

Groundwater study will undergo peer review

Groundwater model meeting scheduled for Feb. 1

On Jan. 10, the Suwannee River Water Management District's Governing Board authorized the District to enter into an agreement with the National Research Council's Water Science and Technology Board (NRC). The NRC will review a scope of work and subsequent study that the District and the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) will jointly conduct to evaluate the regional groundwater decline in the Upper Floridan aquifer.

This study is one of several requirements of an interagency agreement between the District, SJRWMD, and the

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, which formalizes coordination efforts between the districts to address declining groundwater levels in both districts.

The districts have agreed to coordinate on water use permitting, minimum flows and levels (MFLs), and water supply planning activities in order to more effectively and efficiently manage and protect shared water resources.

In addition to the groundwater study, the interagency agreement requires the districts to develop a joint regional groundwater flow model that will cover

numerous counties in north Florida and southeast Georgia in order to better predict and assess potential water resource impacts. The use of a common model will provide more consistent information between the districts to be used for water supply planning and water use permitting decisions.

Meetings for the development of the model are open to the public. The next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 1 at 1:30 p.m. at the SJRWMD headquarters, 4049 Reid Street, Palatka. For more information, call Dale Jenkins at 800.226.1066 (FL only) or 386.362.1001.

December rainfall brings new record lows, some improvements

The District received an average of 1.62 inches of rain in December, which is about half of the long-term average for this time of year.

Rainfall in localized areas in Jefferson and Taylor counties helped groundwater rise significantly. Groundwater in the northeast portion of the District showed modest improvements.

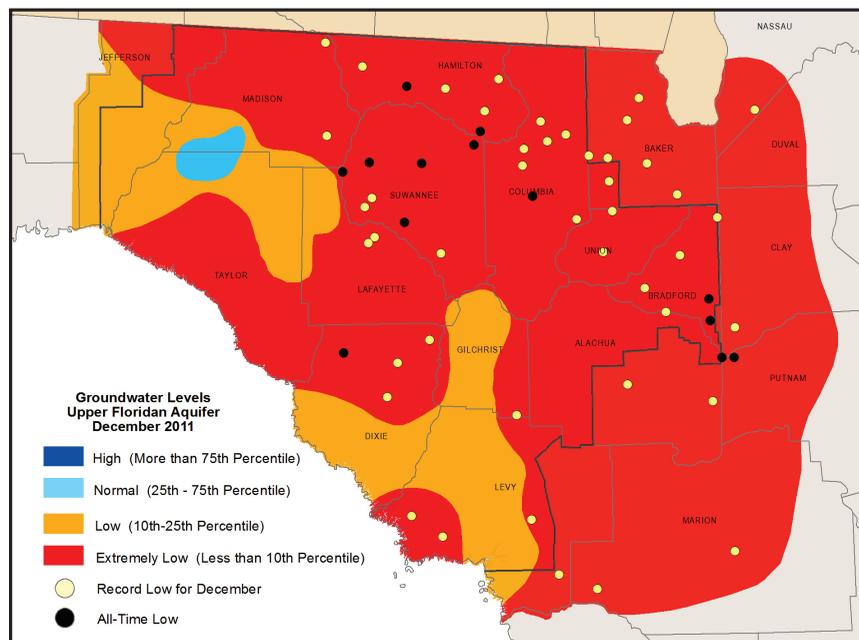
Overall, groundwater levels remained extremely low. Record low levels occurred at 48 Upper Floridan aquifer monitoring wells and all-time lows occurred at 12 wells.

Flows at the Suwannee River at Branford were slightly above the record low observed in October and set new December daily low flow records. Average 60-day and 180-day flows at the Suwannee River at Ellaville were the lowest since 1927 when gaging began there.

Except for Lake Sampson in Bradford County, all monitored lakes remained below their long-term average levels. Sneads Smokehouse Lake, part of the Aucilla River in Jefferson County, rose almost a foot after

setting four consecutive months of record lows. For the first time in several months, the 12-month deficit did not worsen. It

remained at 8.4 inches, the same as the previous month.



December groundwater conditions.

Prescribed burning at Mallory Swamp through February

The District will conduct prescribed burning operations on up to 4,000 acres of its property within Mallory Swamp from Jan. 18-Feb. 29. Hunters who plan to visit the tract during small game season or those planning other recreational activities, should be aware that a portion of the tract may be closed to the public depending upon the burn location and weather conditions.

Contractors will conduct the controlled burn using aerial ignition from a helicopter.

Prescribed fire is one of the District's land management tools to maintain natural resources and reduce the risk of wildfire on District lands. Other benefits of controlled burns include plant disease control, soil nutrient restoration and aesthetic improvement.

"Prescribed burning helps restore and maintain natural vegetative communities that occur on District property," said Scott Gregor, District prescribed burn project manager. "Additionally, many plant and



LEFT: A controlled burn at Mallory Swamp using aerial ignition on December 15, 2010.

animal species within those communities depend on this activity to maintain their habitat."

The District has targeted 14,000 acres for prescribed burning for fiscal year 2012. These activities are subject to weather conditions.

Anyone planning hunting or recreational activities in that area should call the District to confirm if prescribed burning will affect their recreational plans at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only), or check the Important Notices page on the website at www.mysuwanneeriver.com.

District will receive \$1.8M to assist FEMA with flood mapping

The District's Governing Board on Jan. 10 authorized the District to enter into an agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to assist with flood mapping efforts. FEMA will provide a \$1.8 million grant for the District to administer FEMA's Risk MAP (Mapping, Assessment, and Planning) Program for the Upper Suwannee River and the Santa Fe River basins.

Since 1999, the District has served as a technical partner with FEMA to update flood hazard data and flood maps.

The first phase of the project included assisting FEMA with the development of Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs) for all counties within the District as part of FEMA's Map Modernization Program. The process involved remapping certain floodplain boundaries, converting old, paper maps into digital format, and producing geographical information system (GIS)

data to support the new maps.

The District is nearing the completion of this phase of the project, with maps for Bradford and Levy counties entering the final stages of completion. Northwest Florida Water Management District is developing the DFIRMs for Jefferson County.

In the Risk MAP phase of the project, the District will assist FEMA with obtaining additional and more precise information about flood risks to better assess flood hazards. For instance, whereas the first phase of the project identified floodplain boundaries, the second phase will specify the depth of flooding in those flood hazard areas.

The District will use part of the FEMA grant to obtain data through the use of light detection and ranging (LiDAR), a data-collection method that provides more detailed topographic information.

"Having more precise data will allow

us to better identify, assess, and mitigate flood risks," said James Link, the District's FEMA program manager. "This will assist our communities by helping to prevent loss of life and property."

These programs are part of FEMA's plan to provide updated flood hazard data to identify flood risks for flood insurance and development purposes. To learn more about FEMA's program, visit www.fema.gov.

The District provides floodplain mapping information through its FEMA Floodplain Mapping Information page on the website at www.mysuwanneeriver.com. For more information, call the District at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (FL only).

The District manages water and related natural resources in north-central Florida by providing water quality and quantity monitoring, research, regulation, land acquisition and management, and flood protection.