



Sheriff Mark Hunter

COLUMBIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

4917 US Hwy. 90 East • Lake City, Florida 32055-6288
www.columbiasheriff.org

IN THE FLORIDA COURT OF APPEALS
FIRST DISTRICT

CASE NO. 2013-666-CA
in reference; CASE 2013-666CA

SUWANNEE RIVER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
Plaintiff

v.

EL RANCHO NO TENGO, INC &
JEFFERY LANCE HILL, SR.
Defendants

January 20, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to express my concern over the issue of a law suit filed by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) against Mr. Jeffery Hill for replacing a culvert on his property.

I have followed this case for a long time and am shocked at the amount of time and money spent on this and in the end that the SRWMD has found it necessary to take Mr. Hill's property for what amounts to an infraction for not obtaining a permit to replace a culvert.

This case has gone on for over nine years and cost the taxpayers of Florida over \$500,000 for legal fees. As a result of the massive overspending, the SRWMD then found it necessary to "take" Mr. Hill's pond, dike and a portion of his long held family land to help compensate for its legal expenses.

According to the SRWMD the replacement of the culvert without permission (a permit) was a safety issue. The State Attorney has recently expressed that safety is no longer the issue. The SRWMD's case is predicated on the fact that no permit was obtained.

This case has "played out" in the local media and citizens of the community are watching closely to see the final results. People understand that there is a reason for "permitting"; however, an

infraction of this type should have and could have been solved at a much less expensive cost and without the “taking” of Mr. Hill’s property.

It is my feeling that decisions made by both the SRWMD and Mr. Hill led to over nine years of wasted time and \$500,000 of taxpayer money over a failure to obtain a permit. These decisions have led to a family in financial and emotional ruin and also have caused a feeling of distrust within our community that the system for protecting the rights of citizens has failed.

As an elected official, I represent the citizens of this community and it is our hope that the courts, SRWMD and Mr. Hill can find a way to work out an amicable solution to this unfortunate incident to help regain the trust of our community .

Should you require any additional information, please contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Mark A. Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Mark A. Hunter
Sheriff, Columbia County