

## Districts collaborate to protect water resources

In September, the Suwannee River Water Management District (District), the St. Johns River Water Management District, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection entered into an interagency agreement, through which the districts agreed to collaborate on water use permitting, minimum flows and levels (MFLs), and water supply planning activities when proposed withdrawals may contribute to impacts across district boundaries.

Since that time, the districts have made progress in developing plans to carry out the terms of the agreement, which call for the following:

- Implementation of a study, conducted by both districts and reviewed by the National Research Council, to evaluate regional groundwater declines.
- Development of a joint regional groundwater flow model that will cover numerous counties in North Florida and South Georgia in order to better predict

and assess potential water resource impacts.

- Development of consistent MFLs methodology and joint development of MFL prevention and recovery strategies.
- The sharing of hydrologic and planning data.

Meetings for the development of the joint regional groundwater flow model are open to the public. For more information, call Dale Jenkins at 800.226.1066 (FL only) or 386.362.1001.

## MFLs will continue to be a priority for FY 2012

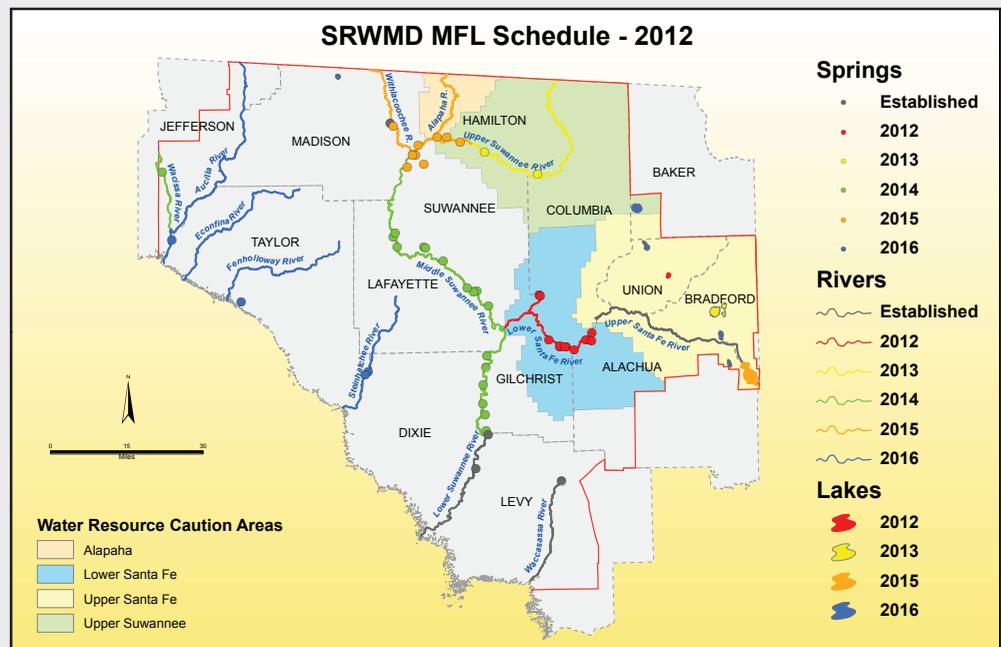
The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) will continue to establish minimum flows and levels (MFLs) in Fiscal Year 2012. Priority will be given to water resource caution areas -- regions that may be short of groundwater within 20 years.

MFL work is underway for the Upper Suwannee, Lower Santa Fe, and Ichetucknee rivers, as well as their associated springs. These projects are in various phases of completion.

Over the last year, the District has collaborated with contractors to collect data at select areas along some of these rivers. In other areas, that process is just starting.

Once staff and contractors have completed the data collection phase, they will develop a river model to assess the degree to which water resource changes can occur without significant harm to the resource.

A final technical report will undergo peer review and governing board approval before each MFL is adopted into 40B-8, Florida Administrative Code.



MFLs priority work schedule.

MFLs determine the amount of water that can be removed from the natural system without causing significant harm to resources, and they allow the District

to know how much water is available for water use permitting and which areas to initiate regional water supply planning.

# LiDAR data will improve flood mapping and MFLs

The Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board on Dec. 13 authorized the District to enter into a contract with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to provide about 720 square miles of light detection and ranging (LiDAR) data in Bradford County and other selected flood risk areas.

Such data will improve floodplain modeling to designate more accurate flood zones for the creation of Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs). The District serves as a technical partner with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help create the maps.

The District will also use the data for

other applications, such as to set minimum flows and levels for Sampson, Rowell, and Crosby lakes in Bradford County.

Captured from a plane, LiDAR provides precise elevation data. LiDAR, as a remote sensing technique, has several advantages. Chief among them are high accuracies, high point density, large coverage areas, and penetration in forested terrain.

"Compared to the existing USGS 5 foot topography contour data, LiDAR data provide a better representation of the earth's surface which gives the District more precise data to be used in modeling and other applications," said Paul Buchanan, the District's geographical

information system (GIS) program coordinator.

Over the last several years, the District has been able to obtain 4,785 square miles of LiDAR data for a fraction of the cost through partnerships with the USGS, FEMA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Northwest Florida Water Management District, the Florida Department of Emergency Management, and Alachua County.

FEMA will provide \$175,000 of the cost, USGS will provide \$44,000, and the District will provide \$50,000.

## New standard designed to prevent spread of invasive weeds

Contractors who work on District lands will soon help prevent and control the spread of invasive weeds as part of a new standard that will be implemented in the near future.

Under the come clean, leave clean standard, being developed by the District, all equipment that enters and leaves District lands must be free from plant material. Contractors will not use equipment in or near infested areas. If work is needed in these areas, contractors must spray equipment upon departure.

"Tractors, trailers, or other equipment may look clean, but mud containing

spores, seeds, or root masses of invasive weeds can hide under wheel wells or other crevices," said Beau Willsey, District environmental scientist. "Transporting such plant material can cause infestations on District or other property."

Exotic species are non-native plants that have been introduced into Florida for a variety of reasons, either for their ornamental nature, as a potential forage crop or by accident. Most non-native plant species are not invasive, that is there is little threat of their proliferation in the wild. However, invasive weeds can displace Florida's native plants and

threaten the health of the ecosystem.

"Invasive exotics threaten biodiversity and wildlife habitat and are expensive to control," said Willsey.

The District is tasked with keeping the native environment intact and protecting biodiversity. The District controls the infestation of non-native, invasive plants on District lands through multiple methods, including tree removal, prescribed fire, chemical and biological treatment.

More information about invasive weeds is available at [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com).

## Reforestation efforts will restore natural communities

Contractors with the District are busy planting pine seedlings on nearly 1,800 acres of District-owned lands. These efforts will return altered lands back to their natural state and condition, which will improve wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

Tree planting activities began Dec. 5 and are scheduled to continue through

the end of the month on the following tracts: Natural Well Branch, Cuba Bay, Goose Pasture, Jones Mill Creek, Steinhatchee Springs, Steinhatchee Falls, White Springs Well Field, Mallory Swamp, and Alapahoochee.

For more information, call Bill McKinstry at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only).



**LEFT:** Contractors use equipment accompanied by a v-blade to plant pine seedlings on District property.