



Fanning Springs Mayor Cheryl Nekola cut the ceremonial ribbon as a crowd looked on. Pictured from left, Don Quincey, chairman of the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board; Doyle Frierson, superintendent of operations for the City of Fanning Springs; former City Councilman Jim White; City Councilman Marty Sanchez; Councilwoman Barbara Locke; Councilman Robert Kerr; Councilman Paul Chase; Mayor Cheryl Nekola; Joe Mittauer, president of Mittauer & Associates; Richard Macheck, state director of USDA Rural Development; David Beach, president of Beach Construction Company.

# Wastewater Treatment Plant goes online in Fanning Springs

By Carrie A. Mizell

Fanning Springs marked the 43rd celebration of Earth Day on Monday with a dedication ceremony of the city's new centralized wastewater system.

City officials and members of the community gathered at the new facility on State Road 26 for a tour and dedication ceremony for Phase 1 of a project that has been 20 years in the making.

Fanning Springs was identified by the Florida Department of Environmental Protections as an area of concern due to high levels of nitrates in its groundwater. Subsequently, the city received a \$2,946,000 loan and a \$2,855,000 grant from U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development for construction of the centralized wastewater collection and treatment facility. The project, leveraged with \$600,000 in State of Florida Community Development Block Grant funds will decommission existing septic tank systems, replace three packaged wastewater treatment plants and reduce the amount of nitrates in the community's groundwater, leading to improved spring and groundwater conditions, while working to restore water quality in the Suwannee Basin.

"We have been working on this project in earnest for the last six years," said Cheryl Nekola, mayor of Fanning Springs. "I just feel like, if not now then when."

The mayor indicated that 160 commercial and residential customers within the City of Fanning Springs are now online with the city's new centralized wastewater system. Initial hook-up charges are covered by grant funding and monthly bills will run \$27.60/month for residential customers and \$35/month for commercial customers, Nekola said. Thus far, customers include businesses along US 19 and residents living in the community behind the Cadillac Motel. Officials are currently working to get funding for Phase 2, which would include hook-up to additional residents, including residents in River Walk subdivision.

"A reliable wastewater system

is vital to economic growth and the health of the environment," said Richard A. Macheck, Rural Development state director. "The City of Fanning Springs is not only making an investment in their future, but in the spirit of Earth Day, they are also safeguarding the area's natural resources and environment as well."

Beach Construction Company of Gainesville built the centralized wastewater treatment facility which has been up and running for six weeks. The plant includes static screening, an equalization basin, two anoxic basins, two aeration basins, two hopper bottom secondary clarifiers, two chlorine contact chambers, a chlorination system, a 0.5 MG reclaimed water storage tank, an irrigation pump station, a 13-acre spray irrigation field, aerated sludge

holding and associated sitework, electrical work, 150kW stand by generator and instrumentation work.

Once the waste is treated, reclaimed water will be used for irrigation at the city's new 13-acre spray field, where 96 gallons of water per minute are currently being sprayed daily.

According to Doyle Frierson, superintendent of operations for the City of Fanning Springs, the municipality is currently working with local farmers on a partnership to use excess water produced at the treatment facility to irrigate non-food crops like hay or corn grown for silage.

The plant is rated for 100,000 gallons of daily waste, though officials believe it could be 20 to 40 years before the centralized wastewater system sees that much. Currently,

22,000 gallons of waste flow into the facility each day through a 10-inch pipe.

Harry Knaufman, an engineer with Mittauer & Associates, estimates that in five years the City of Fanning Springs will still only be using half of its daily capacity.

Steve Davenport, assistant manager of Fanning Springs State Park, explained on Monday that the park was hooked up to the city's new centralized wastewater system last week. The April hook-up is just in time for summer visitors who flock to Fanning Springs each summer to enjoy its second magnitude springs, which pour nearly 65 million gallons of spring water into the Suwannee River each day.



Doyle Frierson, superintendent of operations for the City of Fanning Springs, gives city residents a tour of the new centralized wastewater treatment facility on Monday.