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Marion County Board of County Commissioners
(Michelle Stone, David Moore, Kathy Bryant, Jeff Gold, Carl Zalak, III)
601 SE 25th Ave.
Ocala, FL 34471

RE: Protection of Salt Springs Water Quality and Aquatic Species

This report is provided on behalf of the Concerned Citizens of Salt Springs Florida. They are justly concerned that septage (treated or not) and stormwater runoff chemicals (e.g., hydrocarbons) from the proposed RV Park will result in degradation of water quality in the Salt Springs Recreation Area. Water quality degradation may adversely impact public health and safety of human swimmers as well that of Endangered Species Act threatened manatees that rely upon contaminant-free habitats. Related adverse environmental impact would adversely affect public interest and ecotourism and would, as such, be incompatible with surrounding land use designed to protect the spring resource. To this end, it is clear that a detailed environmental assessment has not been conducted to address these and other concerns. The lack of empirical data and analysis in the application provide justification for denial of a Special Use Permit.

I am a hydrogeologist with 36 years of professional experience, much with specific emphasis on karst hydrology. I have authored numerous papers and reports on caves and springs, including ones focused on land use in karst terrains. Relative to Florida, I have raised environmental concerns specific to proposed pipeline crossings through karst terrain, as well as the need for prudent land use planning designed to protect spring water quality. Please refer to the two report attachments that provide examples of this work including concerns regarding the vulnerability of karst springs to contamination.

I have reviewed orthoimagery, parcel data, and a topographic map of the proposed RV Park and surrounding area. In addition, I have examined and delineated the approximate topographic boundary of the shallow watershed area immediately surrounding the primary Salt Spring Recreational Area (see Figure 1, red polygon). This Recreational Area is used by the public for activities such as swimming and fishing. It is also an important sanctuary for the Endangered Species Act threated manatee, as well as assorted fish and mollusk species. Because this red-outlined area is very small, approximately 31 acres in areal extent, potential contaminant transport from within it may jeopardize the present water quality. It warrants special protection.