



Hi, I'm Wyatt ERP.

You may have seen my name on WANTED posters around town. No, the law's not lookin' for me.

I'm looking for the law - the law giving Northwest Florida equal protection from flooding problems the rest of the state has enjoyed for 10 years. The law also gives the Panhandle the same controls on stormwater runoff and wetlands destruction as every other part of Florida.

It's called ERP, like me. It stands for Environmental Resource Permitting and here's why it's WANTED:

What is ERP?

Since 1995, Florida has enjoyed the protection of a very successful stormwater, flooding and wetlands program called Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) - all of Florida, that is, except for the 16 counties of the Northwest Panhandle. Our local legislators exempted us from the program. Recent hurricanes and spring rains demonstrate that Northwest Florida needs better flood prevention. During the spring of 2005, the Governor offered \$1.9 million to implement ERP in Northwest Florida, but our local legislators turned it down.

How is ERP better for controlling flooding and stormwater and for protecting the wetlands than the current NW Florida regulations?

1) ERP protects "isolated wetlands" that filter and absorb pollution and recharge our aquifer. Currently no state or federal agency protects these wetlands, and there are 800,000 acres of them in NW Florida.

2) ERP evaluates the quantity of water flowing from new developments and considers the downstream effect of any overflow from the retention ponds. Our current regulations evaluate only the quality of water held in the retention ponds.

3) ERP requires twice as much water to be retained onsite as our current state regulations.

4) ERP requires a 25 foot buffer between wetlands and development. Current state regulations require no buffer.

We know why we don't want to have our properties flooded, but why should we care about wetlands?

1) Wetlands are the buffer between the land and the sea; they soak up water like a sponge.

2) "Isolated wetlands" are not really isolated. Even a wetland not directly connected to a bay or river may still connect to the

aquifer. Wetlands filter pollution from stormwater and keep it from seeping into the groundwater.

3) Wetlands, including "isolated wetlands," also recharge the aquifer. Either stormwater can be filtered through wetlands to supply clean drinking water - or it can gush into our houses as dirty floodwater.

4) Wildlife and fish depend on wetlands for habitat.

5) Wetlands help prevent erosion by soaking up stormwater.

What can you do?

1) Call or fax the Governor. Tell him we want his \$1.9 million for Northwest Florida's ERP in the next budget. Phone: 850-488-4441. Fax: 850-487-0801.

2) Call, write, fax or visit your local legislators. Tell them to support ERP for NW Florida now. **We want equal protection under the law!**

POLITICIANS SAY WE DON'T NEED ERP.

"Regulations written for South Florida's local governments should not interfere with local solutions to environmental challenges unique to Northwest Florida."

- Florida Representative Greg Evers
Pensacola News Journal, August 14, 2005

We reply:

■ ERP standards were intended to cover the entire state, but Northwest Florida legislators asked for and received a "temporary" exemption for our area.

■ For ten years, Northwest Florida has had weaker stormwater and wetlands regulations: DEP does not regulate the quantity of stormwater flowing from new developments. DEP does not regulate isolated wetlands, of which there are 800,000 acres in Northwest Florida.

■ Recent hurricanes and the 2005 spring rains show that NW Florida is very vulnerable to flooding.

■ We need equal protection under the law for Northwest Florida.

POLITICIANS SAY ERP IS JUST ANOTHER LAYER OF BUREAUCRACY.

"That's just adding another bureaucracy."

- Florida Representative Dave Murzin
Pensacola News Journal, May 9, 2005

"I do not think our residents need to have another layer of government in their backyard..."

- Florida Representative Dave Murzin
Pensacola News Journal, May 22, 2005

"...[I]t is an expansion of regulation."

- Florida Representative Don Brown
Pensacola News Journal, April 20, 2005

We reply:

■ ERP is not an additional layer of regulation. It is a replacement for existing, weaker state legislation currently in effect in NW Florida.

■ ERP would streamline state permitting by combining stormwater and wetlands dredge and fill permits in one permit.

POLITICIANS SAY LET LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE CARE OF IT.

"There are significant layers of protection in place," Benson said, pointing to Escambia County's wetlands ordinance."

- Florida Representative Holly Benson
Pensacola News Journal, May 9, 2005

"Last I checked, we have a stricter ordinance than is contained in the ERP."

- Florida Representative Dave Murzin
Pensacola News Journal, May 9, 2005

We reply:

■ There are 14 counties in Northwest Florida with NO protection for their isolated wetlands. Every isolated wetland in those counties can be filled in tomorrow without a permit. In ten years, only Escambia County

and Leon County have enacted local ordinances to protect wetlands.

■ Why settle for a patchwork of regulations that vary county by county, instead of using an existing statewide program? Small counties can't afford the engineers and biologists necessary to implement a local stormwater and wetlands ordinance. Will the state legislators give each county General Revenue funds to create a program?

POLITICIANS SAY ISOLATED WETLANDS AREN'T IMPORTANT.

"How are isolated wetlands related to flooding?" Murzin asked."

- Florida Representative Dave Murzin
Pensacola News Journal, May 9, 2005

We reply:

■ Isolated wetlands soak up floodwaters like a sponge and help prevent flooding.

■ NW Florida has 800,000 acres of isolated wetlands currently absorbing water we don't want in our homes or yards or on our roads.

■ Isolated wetlands are not really isolated. They connect to the aquifer, filter pollutants and recharge the aquifer from which we get our drinking water.

POLITICIANS SAY WE DON'T HAVE THE MONEY.

"...Much of the criticism has been centered on the \$1.9 million Gov. Bush proposed to implement the ERP in Northwest Florida this year. For one, this money was a one time allocation and not recurring money, which means a potential tax increase to our residents to pay for it in future years..."

- Florida Representative Dave Murzin
Pensacola News Journal, May 22, 2005.

We reply:

■ Our residents are already paying increased stormwater taxes because ERP is not in place. When local governments have to resort to stormwater ordinances and utilities or flood repairs, they come at a price for taxpayers.

■ The problem is not money – it is politics. When the legislators want to fund something, they find the money. Look at the \$300 million spent on the Scripps project and the \$50 million spent on the Bay County airport which was even voted down by the voters in referendum.

■ During the last legislative session, the NW Florida legislative delegation promised the Governor that they would take action on ERP in 2006. We are holding them to that promise.

For more information, contact the Coalition for ERP:

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