

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DIVISION OF RECREATION AND PARKS
OFFICE OF PARK PLANNING**



**GILCHRIST
BLUE SPRINGS**

**PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS
AND COMMENTS**

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

- 3. Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- 2. Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing

- 1. Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

*Educational workshops for
Students + visitors*

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- 1 Water Quality and Springs Protection
- 3 Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- 2 Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- 5 Public Recreational Access
- 4 Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

*1. Do not want to see a link to
Rum Island*

2. No Pavement

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks**

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In SNORKELING

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
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- Other - Write In _____

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- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

~~FA~~
NSS-CDS ~~SA~~ UNDERWATER CAVE ARCHIVING PROJECT
BASED ON THE NFSA PROGRAM DEVELOPED BY KELLY JESSUP
PROJECT OBJECTIVE: ① TO ARCHIVE BIOLOGICAL/GEOLOGICAL
ASPECT OF CAVE SYSTEMS TO CREATE A BASELINE OF INFORMATION
ABOUT THE SYSTEM & THE AQUIFER

② TO DO THIS BY: SYSTEMATIC FAUNA COUNTS BY DIVERS

+ ADDING DIVER MOUNTED HYDROLOGICAL INSTRUMENTS TO MEASURE
DISSOLVED OXYGEN, CONDUCTIVITY & TEMP/DEPTH

③ CREATE A PHOTO ARCHIVE OF PARK BY TAKING SYSTEMATIC PHOTOS
OF THE PARK OVER PERIODS OF TIME TO CREATE TIME LAPSE
VIDEO OF THE LIFE OF A SPRING

Michael Angelo Gasliardo

773-531-4993

-NSS-CDS CONSERVATION CHAIR

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

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Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)

Swimming

Picnicking

Paddling

Hiking

Tubing

Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study

Other - Write In Boardwalk Improvements

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

Water Quality and Springs Protection

Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection

Public Recreational Access

Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Are there any plans to build retaining walls around the springs?

Any plans to improve the boardwalk?

Are you going to pave the entry road and parking lot, it is needed?

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Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)

Swimming

Picnicking

Paddling

Hiking

Tubing

Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study

Other - Write In EDUCATION/Environmental Center

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Water Quality and Springs Protection

Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection

Public Recreational Access

Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

This really is the most beautiful spring. I can't think of a better representative of Florida's springs than this one.

It's important that we use that as a way to educate visitors on Florida's water & aquatic systems.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
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- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

As Much RECREATION AS POSSIBLE

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
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- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In diminished flow due to excessive GW use

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Please include a Florida Springs Environmental Center

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

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Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)

Swimming

Picnicking

Paddling

Hiking

Tubing

Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study

Other - Write In MAXIMIZE RECREATION

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

Water Quality and Springs Protection

Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection

Public Recreational Access

Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF ACRES - KEPT
IN NATURAL STATE ALONG
RIVER. NEED PUBLIC
RECREATION FACILITIES - OPEN
AS POSSIBLE - SO PEOPLE WILL
NOT FEEL NEED TO DO NEW
DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL AREAS.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
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- Tubing
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- Other - Write In _____

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- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Signed park boundary fences.

Protection of adjacent land owners from trespassers.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In SNORKLING

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

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- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

NEED TO DO EDUCATIONAL SNORKLING TRIPS IN SMALL GROUPS

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

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- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

In terms of recreation, I think it would be neat at the end of the boardwalk to provide stairs down to the Santa Fe confluence. Many people climb down the boardwalk & cause erosion on banks. If access to that portion of the spring run were added it would reduce physical impact & provide easier access to river and downstream run.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

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- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

keep it as a sanctuary. An example of Springs protection and restoration. Give classes Support NGO's that are involved! OSFR, Springs Institute
Create volunteer programs
Create educational programs for schools
minimal septic phase !!! Recycle, lots of
garbage Bins Thanks!

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

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- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Need to add ^{more} activities in addition to the current #1 attraction which is the diving platform, such as hiking trails and educational opportunities about the eco system and more to do for children, maybe a playground. btw, I'm disappointed that the beach is no longer there. That was good for small kids. I think camping could be added as long as the campsites at other local parks, like O'Leno are not underutilized.

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Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)

Swimming

Picnicking

Paddling

Hiking

Tubing

Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study

Other - Write In Snorkeling

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

Water Quality and Springs Protection

Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection

Public Recreational Access

Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

This should be an opportunity for families
visitors to enjoy the natural resources
and natural beauty of the Springs and
surrounding property while maintaining
a balance of protection of natural
resources.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

THE CAMPSITES IN THE BACK OF BLUE
SPRINGS OFFER A FEELING OF ISOLATION
FROM THE OTHER SITES WHICH IS SOMEWHAT
UNIQUE. I OFTEN SEE OR HEAR FEW
IF ANY OTHER PEOPLE WHEN I HAVE CAMPED
THERE. IT WOULD BE A GREAT LOSS IF
THIS WERE CHANGED.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In Park Ranger Walks - Education

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection 1st
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection 2nd
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In Leave Wild Areas alone (Do NOT PAVE ROAD)

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

- limit Swimming to 3 days a week -
tent camping is nice please donot let this
become a RV PARK - We need Wild spaces!

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

- ESTABLISH CARRYING CAPACITY FOR MAIN SPRING
- MAKE NEARBY SPRING WHICH HAS BEEN USED FOR SWIMMING OFF LIMITS TO SWIMMING - INCORPORATE INTO NATURE TRAIL
- CURRENT CAMPING AREAS OVERLAP AREA OF BEST POTENTIAL FOR SANDHILL RESTORATION - REMOVE THIS CONFLICT
- WHAT IS TARGET COMMUNITY SOUTH OF ENTRY ROAD? HIGHLY DISTURBED & BETTER FOR CAMPING
- REMOVE CURRENT BOARDWALK ALONG SPRING RUN

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

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- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

I have never been to Gilchrist Blue Spring, therefore I will limit my priority to the protection of the area including the 2 issues I checked off above.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In OTHER

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

- Please incorporate an educational program like?
- Ranger/ volunteer walks thru nature
- kiosks like Peacock Springs interpretive trail
- signage not only warnings about how fragile nature is but to educate people on what the nature is here
- start a art in the park program

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- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming / SNORKELING
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

IN CONJUNCTION WITH RECREATIONAL ACCESS AND MINIMAL-IMPACT CAMPING AREAS.

RESTRICT ACCESS FOR MOTORIZED WATERCRAFT.

PERHAPS PUBLICLY POSTED REGULAR WATER-QUALITY DATA, WITH
HISTORIC DATA LEVELS ALSO VISIBLE.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In Educational programs

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

As the most pristine spring system along
the Santa Fe Blue must be protected +
yet promoted to educate residents, visitors
about these natural resources + how to
care for + protect Blue, Naked + Santa Fe River

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In Do not compete with local Rental Business like the Ick!

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

I live very close and would like to see the park protecting the springs and not exploiters them for state profits!

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- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- 2 Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- 3 Hiking
- Tubing
- 1 Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- ~~*/~~ Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Thank you for taking this on for all of us. Keep reaching out to the public, there are a lot of people very willing to help. Including many who do not live here but spend several weeks at a time here, i.e. cave divers (even if it isn't available for diving)

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- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In Food Service

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

keep it clean, keep it natural. If it is already
~~too~~ developed use it. If it is not developed
leave it alone.

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In Don't pave the roads, I like the sand roads feels like old Florida

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

~~It~~ I would like to see the roads in and to the park remain sand/dirt feels more natural like old Florida ~~is what~~

Also the jumping dock is my favorite part of the spring I see alot of state and USDA parks taking them away due to safety concerns, but its so much fun.

Thank you :)

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

I Like Snorkeling in Blue Springs

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

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- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Buy Water shed properties not springs

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study

Other - Write In updated facilities. They're all old

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In Stop Agriculture in the Area

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
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- Tubing
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- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

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- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

*Impress upon the public if you "bring" it
in you "take" it out!!*

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- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing *no*
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In Trail walking / Hiking / Geo caching

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Thanks for helping us preserve
this beautiful natural wonder.

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Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)

Swimming

Picnicking

Paddling

Hiking

Tubing

Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study

Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

Water Quality and Springs Protection

Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection

Public Recreational Access

Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

How are you going to handle the "traffic"??
I live by the entrance to Poe Springs Rd
across from a Shell station - Not conducive to
heavy traffic - Don't want to spoil the ambiance
of down town High Springs but yet the boost
to the economy might be welcome - so it is
a fine balance to be maintained -

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In SNORKELING

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

DEVELOPE CARRYING CAPACITY

ALLOW OUTSIDE ECO TOUR PROVIDERS

CONTROL THE CONCESSIONAIRE NO TAIL WAGGING DOG

DESIGNATE A PADDLE CRAFT LAUNCH FOR PEOPLE WHO

BRING THEIR OWN GEAR TO NOT CONFLICT W/

CONCESSIONAIRE (LIKE @ SILVER RIVER)

NO CEMENT RETAINING WALLS AROUND SPRING.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

SNORKELING

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

THANKS SO MUCH PARK STAFF! GOOD JOB!
I'm excited about the future of this Park: envision
it being a leader in educating the public about our sacred
springs. PROTECTION OF THE FLORA-FAUNA OF THE
SPRING RUNS MUST BE A TOP PRIORITY! The Park can
continue the legacy of love built by the Davis family by
conducting educational tours of the spring runs. I envision
biologists or trained volunteers taking small groups on
snorkeling tours, educating generations to come on preserving
our Sacred spring
The Park must remain the People's Park in Perpetuity
Never open for privatization - No hunting, No logging, livestock!
EVER

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Would like to see the boardwalk rebuilt
and a limit of people wading down
the run

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In ITS ALL FINE AS IT IS

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Blue Spring is a gem and has been so well
cared for in private ownership, It has a
very "mom & pop" type feel to its management/staff.
I think its charm is in how little
developed and over-engineered it is... very simple,
the jumping platform is a ritual and allows
us also to see down into the spring from
above (which is seldom possible elsewhere.)
the camping is mostly primitive which is
also an asset asset. I hope it can
largely be left as is.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In DIVE PLATFORM

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

THE DIVING PLATFORM IS UNIQUE.
THIS PRIVATELY OWNED SPRING IS BEAUTIFUL
JUST THE WAY IT IS. PLEASE DO NOT
RUIN IT.

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks**

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In Snorkeling

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)

Swimming ☆

Picnicking

Paddling ☆

Hiking

Tubing

Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study ☆

Other - Write In _____

☆ ← top 3

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

Water Quality and Springs Protection

Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection

Public Recreational Access

Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

I would like to see a small section of the park turned into a designated turtle area where we may watch them sun bathe but no one can disturb this area. Why, you ask? so the turtles will stay and more will come. Also a gumball machine with turtle food would be a nice addition to the park.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

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- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In public recreation and education

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Tubing run so you can see more of the River

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

SWIMMING BLUE & NAKED RUNS (NO WADING) OR WALKING ON BOTTOM

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

GILCHRIST BLUE SPRINGS PARK recommendations:

Move all picnic tables at least 200 feet from spring waters. Change entrance where fees are collected to at least 600 feet from spring waters. Allow swimming in Blue Springs Run and Naked Springs run only in the months of September through February with limited access 8 to 10 am for swimming the runs in the other months. **ABSOLUTELY NO WALKING IN BLUE OR NAKED RUNS!!!!** Create a more green park like setting from picnic tables down toward spring waters geared towards landscaped native plants and specifically designed to reduce erosion. Reengineer parking for more efficient use and at least 300 to 400 feet from spring waters. Handicap parking closer. Create handicap walkway. Create primitive dirt trail walkways.

ERIC PARKER
352 3188880
EPARKER84@GMAIL.COM

Dear Planning Board for Florida State Parks:

Gilchrist Blue Springs is now a state park! It has been a long process, and a wonderful outcome for the people of Florida who so love this beautiful spring. Thank you for all your work to help the spring. I have been there several times recently, and I've seen changes already that will help the springs.

I'm concerned about recreational usage--specifically *wading*--destroying the beautiful Blue Springs and Naked Springs runs. Nope, no one ever had a eureka moment about the springs from wading in them. The rapture of experiencing the springs is from being immersed in the waters, brought to revelation by seeing the beautiful world of water, aquatic life, and plants, in a magical underwater world. And this opportunity is (only) possible here in North Florida, in a healthy spring. *There is no immersion in wading.*

The beautiful springs runs at Blue springs and Naked Springs, are a world treasure. They need to be protected from wading, to safeguard the delicate beauty of these underwater gardens. Snorkeling tours could be a great way to appreciate this landscape, as with Rainbow Springs. A good boardwalk, with belvederes like at Volusia Blue Springs park, could encourage people to study and learn the underwater world. An educational program, with snorkeling instruction, and information about the wide array of underwater plants and species, could give folks a coveted "Underwater Springs Ambassador" award, or even, "Underwater Master Gardener" status. As with the snorkeling tours at Rainbow springs, expert volunteers could share information about the life in the different springs world that swimmers are about to enter. Steps at the far end of the boardwalk, at the confluence of the Santa Fe River, would protect the runs from those who can't swim back up, but would be trampling on plant life and snails, both of which are crucial to the health of the springs. Without these plants and creatures, the water quality would degrade and no longer be inviting for swimmers or tourists.

I've heard many complaints about "No float lines!" But underwater, none of us really see the float lines. We just see the beauties that they protect.

I hope the state considers the aesthetic inspiration they provide many of us, *beyond* recreation. Gilchrist Blue Springs and its runs have inspired my paintings for decades, and even video narratives—see attached. These films have inadvertently provided documentation of the SAV at Gilchrist Blue.

The world has seen the richness of these underwater gardens through art and film, and it's an inspiration we need to protect. These images are a beacon for tourists who come to Florida to see the springs. On the boardwalk at Volusia Blue, I've heard five different languages being spoken while families study the wildlife in the waters below.

The headspring at Blue, with the jumping dock, and wading areas, generally serves a purely recreational function. It has long been stripped of vegetation. With the new park entrance fee (less than the previous fee) people will pour in in the summer to enjoy the cool waters and the excitement of jumping into these springs. A wonderful experience! But the increase in visitors will be exponential.

But the springs runs should be inviolate. These are the richest, and most diverse springs runs on the Santa Fe, per biologist Tom Morris who did the survey.

Swimming and wading take a toll on the vegetation in the springs.

Rainbow springs' swimming area is stripped bare of vegetation, even though it is too deep to wade. Ichetucknee River, on the top half, suffers major damage during the season from tubers wading down the run. The eel grasses and submerged aquatic vegetation are essential in helping the river de-nitrify itself, as you may have read in Matt Cohen's chapter in AQUIFERious.

Many state parks limit access for kayaking, as in Fanning, or Volusia Blue. We can always find safe ways to explore the springs runs over time, but for now we need to protect them, as they are irreplaceable treasures. They provide a haven for wildlife and guarantee biodiversity. Those beautiful "underwater gardens" are the last line of defense for the springs to fight water pollution, along with snails and creatures that eat the algae and help control it. Instead of a concessionaire for kayaks and floats, why not hire them to handle an education program and guided snorkeling tours?

These “gardens” of SAV are one of the few sources of food on the Santa Fe for the dozens –sometimes hundreds–of turtles that we regularly see there, as most of the other springs and the river bottom, are denuded of vegetation, with strands of algae covering the river bottom. On occasion Gilchrist Blue provides manatee refuge for this very reason...in many other riverine areas, there is nothing for them to eat.

The sparkling and healthy underwater gardens at Fanning, Manatee, Peacock, much of Ichetucknee, and so many springs in Florida , that I was so privileged to see and be transformed by, are gone. They have given way to clotted ropes of algae and cloudy waters. *One Spring*. Please help us preserve **One Spring** to show our citizens and the world what a beautiful healthy spring can be like. Please let me know how I and others who love the springs runs can help you in this effort.

Let’s keep the unspoiled wild places in Gilchrist Blue Springs! Protect the springs runs!

Sincerely yours
Margaret Ross Tolbert

1. Like the Upper Ichetucknee, GB’s spring run is shallow and easily damaged by wading, swimming and canoe paddles.
2. GB’s run is a lush manatee pasture that is important for the health of the manatees (and turtles) that inhabit this part of the Santa Fe River.
3. The scenic beauty of the run, as seen from the boardwalk, is an important attribute of this state park. Artists, photographers and just plain folks want the run protected.
4. The spring is popular for active recreation and the run should be zoned for passive recreation (wildlife and natural scenery appreciation).

:

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

- opportunity to provide a different experience from other local recreation areas
- can regulate spring use so it doesn't receive excess pressure/footprint
- can use restoration of sandhills to inform public of mixed uses that don't get exposure
- Rx burning + its benefits, controlled/rotational timber harvest

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

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- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks**

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- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks**

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- Other - Write In _____

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- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Gilchrist Blue has been a place for locals and
visitors to enjoy for many years. We want to make
sure Gilchrist Blue is open for public use. We invite
folks to come and explore our Santa Fe River and all
its hidden beauty!

Develop Gilchrist Blue with public recreational
access!

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks**

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- Swimming
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- Other - Write In _____

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- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Please Keep Natural, do not increase
cance * Kayak rentals.

Please minimize signs * any form
of commercialization

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
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- Swimming
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- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

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- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Access to the spring and river by the public is such an opportunity at Blue Springs. Hopefully the management plan will protect and enhance the resource - the water quality, the vegetation and wildlife, while allowing the public to enjoy it. The larger threats to the spring - nitrate pollution & water withdrawal will affect the spring, but perhaps the spring can be a window to the problem of overpumping and nitrate pollution and raise awareness about the fragility of the ecosystem.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
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- Hiking
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- Other - Write In _____

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- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

ADD BETTER ACCESS & PAVILIONS FOR A COUPLE OF
THE OTHER MINOR SPRINGS ON THE PROPERTY

LANDSCAPE BETWEEN THE PAVILIONS & MAIN SPRING
WITH NATIVE PLANTS AND NO FERTILIZER

FIX BOARDWALK

ADD PAVED ENTRANCE DRIVEWAY

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

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- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

- 1- Landscape area between pavilions and main spring with native plants and no fertilizer
- 2- Fix boardwalk to Suwanee
- 3- Include pavilions or benches at secondary springs
- 4- Pave the driveway into Blue Springs
- 5- Make the front area near the pavilions quieter, less commercial, more natural
- 6- Add mats by the bathrooms so dirt isn't tracked in and staff don't have to clean constantly

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

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- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing

Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
 Other - Write In Spring/Aquifer Education

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

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- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Need to stress Aquifer protection education

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

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Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)

Swimming

Picnicking

Paddling

Hiking

Tubing

Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study

Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

Water Quality and Springs Protection

Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection

Public Recreational Access

Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Improving water quality will improve the other areas of concern.

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks**

COMMENT FORM

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- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

WHERE: Gilchrist County Public Library
105 NE 11th Ave.
Trenton, FL 32693

I think the most important issue here is to minimize the commercialization of the park. I am aware that Gov. Scott wishes to make parks pay their way, but the huge danger there is that we lose sight of the purpose of our state parks, which is as follows:

Quote---The goal of the Florida Park Service is to help create a sense of place by showing park visitors the best of Florida's diverse natural and cultural sites. unquote

The goal is to preserve a Natural Florida, not to make money, and the less human impact allowed will make for a greater natural Florida and a better park.

Traffic in the swimming area and spring run is already excessive on weekends. Don't try to make a novelty park or an amusement park. Minimize signs and let the natural beauty of the park stand alone.

Don't try to compete with local kayak and canoe rentals; these are local businesses which contribute to our community in many ways, much more than just providing a service of boat rentals. They are centers for community, cultural and environmental events and resources for educational historical and nature kayak trips. Rum 138 rents kayaks but also supports art, Sierra Club, music, and environmental events; Adventure Outpost's Lars Andersen, is a local historian and nature expert; Three Amigos dive shop hosts river clean ups.

Local businesses such as these are an asset to our community and if the park monopolizes their businesses, their disappearance will be an irreparable loss to our area. The income they generate stays in the Fort White and High Springs area, but the profits made at the park will not stay here. This has already happened at Ichetucknee State Park and has been our local loss.

Jim Tatum 914 SW Riverland Ct. Fort White, FL 32038
386 454 1916

I own 10 acres and live on the Santa Fe about one mile upstream from Blue Springs.

Jim Tatum, 914 SW Riverland Ct. Fort White.

I live on the river about one mile from Blue Springs. As a riparian land owner and user of Blue Springs I have an interest in its future. I am also a member of Our Santa Fe River, Inc. which had a role in the state's acquisition of the springs for a park, but I am speaking here as a land owner nearby. We are so happy that the state will preserve Blue Springs and the surrounding land area.

I think the most important issue here is to minimize the commercialization of the park. I am aware that Gov. Scott wishes to make parks pay their way, but the huge danger there is that we lose sight of the purpose of our state parks, which is as follows:

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Division of Recreation and Parks

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- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

As a Gilchrist County Resident I believe the State has the responsibility to giving the public access to this park, but in a controlled way. It should be treated similar to Manatee State Park in Christland giving access for swimming & other recreational uses to the public. As a business owner in the county it also would bring business to our rural county

Thank You
Michael Faught

Myrched Fought
P.O. Box 38
Bell, FL 32619

JACKSONVILLE FL 320

06 DEC 2017 PM 41



Office of Park Planning
Florida Dept of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation & Parks
3900 Commonwealth Blvd, MS 525
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

950555555555



Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

1. What recreational activities would you like to see developed or enhanced within Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top 3.**

- Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Paddling
- Hiking
- Tubing
- Wildlife Viewing/Nature Study
- Other - Write In _____

2. In your opinion, what is the most important issue to consider in the future management of Gilchrist Blue Springs? **Please choose your top priority.**

- Water Quality and Springs Protection
- Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites
- Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection
- Public Recreational Access
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

hat threaten
With the pumping and pollution of our springs
it is imperative that the springshed is also
protected. Please work to reduce nitrate levels
to the 0.35 mg/l. Please work to encourage
farmers of nearby properties to pump less
water to irrigate their fields.

Thanks,
Dave Wilson

Received by OPP 12/12/17



Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

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3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Please keep our Blue Springs area as a park for people to enjoy. Please do not close it down or severely restrict usage. Restrict some, if necessary, but like the Ichetucknee, the wild life and environment can be reasonably managed and still allow us to use the springs.

Holly Creel
Kerh Creel
Gilchrist Residents

Holly & Ken Creel
2317 NW 66th Court
Gainesville, FL
32653

Office of Park Planning
Florida Department of Environment
Protection

Division of Recreation & Parks
3900 Commonwealth Blvd. MS 5
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

GAINESVILLE FL 326
11 DEC 2017 PM 4 LEOR



Barn Swallow

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

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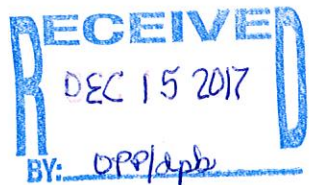
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- Ecosystem Restoration
- Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Water quality improvement and protection underlies all other options and is achieved not only by funding appropriate measures and BMP development but also by appointing qualified people in leadership positions. E.g., WMD board members.

Phyllis Saarinen, Fl. DEP ECC 1987-91



Phyllis Saarinen
827 NW 125th Dr
Newberry, FL 32669

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

COMMENT FORM

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Overnight Accommodations (i.e. Camping, Cabins)

Swimming

Picnicking

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Protection of Archaeological and Historic Sites

Wildlife Habitat and Threatened Species Protection

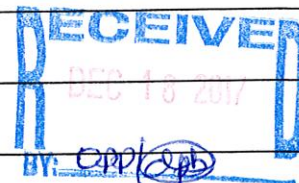
Public Recreational Access

Ecosystem Restoration

Other - Write In _____

3. Please include any other comments or suggestions:

Water quality ~~is~~ in the Springs is a result of how we collectively control the land in the entire watershed. The Springs is only the result and we can't change water quality at all by limiting recreation of the Springs.



Charles & Ann Smith
3649 NW 67th Terrace
Bell, FL 32619

Baxley, Demi

From: Lori Di Domenico <ldid35@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 7, 2017 1:26 PM
To: FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs

Hello Sine, Cliff, Tyler, Dan, Gabby,

In reference to the planning for Gilchrist Blue Spring State Park, I will hope that the Springs will be protected yet enjoyed by others. One idea that I thought of would be to form the boardwalk in a way that people can get in and out using steps, so they wouldn't have to walk up stream after floating down. An example would be Volusia Blue Springs State Park in Orange City. The way they have constructed the boardwalk is ideal, in my opinion. You can get in and swim up stream without touching the bottom and Float back. Possibly close the Spring run every other month to allow the vegetation a chance to bounce back. From my experience of visiting other state parks and County Parks the boardwalks certainly save the ground and the trampling of vegetation. I'd like to offer my services to volunteer if any help is needed with the park. I have already added my phone number and name to a list at the main gate. If ever you need somebody qualified to teach kayaking, I am certified with American canoe Association to teach and I am also a registered nurse. If, in the future you have openings, I would certainly be interested in working at Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park.

Best regards,

Lori DiDomenico RN

Baxley, Demi

From: Mullen, Christina M. <mullcm@shands.ufl.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2017 9:51 AM
To: FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: Further protection for Florida's natural wonders

Dear Planning Board for Florida State Parks:

Gilchrist Blue Springs is now a state park! It has been a long process, and a wonderful outcome for the people of Florida, and beyond, who so love this beautiful spring. Thank you for all your work to help the spring!

The beautiful springs runs at Blue springs and Naked Springs, are a world treasure. They need to be protected from wading, to safeguard the delicate beauty of these underwater gardens. Snorkeling tours could be a great way to appreciate this landscape, as with Rainbow Springs. A good boardwalk, with belvederes like at Volusia Blue Springs park, could encourage people to study and learn the underwater world. An educational program, with snorkeling instruction, and information about the wide array of underwater plants and species, could give folks a coveted "Underwater Springs Ambassador" status. As with the snorkeling tours at Rainbow springs, expert volunteers could share information about the life in the different springs world that swimmers are about to enter. Steps at the far end of the boardwalk, at the confluence of the Santa Fe River, would protect the runs from those who can't swim back up, but would be trampling on plant life and snails, both of which are crucial to the health of the springs. Without these plants and creatures, the water quality would degrade and no longer be inviting for swimmers or tourists.

The headspring at Blue, with the jumping dock, and wading areas, generally serves a purely recreational function. It has long been stripped of vegetation. With the new park entrance fee(less than the previous fee) people will pour in in the summer to enjoy the cool waters and the excitement of jumping into these springs. Yes—it's a wonderful experience!

But the springs runs should be inviolate. These are the richest, and most diverse springs runs on the Santa Fe, per biologist Tom Morris who did the survey. Swimming and wading take a toll on the vegetation in the springs. Rainbow springs' swimming area is stripped bare of vegetation, even though it is too deep to wade. Ichetucknee River, on the top half, suffers major damage during the season from tubers wading down the run. The eel grasses and submerged aquatic vegetation are essential in helping the river de-nitrify itself.

Many state parks limit access for kayaking, as in Fanning, or Volusia Blue. We can always find safe ways to explore the springs runs over time, but for now we need to protect them, as they are irreplaceable treasures. They provide a haven for wildlife and guarantee biodiversity. Those beautiful "underwater gardens" are the last line of defense for the springs with water pollution, along with snails and creatures that eat the algae and help control it.

They are one of the few sources of food on the Santa Fe for the dozens —sometimes hundreds—of turtles that we regularly see there, as most of the other springs and the river bottom, are denuded of vegetation, with strands of algae covering the river bottom. On occasion Gilchrist Blue provides manatee refuge for this very reason...in many other riverine areas, there is nothing for them to eat.

The sparkling and healthy underwater gardens at Fanning, Manatee, Peacock, much of Ichetucknee, and so many springs in Florida are gone. They have given way to ropes of algae and cloudy waters. *One Spring*. Please help us preserve **even One Spring** to show our citizens and the world what a beautiful healthy spring can be like. Please let me know how I and so many others who love the springs runs can help you in this effort.

Let's keep the unspoiled wild places in Gilchrist Blue Springs! Protect the springs runs!

Sincerely yours

Tina Mullen
Director
PO Box 100326
Gainesville, FL 32605
PH: 352-733-0880



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Transforming the hospital experience through the Arts
<http://artsinmedicine.ufhealth.org/>

Baxley, Demi

From: Debbie Venn <debevenn@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2017 3:44 PM
To: FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs

Dear office of park planning,

Thank you for making such a good investment for the people of Florida and the world. I love cool clean water and Gilchrist Blue Springs is one of the best examples I have ever seen.

Floating down the spring run from Blue or Naked Spring is an incomparable experience. I hope you will find a way to keep that treasure alive. I go early in the morning before the runs get clouded from people walking.

My dream would be a way to keep allowing floats DOWN the big run to Santa Fe, and (as the current is too strong for me) walk back on a boardwalk.

Deb Venn
904.443.7722

Baxley, Demi

From: Michael S. Riffle <msrif@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2017 8:42 AM
To: FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Michael Riffle and I'm a frequent visitor to the newest state park in the great state of Florida. I've visited this park many times over the last few years. My passions are two-fold, Florida springs and photography. I marry these passions when I visit the springs in our state. I've photographed this new state park from above and below the waterline, both during the day and at night. It is a natural wonder to behold.

I wasn't able to make the meeting Tuesday night, nor will I be able to be present at the meeting tomorrow night, so I'm writing this email to add my comments to the public record.

Since you will be hearing so many points of view, I'm only going to make two suggestions.

1) I think the spring runs from both Blue Spring and Naked Springs should be closed for swimming between Memorial Day and Labor Day. This is the time when the spring runs suffer the most from traffic due to large crowds. During fall, winter and early spring months, there is far less traffic in the spring runs and native vegetation is able to not only recover, but thrive. I've watched the eelgrass in the Naked spring run recover completely during the last two winters. In fact, the eelgrass almost completely grew across and filled the run last winter. The same is true for the red ludwigia in the Naked headspring. I watched it almost take over the far side of the spring last winter. It was beautiful!

2) For those times when the runs are open, consider an educational sign at each headspring. It could be very simple and say something like "The submersed aquatic vegetation in this spring run is both unique and sensitive. Please consider floating down the run without touching bottom as much as possible to preserve the beauty of this natural spring run."

I am presently a volunteer at the Natural Bridge State Park which includes the new Horn Springs acquisition. In my application, I also listed Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park. I have a plant biology background and would be happy to help in any way I can.

Thank you for receiving these comments,

Michael S. Riffle, Ph.D.

msrif@comcast.net

850-566-9070

Baxley, Demi

From: Federation Chief <federationchief@nsdjax.org>
Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2017 2:11 PM
To: FLStateParkPlanning
Cc: Federation Council
Subject: Blue Springs

Good afternoon,

I am writing to share my concerns regarding Blue Springs and its future.

I am the Federation Chief of the Native Sons and Daughters Program in Jacksonville, <http://www.nsdjax.org> and Blue Springs has been a great resource for our program. The ability to camp near the spring and let our kids play in it all day is an easy activity to sponsor and the park has not been as wild as Ginny Springs has become.

The park staff have been great. They have shared their archeological finds with our kids as part of our "Archeological Digs" in the volleyball court. Unlike most of the state parks, we have been allowed to setup BB Gun stands, Archery and a zip-line. Also, unlike the state park system, Blue Springs has allowed us to reserve sections of the campground for our group, without having each family pay on-line, first come, first serve. The first come, first serve method does not work because other families wind up being surrounded by our kids and eventually complain they are surrounded by the craziness of kid's activities.

While it certainly would be nice to be able to have a drop off or pickup up or down-stream from the park for canoes and tubes, the thing the campground needs the most is posted lifeguard hours. Members of our program have twice saved other people's kids from drowning. While the campground should still allow late-night plunges into the spring at camper's own risk, there should be a lifeguard during the time the day-visitors are there.

Some other additions that could be helpful would be a few cabins for rent, and small camp store.

Something that is of great importance to our program is our fire ceremony. While we occasionally have had to be creative during fire bans, our main performance for the kids during our fall and spring campouts is the Sacred Fire Ceremony and is at the very heart of our program. It would be great to have a dedicated fire pit for group fires, especially if we could reserve it. While our program welcomes any campers to witness this amazing performance, it takes a few hours to setup for.

While I am excited that developers did not purchase the park and that it may still exist as a usable resource, I am nervous as to what the State Park system may turn it into. I am hoping that my concerns are nothing and that the park will become an even better resource than before. I look forward to transitioning this partnership to the FL Park System for generations to come.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about our use of the park or about our program.

Spirit Bear – aka Ron Smith
Timucuan Federation Chief
Native Sons & Daughters of Jacksonville
904-993-8524
federationchief@nsdjax.org

Baxley, Demi

From: Murray, Sine
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 11:28 AM
To: Margaret Tolbert
Cc: FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: RE: Hi is this the correct address of sending input about Gilchrist Blue Springs?

Hello Margaret, yes you can send them to directly to me if that is most convenient for you.

However, our preference is for comments to be emailed to FLStateParkPlanning@dep.state.fl.us with Gilchrist Blue Springs in the Subject Line.

You can also send you comments via regular mail to this address.

Office of Park Planning
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation & Parks
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 525
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us about Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,
Sine



Sine A. Murray
Senior Planner

Office of Park Planning
Division of Recreation and Parks
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Phone: 850.245.3061
Cell: 850.284.6551
sine.murray@dep.state.fl.us
Visit The Real Florida at: <http://www.floridastateparks.org>

From: Margaret Tolbert [mailto:mrtolbert@me.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2017 11:23 AM
To: Murray, Sine <Sine.Murray@dep.state.fl.us>
Subject: Hi is this the correct address of sending input about Gilchrist Blue Springs?

Baxley, Demi

From: brianobrien17 . <brianobrien17@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 22, 2017 11:17 AM
To: Murray, Sine; FLStateParkPlanning
Cc: mrtolbert@mac.com
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs

GIVING THANKS--

To all who made the purchase of these spectacular natural wonders possible!

Please highlight the fragility of Floridas most pristine springs to ALL future visitors. Most folks have experienced concrete swimming pools, slides and waterparks more often than these unique natural habitats. "Tread Lightly" campaigns have worked well for walking/hiking; Lets make a caliberated effort to start "Float not Feet" policy aimed at preserving the flora and fauna of Blue Springs from being trompeped beyond recognition. Most folks happily comply if they have the knowledge.

Thanks,

Brian K. O'Brien
Gainesville, FL

brianobrien17@gmail.com

561-262-3706

Baxley, Demi

From: Lesley Gamble <lgamble@arts.ufl.edu>
Sent: Saturday, November 25, 2017 1:46 PM
To: FLStateParkPlanning; Murray, Sine
Cc: Lesley Gamble
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs Park Management Plan

25 November 2017

Dear Florida State Park Planners,

As a longtime visitor to Gilchrist Blue Springs Park, I'm writing to share my thoughts on the management plan for your most recent acquisition.

My first and foremost wish is for the protection of Gilchrist Blue's unparalleled natural beauty and ecological productivity, particularly the abundance and healthy diversity of underwater flora and fauna in its runs.

Today, Blue's diverse plant and animal life is rarely glimpsed in other springs, with perhaps the exception of Rainbow Springs' restricted sections of run and the small area just beyond Ichetucknee's Head Spring. Far beyond recreation value, Gilchrist Blue is peerless as a site for artistic and spiritual inspiration, scientific research, and crucial "ecosystem services" that include food and habitat for a wide range of plants and animals, denitrification and carbon sequestering.

Looking back, Blue is the only remaining example of a mid-20th century family-run Florida tourist spring, offering a unique potential for historic preservation.

Looking ahead, Blue is a premier site for springs and aquifer research and education. I know this firsthand, from the week-long Springs Ambassadors Camp for middle schoolers I created in partnership with Alachua Conservation Trust in 2016. Here's a link: <http://springseternalproject.org/camp/>

A frequent visitor over many years, I've spent hundreds of hours snorkeling and documenting Gilchrist Blue's springs and runs. As a videographer and director of the Springs Eternal Project (along with my partners John Moran and Rick Kilby) I'm familiar with most of Florida's larger springs as well as many of the smaller, more obscure ones *from an underwater perspective*.

Although I'm not a scientist, I can tell you, from visual and educational experience, that Gilchrist Blue is the best "preserved" (when in recovery) and most beautiful of Florida's springs. Here's why: It offers one of the most "natural" settings (no concrete walls, no paved trails, no paved parking lots); an abundance of "healthy" vegetation and fauna as well as consistent color and clarity (when not overly impacted by recreational users or storm events like Irma); and is the least defiled by algal domination, probably due to its flow and the fact that it often harbors a diverse range of flora and fauna. It is clearly in our own best interests to acknowledge, preserve and protect this magnificent yet fragile ecosystem.

I don't think it's hyperbole to say that Gilchrist Blue is the crown jewel of Florida's once magnificent array of artesian springs. As most of our springs are now highly degraded, suffering visibly and biologically from reduced flows and increased pollution, Blue is one of the last Florida springs to offer glimpses, at various moments, into what a relatively healthy (or at least functioning) springs ecosystem might look like. In a very real sense, Blue is a rare and endangered species. Like her siblings across the state, many of which have disappeared or are so degraded as to be unrecognizable, she won't survive if we don't take intelligent, committed and decisive measures to protect her.

Gilchrist Blue has been a crucial site for scientific research and artistic output. Many local as well as international painters, photographers, writers and filmmakers (i.e. Margaret Ross Tolbert, David Moynahan, Jenny Adler, Tom Morris, Mark Long, John Moran) have found inspiration in Blue, and most of my underwater video footage has been shot there. My video "Swimming Through Air" (link: <https://vimeo.com/108267111>) is on permanent display in the Florida Museum of Natural History's Discovery Room. Sharing the underwater wonders of our springs with generations of Floridians and visitors, young and old, inspires new springs enthusiasts and a rigorous commitment to our state parks, our best emissaries for "the Real Florida."

My biggest immediate concern for the management of Blue is recreational usage, specifically wading in Blue Spring and Naked Spring runs. I have watched helplessly and aghast as visitors wade up and down the runs, oblivious to the creatures that live there and the fragile plants and grasses they trample. Waders destroy the runs, which take months or sometimes years to grow back. Without protection, the runs will reach a point where they cannot recover.

Let's start by protecting Blue's beautiful and unique spring runs from waders. There are already several promising models offered by other springs parks. At Rainbow Springs the run is closed to regular visitors. However, snorkeling has been available by reservation, which offers a way to experience and appreciate the delicate underwater vegetation while also protecting it. Guides make sure that visitors know how to snorkel properly, have plenty of time to explore on their own but don't touch the plants or animals, and are given informed, ecologically sound answers to questions. At Crystal River, it's mandatory for visitors to watch educational videos about manatee biology, habitat and endangerment, as well as guidelines for interaction before they head out to Three Sisters Springs.

A similar model could be offered at Blue, focusing on our mutually interdependent relationship with the springs and Floridan aquifer. Information could include introductions to Blue's springshed, hydrogeology, flora and fauna, our dependence on the aquifer for our drinking water (and so much more), and threats to Blue's health, such as over-pumping and pollution from septic tanks, manure, fertilizers and pesticides. More directly, the importance of protecting the plants and animals in the runs by not wading or touching them needs to be emphasized. Innovative forms of positive visitor engagement and "stewardship" could also be created.

I'm confident that if the Florida Park Service works with local springs lovers, experts, scientists, artists, educators and users, we can create a win-win management plan. We can retain the recreational thrill of leaping off the dock, swimming in the headspring, walking the boardwalk and hiking the nature trails while, at the same time, protecting Blue's unique runs.

Blue could be the test case, icon and success story of Florida's ability to fully restore and protect a living (healthy and fully functioning) spring ecosystem. By offering the public not just recreation but additional immersive and exploratory springs educational experiences, we can protect Gilchrist Blue now and inspire future springs conservationists. As a videographer, university professor and Springs Ambassadors Camp producer, I'm happy to offer my assistance with developing creative, fun and innovative forms of immersive springs education at Blue.

At present, Gilchrist Blue is a last glance into what a Florida spring once was. Let's make it the first *realized* vision, the first success story, for restoring the wondrous and thriving "bowls of liquid light" that Florida's springs could be again.

With love for the springs and gratitude for your work,

Lesley Gamble

Springs Eternal Project, Alachua Conservation Trust

Watershed address: Gainesville Duckpond > Sweetwater Branch > Paynes Prairie > Alachua Sink > Floridan Aquifer > Springs of the Upper Santa Fe River > Santa Fe River > Suwannee River > Gulf of Mexico

Baxley, Demi

From: Joseph Davenport <jddavenport@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 26, 2017 12:02 PM
To: Murray, Sine; FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: Gilchrist Blue/Naked Springs Recreation

Greetings, and to whom it may concern,

I am writing to you as a filmmaker, a Florida native, and a lover of the natural treasures that are Florida's springs. I was very excited to learn that Gilchrist Blue has been slated to become one of Florida's newest state parks. Over the years I've spent countless days and weeks exploring the crystal blue waters at Gilchrist and its neighbor, Naked Spring. It makes me proud that this place will be officially preserved by the state for future generations to enjoy.

With this appreciation also comes a note of concern. The Gilchrist and Naked spring runs are teeming with life, fish and turtles and birds and snails and manatees and the underwater vegetation that provides food and habitat for them all. While I want every Floridian to have the chance to experience this beauty, there is a distinct risk that overuse of these places can lead to diminished habitat for the animal and vegetable residents of the spring runs. I would like to suggest that use of the spring runs be limited, in order to preserve the vegetation that supports wildlife and keeps the water clean. The Gilchrist headspring is deep and wide and already stripped bare of vegetation - a perfect place to encourage diving and swimming, while preserving the crucial natural spaces in the spring runs.

The previous owners of Gilchrist Blue did such a wonderful job of preserving these natural places while still encouraging robust recreational use. I write to you today to encourage you to continue their legacy of stewardship so that one day my grandchildren can experience the same magnificent underwater worlds that I have been so lucky to explore.

<https://youtu.be/GWMYQXwdQTY>

Sincerely,
Joseph Davenport
(850) 567-3389

Baxley, Demi

From: Margaret Tolbert <mrtolbert@me.com>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2017 10:02 AM
To: FLStateParkPlanning
Cc: Murray, Sine
Subject: Protect the Springs Runs at Gilchrist Blue Springs !

Dear Planning Board for Florida State Parks:

Gilchrist Blue Springs is now a state park! It has been a long process, and a wonderful outcome for the people of Florida who so love this beautiful spring. Thank you for all your work to help the spring. I have been there several times recently, and I've seen changes already that will help the springs.

I'm concerned about recreational usage--specifically *wading*--destroying the beautiful Blue Springs and Naked Springs runs. Nope, no one ever had a eureka moment about the springs from wading in them. The rapture of experiencing the springs is from being immersed in the waters, brought to revelation by seeing the beautiful world of water, aquatic life, and plants, in a magical underwater world. And this opportunity is (only) possible here in North Florida, in a healthy spring. *There is no immersion in wading.*

The beautiful springs runs at Blue springs and Naked Springs, are a world treasure. They need to be protected from wading, to safeguard the delicate beauty of these underwater gardens. Snorkeling tours could be a great way to appreciate this landscape, as with Rainbow Springs. A good boardwalk, with belvederes like at Volusia Blue Springs park, could encourage people to study and learn the underwater world. An educational program, with snorkeling instruction, and information about the wide array of underwater plants and species, could give folks a coveted "Underwater Springs Ambassador" status. As with the snorkeling tours at Rainbow springs, expert volunteers could share information about the life in the different springs world that swimmers are about to enter. Steps at the far end of the boardwalk, at the confluence of the Santa Fe River, would protect the runs from those who can't swim back up, but would be trampling on plant life and snails, both of which are crucial to the health of the springs. Without these plants and creatures, the water quality would degrade and no longer be inviting for swimmers or tourists.

I've heard many complaints about "No float lines!" But underwater, none of us really see the float lines. We just see the beauties that they protect.

I hope the state considers the aesthetic inspiration they provide many of us, *beyond* recreation. Gilchrist Blue Springs and its runs have inspired my paintings for decades, and even video narratives—see attached. These films have inadvertently provided documentation of the SAV at Gilchrist Blue. The world has seen the richness of these underwater gardens through art and film, and it's an inspiration we need to protect. These images are a beacon for tourists who come to Florida to see the springs. On the boardwalk at Volusia Blue, I've heard five different languages being spoken while families study the wildlife in the waters below.

The headspring at Blue, with the jumping dock, and wading areas, generally serves a purely recreational function. It has long been stripped of vegetation. With the new park entrance fee(less than the previous

fee) people will pour in in the summer to enjoy the cool waters and the excitement of jumping into these springs. Yes—it's a wonderful experience!

But the springs runs should be inviolate. These are the richest, and most diverse springs runs on the Santa Fe, per biologist Tom Morris who did the survey. Swimming and wading take a toll on the vegetation in the springs. Rainbow springs' swimming area is stripped bare of vegetation, even though it is too deep to wade. Ichetucknee River, on the top half, suffers major damage during the season from tubers wading down the run. The eel grasses and submerged aquatic vegetation are essential in helping the river denitrify itself, as you may have read in Matt Cohen's chapter in AQUIFERious.

Many state parks limit access for kayaking, as in Fanning, or Volusia Blue. We can always find safe ways to explore the springs runs over time, but for now we need to protect them, as they are irreplaceable treasures. They provide a haven for wildlife and guarantee biodiversity. Those beautiful "underwater gardens" are the last line of defense for the springs with water pollution, along with snails and creatures that eat the algae and help control it.

They are one of the few sources of food on the Santa Fe for the dozens —sometimes hundreds—of turtles that we regularly see there, as most of the other springs and the river bottom, are denuded of vegetation, with strands of algae covering the river bottom. On occasion Gilchrist Blue provides manatee refuge for this very reason...in many other riverine areas, there is nothing for them to eat.

The sparkling and healthy underwater gardens at Fanning, Manatee, Peacock, much of Ichetucknee, and so many springs in Florida, that I was so privileged to see and be transformed by, are gone. They have given way to ropes of algae and cloudy waters. *One Spring*. Please help us preserve **even One Spring** to show our citizens and the world what a beautiful healthy spring can be like. Please let me know how I and so many others who love the springs runs can help you in this effort.

Let's keep the unspoiled wild places in Gilchrist Blue Springs! Protect the springs runs!

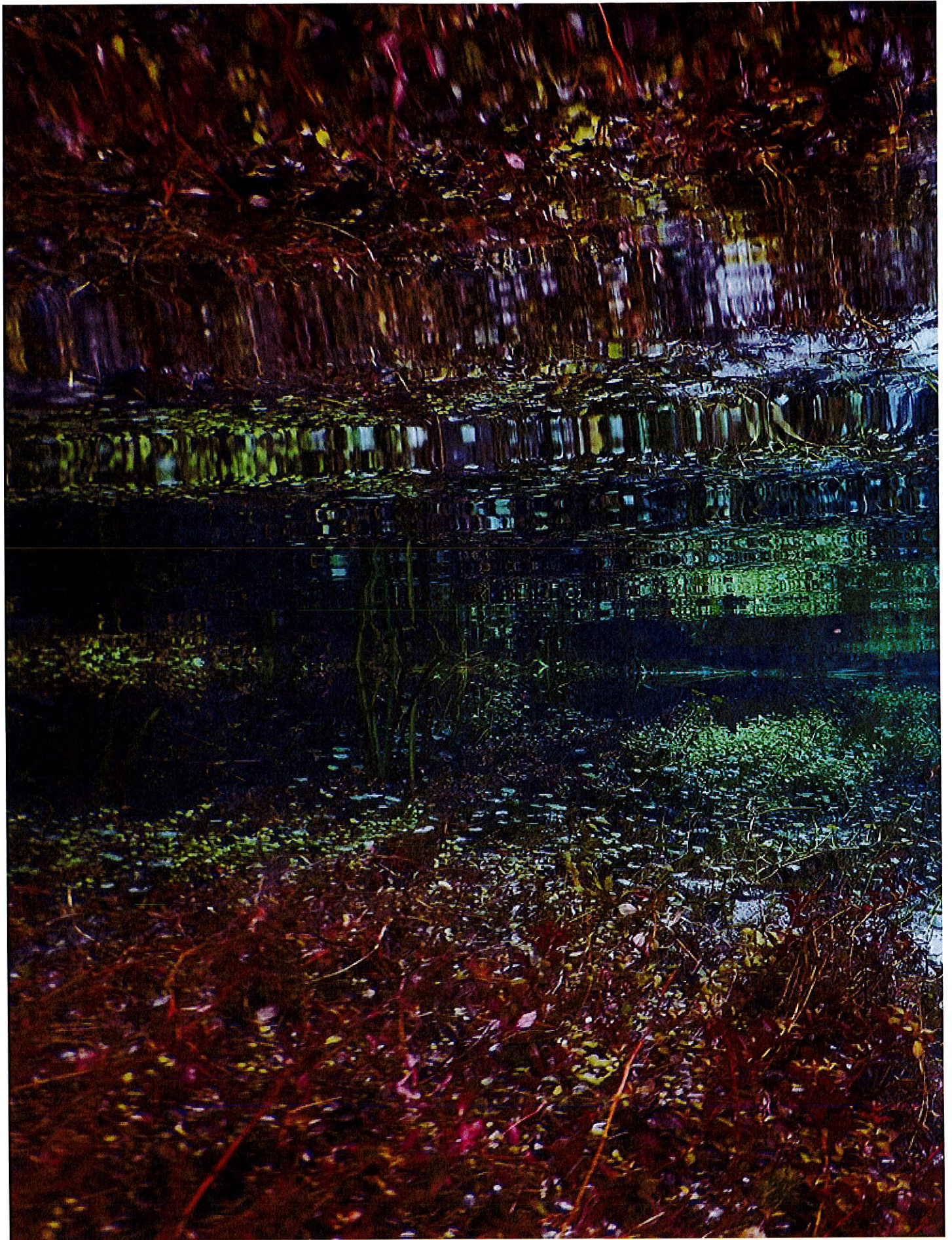
Sincerely yours

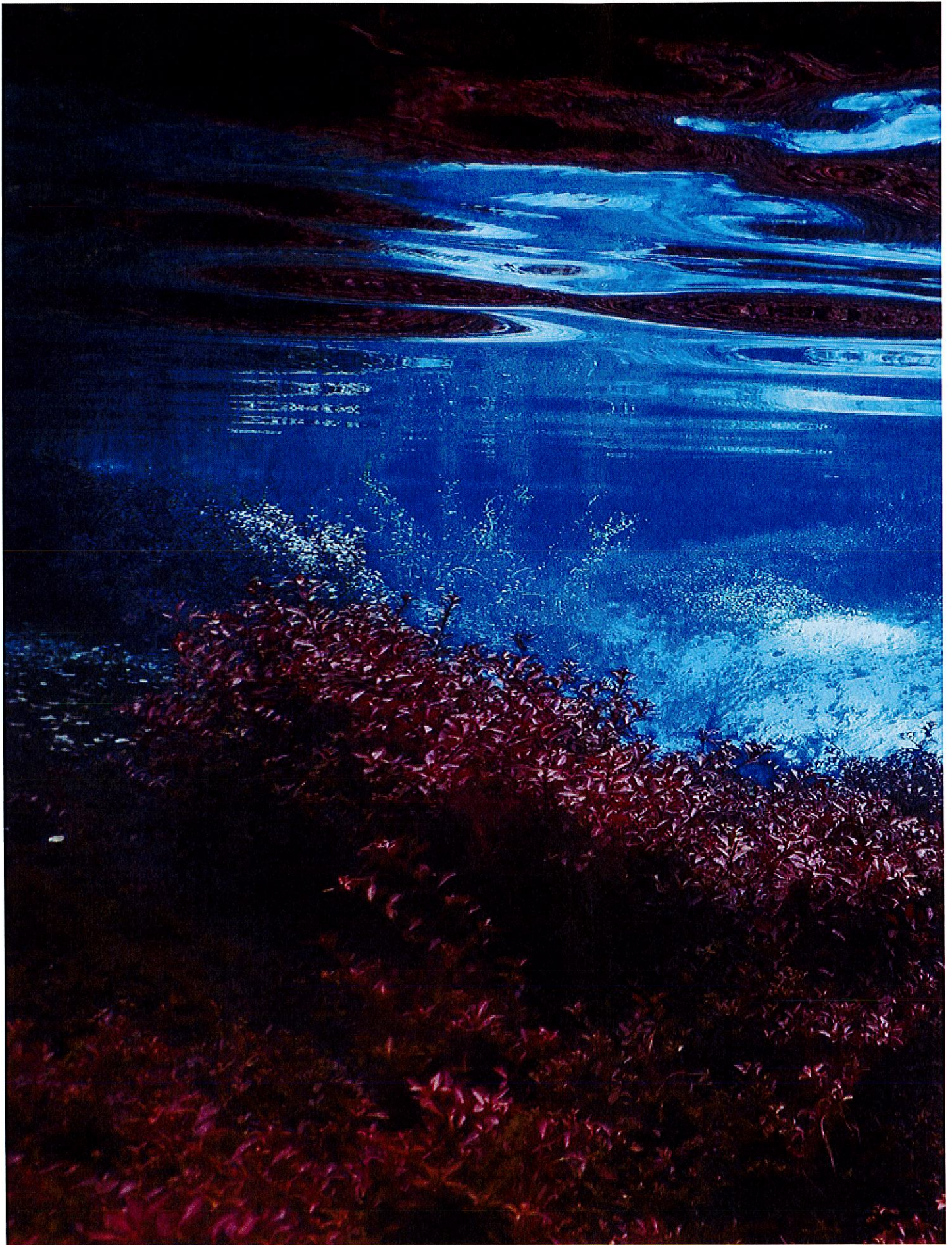
Margaret Ross Tolbert
AQUIFERious.org
margaretrosstolbert.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrKkGEdiXv0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uf9FMYlhysk>









Baxley, Demi

From: Jillci <jillci@aol.com>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2017 10:44 AM
To: Murray, Sine; FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: Gilchrist Blue

To whom it may concern,

I was introduced to Gilchrist Blue when I first arrived in Gainesville, fourteen years ago, for my initial interview with the University of Florida, where I am currently a Professor of English. Blue Springs was one of the factors in my decision to live and teach here. I am delighted that it is now under the protection of Florida's state parks.

I have been snorkeling at Blue ever since. Now that the spring is under the state's control, I would like to propose a way of protecting its fragile run. As a diver, I have seen how different communities in the Caribbean protect their reefs. Each marine preserve includes vital information on signs near entry points along the beach. The signs explain how touching the coral kills it. Why not include signs at Blue Springs that explain to swimmers that the run is fragile, that wading will destroy it, and that swimmers may only enter the run if they agree to not wade, or touch anything.

It seems like an inexpensive way to protect such a glorious resource.

Sincerely,

Jill Ciment
Professor of English
University of Florida

Baxley, Demi

From: doug@stammphoto.com
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2017 9:38 AM
To: FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: Gilchrist Blue

Hello Planners,

As the author of "The Springs of Florida", Pineapple Press, Sarasota, I feel compelled to comment on the future of Gilchrist Blue.

For several years I travelled springs throughout Florida photographing their inhabitants, vegetation and terrain both day and night and in all seasons of the year. I was given the opportunity to dive Wakulla, Silver and the Rainbow River headsprings to complete that task. Though small in comparison to these giant first magnitude springs, I found no other spring in the state was more indicative of the springs ecosystem than Gilchrist Blue. I in fact lived in a tent at Gilchrist Blue for two winters and was permitted to use SCUBA day and night there to search for and photograph springs inhabitants.

Gilchrist Blue "had" a population of spotted bullheads I found in no other spring in the state. The crayfish, *Procambarus speculifer* was visible in its headspring and run, Suwannee Bass were plentiful, Naked "had" immature troglobitic crayfish in its water column. As was my purpose to document the life found in Florida's springs, many inhabitants were photographed for use in my book at Gilchrist Blue. With final direction by Archie Carr, the book was first published in 1993 and is now in its 3rd edition.

I realized while spending time at Gilchrist Blue that visitors found the spring, the run and boardwalk to be a living museum of natural history. No pamphlet, book or lecture could do more to foster an appreciation of the unique springs environment than a snorkel trip in the headspring, a snorkel float down the run or a walk down the boardwalk. These experiences made visitors advocates for springs protection. I think if protection with education and appreciation are your goals then a few things should happen at Gilchrist Blue.

Snorkeling should be allowed in the headspring and down the run but no standing or wading in the run. A small platform halfway to the river similar to Juniper would offer a respite for snorkelers. If you don't have a mask you should not be in the run out of a canoe or kayak. A short snorkel float down the run is both beautiful and educational for the vistas and wildlife viewing it offers.

The boardwalk should be rebuilt with a viewing/seating area at the confluence the run and river with a stairs for snorkelers to enter the boardwalk. That's quite a place to be day or night as much happens there.

The diving platform in my opinion could be removed as it does not offer the educational experiences snorkelers would have in the same area. If you happen to look in my book you'll see the platform did offer exceptional cover to a variety of fish species. Perhaps a snorkel enter platform could be constructed there that would offer the same shade cover.

Gilchrist Blue is a beautiful little spring with a lot to offer its visitors in and out of the water. Those who see it with a face mask are most fortunate, and its small headspring and run offer a rare and unimposing opportunity to see what really is unique about the springs of Florida - the fascinating and crystal clear world found below their surface.

Thank you for your efforts,

Kindest regards,

Doug Stamm

www.stammphoto.com

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Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA)

Professional Outdoor Media Association (POMA)

Florida Outdoor Writers Association (FOWA)

Author - The Springs of Florida

Author - Underwater-The Northern Lakes

From: Mary Witoszynsky <mwmw57@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, December 4, 2017 2:03 PM
To: FLStateParkPlanning
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs

Dear Florida State Park Planning Team,

As a Florida native and admirer of our wonderful state parks, I applaud the acquisition of Gilchrist Blue Springs as our newest Florida State Park. It is reassuring to count this magnificent natural resource as a protected area within the broader network of inseparable springs, rivers, sinks, and lakes which together compose the Floridan Aquifer that sustains the existence of all life throughout our region. Your careful consideration of ways to counteract the inevitability of ecological disruption resulting from our human presence and activity in this fragile ecosystem can help set examples for us all to follow. Along with the options you are already exploring, may I take this opportunity to present ideas for park management as we welcome Gilchrist Blue Springs into our state park community.

Parking and Walking

The absence of asphalt and concrete paving at Gilchrist Blue Springs is one of its charming aspects. As the entry drive and parking area are likely to be renovated, may they remain permeable to rainfall and well distant from the water's edge. Please plant native trees to shade parking areas.

The installation of well-marked interpretive trails, pathways between facilities, and elevated boardwalks would help protect the many small creatures and vegetation underfoot. Visitors would be asked to remain on the designated walkways. At the same time, such traffic-control structures should be ADA accessible and, where pertinent, should accommodate the transport of paddle craft between a designated loading/unloading and launch area.

Park Fees and Springs Usage

The reduction in the Gilchrist Blue Springs entry fee (now \$6 per vehicle down from \$10 per person) may greatly increase park usage and place added stress on this delicate ecosystem. Wading should therefore be limited to a designated roped-off swimming area at the main spring head.

To keep the numbers of spring run users in check, an additional extra-use fee could be implemented for all visitors wishing to tube or paddle the main run to the Santa Fe River. Staggered entry into the spring run during peak hours would control crowding on this fragile waterway. To further protect the vitality of this aquatic habitat, a limit should be placed on the total number of swimmers, tubers, and paddlers in the spring run at any given time.

Swimmers, tubers, and paddlers utilizing the spring run should be required to maintain a one-way-only flow with the current from the spring head to the Santa Fe River. This could be achieved by providing a staircase at the river end of the existing boardwalk that would enable visitors to safely exit the water and conveniently return watercraft to the launch/storage area. The boardwalk could be renovated with split-level construction to enable closer viewing of the floodplain surface, and for ease of channeling the return of watercraft to the spring head. Wheeled trolleys to facilitate this purpose could be made available. Small platforms attached to the boardwalk superstructure, able to rise and fall with changing water levels, would provide floaters the opportunity to safely stop without disturbing delicate aquatic flora and fauna.

One-way-only float traffic in the spring run may preclude paddle craft entry from the Santa Fe River. Alternatively, an auxiliary fee station at the river end of the boardwalk could manage such visitor entries and guide them through the haul-out procedure for re-launch at the spring head.

Naked Springs

I encourage the closure of Naked Springs and its run to all recreational use so as to facilitate the regeneration of the amphibious and aquatic flora and fauna native to this fragile habitat.

Naked Springs offers an outstanding location for springs restoration, and for visitor education, observation, and repose. A small, well-designed pavilion and deck near the springhead could offer a pleasant sitting and interpretive venue. The installation of underwater video cameras at various points in Naked Springs and along its run, coupled with viewing screens at the pavilion, would offer visitors a close-up vista of this magical underwater realm without getting their feet wet! If possible, all the better to project images in real-time. Such an amenity could be particularly meaningful for visitors who may be unable to float, swim, or paddle.

Appropriate signage and displays would serve multiple purposes of education, restoration monitoring, and public awareness. The pavilion would also serve as a meeting place for ranger talks, guest speakers, workshops, and a place for visitors to post and display their photos and observations.

Visitor Engagement and Participation

Well-crafted programs enable park visitors of all ages to become actively engaged participants in ecosystem protection. These can take the form of nature walks and talks, citizen scientist projects, school outings, and contests. Along with engaging the public, contests can raise funds required to support such programming through modest registration fees. Imagine the enthusiasm to be generated, for example, by an annual contest for best Naked Springs T-shirt design. In addition to a prize, the winner's name would be emblazoned on the shirt for posterity and the Park would earn a tidy sum from the sale of these unique collector's items.

Springs Studies Scholarships

From A to Z, there are few academic topics unsuited to springs studies. I would therefore like to encourage the Florida State Park Service to partner with the Florida Department of Education in the establishment of a Springs Studies Scholarship program directed toward senior-year high school advanced placement students statewide. Interested scholars would submit research proposals for studies of interest both to themselves and the Park Service that are applicable to issues of springs conservation. In a nutshell, the scholarship winners would work under the guidance of compatible

academic departments within our state university system and earn college credit toward their university-level education. The goals are to stimulate areas of springs research that may otherwise be unattended, to broaden existing programs of investigation, to apply research findings as appropriate, and to cultivate future generations of knowledgeable springs ambassadors. The benefits would be too numerous to list.

I believe I speak for many park visitors by stating that we place great trust in the award-winning Florida State Park Service to develop and implement state-of-the-art infrastructure design, materials, and programming that enable the invaluable wildlife and hydro-geological features of Gilchrist Blue Springs and all our State Parks to thrive in perpetuity, and to serve as models for sustainable nature-based recreation in tandem with the re-creation of the natural serenity of our unparalleled Real Florida ecosystems. Thank you for your kind attention.

With best wishes,

Mary

Witoshynsky

Gainesville, Florida

Baxley, Demi

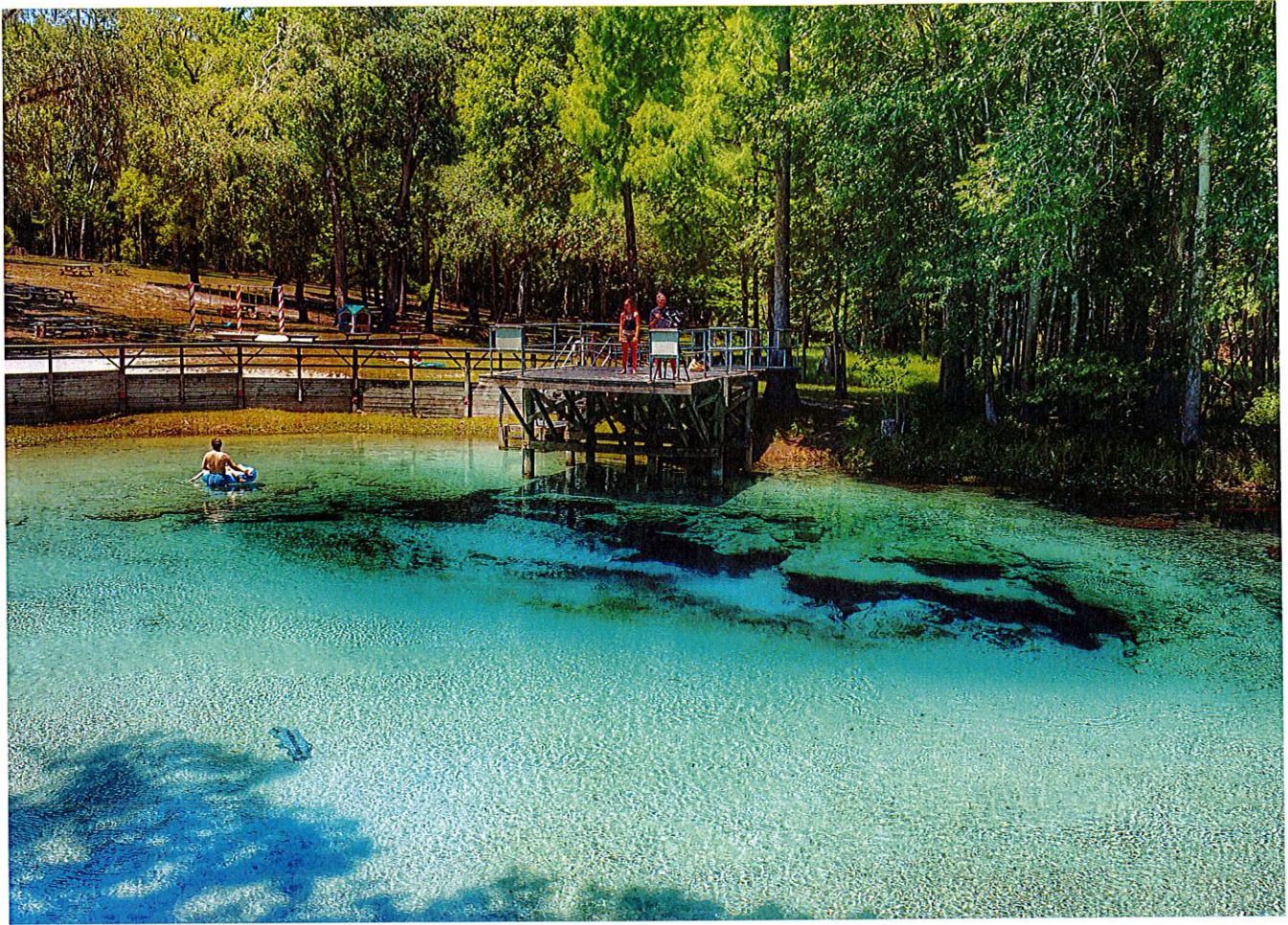
From: Kirby Morgan <kskm472000@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 6, 2017 9:43 AM
To: FLStateParkPlanning; Maxwell, Clifton; SineMurray@dep.state.fl.us
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park
Attachments: 20160509_130511 Gilchrist Blue Spring-01.jpeg; 20160509_130903 Naked Spring Run-01.jpeg; 20160509_131230 Gilchrist Blue & Santa Fe-01.jpeg

Good Morning,

If you could please rebuild the boardwalk from the spring head to the Sante Fe as close to the original as possible I would greatly appreciate it. It provides a very unique experience viewing the main spring run as well as providing a gorgeous perspective on the Naked Springs run. I've attached a few of the photos I've taken.

Thank you,

Kirby Morgan







From: Elliott, Adam
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#)
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2017 4:15:11 PM

To Whom it May Concern,

I would like to offer some of my suggestions for the future planning of the newest state park Gilchrist Blue. I have enjoyed visiting, camping, swimming, snorkeling, fishing, hiking and all other sorts of activities at Blue Springs in the past 30 plus years, I was able to visit this spring more than almost any other spring because I grew up down the road and still currently live in the area less than 5 miles from it. It has been operated in a manner that has been well suited for the rural area of Gilchrist county and has provided many families with a place to gather for birthdays, family reunions and other events. I would like to give you a short list of things I would like to see improved and a short list of things that I think need to be kept so that the park can provide the same level of enjoyment that it has for over 50 years.

The jumping dock and board walk need to stay with some small improvements made for access for all people, I currently understand that the boardwalk has suffered some damage and it is being removed from the river all the way up the run.

The entrance road from county road 340 to the main spring needs to be paved for better access. The bathroom and showers need some updates along with more camping sites and upgraded foot paths for hiking.

The main swimming area does not need to be limited which I understand that it has currently been roped off along with some of the main run.

The park consists of over 400 acres and I think that all of the springs should have an accessible path made so that people can safely walk to them so that they can swim and enjoy them.

I also know that most of the plans for parks consist of saving natural areas by making them off limits to people but for this park and it the people that will enjoy it the most please don't limit the number of people that can enter the park, the number of people that can swim in the different springs and runs, the state and county own almost all of the major springs in the area and those can be used to conserve land, eel grass, apple snails and other things.

Gilchrist County needs a major attraction to bring in more visitors to enjoy one of the best things that we have which is Blue Springs.

Please don't mess up the Best Place that we have by limiting access or removing anything.

Thank you,
Adam Elliott

Gilchrist County Resident since 1981

Private and confidential as detailed [here](#). If you cannot access hyperlink, please e-mail sender.

From: Eric Parker
To: [Paxton, George](#); [Maxwell, Clifton](#); [Murray, Sine](#); [FLStateParkPlanning](#); [Vickery, Jason](#); [Eric J Parker](#)
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park Comments
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2017 6:25:27 PM

Good Day To All,

It gives me great pleasure that the state is the new steward of Gilchrist Blue Springs. Blue, Little Blue, Naked and Johnson Springs are a great addition to our state park system

The following are my comments and input:

1. Replace the boardwalk part way along Blue Run and as it crosses Naked Run have it run along the land towards Santa Fe River, but where people can not access the boardwalk from the river. This will allow a combination of viewing different habitats.
2. Change the fee collection area and vehicular parking at least 300+ feet from Blue Springs. Create a handicapped walkway and primitive dirt walkway to Blue Springs.
3. Picnic tables 200+ feet from Blue Spring.
4. Create a more natural landscape setting specifically designed to reduce erosion.
5. Allow for Primitive and Cabin campsites.
6. RV's take away from the natural beauty of the park.
7. Allow for swimming in Blue and Naked Runs during the winter months when less people are using the park and most people stay out of the water. Other months swimming in the Runs should be limited and at the discretion of the Park Ranger or staff. In all cases: NO WALKING OR TUBING IN RUNS!!!
8. Kayaker's do no harm.

Since Hurricane Irma the springs have been rebounding quite impressively with new growth from eel grass in Blue Run. Snails, turtles and Suwannee bass everywhere. The springs will change from time to time with storms and hurricanes. In my opinion this is always good. It freshens up the springs.

For nearly 50 years I have been swimming different Florida Springs year round, but I have been swimming Blue and Naked and their Runs to Santa Fe River nearly everyday sometimes 2 or 3 times, because I am concerned the Runs may be off limits to swimmers in the future. Please leave a small window open.

Good Luck balancing nature and people!!!!!!

Sincerely,

Eric Parker

3523188880

From: ANDREA H SWEENEY
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#)
Subject: Gilchrist Blue Springs
Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2017 9:36:17 PM

Gilchrist Blue Springs Concerns:

One of our greatest concerns would be for maintaining snorkeling access to the runs, non trampling, but feet up access to maintain the beauty of the amazing aquatic vegetation, which is vital to the wild creatures and feeds our souls to view its beauty.

Many folks don't bother snorkeling the runs. They simply enjoy jumping from the platform and swimming in the open sandy area of the head spring. We also don't want lots of ugly "DO NOT" signs marring natural beauty.

The buoys which collect algae in Naked Springs mar this natural beauty. We don't think they are necessary since few would even enter the runs that way, nor venture to kayak through that little spring.

What we in the Spring Hunters group admire most about Gilchrist Blue has been its unspoiled beauty, vegetation, wildlife, and the ability to walk the oaken boardwalk to view the run from above, and the Santa Fe at the end.

We are avid about being able to snorkel the runs, feet up, and not trample the vegetation which is a most beautiful and unique characteristic of Gilchrist Blue.

We from Spring Hunters group hope that you will consider these items of importance in your choices, and keep Gilchrist Blue as nice as it always has been.

Thank you for your consideration,

Andrea Sweeney
Spring Hunter



Snorkeling without touching bottom:



Sent from my iPad

From: Kevin Campbell
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#)
Subject: Planning for Blue Springs in Gilchrist County
Date: Friday, December 15, 2017 4:38:09 PM

Dear Park Management,

I have been a frequent camper at Blue Springs Park in Gilchrist County for many years, and I just love it. In fact, I first camped there about 40 years ago. Having car camped in campsites all over the country, I can attest that Blue Springs is quite unique in the experience it offers, even if you ignore for a moment what most people are first drawn to: the springs.

For people who wish to have the simplicity of car camping -- instead of backpacking or other more involved levels of camping -- but who wish to be immersed in a natural setting to enjoy the wildlife, instead of being surrounded by the sounds and sights of many other adjacent campers close by, I have never found another location like Blue Springs. Some of the campsites in the back of the park are so far removed from the rest of the park that I have often camped there and not seen or heard another person, other than those in my group, for our entire trip!

That is an amazing experience considering how much wildlife I have seen and heard at Blue Springs. I have seen many wild turkeys, many deer (even very small fawns), a bobcat, rabbits, and a whole host of birds and other wildlife which have become somewhat more reclusive in Florida in recent years.

I was very pleased to hear a Chuck-will's-widow while camping there last spring. This is a bird I had heard often in Gainesville during my childhood, but it has been more than 20 years since I remember hearing another one anywhere else but at Blue Springs.

This wildlife experience is dramatically enhanced because there are not so many sounds and sights of multiple other campers right next to these more private primitive camping sites in the back of the park.

I think it would be a great loss if these somewhat private sites in the back of the park, such as Lois Lane and East Log Road, were closed to camping or if many other additional campsites were added to these same areas so they are less private.

I hope I will still be able to share these types of experiences with my family and friends in the future.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Kevin Campbell

December 2017

Dear Planners for Gilchrist Blue Springs,

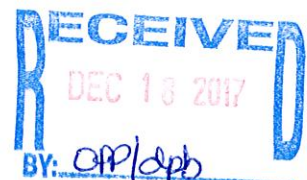
I have been visiting Gilchrist Blue springs since the 1970's and have really appreciated the care, that this family gave to the land and water under their care. We are all hoping that, as a part of the state park system, this quality care will continue. I have decided to give my opinion about certain changes to the park in bullet points. I was told that the park service welcomes and considers all concerns and will use this information, when making their plan.

Swimming, snorkeling in the run

- one of the primary source of enjoyment, for many people, has been this activity
- common sense measures, such as a way out at the end to prevent arduous swims back up the run, instead of total restriction
- documenting the plant growth is important to make sure that the rules or restriction matches the actual situation, for example, saying human traffic this summer destroyed the plant life is not supported by photos taken late Aug 2017 after a summer of heavy use. Yesterday, I observed and happily photographed new plant growing in both runs yesterday (Dec 12, 2017)

Board walk (to be as close to the old one as possible)

- it protected the left bank from swimmers getting out on this bank
- it protected the left bank from getting trampled by boater landing their vessels
- it protected the underwater plants, below it, from traffic
- it allowed people to view the run without impacting the land or water
- it should be make of wood and natural materials
- it was a unique, iconic boardwalk and its replacement should be as beautiful
- it made you feel like you were in the trees and you got to see nature from a new prospective
- looking at and photographing the reflection of this boardwalk on the water and the beautiful curves, made many realize it's beauty
- making a way back from the end would be a great improvement
- extreme care when putting in the new boardwalk... please



Plastic swimming pool ropes

- both ropes are ugly and unnatural eyesores
- they are now getting covered with a brown film, algae?
- do we really need more plastic in a natural spring?
- if we're told it's needed to prevent swimmers from injury, we need evidence to support this claim
- if this is its purpose (above) , then it is not needed in the off season because so few are in the water
- if it is deemed necessary, shouldn't it be made of natural materials, such as natural wood buoys and natural fibers?

Camping

- limited number of sites and half set up so people who are on site get them, so people don't have to reserve months ahead

Asphalt

- this spring has not had asphalt, so please, we don't need it now
- the impacts from the run off ? Unknown

Signs

- why do we need 3 no motors signs, isn't one at the Santa Fe river enough?
- why all the pet signs and where are the.. pick up your dogs poop sign? Doesn't dog poop have an effect on the spring?

Jumping Dock

- please, please keep it! Many people love and enjoy it so much

Tree cutting

- noticed many healthy trees being cut down. Why? Logs cut in the run.. decaying logs. aren't they good for the health of the spring

Lesser springs

- too much attention and development of these springs could lead to their demise. Can't they be left alone?

I love this spring more than I can express and hope that you will think about my concerns and consider my suggestions. Thanks Jerrine McClelland-- (if you'd like any photos mentioned contact me)