

- o [YAHOO](#)
- o [NEWSVINE](#)
- o [DEL.ICIO.US](#)

## Soiling Glen Springs

Concerns arise over boaters dumping waste, grease into water



Jon Singley

[Buy photo](#)

Boats tied up and left unmoved for weeks, months and even years to be used for overnight and weekends stays line the south side of Silver Glen Springs.

By [Susan Latham Carr](#)

Staff writer

Published: Monday, August 3, 2009 at 6:30 a.m.

Last Modified: Sunday, August 2, 2009 at 11:02 p.m.

OCALA NATIONAL FOREST - Ed Haversat has been coming to Silver Glen Springs in the Ocala National Forest for about 35 years.

More Photos:

Before he sold it, he used to arrive by boat. On Thursday, he came by car from his home in Leesburg for a day trip with his grandson.

- [Silver Glen Springs](#)

The two were enjoying the U.S. Forest Service's swim and picnic area at the spring. They had paid the \$4.25 admission fee to use the facility, which the Forest Service leases to a concessionaire.

Beyond the spring's recreation area, boaters, who have come down the run from Lake George, collect in large numbers in a shallow area, where they anchor.

By noon Thursday, about a dozen-and-a-half boats of all sizes - everything from houseboats to sailboats to small motor craft - were anchored outside buoys set up around the swimming area. And more were arriving.

"On the weekends the boats are rafted against one another," Haversat said about how the boats sidle up to one another, allowing people to walk from boat-to-boat. "It's a zoo, particularly when you get 800-900 boats in here at a time. It's dangerous."

Haversat said an alcohol ban by both Marion and Lake counties is a "farce."

"They throw chicken bones. They let their sewage run overboard. It's sickening," he said.

Haversat remembers years ago boating to Silver Glen, spending the night and returning home on a Sunday morning.

"It was paradise. It still is, as long as they don't dump trash and sewage in the water," Haversat said. "Somebody who wants to keep their boat in a long time, that should not be allowed."

Rick Lint, Ocala National Forest District Ranger, shares Haversat's concerns. He worries that overuse and abuse are destroying Silver Glen Springs for future generations.

"This is a special place," Lint said. "It's got problems. There's rules on the books, but we have to look at the long-term management here."

He said part of the problem is that many government entities are involved. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission does compliance with boat traffic and boating safety. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has jurisdiction over sovereign submerged lands or waterways. The U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service has designated Silver Glen as a critical habitat for manatees. And the spring is in the Forest, which is managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

Generally, the state of Florida has jurisdiction over the state's waterways, but because Silver Glen Springs is on the eastern edge of the Forest, Lint said he has concurrent jurisdiction.

"Everybody has a hand in it," Lint said.

But it appears no one has a firm hand in it.

"In the past, when anybody, particularly the state, tried to do something, it got beaten down," Lint said. "People are in denial there's a problem"

But Lint sees problems. They are not as bad as they once were, but there still are problems, he said.

The vegetation is ripped up by anchors and stomped down by boaters who jump off their boats and walk in the shallow waters. There is a sandbar in the middle of the run and boats anchor there. Boats also are pulled on shore, eroding the banks. People are raking the eel grass to stand in the water next to their boats, few manatees are seen when the boats are there, and some boats are staying there for months, weeks and years, Lint said.

He said that, during the week, it is more of a family atmosphere, but turns into a party area on weekends.

Some of the same problems existed in 2003, when Pandion Systems Inc. conducted a study for the DEP about the spring's carrying capacity.

According to the report, much of the 200-foot-wide and 3,300-foot-long run was damaged by recreation. Boat propellers damaged the eel grass, and waders trampled native grasses. The vegetation in the USFS swim area also was trampled. Exotic hydrilla plants were spreading. Anchors scarred the sediment and vegetation. The heaviest use was on holiday weekends in the summer, when as many as 200 boats would anchor. Contamination from human waste from boat sewage or people using the water or the woods onshore as toilets was a major concern.

Jim Stevenson, who worked for the DEP and was chairman of the Florida Springs Task Force and director of the Governor's Springs Initiative at the time the study was being done, said he has had no dealing with the matter since he retired in June 2003.

He said DEP is the responsible agency, but other involved agencies include the U.S. Forest Service and Marion and Lake counties. He said the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which regulates boating, also is among the agencies with responsibility for the spring's protection.

"We did our best to approach it in the appropriate manner. We had a number of inter-agency meetings. We did research. We held public meetings," Stevenson said. "Of course, the boaters went right to their legislators, and agencies have a hard time dealing with that kind of politics. So it's really very unfortunate that such a fine spring is being abused in this manner, but there's not enough people that care about it to change the status quo."

He said of all Florida's 700 springs, Silver Glen is the most abused from recreational use.

"It's one of Florida's finest springs, being a first magnitude, and it's very unfortunate that action has not been taken to overcome this abuse," Stevenson said.

Steve Fleming, of Orlando, also visited Silver Glen with his family on Thursday. He does boat at Silver Glen, although he was not boating that day.

"I think the two-stroke engines are adding some pollution into the springs," Fleming said about older motors that use gas and oil that spills into the water. "Then you have the houseboats here. You see people dumping the grease from their houseboats as they cook. The houseboats should be banned, or at least cooking on the houseboats and on the grills. The grills hang off the side of the boat, and the grease drips right into the water."

He said the number of boats should be limited because "it does get crazy." He also commented about alcohol use.

"I don't think anybody should be drinking and driving," Fleming said.

Jena Counts, from Putnam County, was among the boaters at Silver Glen on Thursday.

"We use the dump out at the marina," Counts said about disposing of human waste. "To me, it's the government's way of shutting everything down."

Counts has been coming to Silver Glen since she was 10 years old. She said there is some drinking and partying on weekends, but the majority of people there are families.

"With anything, you are going to get bad with the good," Counts said.

FWC Lt. George Pottorf, who oversees the patrol of Silver Glen's waters, said most of the trouble occurs during Memorial Day, July Fourth and Labor Day, when young people come to party.

Pottorf said his agency has not had many complaints but, when they do receive them, they have not been able to confirm that people are dumping waste.

"It doesn't mean it's not occurring," Pottorf said. "We just can't confirm it."

He said officers do enforce speed limits in manatee zones, issue tickets for littering, and enforce the no-drinking ordinance when they encounter it.

"It's a very, very high usage area," Pottorf said. "You do see the damage. You can see grass in the main channel. I would confirm that. I haven't seen anybody throw their waste overboard."

Alice Whitehead, who manages the USFS concession for American Land and Leisure, said the boaters come on USFS land, but do not pay the fee.

They have torn down the signs, she said, adding they come ashore after the park closes and dump trash and beer cans in and around Dumpsters and turn over the portable toilets, throw toilet paper everywhere and dump charcoal on the USFS land.

"They bring their dogs on shore to poop everywhere," Whitehead said. "Usually there are so many boats you can walk from boat-to-boat on weekends."

She worries that if a boat caught fire, there would be a disaster.

"It's beautiful here and it's being destroyed, and I hate that," Whitehead said.

And so does Lint, who would like to hear ideas about how to resolve the problems so the public can continue to use the run while protecting the resource. He will be out of the office for about two weeks, but will return calls. His number is 352-669-3153.

"I don't know what the answer is, but something is not right," Lint said. "There's problems there. It would be irresponsible not to address them."

All rights reserved. This copyrighted material may not be re-published without permission. Links are encouraged.

- -
- -
- -
- [Enlarge Text](#)
- [Email](#)
- [Print](#)
- [Comments](#)
- [Share](#)

- Your Name
- Your Email
- Recipient's Email
- 

- [WITH PHOTO](#)
- [NO PHOTO](#)
- [FACEBOOK](#)
- [Yahoo! Buzz](#)
- [YAHOO](#)
- [NEWSVINE](#)
- [DELICIOUS](#)

<p><b>Super Cheap Home Insurance</b> Get Discount Homeowners Insurance Online – Rates from \$20 / Month. <a href="#">Discount-Home</a></p>	<p><b>Buy Stocks - \$4 Fee at ShareBuilder</b> No account or investment minimums. No inactivity fees. Start today. <a href="http://www.sharebuilder.com">www.sharebuilder.com</a></p>	<p><b>meet silver spring singles</b> Meet singles in Silver Spring. We are 100% free for everything. <a href="http://www.datehookup.com">www.datehookup.com</a></p>
--	---	---

Ads by Yahoo!

## Comments

Only moderator-approved comments are shown on this page. To see all comments, please visit the forum. We at Ocala.com created these forums as a place where our community can exchange ideas on news issues and express their thoughts. Please be courteous and respectful. Avoid expletives, false statements, veiled or overt threats and personal attacks. Stay on topic. ([View full Terms of Service.](#))

[Post a comment](#) | [View all comments](#) on this topic.

1. [starrynight](#) says...  
August 3, 2009 6:33:17 am