



Op-ed submitted by the Lake 100

St. Johns River Water Management District appointment

It has been twenty-four years since Lake County has been represented on the St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board. Water management districts were formed 47 years ago and appointments to the governing board of these districts are made by the governor. Considering the powerful role the districts play in the protection of water resources in our state and our county, it is shameful that Lake County has been so under represented.

For most Floridians, the five water management districts generally fly under the radar and aren't the subject of dinner table conversations. But their authority and influence over Florida's water resources is significant enough that Florida's residents and legislators should pay close attention.

The five water management districts play key roles in ensuring that we will all have a safe and reliable source of drinking water for decades to come. They also ensure protection of wetland systems and floodplains that are key to storing flood waters throughout the low-lying state and are also critical recharge areas for the underground drinking water supplies.

Much of Lake County is within the St. Johns district, which includes all or part of 17 other Florida counties in northeast and east-central Florida. Like much of the rest of the counties within the St. Johns district, Lake County's drinking water supply comes from below ground.

That's a finite supply of water that the St. Johns district is responsible for protecting. And all Lake County residents should want that water supply protected.

When you consider that Lake County is part of two of the district's three water supply planning areas, includes part of one of the district's most significant environmental restoration projects – Lake Apopka, and is home to 31 of the 96 springs that the district has documented, it becomes painfully obvious how overdue Lake County is for representation on the St. Johns board.

Gov. Ron DeSantis took a significant first step to bringing balanced leadership back to the St. Johns district governing board in February when he revoked the reappointment of three members of its board.

The Lake County Commission also took an important step in March when it sent a letter to Gov. DeSantis calling for a representative of Lake County to be appointed to the board.

Six of the nine board seats are open for appointment, which provides Gov. DeSantis an opportunity to reset the leadership and appoint representatives from historically unrepresented parts of the district, like Lake County.

Please join us in encouraging the governor to finally provide Lake County representation on the St. Johns board by appointing one of our residents.

Submitted by Lake 100, a not-for-profit organization comprised of various Lake County CEO's dedicated to promoting economic prosperity in Lake County. For more information about Lake 100, including opportunities for business owners and community leaders to join Lake 100, or to participate in forums hosted by Lake 100 about issues impacting Lake County, please contact Mandy Wettstein, APR, CPRC at mandywettstein@gmail.com