



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File #:** 24-00859

**Agenda Date:** [Publish Date]

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**Agenda Item Name:**

**Mill Creek Sink Projects Discussion**

**Presenter:**

Stephen Hofstetter, Environmental Protection Department (EPD) Director, 352-264-6811 and Stacie Greco, EPD Water Resources Program Manager, 352-264-6829

**Description:**

Staff to discuss options and strategies to address concerns with development projects in the Mill Creek watershed and near Mill Creek Sink.

**Recommended Action:**

To receive direction from the Board.

**Prior Board Motions:**

August 13, 2024, Regular Meeting, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) directed staff to draft a Chair letter and provide data and reports to the City of Alachua related to Mill Creek Sink and its sensitive connection to our springs and Floridan Aquifer.

August 15, 2024 Special Meeting, the BOCC directed that the Chair letter include a request for affected party status, requesting that County staff have the opportunity to present testimony and evidence at the City of Alachua's August 26, 2024 meeting regarding the Tara Forest West final plat agenda item and additionally directed staff and the County Attorney to brief the Board at their August 22, 2024 Special Meeting on what concerns would be presented at the City's upcoming meeting and what rights party status would be available to the County.

**Fiscal Note:**

N/A

**Strategic Guide:**

Environment

**Background:**

The Board of County Commissioners has recognized the sensitivity of the Mill Creek Sink and Watershed since a large box commercial business was proposed over the Mill Creek Cave system in 2005. There is strong evidence that the Mill Creek Sink and Swallet is connected to the Floridan aquifer and that water entering this system moves quickly in a general northwest direction. A 2005 Dye Trace Study conducted for Alachua County by Karst Environmental Services documented the direct

connection between Mill Creek Sink and Hornsby Spring and the Santa Fe Hills drinking water system.

Based on recent proposed development activities in the watershed, including Tara Forest West, Tara April, Tara Phoenicia, and Tomoka Hills, the Board has directed staff to intervene as an affected party and work with the City of Alachua and the developers/property owners to address concerns with these proposed developments and the potential impacts they could have on sensitive water resources, drinking water, county-owned resources, rare and imperiled species, and the Mill Creek cave system and other karst resources.