



Wave Maker's News

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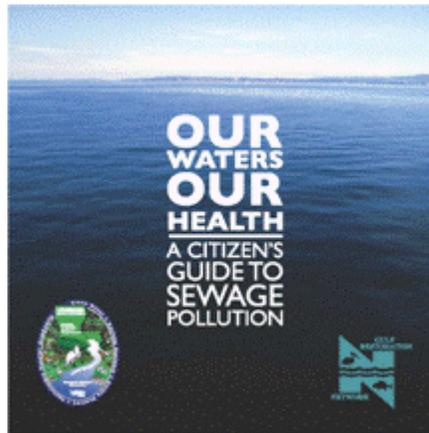
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Helping Citizens Push for Proper Sewage Treatment

What happens to the water once you flush the toilet or use the shower? Most of us would prefer to be in blissful ignorance and think that it is magically transported away... out of sight, out of mind. Unfortunately, if we don't pay attention, this sewage can end up in local streams, lakes, and bayous, harming wildlife and making it unsafe for our families to swim, boat, and fish.

Many sewage treatment plants throughout the Gulf are old or poorly designed and do not adequately treat sewage before it is discharged in to local streams. While it is the responsibility of state and federal agencies to make sure that our waters are not polluted from sources such as sewage

treatment plants, many waters throughout the Gulf remain polluted due to untreated or poorly treated sewage. Unfortunately, the responsibility often falls to the citizens of the Gulf to recognize potential threats and make sure that the responsible parties clean up their act.



In order to help Gulf residents recognize and address sewage pollution problems in their streams, bayous, and lakes, the GRN is pleased to announce the release of *Our Water Our Health: A Citizen's Guide to Sewage Pollution*. We hope that this new manual will be a guide for citizen groups and help them navigate the ways that sewage pollution is regulated. This new

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Pearl River Among America's Most Endangered

From its headwaters in central Mississippi running all the way to Lake Borgne, the Mississippi Sound and eventually the Gulf of Mexico, the Pearl River plays a critical role in economy, culture, and natural heritage of Mississippi and Louisiana.

The Pearl's forested wetlands filter Jackson's polluted runoff - a service worth \$6.8 million annually. Further south, the river's freshwater provides an essential balance to the salt waters of the Gulf. Not only is this freshwater critical to the survival of oyster, shrimp, and fish, but it is also vital in sustaining coastal wetlands which serve as natural hurricane and storm surge protection for nearby communities.

Unfortunately, developers are pushing plans to dam and dredge the Pearl in Jackson, to create fake lakes and man-made islands for private commercial gain. Almost 5,500 acres of wetlands and 7,800 acres of bottomland hardwood forests would be dredged or drowned. Consideration is also being given to building large earthen levees along portions of the river. Because of these threats, the Pearl River was highlighted in American Rivers [Most Endangered Rivers Report](#).

When looking at all of the proposals being developed for the Pearl we found a glaring omission—there was no comprehensive river wide approach. Flood control cannot be

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GRN Fights Fertilizer Pollution Along the Nature Coast

As Florida's population has grown so have threats to our streams, rivers, and estuaries. In 2005 massive amounts of polluted runoff reached the Gulf of Mexico, causing Florida to experience tremendous red tide blooms, algal blooms, and black water events resulting in massive losses of marine life. Our coastal communities and economy suffered, and Florida's vibrant beaches and estuaries were reduced to dead zones of discolored water and dying fish.

Reducing the pollution and runoff created by 19 million Floridians and their yards is a daunting and expensive task for local governments and state agencies. In 2006 and 2007 several local governments in Florida, at the urging of the conservation community, began to draft and pass local ordinances that limit or regulate fertilizer use on residential and commercial lawns and properties. Despite pressure from the fertilizer and lawn care industry, this simple, straightforward approach has caught on. Local counties and cities along the southern part of Florida's Gulf Coast have passed strong and visionary ordinances that protect coastal waters from polluted runoff high in nitrogen and phosphorus.

GRN has worked with the Sierra Club, the Healthy Gulf Coalition, local Audubon Society Chapters, and Native Plant Society groups on projects to regulate fertilizer use through passing local fertilizer ordinances. We are also working to amend local landscaping ordinances to require the use of native and drought-tolerant plants. Florida not only sends massive amounts of polluted runoff into the Gulf during normal rains, but we also waste water on thirsty non-native plants, robbing our rivers and streams of necessary flow.

Now we are working with a growing number of community, neighborhood, civic, fishing and conservation groups to push for strong local fertilizer ordinances in the counties along Florida's Nature Coast. We will be

working in 2008 and 2009 to pass ordinances in Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus Counties, the gateway to the Nature Coast. By passing these ordinances we can protect Florida's longest undeveloped coastline and some of the Gulf's most productive and healthy seagrass beds and estuaries.



Courtesy of Harrison Fox

Along the Nature Coast, pollution from fertilizer not only impacts our coastlines, but also degrades and pollutes some of the most magnificent springs in the world. Florida's Nature Coast is home to some of the largest springs in the state. Places like Weeki Wachee Springs are showing the impacts of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution as algal growths mar the crystal clear waters and white sand bottom of the river.

We all live downstream and everything we love in Florida is impacted by what we dump down our drains and sewers and what we put on our lawns. We must reject over-fertilized and water wasting turf grass and non-native plant landscapes that ruin our coast! Local fertilizer ordinances are the first step in protecting good fishing, clean beaches, pristine springs and healthy coastlines. ■

GRN Releases New Citizens' Guide continued from page 1

manual reviews topics, such as how sewage treatment works, what types of pollution come from sewage treatment plants, how to identify problems in your local water, and the basics of how states grant permits to sewage treatment plants. Additionally, the manual describes how citizens and community groups can successfully advocate for better sewage treatment utilizing tools such as coalition building, media, and the Clean Water Act.

Our Water Our Health was released in May 2008 and debuted at the River Network's River Rally in Ohio, where activists from throughout the United States learned how they can improve the lakes and rivers that they love. After the successful release, GRN is now beginning to arrange workshops for interested grassroots groups throughout the Gulf.

For more information or to schedule a workshop, please contact the Water Resources staff at the Gulf Restoration Network. ■

Dam Project Threatens Pearl River (continued from page 1)

developed with out looking both upstream and downstream. Current proposals, in their failure to look comprehensively, would only exacerbate and shift the problems downstream.

The proposals being pushed would create intense floodplain development. We have to look no further than the current Mississippi River floods for yet another example of the importance of keeping development out of floodplains. In order to create safe and resilient communities along the Pearl we must focus on restoring wetlands and floodplains, our natural flood protection.

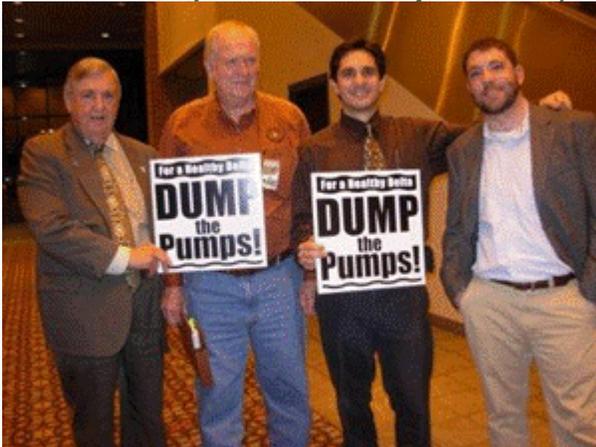
The GRN, along with citizens and other organizations, is calling upon the Army Corps of Engineers to say no to any dam plan on the Pearl. Instead of defaulting to levees, we're asking the Corps to first focus on discouraging risky floodplain development and to work with stakeholders across the basin to develop a comprehensive plan for the Pearl that addresses all of its problems and needs from the headwaters to the Gulf. ■



Photo by Tom Pullen

Pearl River press conference in Jackson, MS

EPA Veto of Yazoo Pumps Slowly Advances



GRN photo

Yazoo Pumps Public Hearing Vicksburg, MS

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to move forward with its veto of the Yazoo Pumps, a project that could destroy as much as 200,000 acres of wetlands in Mississippi.

The Yazoo Pumps is a 66 year old Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) project that would result in one of the world's largest water pumping plants in one of the most sparsely populated regions of the country. The project is designed to drain wetlands for agricultural intensification—with taxpayers being left to foot the more than \$220 million bill. Earlier this year, the EPA announced that it would veto the Corps project, effectively putting an end to the antiquated boondoggle that has persisted for years.

On April 17, fourteen Gulf Restoration Network members attended a [public hearing held by the EPA](#) in Vicksburg, MS in support of EPA's action to veto the project. A total of 34 citizens testified in opposition to the Yazoo Pumps, outnumbering the individuals who support the pumps. Those who spoke out against the Pumps represented an amazingly diverse set of interests and backgrounds, including students, scientists, social justice groups, hunting and fishing enthusiasts, environmental groups, and land trusts. Many local citizens also spoke out because they understand that the Mississippi Delta needs better education, infrastructure, and health care, not a pork project that will only benefit a small number of landowners at an unacceptable cost to the environment and taxpayers.

On June 23, the EPA's south regional office published its recommendation to veto the project. The decision now moves to the EPA headquarters in Washington, DC where the administrator will make a final decision. The EPA received over 47,000 written comments from the public, with 99% of all comments in support of EPA's decision to veto the Pumps. We wish to thank all the Gulf Restoration Network supporters who have taken the time to attend hearings, send in written or electronic comments, and educate others about this boondoggle. We will continue to keep you up to date, and we are optimistic that this work will culminate in a finalized veto and thousands of acres of wetlands saved. ■



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UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

Global Warming and Gulf Waters

Those of us along the Gulf Coast tend to take water for granted, mainly because there has traditionally been an abundance. Global warming may very well alter this reality. Changes in rainfall patterns and sea level rise are already having an impact on freshwater resources in the Gulf.

The severe drought impacting the state of Georgia has led to drastic measures with significant downstream impacts. In an effort to secure more water, Georgia tried to reduce the amount of water flowing into Florida's delicate Apalachicola ecosystem with severe consequences for wildlife and economy. As global warming causes shifts in climate, these types of water wars are likely to become more common as upstream users try to cope with increasing occurrences of drought by taking more water meant for downstream users.

In addition to the shift in rain patterns, sea level rise puts looming threats on the horizon for Gulf Coast residents. Rising sea levels will cause salt water to infiltrate surface water and below ground aquifers. Water contaminated with salt can not be used for drinking, irrigation, or industrial uses. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is already impacting Mobile Bay and Gulf Shores, Alabama.

The decreases in fresh water supplies will have devastating results for agriculture, industry, and residents in the Gulf States. Realizing the devastating impacts global warming could have on coastal communities, the GRN is promoting policy and action across the Gulf States to reduce global warming pollution. Halting global warming compliments and is an essential part of our ultimate goal of protecting and restoring our coastal resources and the communities that rely upon them. ■



Lake Bennett Woolly Hollow State Park in Arkansas

Courtesy of Weather.gov

Pollution Credit Trading Program Raises Concerns in Florida

Decades of bad permits, bad projects, and neglect coupled with massive population growth have done billions of dollars worth of damage and degradation to Florida's waters. As a result, Florida's local governments are facing massive and expensive projects to ensure Florida's lakes, rivers, coastlines, and drinking water are safe and clean.

Fixing decades of bad planning, and pollution is expensive. Now a pilot program in place along the lower St. Johns River only exacerbates the problem. As part of the pilot program polluters can buy and sell "water-quality credits." This market based approach allows polluters to avoid cleaning up their mess and instead purchase credits to offset continued pollution.

The Florida Legislature has authorized the pilot program and Florida DEP is setting rules for the program's potential expansion over the summer. Conservation and community groups are wary of market based approaches that may lead Florida away from the real and necessary steps to clean up our rivers and coastlines. The market can play a role in environmental protection, but strong oversight, safeguards, and regulatory policies must be in place to prevent yet another attempt by polluters to avoid cleaning up their mess.

GRN is monitoring this pilot program and is working to ensure that if this program expands it will not undermine the work of citizens across Florida to have clean, safe water and a healthy environment. ■