

SPRINGS

FLORIDA'S FRAGILE FOUNTAINS OF YOUTH

ETERNAL

FEATURING THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF **JOHN MORAN**
AN EXHIBITION OF THE FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

SPRINGS ETERNAL

A PERSONAL ODYSSEY OF DISCOVERY

I often wonder what Florida must have looked like to Juan Ponce de León and those other early European explorers, pushing forth into the interior of the peninsula in what surely was a remarkable odyssey of discovery.

We know now that Ponce wasn't really searching for a Fountain of Youth, but as a child growing up in Florida that myth took hold of me and never really let go. Like many of you, I've been on a quest of my own, seeking out these pools of stunning blue wonder that are the springs of Florida.

When I moved from South Florida to attend the University of Florida in 1973, I knew what a freshwater spring looked like. I'd never been to a spring before, but every schoolchild in Florida grows up seeing pictures of the glass-bottom boat rides at Silver Springs, or the mermaid show at Weeki Wachee.

Soon I was venturing out from Gainesville to see for myself, and I found my

way to Ginnie and Poe and Blue Springs, and I went spring hopping on the Suwannee and then on to the big springs of the Ocala National Forest.

Nothing had prepared me for the experience of standing there in real time, beholding these incredible gems of the Florida landscape. And so began my personal odyssey of discovery.

Florida is home to the largest and most impressive array of freshwater springs in the world. These "bowls of liquid light," in the words of Marjory Stoneman

Douglas, have lured explorers and artists and tourists and investors since the time of the Timucua.

And yet, 500 years after the arrival of Ponce de León on his mythical search, our real magic fountains are imperiled by pollution, neglect and the groundwater demands of a thirsty state.

Some have stopped flowing and many are choked with algae, their blue waters turning murky and green. Once a source of awe, our springs are now a source of deep concern, their future unclear.



Detail of Thomas Moran's
Ponce de León in Florida, 1878



My daughter Alexis, Poe Springs, Santa Fe River, 1981

This project is a visual celebration of the springs we were given, a meditation on the springs we could lose, and an invitation to the people of Florida to fall in love with our springs all over again, mindful that the choices we make today foretell the Florida of tomorrow.

Slime outbreak, Santa Fe River near Poe Springs, 2012
The Santa Fe is a state-designated Outstanding Florida Water.



For more than 30 years I've been on a search for these pools of stunning blue wonder.



Self-portrait,
Gilchrist Blue Springs,
Santa Fe River, 1983

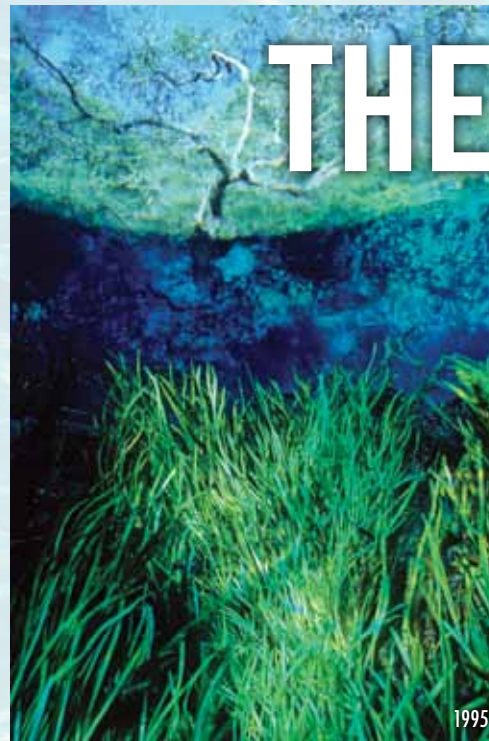


Perhaps you have a favorite place in natural Florida where you have felt the presence of the divine. For many years, **this was my place.**

Here, **I would be filled with wonder** by this gift of beauty beyond measure, this endless bounty of life-giving water flowing onward to the sea.

Here, in the crown jewel of Florida's State Parks, **I would be filled with gratitude** that people I would never know had the wisdom and foresight to set aside this special place, protected forever – or so I believed.

Those are great memories, but it all seems like a dream. Now when I go to the Ichetucknee **I wonder, how could we so dishonor the spirit of creation?**



THEN & NOW

I have stood on the banks of the Ichetucknee and **I have grieved for my loss – our loss** – as I consider with each passing year that my collection of **old springs photographs** seems less a reflection of the real Florida than **a catalog of what once was.**



ICHETUCKNEE SPRINGS STATE PARK

If a foreign power had invaded Florida and done to our springs what we've managed to do all by ourselves, we'd be up in arms to defend our precious waters.

One spring, four decades, five views.

Devil's Eye Spring, 2012

THEN & NOW

“Ecological destruction in Florida is nothing less than economic suicide.”

—Gov. Reubin Askew, 1971

“Florida continues to lead the nation in developing innovative programs to ensure the health of our state’s waterways.”

—Gov. Rick Scott, 2011



SPRINGS ETERNAL JEWELS OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

WEKIWA & ROCK SPRINGS



Rock Springs, 2011

I have a hunch that on some level every person you see in these pictures understands that **clean and abundant water lies at the heart of the Florida experience** – today, tomorrow, forever.

The joy you see here is real and important. When we argue over whether we can afford to clean up our waters, know **there is value in moments like these.**

Connecting with nature and with each other in the real Florida – the one and only Florida – is central to our quality of life **and demands to be factored into our economic models.**



Wekiwa Springs, 2011



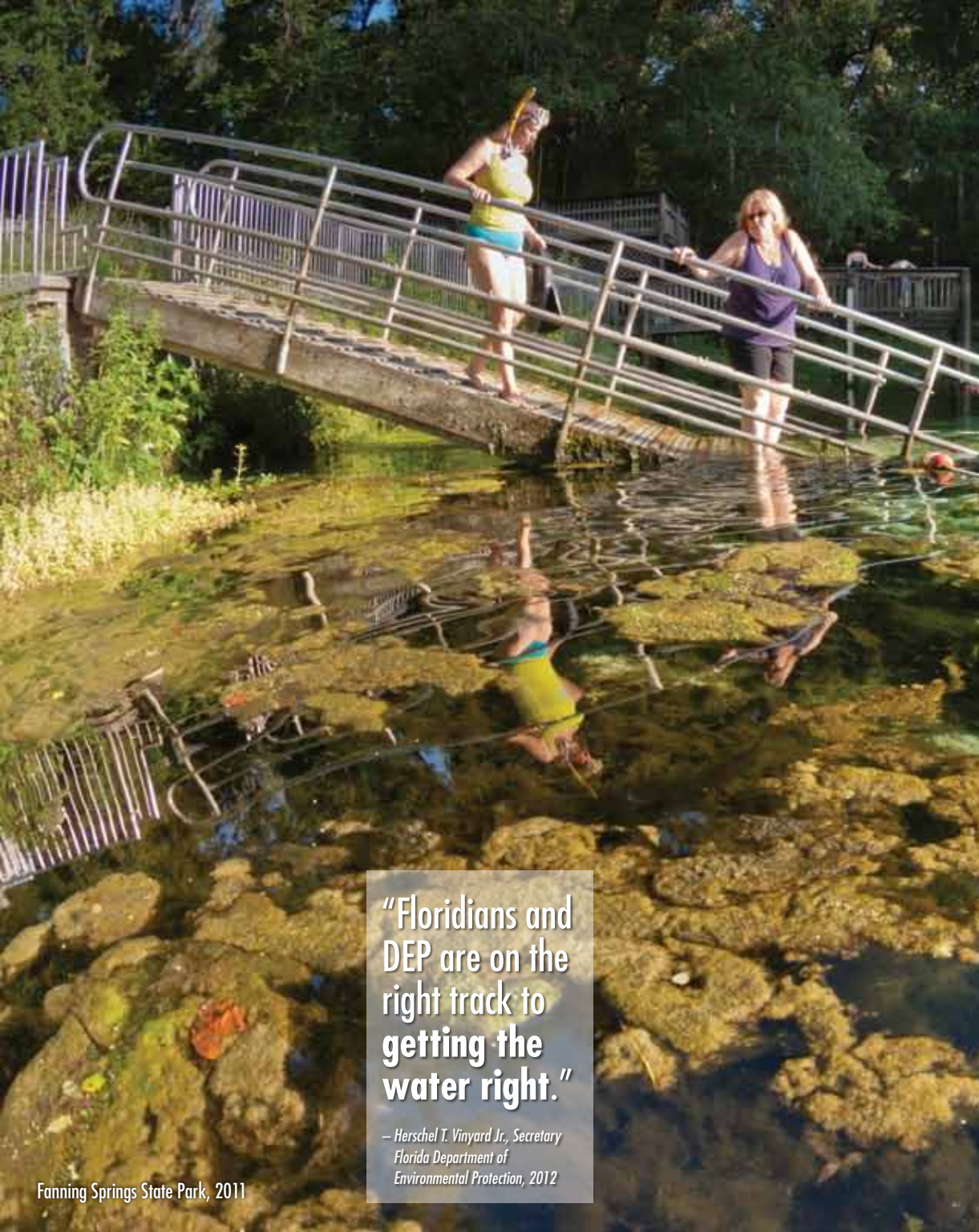
Wekiwa Springs, 2012



Rock Springs, 2011



Wekiwa Sunrise, 2007



“Floridians and DEP are on the right track to getting the water right.”

— Herschel T. Vinyard Jr., Secretary
Florida Department of
Environmental Protection, 2012

FANNING SPRINGS ONCE A FLORIDA GEM, NOW FLORIDA'S SHAME



1989

THEN & NOW



2012



2011

When you look at slime-encrusted Fanning Springs, do you see evidence of a state committed to “getting the water right”?
I see a growing **public health threat**, a deepening **environmental crisis**, and a looming **economic disaster**.
I see a **public relations nightmare** for a state that can ill afford to lose its reputation for natural abundance and clean water.
I see a **message to the future** that says the desires of today are more important than the needs of tomorrow.
I see a picture of heartbreak and shame.



2002

SILVER SPRINGS FATE UNCLEAR FOR FLORIDA ICON

1962



One of the wonders of the natural world, Silver Springs has the chance to turn the corner from more than 50 years of regulatory neglect and decline to a future of recovery and protection. **True restoration of Silver Springs will likely require the following regional efforts:**

- **A permanent reduction** of existing groundwater extraction throughout North and Central Florida to less than 50 percent of today's rates.
- **Elimination** or major reduction of all urban/suburban uses of nitrogen fertilizers.
- **An incentive-based program** to shift agriculture from water- and nitrogen-intensive crops to managed forests.
- **Upgrades** to all regional wastewater treatment facilities and replacement of many septic systems by central treatment facilities.
- **Restoration of the Ocklawaha River** to allow unimpeded migration of fish and manatees up the Silver River.
- **An informed and energized public** that has easier access to Silver Springs through the new state park and the ability to recognize and oppose threats and celebrate successes.

— Dr. Robert Knight, Director of the Florida Springs Institute, 2013

Silver Springs State Park, 2013

Photographer Alan Youngblood so loves Silver Springs that he got married underwater here in 1991. Since then, he says, "The flow is far less. The nitrate levels are so high everything is covered with thick algae. It's a fabulous resource in decline."

"We now face one of the greatest emergencies in Florida's modern history. Our prized and supposedly well-protected rivers and springs are 'sick' from pollution and in need of restoration and protection by our state governmental agencies and Legislature..."

—Former Gov. Bob Graham and former Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nat Reed, in a 2013 op-ed published in several Florida newspapers

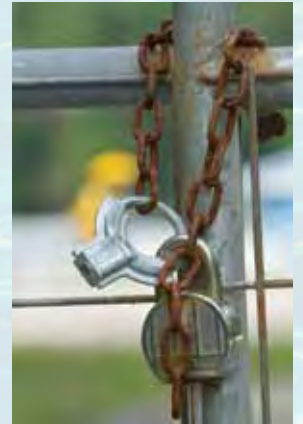
BRONSON'S FAVORITE SWIMMING HOLE BLUE SPRINGS

THEN & NOW

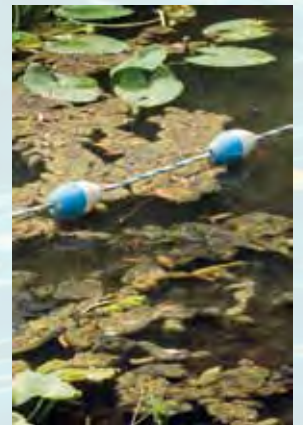
Levy Blue Springs stopped flowing in early 2012, during a record-setting drought compounded by massive groundwater pumping throughout the region. Suwannee River Water Management District records and accounts from long-time locals indicate that the spring's flow had never previously stopped.



1999



2012



2011

A stagnant pool in 2011, Convict Springs on the Suwannee River revived after back-to-back tropical storms in 2012.

Every gallon of water we pump from the Floridan Aquifer - for our farms and mines and lawns and homes - is one less gallon available for our springs and spring-fed rivers and the vital ecosystems they support.



2012

FLOWING ONCE MORE CONVICT SPRINGS



1999

END OF AN ERA POE SPRINGS

Enfeebled by excessive groundwater pumping, pollutants and drought, Poe Springs hit record low flows in 2012.



2012

PARADISE LOST PEACOCK SPRINGS



1990



2012

Photo by Lesley Gamble

The growth of algae in our springs is fueled by sewage, manure and fertilizer, and it makes me angry to see them this way.

When I hear the phrase, "I want my America back," this is what I think of: **I want my Florida back. I want my springs back.** I want to live in a state where it would be unthinkable that we the people would allow the loss of such a priceless natural legacy.



2011

Sulphur Springs is "a prime example of the serious degradation that can occur in the absence of planning and protection," a 2000 state report said about its polluted water and reduced flow. During times of drought, the City of Tampa pumps millions of gallons a day from the spring to a drinking water reservoir two miles away, where **coliform bacteria and other contaminants** are scrubbed by the city's water treatment process.

A popular swimming hole since the late 1800s, **Sulphur Springs was closed to the public in 1986.**



Circa 1938



2012

POLLUTION BEFOULS TAMPA LANDMARK SULPHUR SPRINGS



2012

FADED BEAUTY PITT SPRING



1992



2011

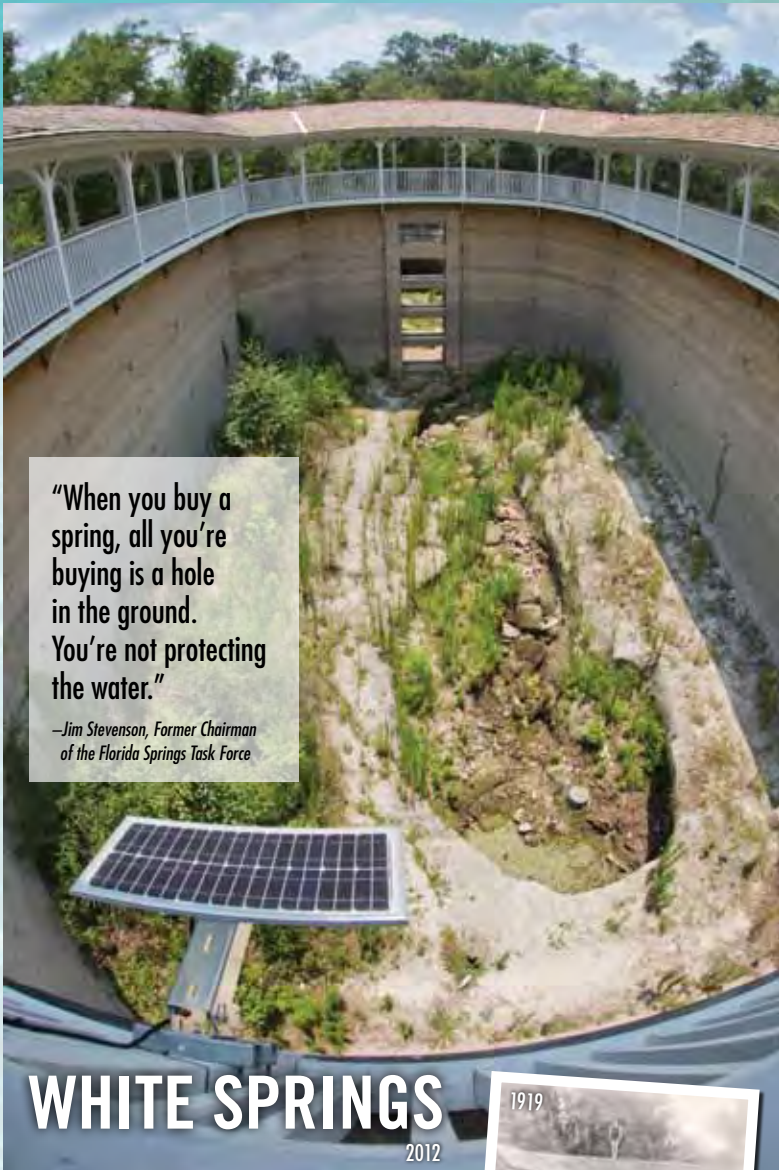
The acclaimed 18th-century naturalist William Bartram was so moved by the extreme clarity of a Florida spring that he described it as "the blue ether of another world." That description seemed apt when I first visited Pitt Spring in 1992.

When I returned in 2011, I found that the years have not been kind to this fading beauty on Econfina Creek. The Northwest Florida Water Management District completed a \$1.3 million restoration project here in 2012, but **recurring outbreaks of algae** now tarnish the spring.



2011

SPRINGS ETERNAL THEN & NOW



"When you buy a spring, all you're buying is a hole in the ground. You're not protecting the water."

—Jim Stevenson, Former Chairman of the Florida Springs Task Force

WHITE SPRINGS

2012

1919



State Archives of Florida

Legend has it that when Spanish explorers arrived in the 1530s, the site on the banks of the Suwannee was **inhabited by Timucuan Indians who considered the springs sacred** and bathed without fear of attack by neighboring tribes.

In 1903, White Springs was enclosed with concrete and coquina walls. Henry Ford and Teddy Roosevelt were among the famous visitors who came to take the healing waters. **Since the 1980s, the spring rarely flows.**



Polk County Historical Museum

Circa 1923

A DEATH IN POLK COUNTY KISSENGEN SPRING



2011

Phosphate mining killed the flow of Kissengen Spring in 1950, making it **Florida's first spring to die from human causes.** In 2011, a rush of memories greeted a tour by a group of seniors, all lovers of Kissengen in their youth, when **none could imagine their beloved spring would soon cease to flow.** A weedy puddle is all that remains.



2013



2012



2012

FORGOTTEN TREASURE GLEN SPRINGS

Closed to the public and hidden in plain sight, Glen Springs lies in the middle of Gainesville on property owned by the Elks Club. **Gainesville's favorite swimming hole was closed in 1970** when the city banned the practice of flushing chlorinated water, used weekly to cleanse the pool, downstream into Hogtown Creek.

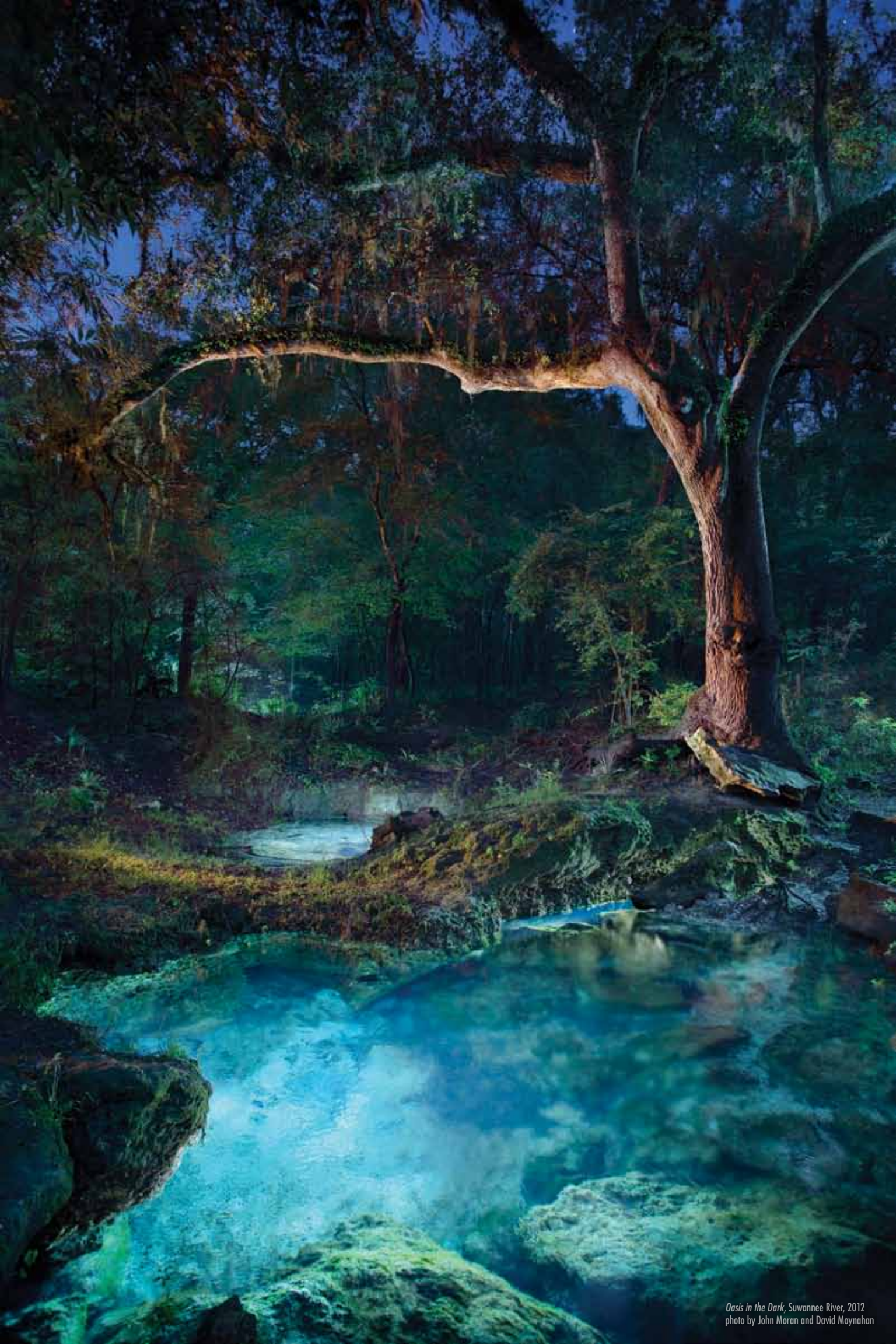
Nearby residential wells, septic tanks and fertilizer use have significantly impacted the spring flow and water quality.

Elks Club member Linda Califf, pictured, is leading a community effort to clean the spring and pool. **The City of Gainesville has expressed interest in acquiring Glen Springs,** though it's unlikely to reopen for swimming.

Circa 1959



Alachua County Historic Trust/Matheson Museum



Oasis in the Dark, Suwannee River, 2012
photo by John Moran and David Moynahan



Silver Glen Springs, 2012



Three Sisters Springs, 2012



Rainbow Springs, 2012



Emerald Springs, 2011



Silver Springs, 2013

SPRINGS ETERNAL

Places for Nature



Sweetwater Springs, 2003



Silver Springs, 2012



Mill Pond Springs, 2005



Ichetucknee Springs, 2012



Cypress Springs, 2012



Juniper Run, 2006



Mound Spring, 2012

SPRINGS ETERNAL

Places for People



Silver Springs, 1995



Suwannee Springs, 1987



Dogwood Springs, 1992



Poe Springs, 1989



Devil's Eye Springs, 1993



Gilchrist Blue Springs, 2012



Hart Springs, 2000



Lithia Springs, 2012



Wekiwa Springs, 2012



Madison Blue Springs, 2012



Manatee Springs, 1999

Madison Blue Springs, 2006

SPRINGS ETERNAL

A CLEAR FUTURE FOR FLORIDA

Florida, we need to talk. If democracy is fundamentally about having a conversation, then the question here is, “Who speaks for our springs?”



As the Everglades are to South Florida, our unique and irreplaceable springs define the health and identity of our region and state. They are our blue-water calling card to the nation and the world.

Our springs are world-class treasures. They deserve world-class protection.

As civilized people, we need to develop ways to grow our food and dispose of our waste without depleting and defiling the source of our water.

For the measure of a civilization is not merely what it creates, but what it refuses to destroy.

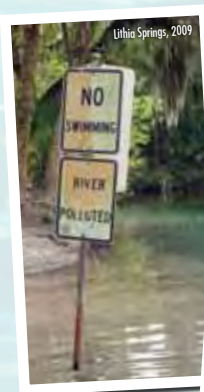
The vast Floridan Aquifer, the source of our drinking water and our springs, is neither invulnerable to pollution nor is it infinite. **Withdrawals are exceeding deposits in our bank of liquid assets,** and saltwater intrusion is rising.

The average Floridian uses a wasteful 134 gallons of freshwater every single day. Our population is expected to double in the next half century, and **the old ways of using water are simply not sustainable.** Resistance to change is no longer an option.

We are all part of the problem, but together we can fix this. We must embrace change, not because we are governed by law but because we are governed by conscience.

Here's what you can do right now:

- **Use less water. Be mindful of your water footprint** and consider that the choices you make today about diet, energy consumption and family size will profoundly impact the Florida of tomorrow.
- **Turn off the sprinklers, quit fertilizing, and a spring will whisper, “Thank you.”** Half the groundwater used at homes in Florida – water that otherwise would be available for our springs – is poured on lawns and landscaping.
- **Pay attention to the people and agencies that are responsible for managing and protecting our waters;** they are not immune to the influence of moneyed special interests that value their profits above our waters. **The survival of our springs depends on public advocacy.**



We get to decide. Which path shall we choose?



We are creatures of spirit, drawn to these sacred waters body and soul.

Many may say they love Florida, but we know that love is more than words or a feeling we have today. **Love is also action and a commitment to tomorrow.**

Here in Florida, we need a new way of thinking and doing for the next 500 years – a mindset of environmental patriotism that defines wellbeing in terms larger than dollars.

We need brave political leaders and engaged citizens who are willing to question the old ways of thinking that see the Earth only in terms of dominion and ownership, rather than stewardship.

Ask not what Florida can do for you. Ask what you can do for Florida. **Be a voice for our springs.** Water is what sustains us, connects us, and defines us.

Water is the lifeblood of Florida.

Go to a spring today. Dive in! In your body and in your heart, **feel what a gift beyond measure it is to call this place home.**

Our Water, Our Future
SAVE OUR SPRINGS
SpringsEternalProject.org

