



Comments from supporters of Three Sisters Springs

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson: “This ensures the public can enjoy the beautiful springs and the manatees that depend on its unspoiled habitat. Many people have worked to make this conservation effort happen, and it’s wonderful to see it all come together.”

U.S. Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz: “The Three Sisters Springs project is tremendous news for Florida’s environment, and our economy. We secure an important breeding and calving area for endangered manatees, while also securing yet another gem for Florida’s burgeoning eco-tourism economy. Yet again we see that the environment and our state’s economy can go hand-in-hand. This is a great victory for everyone here in my home state.”

State Representative Ron Schultz: “Having Three Sisters Springs in public ownership can be the keystone in making the Nature Coast a world class eco-tourism destination. The Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, Weekiwachee Preserve and the Withlacoochee State Forest provide the conservation lands and habitat. Our Weeki Wachee Springs State Park and the newly renovated and expanded Ellie Shiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife Park already lure thousands. Three Sisters Springs attract and concentrate more manatees than anywhere else in the world. When we can add the opportunity for the public to see this unique phenomenon, our splendid piece of Florida will get the recognition it deserves.”

Mayor Ronald Kitchen, Jr., City of Crystal River: “The acquisition of Three Sisters Springs has been an historic event. Never before have I seen such a diversified group of individuals, groups and different governmental agencies come together in such a united way. Because of the effort and perseverance of all of those involved, future generations will be able to enjoy this wonderful natural treasure.”

Secretary Tom Pelham, Florida Department of Community Affairs: “The grant funds provided by Florida Communities Trust have ensured that local communities throughout the state of Florida can protect and preserve precious local resources for years to come. The acquisition of Three Sisters Springs was a true partnership effort by the different local, state and federal agencies involved, and I am pleased that Florida Communities Trust was able to play an important role in protecting this natural gem for Floridians and visitors to enjoy.”

David Moore, Executive Director, Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD): “This is a major acquisition to preserve one of Florida’s truly unique springs. It also provides the District with the opportunity to treat storm water entering the springs and Kings Bay, furthering long-term preservation.”

Hal Flowers, Seller of Three Sisters Springs property: “I’m a developer, and I’ve never seen such a diverse group of people get together to get something done. I’m so incredibly proud of that coalition. It happened because of these people.”

Michael Lusk, Refuge Manager, Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex: “For a refuge manager, acquiring a unique piece of property like Three Sisters Springs and being given the opportunity to manage it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I am honored to be the first Fish and Wildlife Service employee to be given the opportunity to manage this area as public property, but also understand the responsibility that goes with it. Our primary goal will be to protect Florida’s endangered manatees, but we are committed to working with the local community and the City of Crystal River to make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for the public to observe these magnificent animals in their natural habitat.”

Contact: Phone: (352) 563-2088; Email: Michael_Lusk@fws.gov

Lace Blue-McLean, President, Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex: “A project like this really does take a village. We wouldn’t have gotten to this point without the support of the community. Literally hundreds of people attended meetings, sent e-mails, made phone calls, raised money, and did whatever it took to get to this day. From the eighth-graders who picked up trash alongside the road to raise money for the project, to a member who took time off from his vacation in Iceland to send a letter to the governor, this truly was about a community that cared about protecting this special place.”

Contact: Phone: (352) 201-0149; Email: laceblue@gmail.com

Patrick M. Rose, Aquatic Biologist/Executive Director, Save the Manatee Club: “With the endangered manatee population suffering the worst losses on record this year (over 10% of the population), most of which were due to cold shock, the acquisition of Three Sisters Springs comes at a vital time when many hundreds of manatees desperately need a place to stay warm and protected during harsh winters. Having worked toward the acquisition of this priceless spring system for more than 25 years, it gives me great hope and encouragement that these critical springs will be preserved in perpetuity. The Save the Manatee Club is exceedingly grateful to all those who poured their hearts and souls into this project. In these very troubling economic and environmentally stressed times, the Three Sisters Springs project is a heartwarming example of how disparate forces can make a difference for future generations by coming together to protect a place of priceless beauty and safeguard a vital haven for endangered manatees and other wildlife.”

Larry White, Trustee, The Felburn Foundation: “The Felburn Foundation is pleased to have contributed to the preservation and protection of Three Sisters Springs and thrilled at the accomplishment. The achievement of this goal fulfills a dream pursued for many years by Ellie Schiller, of Crystal River, Florida, who was, until her death in February 2009, the heart and soul of the Felburn Foundation, established in 1978 by her father, Phil Felburn.”

Contacts for additional information:

Vanessa Vaughan, The Conservation Fund, 703-908-5809, vvaughan@conservationfund.org

Kathy Westra, National Wildlife Refuge Association, (202) 258-6661, westrake@rcn.com

Jeffrey Fleming, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (404) 679-7287, jeffrey_m_fleming@fws.gov