



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 28, 2012**

## **SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT -- ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

**Setting the Record Straight on the Gainesville Sun Editorial: Purge at DEP**

The editorial omits critical factors:

- **The Department has directed \$11.5 million to springs protection alone.**
- **The Department's numeric nutrient criteria – designed to clean Florida's waters – has been approved by the U.S. EPA and an Administrative Law Judge.**
- **Statewide to date, the Department has adopted 13 waterbody restoration roadmaps to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus, about half of which were adopted in the past 24 months.**

**CLAIM:** Headline characterizes recent staffing reduction as a "purge."

**SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT:** The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has 3,024 full-time employees, plus another 830 part-time employees, statewide who are dedicated to enforcing federal and state rules, studying the environment and seeking to leave Florida better tomorrow than it is today. Recent reductions amount to 1.5 percent of the workforce. To characterize this percentage of employees as a purge is factually inaccurate and omits significant improvements made by the Department.

**CLAIM:** "And in a master stroke, the department has laid off 58 veteran employees who were apparently too serious about doing their jobs." . . . and "purged the DEP of its most senior and experienced regulators."

**SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT:** The Department's recent reorganizations were conducted after months-long assessments of procedures and processes as well as staffing and workload levels. The process has included thoughtful assessments to implement measures that increase the effectiveness of reaching the Department's core mission of protecting environmental and human health. No programs or core functions have been eliminated and the Department's level of service will not be compromised.

By reorganizing districts and divisions, leadership eliminated levels of bureaucracy that improve communication, created a stronger employee to supervisor ratio and combined or elevated similar functions to become more efficient and consistent.

The Department has directed \$11.5 million to restoration, outreach, monitoring and research of springs – **doubling the amount of money spent from the three previous fiscal years** and identifying projects to take action.

**CLAIM:** "...protection of Florida's much abused water resources has become a joke. Scott has... fought off federal water quality regulations..."

**SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT:** Florida submitted its rules directly to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which reviewed and ultimately approved the entirety of the state's numeric nutrient criteria prepared by Department scientists. These rules provide a reasonable and predictable implementation strategy and for the first time provide numeric criteria to cover all lakes, rivers, streams, and now 72 percent of our estuaries. Over the last three years, the Department has developed a better understanding of nutrient impacts to our waterbodies, leading to the establishment of numeric nutrient criteria that will increase protection of Florida's waters.

The notion that Florida is acting in defiance of federal agencies is a direct contradiction of the fact that proposed rules were upheld by both a state Administrative Law Judge and the EPA. This endorsement by the EPA proves that Florida is capable of implementing statewide rules that equal or exceed the protection afforded by current federal rules.