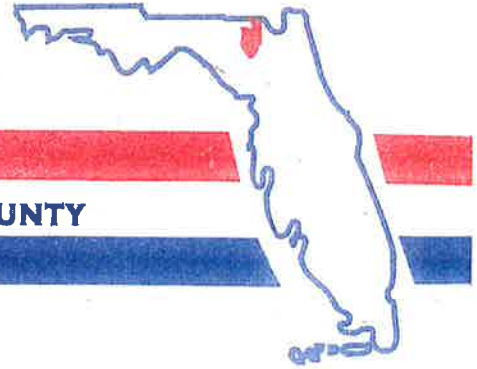


District No. 1 - Ronald Williams
District No. 2 - Rusty DePratter
District No. 3 - Bucky Nash
District No. 4 - Everett Phillips
District No. 5 - Scarlet P. Frisina



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS • COLUMBIA COUNTY

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

CASE NO. 14-10609

JEFFERY LANCE HILL, SR.,

Plaintiff/Appellant,

v.

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Defendants/Appellees.

December 2, 2014

To Who It May Concern:

I am a lifelong resident of Columbia County, Florida. I serve as the Chairman of the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners. I have served as an elected County Commissioner for 32 years. The case referenced above revolves around property located in Columbia County. I wish to state that I am familiar with this case and have personal knowledge of the property in dispute.

I am aware of Hill's pond and dike. I know that the pond and dike has existed since 1966. The pond and dike was designed by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. I have no personal knowledge or recollection that the pond has ever harmed anyone. The pond has always served as a source for agricultural irrigation and community fishing.

In addition to the above, the pond has evolved into a beneficial ecosystem. The pond supports all types of aquatic plants and wildlife. The pond serves as an aquifer recharge area. Stormwater from three (3) subdivisions drain to the pond. The pond serves as "waterfront" property for several private citizens who are not a party to the suit.

BOARD MEETS FIRST THURSDAY AT 5:30 P.M.
AND THIRD THURSDAY AT 5:30 P.M.

P. O. BOX 1529

LAKE CITY, FLORIDA 32056-1529

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United States Court of Appeals

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The case against Hill is approximately nine (9) years old. This appears to be an absurd amount of time given the specifics of the original complaint (replacing a culvert without a permit) and given that Hill has for the most part represented himself pro se. The plaintiff (Suwannee River Water Management District) initially filed suit claiming the repair of the dike without benefit of a permit was a safety issue. According to the Districts Attorney, safety is no longer the issue. The Districts complaint centers on failure to obtain a permit.

After nine (9) years of "litigation" against a defendant that has virtually represented himself and his family, the District laments it has amassed in excess of \$500,000 in legal fees. Now the District feels it necessary to "take" the pond, dike and portion of the Hill farm to compensate for the legal expenses incurred by the District. It should be noted the value of the property to be taken will in no way reimburse the legal expenses of the District based on current value.

In my capacity as a County Commissioner I am accessible within the community. I am asked about this case daily. I am also asked as to what the county can do to help. The opinions of those that I speak to are that the actions of the District are absurd and excessive. Even if a permit was required (debatable as maintenance does not require a permit), the punishment does not fit the offense. The District has spent \$500,000 (with the possibility of more expenses to come) on what is viewed as a \$5,000 problem.

The current Executive Director of the District and most of the current Governing Board of the District were not seated when this suit began. Much of the District's administrative staff is the same. Governing Board members are appointed by the Governor of the State of Florida. They serve without compensation and meet monthly. They are designed to be policy makers. As such, Governing Board members rely on the information supplied by staff to make informed decisions. I personally believe this is where the enforcement of this case failed. Initial poor (or unsupervised) decisions made by staff have continued to be supported by the same staff. Current District management has failed to recognize this; therefore, nine (9) years have been wasted, \$500,000 of taxpayer money has been spent and a family ruined financially and emotionally. This needs to end.

My government experience has taught me many things. One of these things is that failure on any level of government reflects on all levels of government. I trust that the courts will find an amicable way to end this nonsense. I may be reached at the letterhead address if needed.

Respectfully,



Ronald Williams, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

XC: Board of County Commissioners