

## Top Hat Consulting

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**Advisor:** John Tichenor

**Topic:** Nestlé & Ginnie Springs: Socially Responsible Business or Unsustainable Water Management?

**Audience:** Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board

### Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

### Executive Summary

The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) grants permits for companies such as Nestlé Waters North America (NWNA) to pump drinking water directly from freshwater springs in north Florida. The SRWMD Governing Board must decide if it will allow NWNA to draw 1.152 million gallons of water per day from Ginnie Springs near High Springs, FL. Currently, NWNA, like other bottlers, draws only a fraction of the permitted amount of water from Ginnie Springs. However, NWNA is expanding and updating a bottling plant with the intent to expand production of bottled water coming from Ginnie Springs. Environmental groups point to the threat that increased extraction will pose to the spring and the aquifer that supplies it, as well as to the surrounding wetlands, and the local wildlife dependent upon a sufficient and sustainable water flow. A second element of concern, expressed by opponents of Nestlé's initiative at Ginnie Springs, is articulated as a rights issue. Some stakeholders argue that water is a basic human right and that strict controls need to be in place if it is to be commodified and sold by private industry. Nestlé has consistently responded to critics by pointing to its longstanding commitment to protecting sustainable freshwater sources worldwide.

We believe that NWNA's business practices can help ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, as well as provide jobs in communities that have historically been economically depressed. Nestlé has pledged to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals, but a pledge is only meaningful if it is backed with actions. Our proposal will outline the necessary actions that NWNA will need to take to extract freshwater from Ginnie Springs in a sustainable way that supports regional economic growth.