distort the facts to line their pockets. We must encourage FDEP to stand up to these charlatans. We, the people, must support FDEP's efforts to protect our beautiful and unique rivers for future generations.

FDEP must continue the work of Dr. Sean King regarding the relationship between algal impairment, nitrate concentrations, and reduced flow rate (aka increased residence time) in Florida's spring-fed riverine systems. The obvious disconnect between FDEP and Florida's water management district's continues to defy all logic.

Both FDEP and the water management districts are well aware of the relationship between flow rate and algal impairment. Nonetheless, in 2013, the SWFWMD adopted Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) rules which will undoubtedly contribute to the continued degradation of water quality via algal impairment on both of these Outstanding Florida Waters.

Last October, under State mandate, Citrus County's Commissioners unanimously adopted the State's meaningless model fertilizer ordinance. This ordinance does virtually nothing to address the root source of nitrate pollution in our State's spring-fed rivers. The pandering behind the State's decision to allow local politicians to make decisions regarding the protection of Florida's Outstanding Waters is obvious. Pontius washes his hands and another problem is seemingly solved. We'll see about that.

Citrus County has the greatest concentration of historic first magnitude springs and Outstanding Florida Waters of any jurisdiction in Florida. Under the blind eye of FDEP and SWFWMD, all of these OFWs have found their way onto FDEP's 303(d) impaired waters list for excess nutrient (algal mat) impairment.

Despite the hoopla regarding the recent \$1.3 million spent on the Chassahowitzka “springs restoration”, there is not one shred of evidence that anything aesthetic or environmentally meaningful was actually accomplished as a result of this project. We need to move past the political rhetoric and start focusing on what really needs to occur if any of our beautiful spring-fed rivers are to be saved.

SEVENTEEN YEARS LATER, THE RIVER ALLIANCE GOALS REMAIN THE SAME. UNFORTUNATELY, OUR RIVER HAS CHANGED

Florida’s endeavor to circumvent the mandates of the Federal Clean Water Act is simply disgusting. Our Outstanding Florida Waters are dying and our elected/appointed representatives seem clueless. In 1998, several members of the Old Homosassa Civic Club and some other citizens of like mind realized that if action was not taken soon to halt the alarmingly rapid deterioration of the Homosassa River and its environs, it would be too late. They formed a group under the support of the Civic Club and named it the “Save The Homosassa River Council”.

WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE - PLEASE JOIN NOW!

If you are currently a member and do not know if your dues are current, just check the mailing label on this newsletter. To the left of your name is a number which represents the year you last paid dues. If that number is earlier than 2013 and the dues are not paid before the next newsletter, you will unfortunately be deleted from our membership list. If you have not done so, please consider updating your membership with the River Alliance for 2015. Your support is needed and very much appreciated.

1. Water quality.
2. Spring and river flow and ground water levels.
3. Balancing quality of life and growth impacts.

This newsletter has a wide distribution, reaching out to members in and out of our county – to those who value and wish to keep the waters in our area alive and clear once again.

We hope this newsletter interests you as individuals and as groups to get involved with us in these efforts.

Our meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Homosassa Civil Center. We invite you to join us.