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Agencies partner to celebrate April as Springs Protection Awareness Month

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April has been designated Springs Protection Month by the Florida Legislature, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Suwannee River, St. Johns River, Southwest Florida and Northwest Florida water management districts. Rep. Elizabeth Porter submitted a House Resolution (HB) 9027 that was adopted on March 18, 2015, which recognizes April 2015 as Springs Protection Awareness Month. Sen. Charlie Dean filed a similar resolution in the Senate, Senate Resolution (SB) 1610 which was adopted on March 24, 2015. The intent of these resolutions is to raise public awareness on the importance of springs protection. "During my time in the Florida House of Representatives, I have taken every opportunity to bring attention to one of Florida's greatest resources, our springs. My District is the home to the highest concentration of first magnitude springs in the nation" said Rep. Porter. "Having grown up around the Suwannee, Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and the many springs that supply them, I believe it is imperative to protect these unique resources in our state." Rep. Porter added. Rep. Porter recently hosted a press conference to further the awareness for the preservation and restoration of Florida's many springs, where she was joined by DEP Secretary Jon Steverson and representatives from the water management districts. "Springs protection is a vital component of our water policy. I have spent my entire life around springs and I am excited to file this resolution again this year in the Senate to honor our springs and those who work to protect them" said Sen. Dean. "Over the past two years, Governor Scott and the Legislature have championed record funding for springs restoration and protection. In partnership with the water management districts and local governments, we've been able to invest more than \$106 million in protecting our springs," said DEP Secretary Jon Steverson. "The health of our springs is vital to our state's future, and I look forward to working with the governor and legislature to continue to protect them." Ann Shortelle, Executive Director of the Suwannee River Water Management District stated, "The District and partners are working diligently to protect the valuable treasures in our District and state-wide. We recognize that Florida's concentration of springs is possibly the greatest worldwide, and we do not take these treasures lightly." "The Southwest Florida Water Management District recognizes the need to manage all springs within its boundaries and places a high priority on the five first-magnitude spring groups in the northern area of our District," said Governing Board Vice Chair Randy Maggard. "Springs awareness month gives our Springs Team more opportunities to engage the public in our efforts to protect and restore our springs." "We are grateful for the leadership exhibited by Representative Porter, Secretary Steverson and Governor Scott regarding such an important issue for Florida," said Brett Cyphers, Executive Director of the Northwest Florida Water Management District. "The District takes its responsibility to protect northwest Florida's 270 springs very seriously, and our ability to make progress toward that goal has rested largely on the consistent support of Governor Scott and the legislature." "Springs protection is a high priority for the St. Johns River Water Management District," said Executive Director Hans G. Tanzler III. "We are working hard with local government partners to implement projects benefiting our spring flows and water quality to restore and support healthy biological communities at the spring head. We are simultaneously pursuing collaborative scientific research with the University of

Florida to better understand how and where to focus our financial resources for the biggest, quickest and most cost-effective solutions to improve the aquifer and to reduce nutrients in spring water flows.”