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Legislature's Draft Water Policy Bill Benefits Polluters, Hurts Citizens
Requires Voluntary Actions Instead of Regulations.

TALLAHASSEE - The Florida water policy bill (PCB SAC 15-01) passed by the House State Affairs Committee this week does not protect Florida's citizens, because it lets polluters operate without permits. Instead, compliance with clean-water standards will become voluntary.

"This is legalizing pollution," says Earthjustice attorney David Guest. "Instead of requiring permits, the state would just be asking polluters 'What's your plan?' and that would be considered compliance."

"Large agricultural corporations have convinced the state to let them off the hook. All they have to do is claim they are changing the way they handle manure and fertilizer and they get a get-out-of-jail-free card."

Under the measure, if polluters claim that they have a plan to prevent pollution, the state even exempts them from any monitoring to check if they are actually keeping contaminants out of our public water supplies.

"It is like taking the radar guns and ticket books away from the Florida Highway Patrol," Guest says. "As long as a driver presents a plan for speed control, they can't get speeding tickets."

"Once again, this puts the cost of pollution cleanup on the taxpayers," Guest says. "The polluter-lobbyists in Tallahassee and their political friends in the Legislature are hoping we won't notice."

"Under the Legislature's polluter-friendly scenario, the only thing you'll get to protect the public is what polluters say they are willing to do, there's no checking up to see if it's done, and there's no enforcement when they turn our waters into green slime."

The bill's provisions regarding Lake Okeechobee are a particular insult to taxpayers. At present, polluters are legally discharging 300 tons over the legal limit, and what the Legislature is proposing is a plan that will only reduce pollution by 100 tons over 10 years.

"Plans are a way to avoid taking action," Guest says. "To add one more plan is to say: 'I give up. Lake Okeechobee is not worth saving.'"