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from the The Florida Current 2/7/14:

## Associated Industries of Florida forming coalition on water issues while Simmons seeks consensus

Bruce Ritchie, 02/06/2014 - 05:53 PM

**Associated Industries of Florida** announced Thursday it is establishing a coalition to make recommendations on state and federal water laws affecting Florida.

Meanwhile, **Sen. David Simmons**, R-Altamonte Springs, said Thursday he will work with groups, including Associated Industries of Florida, that have raised concerns about Senate draft springs legislation.

"Doing nothing is not an alternative -- that's what I say to people," Simmons told *The Florida Current*. "If you don't like it, tell me what you would do to solve the problem."

A Jan. 10 version of the draft legislation called for sewage treatment plant upgrades in areas with polluted springs and upgrading septic tanks in areas where sewer lines cannot be extended. The bill would earmark an estimated \$378 million a year for wastewater treatment improvements.

Twenty-three groups including Associated Industries of Florida raised concerns in a letter sent last week to Simmons and other senators who are backing the measure. The groups said Florida also has the regulatory tools it needs to address springs issues.

But Simmons said Thursday that current law lacks timetables and specific goals for cleaning up and protecting springs.

A **Florida Department of Environmental Protection** official this week told a House subcommittee that Florida is leading the nation in the development of numeric limits on nitrogen and phosphorus, which DEP says are the standards used to clean up waterways. Those rules will take effect in Florida when federal rules are repealed, a process that is expected to begin in March, but the pollution limits are being used now to develop waterway cleanup plans.

In announcing its "**Florida H2O Coalition**" on Thursday, Associated Industries of Florida said years of below-average rainfall and reduced infrastructure spending during the recession exacerbated a shortfall in water supply across the state. The association said water quality and water quantity issues have the potential to limit residential and business growth.

"This coming session we will be encouraging lawmakers to support a comprehensive, statewide plan to address our current problems and plan for future needs, advocating for science-based solutions and adequate funding for badly needed programs, supporting

alternative water supply options and highlighting the need to fund regional projects that are in line and ready to deliver results,” said **Tom Feeney**, a former House speaker who is CEO and president of AIF.

Meanwhile, some environmental groups are planning a ["Clean Water Rally"](#) on Feb. 18 at the Capitol and are asking Florida residents a "Clean Water Declaration."

Also this week, the **Earthjustice** law firm criticized **Attorney General Pam Bondi** and Florida for joining 20 other states in trying to block water quality regulations for the Chesapeake Bay.

Bondi stated in a brief along with the other opposing states that a district court decision approving the pollution limits "defies the limits of the Clean Water Act and strips states of their traditional right to make land-use decisions necessary to comply with federal water quality standards."

**David Guest**, Earthjustice managing attorney in Florida, said in a statement on Tuesday that Bondi and **Gov. Rick Scott** "are doing the bidding of corporate polluters" at taxpayer expense.