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Local woman joins historic all-female veterans Honor Flight



**LOCAL** Page B1  
Community gathers to mourn distillery owner

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**CRYSTAL RIVER GOVERNMENT**

**CR Council advances city hall design**

Parking, park space and chamber style debated

By **MIKE ARNOLD**  
Chronicle Reporter

Crystal River City Council members signaled support last week for a new city hall design that pairs a civic building with an expanded park space, while leaving key cost-driven decisions,

including ground-floor parking, to be refined in the next phase.

During an April 22 workshop, consultants from Monarch Design Group, Kimley-Horn and construction manager Scorpio walked the council through updated site and floor plans, asking for direction on several pivotal issues to keep the project moving.

The concept keeps city hall near its current footprint while reimagining the surrounding property as

a flexible public space anchored by a large event lawn, shaded by existing live oaks and tied together with walking paths, a playground and a “festival street” plaza.

Landscape architect Elisabeth Manley said the goal is to balance daily park use with the ability to host larger events.

“This is a passive-event park,” she said, describing open lawn space that could accommodate festivals or remain usable for

everyday recreation.

Designers also eliminated a previously proposed northern parking lot, shifting instead toward a more park-focused layout and exploring options for additional parking, including a nearby antique store parcel.

**Parking vs. public space**

The most debated issue was how to use the elevated building’s ground floor, either as covered event space

or as additional parking.

Council members leaned toward parking, provided costs remain reasonable.

Councilwoman Mindi Hastings called it a “missed opportunity” not to use the space for parking, while Councilman Chris Ensing noted the building will already require structural and fire protection systems regardless of use.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERN**

**Group: Inglis dams show failure risks**

Florida DEP reports cite major deficiencies, aging structures, FOIA reveals

By **MIKE ARNOLD**  
Chronicle Reporter

Two aging water-control structures on the lower Withlacoochee River are showing “significant deterioration” and signs of potential failure, according to 2025 inspection reports obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request and shared publicly for the first time by the Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration (WAR) group.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection reports detail conditions at the Inglis Dam, built in 1969, and the Inglis Spillway, completed in 1970, both of which have exceeded their expected 50-year service life. Inspectors classified the structures as high hazard dams, meaning a failure could result in catastrophic loss of life and major property damage downstream.

“These are dangerous dams,” said Bruce Kaster, a WAR board member and former U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officer who reviewed the reports. “They’ve passed their life expectancy. Failure is not a question of if, but when.”

Kaster said the findings elevate the issue beyond routine maintenance.

“When you see C4s and C5s on high hazard dams, that’s not theoretical,” he said. “Those are conditions that require action. Left unaddressed, they lead to failure mechanisms already underway, seepage, internal erosion, structural weakening.”

**Repairs required, major deficiencies identified**

Inspection findings categorize structural issues on a scale from C1 to C5, with higher numbers indicating more severe problems. According to Kaster, the reports show multiple C4 (repair required) and C5 (major deficiency) ratings, particularly on the spillway structure.

Among the most serious concerns:

Corrosion and deterioration on lift gates that control water flow  
Leakage and voids beneath structural components, often a sign of internal erosion

Widespread C3 ratings indicating repairs should already be scheduled

Spillway inspection findings show Gate No. 2 is in “overall poor condition,” with some components nearing failure due to significant corrosion and loss of structural material.

Inspectors also documented several feet of deteriorated sealing systems, including sections where water is bypassing the full height of a gate. Additional findings



An angler waits for a fish to bite on the east side of the Inglis spillway.

Photos by Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor



A cormorant rests near the Inglis spillway.

include a poorly formed structural joint with measurable penetration and steel elements with complete loss of protective coating and visible section loss. The report further notes many of these conditions have “not changed appreciably” since the previous inspection.

“The spillway is actually in worse condition than the dam itself,” Kaster said, noting the concentration of higher-level deficiencies

on critical components. Separate findings for the Inglis Dam gates also point to advancing deterioration, particularly in protective coatings and underlying steel.

According to the report, the hydraulic gate coating system is “significantly degraded,” with widespread chalking, flaking, discoloration and areas where the coating has failed entirely. Inspectors noted rust is firmly

established, with pitting and corrosion visible in moisture-prone and debris-collecting areas.

The report warns that in some locations, corrosion has progressed to the point of measurable material loss, with early signs of cross-section reduction in steel components.

More severe findings indicate areas where coating failure has

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**Who is Bruce Kaster?**

Bruce Kaster is an Ocala attorney, former U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officer and longtime environmental advocate with decades of experience in Florida water management and dam oversight issues.

He served in the Corps of Engineers and as a paratrooper, and later chaired the Ocklawaha Basin Board for the St. Johns River Water Management District. He is currently vice president of Florida Defenders of the Environment and a board member of Withlacoochee Aquatic Restoration.

Kaster has spent more than 40 years working on river restoration efforts and has used public records laws to obtain dam inspection reports across the state, including multiple reports on the Kirkpatrick (Rodman) Dam.

For the Inglis Dam and Spillway reports, Kaster said he has retained an independent earthen dam engineering expert to conduct a full technical review.

“I understand the reports, but I’m not an earthen dam engineer,” Kaster said. “That’s why we bring in someone who is, to make sure nothing is missed.”

