

## **Stay Vigilant Thank you & Southworth Sand Mine/Crystal River Borrow Pit Update**

**Dear Friends,**

**First, we want to sincerely thank everyone who was ready to show up on August 12th to speak or stand in support of stopping the Southworth sand mine. Your commitment means everything, if any of you showed we are sorry we tried to get the word out quickly, it was canceled without reason.**

**We've been reorganizing, pushing state agencies, and updating the website with new info and reaching out to the media. Check the site often — be sure to check the how to help section. This will be updated again soon.**

**A new flyer is posted at the bottom of the homepage. Please share it! There are major misrepresentations in the mine's application, and they must be exposed. Recognition of the FACT this is an Outstanding Florida Water location must be acknowledged. [Citrus County Board of Commissioners/LDC, SWFWMD reviewers, CES consultants, and other responsible entities have all failed or refused to acknowledge the borrow pit site is in an Outstanding Florida Water/Priority Focus Area.](#)**

**There is a lot of information below please keep reading. We have learned so much about how wrong this is on so many levels. Right Now we need to be ready if this stays at the County level or if it goes to the State. We are prepared and getting ready for either. This is NOT hopeless if it goes to the State. There are things that can be done! There are still many variables in this and as soon as we have confirmation of what is happening we will be informing you. We need everyone to stay engaged and please continue to help as you are able.**

**The sand mine does not belong here. Stay engaged. Stay vigilant.**

## **FDOT Pressure, Public Trust & Transparency Concerns – Cancelled Hearing & Public Speculation**

The Citrus County Board of County Commissioners hearing on the Southworth mine, scheduled for August 12, 2025, was abruptly cancelled less than five hours before it was set to begin. Citizens had traveled from across the state to attend, only to be told the applicant requested a continuance at the last minute.

This sudden cancellation, combined with Florida's Department of Transportation (FDOT) documented interest in acquiring fill material for the Suncoast Parkway, has fueled public concern that parallel negotiations may be occurring outside the normal public permitting process. While no proof has yet been offered, the timing and lack of explanation have created a perception of backroom dealing. We have strong reasons for being concerned. At the May 27th BOCC meeting Justin Hall of FDOT sent a letter to Commission Kinnard stating;

**“Currently the land development code and zoning requirements (including setbacks and public hearing/meeting requirements) make this task unattainable within the project schedule... FDOT is seeking Citrus County's assistance...”**

FDOT even suggested **“no permits needed”** for the duration of the Parkway project.

This shows a disturbing attitude: public hearings and environmental permits are “in the way,” not safeguards. It raises legitimate concerns about whether FDOT influence could pressure SouthWest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) or Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) into overlooking statutory protections.

In matters involving an Outstanding Florida Water and Priority Focus Area, transparency is essential. The public deserves to know whether

any agency or state entity — including FDOT — is considering direct acquisition of the site to bypass the public hearing and permitting safeguards that protect our aquifer, springs, and manatee habitat.

This is not just about one parcel of land.

**This is about whether Citrus County and the State will follow its own laws, protect its water resources, and defend the long-term public interest** — or allow an irreversible excavation in one of the most sensitive aquifer recharge areas in Florida. Once the damage is done to our water, springs, and aquifer — there is no going back.

## **Crystal River–Kings Bay Outstanding Florida Water / Priority Focus Area Ignored in the Sand Mine Application**

**Core Issue:** The Southworth sand Mine/Crystal River Borrow Pit in Citrus County, Florida, is advancing with misleading information in its Environmental Resource Permit application. The **application denies** the site's location within an **Outstanding Florida Water, Outstanding Florida Spring, and Priority Focus Area**, despite clear evidence from state maps and Citrus County GIS confirming these designations.

This matters because Outstanding Florida Water's and Priority Focus areas are Florida's highest-protected aquifer recharge areas, where contamination can travel quickly and directly into springs. Kings Bay provides 99% of its flow from groundwater, supports critical manatee habitat, and sustains Citrus County's tourism economy.

## **What do these Misrepresentations and Oversight Failures Mean?**

### **1. Credibility of the Applicant and Consultant**

The ERP application form is clear: knowingly providing false information is a **violation of Florida Statute §373.430 and 18 U.S.C. §1001**. Yet the applicant — represented by Creative Environmental

Solutions, Inc. (CES) — denied the site’s location within an Outstanding Florida Water (OFW) and listed receiving waterbodies as “Not named,” despite both Citrus County GIS and official state maps confirming otherwise. CES is not a novice operator; they are a professional firm with decades of experience. The failure to identify basic mapped facts raises the appearance of misrepresentation and undermines confidence in the accuracy of the application.

## **2. Failure of Oversight by SWFWMD and Department of Environmental Protection**

These errors should never have survived first-round review. Both SWFWMD and DEP are custodians of the very maps that confirm the site’s OFW and Priority Focus Area status. **Accepting incorrect answers at face value undermines their statutory responsibility** under Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, and F.A.C. 62-330.301. By overlooking these facts, regulators risk complicity in stripping protections from one of Florida’s most sensitive spring systems.

## **3. Impact on Public Trust**

Public trust hinges on truthfulness in permitting. When applications contain false or misleading answers — and when those **answers are allowed to stand uncorrected** — the public is left to question whether decisions are based on facts or on expediency. This perception erodes confidence in local and state government alike and **diminishes faith in the regulatory system** that exists to safeguard our water and natural resources.

## **4. Legal and Ethical Risk**

**Misrepresentations in a permit application are not just technical errors**; they carry serious legal consequences. Courts have consistently invalidated permits granted on the basis of false or incomplete information. By moving forward without correction, every party involved — the applicant, CES, SWFWMD, and DEP — risks reputational harm, liability exposure, and the invalidation of the project.

## Conclusion

The omissions and misleading answers in ERP Application reflect poorly not only on the applicant and CES, but also on the agencies tasked with ensuring environmental protections. **The public should not have to be the last line of defense to expose such fundamental facts. It is time for accountability, correction of the record, and a full review of whether this application can lawfully proceed.**

## What Must Happen

We call on SWFWMD and DEP to:

1. **Acknowledge** and verify the **Outstanding Florida Water/Priority Focus Area/Outstanding Florida Spring** status in the permit record.
2. Deem the **Environmental Resource Permit incomplete** and issue a Request for Additional Information (RAI) correcting the misstatements and assessing aquifer connectivity and non-restorability.
3. **Investigate misrepresentations** by the applicant and consultant.
4. Direct a **full Governing Board review** of whether ERP #48405.000 meets statutory requirements under F.A.C. 62-330.301 and Citrus County Comprehensive Plan Policies 17.9.3 and 17.13.4.
5. We must continue to fight this if this goes to the State next. We can do this. You can help now by getting this information out there all entities involved need to acknowledge this is an environmentally protected area under the Florida Aquifer and Springs Protection Act.

**Please verify this information for yourself here is information you may need. Everything is available online publicly. You do not need to FOIA this information.**

ERP Application #48405.000 (App ID 912905 – Crystal River Borrow Pit)

Location of the Southworth Sand Mine/Crystal River Borrow Pit  
Sections 11 & 12, Township 18 South, Range 17 East, Citrus County, Florida

Southworth Sand Application Atlas Amendment/Planned Unit Development (CPA/AA/PUD2025-00001) to change approximately 322 acres from agricultural to extractive.

1. **SWFWMD ERP Application #48405.000**, Microsoft Word - 02-02-Sec\_C\_wetlands - 12.29.20 (5) **Section C: Supplemental Information for Works or Other Activities In, On, or Over Wetlands and/or Other Surface Waters Section C, Part 1, Question 6** — (Found on the ERP website)
2. **Affidavit of Publication** — the line for “Outstanding Florida Water” was marked “NO”. (Found on the ERP website)
3. **SWFWMD ERP** Application for Individual and Conceptual Approval Environmental Resource Permit, State 404 Program Permit, and Authorization to Use State-Owned Submerged Lands **Section A, Part 1, K** — “Name of waterbody(ies)... into which the system will discharge” — the applicant wrote “Not named”. (Found on the ERP website)
4. 4. From J Coutu Geotech-Hydro-Mitigation Plan reduced file size (2).pdfSincerely (found on the Citrus County Website)
5. J. Coutu Staff Report prepared for the special master hearing on 6/27/25 (found on the citrus County website).

6. You can listen to the BOCC hearings on 5/27/25 with the FDOT, (on Citrus County Website), 6/27/25 Special Master Hearing is on U-tube.
7. Many documents publicly available with the ERP.

### **Here's the reality:**

**If you mine here, you will change the water table. If you change the water table, you change the springs. If you change the springs, you change Crystal River, Kings Bay, and the manatee habitat — forever**

**Bottom Line:** The Southworth Borrow Pit is non-reclaimable, aquifer-connected, and located in a protected Outstanding Florida Water/ Priority Focus Area/Outstanding Florida Spring zone. Proceeding with false application information violates state law, undermines public trust, and endangers Crystal River and Kings Bay's environmental and economic value.

**Thank you for staying engaged, staying vigilant, and standing up for Citrus County's springs, aquifer, and future.**

**Stop the Sand Mine Committee**