

RiverFronts



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Water supply planning is set to move forward

WATER RESOURCE CAUTION AREAS

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board on Oct. 11 designated the Alapaha River Basin, Upper Suwannee River Region, and Upper and Lower Santa Fe river basins as water resource caution areas. The District's 2010 Water Supply Assessment designated those areas as water supply planning regions last December, and under chapter 62-40.520(2), Florida Administrative Code, the District is required to designate those areas as water resource caution areas within a 12-month period.

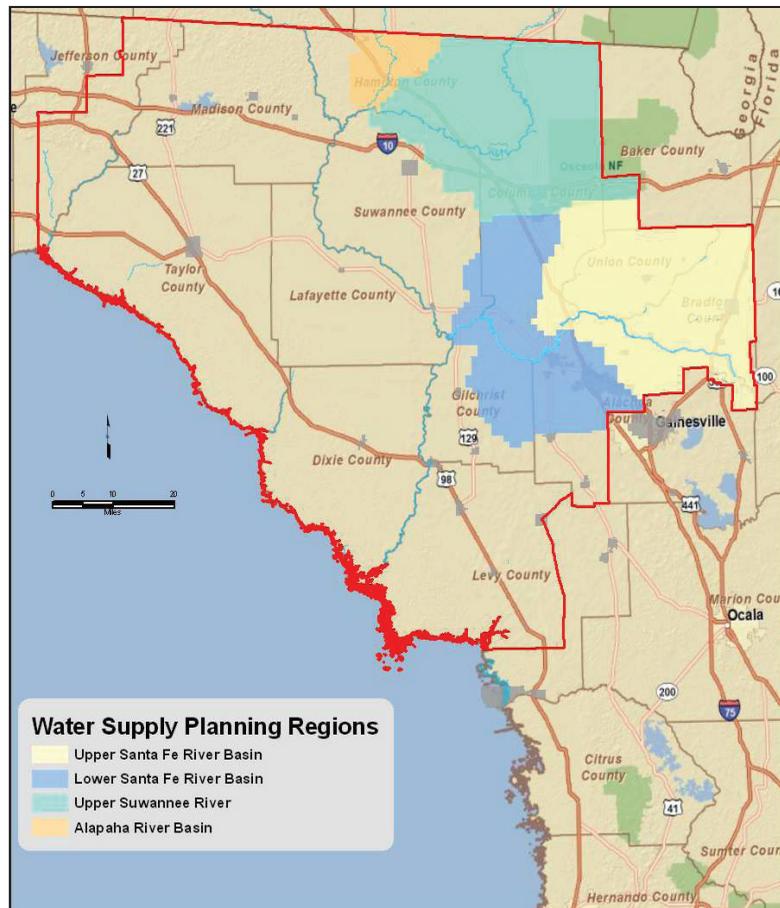
WATER SUPPLY PLANNING

The designation means that groundwater sources in those areas are not adequate to meet future needs over a 20-year period and that regional water supply plans are needed to find water sources to meet demands. The designation also means that the District will initiate water supply planning in those regions and will prepare one or more regional water supply plans.

The District's 2010 Water Supply Assessment addressed declining groundwater levels in the northeastern portion of the District due to regional withdrawals. These areas include parts of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Suwannee, and Union counties.

ALTERNATIVE WATER SUPPLIES

The District has begun to identify strategies to offset projected water resource impacts. The governing board has approved a measure to allow the District to seek funding assistance for a study to find ways to recharge the Upper Floridan aquifer. The District will also expand its reclaimed water program and employ



These regions were designated as water resource caution areas.

water conservation measures to help recover groundwater levels and prevent additional water resource impacts.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

The District is also preparing an update to its regional groundwater flow model in order to better predict water resource impacts that may occur from groundwater withdrawals. The District continues development of minimum flows and levels (MLFs) to determine the amount of water that can be removed from the natural system without causing significant harm to the resources and the ecology.

COORDINATION EFFORTS

The District is working with the St. Johns River Water Management District in its water supply planning process to address concerns over declining groundwater levels that are affecting both districts.

Both districts and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection entered into an interagency agreement in September, which requires the districts to coordinate on water use permitting and water supply planning activities when proposed withdrawals may contribute to impacts across district boundaries.

Farmers will receive assistance to update conservation plans

About 50 poultry producers in the Middle Suwannee area will soon receive technical assistance to update conservation plans on their farms that help save and protect water.

Over the last 12 years, the District, through the Suwannee River Partnership (SRP), has worked extensively with dairy, poultry, and crop farmers to help them implement conservation practices. As part of that effort, the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) developed conservation plans or comprehensive nutrient management plans (CNMPs) for participating farms.

Through the program, technical service providers evaluate a farm's operation and recommend changes they can make to conserve water and better manage nutrients. On poultry operations, they evaluate such things as the number of chickens present, the amount of litter produced and applied to cropland, how much water and feed is consumed, and the types of crops grown, if any. Samples are collected to determine the availability of nutrients in soil, litter, and crops.

"We can use this information to make recommendations for how much litter is needed to ensure a crop's needs are met



LEFT: Doug Carter Jr., left, and Douglas Carter Sr., SRP participants, pull samples from haylage on their poultry farm in McAlpin. (Photo courtesy of Suwannee County Conservation District)

while reducing the potential for excess nutrients to leach into the environment," said Hugh Thomas, of the SRP.

Providers can also recommend tools and equipment to help carry out those practices and funding assistance for those tools.

Many of these plans are more than 10 years old and need updating. That means technical service providers will reassess farms for changes, such as an increase or decrease in the number of chickens produced, whether the farm is utilizing manure litter onsite, and types of crops the

producers may be growing.

"An added benefit to the program is these efforts will put farmers in compliance with State water quality standards," Thomas said.

The District and the NRCS have entered into an agreement to provide technical assistance to poultry producers to update their CNMPs. Seventy-five percent of the \$300,000 program will be funded by NRCS. The District, through the SRP, will provide the remaining 25 percent through in-kind services.

News briefs

Recreational Opportunities

The public will have more opportunities to enjoy hiking, biking, horseback riding, picnicking, and wildlife viewing with the 463-acre expansion of the District's Santa Fe River Ranch Tract.

The District, under a joint participation agreement with Alachua County, purchased the tract in 2010 for floodplain and surfacewater protection purposes, and over the last several months has been preparing the tract for public access.

The property is an addition to the 737-acre Santa Fe River Ranch Tract in Alachua County. For more information, call 800.226.1066 (FL only) or 386.362.1001.

Wetland Mitigation

The District will enter into agreements with the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) and the City of Starke to provide wetland mitigation within the historic Alligator Creek Floodplain corridor for the Starke bypass project. Florida Statute requires the District to carry out wetland mitigation plans for transportation projects.

This project will be an extension of the Edwards Road Bottomlands Project, which will expand restoration efforts into the majority of the historic floodplain. The District is managing sediment and restoring stream habitat within the floodplain.

Hydrologic Conditions

September was the sixth consecutive month the District received below normal rainfall, increasing the 12-month deficit to 12.16 inches. However, areas in Baker and Columbia counties received up to 10.6 inches, which caused rapid rises in New River and Olustee Creek. Conditions at all other major gages remained extremely low.

Sneads Smokehouse Lake in Jefferson County fell to its lowest recorded level for the second consecutive month and levels fell in 85 percent of monitored Upper Floridan aquifer wells. Record monthly lows occurred at 37 wells and historic lows occurred at 19 wells.