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### Adena Springs Ranch consumptive use permit

Posted on 2/2/2012

#### Public input

Public input on the Adena Springs Ranch consumptive use permit application can be provided on the [District's e-Permitting site](#).

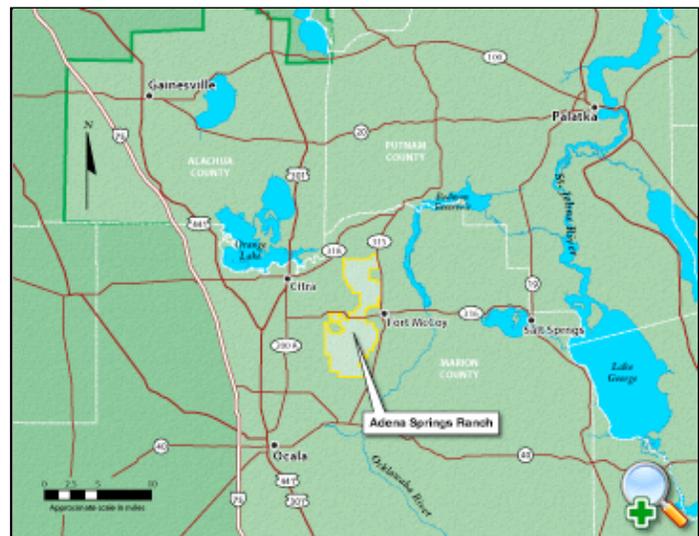
#### The permit application

The St. Johns River Water Management District received a consumptive use permit (CUP) application on Dec. 2, 2011, for the Adena Springs Ranch in Marion County. The permit application, which District staff are currently reviewing, seeks to withdraw 13.267 million gallons of water per day (mgd) for agricultural, commercial, industrial, and livestock uses.

Prior to the permit application being received, District staff met with the applicant to discuss their plans. The applicant originally discussed applying for a permit to withdraw 27 mgd, but that amount was reduced to 13.267 mgd after meeting with District staff.

The applicant proposes using the 13.267 mgd for the following:

- Agriculture to grow forage (food) for cattle (12.56 mgd)
- Cattle watering (0.48 mgd)
- Power plant cooling (0.16 mgd)
- Plant processing (0.06 mgd)
- Potable water for employees (0.005 mgd)
- Pesticide use (0.004 mgd)



Following its initial review of the application, District staff sent a Request for Additional Information (RAI) to the applicant on Dec. 29, 2011. An RAI is used when additional information is needed before District staff can determine if an application meets District permitting criteria. The applicant has 120 days to respond to the RAI or to ask for an extension of the time frame. The date to provide a complete response to the RAI is April 28, 2012. The applicant has provided some of the additional information that was requested.

After the application is considered complete, the District staff will prepare a recommendation for the Governing Board. The Board will consider the recommendation in a public meeting at the District's headquarters in Palatka. The public will have a right to attend and speak at that meeting.

#### The permit process

During the permit review process, the applicant and District staff will evaluate the requested withdrawals using groundwater flow models. This evaluation will allow District staff to simulate site-specific impacts of withdrawals on the Floridan and surficial aquifers, the environment, water bodies with minimum flows and levels (MFLs), as well as the impacts on other permitted water users. The


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# Facts

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## Adena Springs Ranch consumptive use permit application

Updated on 4-27-2012

Text in red indicates updated information.

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### Public input

Public input on the Adena Springs Ranch consumptive use permit application can be provided on the [District's e-Permitting site](#).

Public comments are compiled monthly and can be [viewed](#) on the e-permitting site. Click on the "Public Correspondence Received by Month" folder.

Following its initial review of the application, District staff sent a Request for Additional Information (RAI) to the applicant on Dec. 29, 2011. An RAI is used when additional information is needed before District staff can determine if an application meets District permitting criteria. The applicant had 120 days (until April 28, 2012) to respond to the RAI or to ask for an extension of the time frame. **The applicant provided some of the additional information that was requested, and on April 27, 2012, requested an additional 120 days to complete the RAI response. The District approved the request and the new date to provide a complete response to the RAI or to request another extension is Aug. 26, 2012.**

After the application is considered complete, District staff will prepare a recommendation for the Governing Board. The Board will consider the recommendation in a public meeting at the District's headquarters in Palatka. The public will have a right to attend and speak at that meeting.

### The permit process

During the permit review process, the applicant and District staff will evaluate the requested withdrawals using groundwater flow models. This evaluation will allow District staff to simulate site-specific impacts of withdrawals on the Floridan and surficial aquifers, the environment, water bodies with minimum flows and levels (MFLs), as well as the impacts on other permitted water users. The applicant is working with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and has agreed to meet all best management practices for agricultural operators. This includes meeting all state water quality standards.



One of the water bodies the District will review for possible impacts when considering the application is Silver Springs. Though the final rule adoption process for the Silver Springs MFLs will not be completed until 2013, much of the scientific study on the MFLs has been completed and will be available for use by District staff as they review the Adena Springs Ranch CUP application. MFLs are the minimum water flows and/or levels adopted by the District Governing Board as necessary to prevent significant harm to the water resources or ecology of an area resulting from permitted water withdrawals. Waiting until the MFLs for Silver Springs are adopted to make a determination on the Adena Springs Ranch CUP may not be an option because Florida law directs the District to take action on an application within 90 days of its completion and make a determination to issue or to deny the permit. An application is deemed complete when all requested information is received so District staff can determine if the application meets the District's permitting criteria.

As with all CUP applications, District staff will review the Adena Springs application to ensure that it is for a reasonable-beneficial use, that it does not interfere with other existing legal water uses, and is consistent with the public interest.

### **Additional information**

The applicant was issued an environmental resource permit for the construction of a stormwater system at the processing plant by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in December 2011.

The District has authorized the construction of a 4-inch well. The 4-inch well does not require a water use permit because it is under the District thresholds (under 100,000 gallons per day actual use, under 1 million gallons per day/capacity). The District also authorized a 12-inch well (with associated monitoring wells) to be used in an aquifer performance test, but the 12-inch well is not active at this time.

The Adena Springs Ranch bought a 660-acre sod farm that had an existing consumptive use permit allocation of 0.548 millions of gallons of water per day for sod irrigation. Adena Springs assumed this allocation and is operating under the terms of this permit. This is the only permit for water use they have at this time.

### **Public input**

The District has received letters and emails from members of some communities surrounding the Adena Springs Ranch. All of that input, in addition to any received up to the day that the District Governing Board considers the staff's recommendation, will be provided to the Board.

Public input on the application can be provided on the [District's e-Permitting site](#).

## Objections raised on water permit

By [Fred Hiers](#)

Staff writer

Published: Friday, February 3, 2012 at 5:21 p.m.

Grass-roots resistance is growing against a Canadian-based businessman's request for permission to pump as much as 13.27 million gallons of water per day in Marion County for a future cattle operation near Fort McCoy.

Frank Stronach is asking the St. Johns Water Management District to allow him to pump that much, if he needs it, to irrigate grasslands to feed cattle. In the past two years, the former auto parts mogul has purchased more than 24,000 acres in northeast Marion County and another 36,000 acres in Levy County for the operation, which could grow to 30,000 head of cattle.

Stronach also plans to build a 61,000-square-foot meat processing plant as part of the operation, which will be called Adena Springs Ranch. He already owns the Adena Springs farm in Williston, where he keeps horses and some cattle.

"I'm really against this, wholeheartedly," said Beverly Wood, 61, referring to the water request.

Wood lives in Eureka, close to the Fort McCoy land where Stronach plans to drill about 130 wells. She said the area already has water problems, and Stronach's siphoning would only diminish the aquifer and reduce flows of the Silver Springs and Ocklawaha River.

"I'm going to also print it (her objections) up on fliers and post it wherever I can ... to let people know," the retired legal assistant said.

Wood is one of about 60 people who have written the water agency so far asking that it at least postpone ruling on Stronach's request.

The agency is reviewing the permit application and is requesting additional information from Stronach's engineers. Once that information is received and analyzed, staff will make its recommendation to the agency's board.

The process, which is expected to take a few months, will include public input during the board's meetings.

David Tillman, one of the engineers who applied for the permit on Stronach's behalf, told the Star-Banner that the ranch would likely never need the full 13.27 million gallons. It will rely on rain for much of its irrigation.

In most area cattle operations, irrigation isn't needed, but Stronach's ranch would be different.

Most Marion County cattlemen send their young cows west to feedlots outside Florida, where they are quickly fattened before slaughter. Stronach plans to produce only grass-fed beef. To keep his cows on a grass-only diet, Stronach will need more grass than other area cattlemen — and to do that he'll need water, especially during the winter months, to grow the grass.

Katie Tripp, director of science and conservation at the Save the Manatee Club, is asking the St. Johns Water Management District to wait until the water agency finishes its most recent studies of the Silver River.

St. Johns is currently working to determine the river's minimum flow levels. Minimum flow levels determine how low a river can go before fish, vegetation and other wildlife that depend on the water are harmed.

Until regulators know that, they don't know how much Stronach can safely withdraw from the aquifer without doing harm to area waterways, Tripp told the Star-Banner in a telephone interview

Tripp said that while landowners have a right to water, the water district has an obligation to protect Florida's resources.

As for Tillman's prediction that the ranch probably won't need all the water, Tripp said, "You can't control the weather. If they give them permission to withdraw that much, they can withdraw it."

Mark Roberts, Stronach's Adena Springs farm manager in Williston who is overseeing his land purchases, said people should wait before objecting.

"Let's get all the science and data in," Roberts said. "It's a sensitive issue."

But without the water, Roberts admits he can't grow enough grass for his cattle and they would likely get shipped elsewhere and the meat processing plant would be scrapped.

"But that's up to Frank (Stronach)," Roberts said.

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