

# RiverFronts



June 2011

## District urges water conservation as drought persists

Several months of below-average rainfall has led to record-breaking low flows on the upper Suwannee River and has had similar effects to water resources in other areas within the Suwannee River Water Management District (District).

As drought conditions continue to cause groundwater and surfacewater levels to decline, the District urges all water users to eliminate non-essential uses of water.

### MAY CONDITIONS

- The upper Aucilla, Suwannee and Santa Fe basins experienced rainfall deficits of nearly 25 inches compared to an average year.
- All 16 District-monitored lakes were below their historical average level.
- Groundwater levels fell in 92 percent of monitored wells.

### DISTRICT ACTION

- Water Shortage Advisory: The advisory asks all users to voluntarily reduce water consumption indoors and outdoors until further notice.
- Landscape Irrigation Rule: The



**LEFT:** The Suwannee River at Suwannee Springs in May 2011, at its lowest flow ever recorded. Several months of rainfall deficits have led to historical low flows on the upper Suwannee River.

rule requires homeowners, businesses, and others to limit lawn and landscape watering to two days per week during daylight saving time and one day per week during standard time. Irrigation should not occur between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

### WATER CONSERVATION

- The District offers the following tips to conserve indoors and outdoors:
- Fix leaky faucets and toilets and

replace older fixtures and appliances with low-flow models.

- Turn off tap while brushing teeth, shaving, or washing dishes.
- In watering lawns and landscapes, adhere to the landscape irrigation rule and water only as much as your landscape needs.
- Use Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. Visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com) for more ways to save.

## Drought sparks concerns on District lands

Drought conditions have taken a toll on District lands. A strike of lightning on June 6 ignited a wildfire within the Santa Fe Swamp, located in Alachua and Bradford counties.

The Florida Division of Forestry (FLDOF) has been working to contain the blaze, which has swept through the entire 6,000-acre swamp.

The District, which owns 5,708 acres within the swamp, officially closed public access to the tract on June 13.

Kurt Wisner, of the FLDOF, said

it would take the level of rain that accompanies a tropical system to extinguish the fire, and forestry crews would remain in the area to keep the fire contained until the agency declares the fire out.

District officials recently placed a ban on campfires on all District lands, due to drought conditions and increased fire danger.

"The District urges persons recreating on District lands to exercise caution during all outdoor activities," said Edwin

McCook, District land management specialist.

The District offers the following safety tips:

- Be aware that sparks from vehicles, equipment, and cigarettes can start a wildfire.
- Pay special attention to vegetation conditions. Tall grass and vehicle exhaust systems are a volatile mixture and a fire can start in a matter of minutes.
- Persons spotting a wildfire should call 911.

# District welcomes new governing board members

Dr. George Cole, of Monticello; Kevin Brown, of Alachua; and Donald “Ray” Curtis III, of Perry were sworn in as members of the Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board on June 14. Governor Rick Scott appointed Cole and Brown and reappointed Curtis to the board in early June.

Cole will represent the Aucilla River Basin, Brown will represent the Santa Fe and Waccasassa river basins, and Curtis will represent the Coastal River Basin. The new members will serve through March 1, 2015.

Cole holds a Doctorate in geography with an emphasis on wetland hydrology and is a registered professional engineer and a registered professional land surveyor. He has had a lengthy career in surveying and mapping and is currently a part-time adjunct professor at Florida State University.

Brown earned a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture at the University of Florida (UF). He is also a graduate of UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Natural Resource Leadership Institute. He is a state-certified general real estate appraiser and has served as chief appraiser for Farm Credit of Florida since 1990.



From left: Dr. George Cole, Kevin Brown, and Donald “Ray” Curtis III.

Curtis received his Juris Doctorate from Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville after earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration, with a minor in agricultural law, from UF.

He is an attorney whose law practice (Howard & Curtis, P.A.) is located in Perry. Prior to establishing his own law firm, Curtis was an attorney with the Third

Circuit Office of the Public Defender in Perry.

The remaining governing board members are Donald J. Quincey, Jr., chairman; Alphonas Alexander, vice chairman; Heath M. Davis; James L. Fraleigh; Carl E. Meece; and Guy N. Williams. Curtis serves as the board secretary/treasurer.

## New landscaping features drought tolerant plants



The District has found it’s easier to follow the year-round landscape irrigation rule when you use low-maintenance, drought-tolerant plants such as those that now welcome visitors and staff to the agency’s headquarters in Live Oak.

The District’s redesigned landscape uses a water-efficient drip irrigation system that in the near future will use reclaimed water from the City of Live Oak.

To learn more about designing a Florida-friendly landscape that uses less water, fertilizer, chemicals and energy, contact your local county extension agent or visit [www.floridayards.org](http://www.floridayards.org). Some local nurseries such as Fraleigh Nursersies, LLC, in Madison, which generously donated the plants to the District, can also offer expert advice for environmentally-friendly landscaping.