

## Area springs get restoration money



Devil's Hole spring is currently closed for the restoration project.

Northwest Florida Water Management District | Special to The News Herald  
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**FOUNTAIN** — State funding has been secured in this coming year's fiscal budget to restore two local springs that feed water bodies of popular local recreation areas.

The Econfina Creek and Holmes Creek Springs Protection projects were on a statewide list of springs restoration projects recently approved by Legislative Budget Commission. The commission approved the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) list of proposed \$69 million in springs restoration projects.

The Northwest Florida Water Management District will receive more than \$6.8 million to implement eight projects designed to also improve conditions in Wakulla Springs and Jackson Blue Spring.

"This funding will play a crucial role in the district's efforts to protect water supply and preserve the natural resources of our area's important spring ecosystems," Northwest Florida Water Management District Executive Director Jon Steverson said in a prepared statement.

Including the \$6.8 million proposed by this plan, the district's proposed tentative fiscal year 2014-2015 budget includes more than \$8.2 million for springs restoration and protection. This is in addition to the more than \$3.3 million invested in springs protection by the district during the current fiscal year.

Combined with local contributions, the \$69 million is expected to go to work on springs throughout Central and North Florida that have faced years of decline due to drought, development and

excessive groundwater pumping.  
Two local ones made the list.

Devil's Hole Spring, located on Econfina Creek, discharges about 21 million gallons per day. The spring is a popular public recreation area that is experiencing significant erosion and destabilization, said Lauren Engel, a spokeswoman for the Northwest Florida Water Management District.