Dear Commissioner Crotty:

We are pleased to forward you the final report of the East Central Florida Water Supply Planning Initiative. The report is the culmination of Phase I of the Initiative, and contains the consensus recommendations of the participating local governments as well as suggested approaches for Phase II. We have sent the report to Kirby Green (see attached copy of that letter).

It is clear that local governments in the region accept that future groundwater withdrawals are limited. What is less clear is what they plan to do about it. However, there is a strong consensus in the region that more cooperative water supply planning needs to be undertaken, and that a regional, or at least greater-than-local, effort is required given the nature of the resource and the fact that impacts are felt beyond jurisdictional boundaries.

It is equally clear that the group as a whole is not yet ready to embrace a specific strategy or approach to Phase II of the effort, even though there is strong support for the proposition that something more is needed. In our letter to Mr. Green, we offered our own observations and recommendations based on our individual interviews and group meetings over the past nine months. We believe that these are consistent with the Phase I report principles and recommendations but will require further testing and confirmation with those jurisdictions and decision-makers interested in initiating Phase II efforts.

We believe that Phase II should:

1. **Shrink the area under study.** There was a good reason to include ten counties in the original discussion based on the District’s groundwater model, but we believe it is appropriate to narrow the focus to Brevard, Volusia, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, and Lake Counties at this juncture. These are also the counties within the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, which provide a forum to access, engage and update local government elected officials and other leaders on the progress of this initiative. We would recommend that the appropriate districts continue with outreach efforts on water supply planning with Polk, Marion, Flagler and Sumter counties.

2. **Continue the focus on subregional areas.** Based on pre-existing countywide organizations in Volusia and Brevard Counties (Volusian Water Alliance and Brevard Water Supply Board) and for hydrologic reasons, we recommend that those two counties be addressed individually. The SLOOP Group, a group of utility managers from south Lake, Orange, Osceola and Polk Counties, should be refocused to concentrate on Lake, Orange, and Osceola Counties. This smaller group still...
makes sense from a hydrologic standpoint, and Polk can be included for information and coordination if it desires to participate. Although Lake County has a Water Supply Authority, it has no countywide water supply planning, production or coordinating responsibility. For this reason, unless Lake County requests otherwise, we suggest that north Lake County and Seminole County be included in a sub-regional area. An alternative would be to engage Lake County and Seminole County separately, each on a countywide basis.

3. **Focus the Phase II discussion on reuse and new water supply issues and potential partnership projects.** Reuse was the top issue area identified during Phase I and new water supply is a critical issue for the region. Another important issue of priority to the participants was conservation, which is surely an important part of an overall water supply strategy. However, much work is already underway regarding conservation and little is being done in the region on the issue of new water supply. Therefore, we recommend that reuse and new water supply continue as focus issues for Phase II of the Initiative.

4. **Increase interaction with the business community on water supply issues.** The MyRegion effort currently underway has identified water supply as one of the region’s critical issues and provides an excellent forum to continue the dialogue with leaders in the business community.

5. **Structure subregional efforts so that local governments are providing the maximum input into the regional water supply plans.** Unless these subregional efforts are undertaken, there will be no process or group tasked with bringing together long term water supply planning efforts. If directed efforts are made at the subregional level in 2003, the local government input to the 2005 scheduled updates of the regional water supply plan will be immeasurably improved.

We are grateful to you for your leadership on this issue and to the governing boards and staff of the St. Johns River, South Florida and South West Florida Water Management Districts for sponsoring and participating in this worthwhile effort. We would be pleased to discuss or report further on these recommendations or any aspect of the Initiative at your request.

Sincerely,

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Attachments (2)