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DEP REACHES NEW MILESTONE IN SPRINGS PROTECTION
~Restoration goals now set for hundreds of Florida springs~

TALLAHASSEE - The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has adopted restoration goals for the Rainbow Springs Group and Rainbow River in Marion County, and Jackson Blue Spring and Merritts Mill Pond in Jackson County. These restoration goals, or Total Maximum Daily Loads, are scientifically derived pollution reduction targets designed to drive nitrate reductions so that the spring systems meet water quality standards and support healthy biological communities.

Including Rainbow and Jackson Blue springs, the Department has now identified the specific pollution problems to be tackled and established four pollution reduction goals affecting approximately 250 springs. Another five goals are scheduled for adoption this year to help restore 65 additional springs.

“The Department has made springs restoration a statewide priority and are working hard to address nutrient impacts to these unique waterbodies,” said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard, Jr. “We have seen a continued increase in nutrients in Florida’s springs since the 1960s and we are taking action to reverse this trend.”

The goal setting is just the first step for Rainbow Springs and Jackson Blue Spring. The Department will now forge restoration plans in concert with local stakeholders before the end of the year. These restoration plans will identify the projects necessary to reduce the sources of pollution, the resources necessary to implement them and the schedules for carrying them out.

“Nitrate loadings must be cut by 82 percent for Rainbow Springs and 90 percent for Jackson Blue,” said Drew Bartlett, Director of DEP’s Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration. “The problems are complicated. They weren’t created overnight and they won’t be solved tomorrow, but together we will restore these springs.”

Elimination of excess algae and invasive plants and better management of wastewater, stormwater and agricultural sources will be essential to achieving restoration. Basin residents making simple changes in their everyday life to conserve water, limit lawn fertilizing, properly maintain their septic tanks and pick up after their pets will also have...
a meaningful impact.

Last year, the Department adopted its first springs restoration plan carving out the path to restoration for the spring-fed Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers, with another four restoration plans to benefit springs slated in 2013 for the Suwannee River Basin and its springs, Wakulla Springs, Silver Springs and the Wekiva River and its springs.

With the support of Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature, the Department has committed $11.5 million to springs restoration, outreach, monitoring and research over the past two years. This is double the amount of money dedicated to springs during the three previous fiscal years. In addition, Governor Scott’s Florida Families First FY2013/2014 budget calls for an additional $6.5 million in direct funding for springs restoration and protection.

For more information about the Department’s TMDL and BMAP programs, visit: http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/tmdl/index.htm

About the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is the state’s principal environmental agency, created to protect, conserve and manage Florida’s environment and natural resources. The Department enforces federal and state environmental laws, protects Florida’s air and water quality, cleans up pollution, regulates solid waste management, promotes pollution prevention and acquires environmentally-sensitive lands for preservation. The agency also maintains a statewide system of parks, trails and aquatic preserves. To view the Department’s website log on to www.dep.state.fl.us.