



2020 Annual Work Plan

Suwannee River Water Management District

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ADA Statement

Americans with Disabilities Act: The District does not discriminate upon the basis of any individual's disability status. This nondiscrimination policy involves every aspect of the District's functions including one's access to, participation, employment, or treatment in its programs or activities. Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation as provided for in the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the District at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (Florida only). The District's fax number is 386.362.1056.

Introduction

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District), in accordance with subsection 373.036(2)(e), Florida Statutes (F.S.), submits an annual strategic plan and annual work plan report in lieu of the District Water Management Plan. The annual work plan report describes the implementation of the strategic plan for the previous fiscal year.

The strategic priorities and goals set by the strategic plan evaluated in this report, covering Fiscal Year 2019-2020 (FY 2020), are provided below. This report will describe District efforts over the past fiscal year to achieve these goals.

Flood Protection

- Reduce and mitigate the risk of flooding
- Encourage non-structural flood plain management approaches

Natural Systems

- Establish minimum flows and minimum water levels for priority water bodies
- Steward District lands to balance the needs of natural resources and people
- Preserve and protect water resources
- Optimize public use of District lands

Water Quality

- Reduce nitrate levels to achieve water quality criteria

Water Supply

- Sustainably manage District water resources

Mission Support

- Reduce risks through the management of information and data
- Maintain institutional knowledge
- Strengthen stakeholder relationships and District partnerships

Flood Protection

Harnessing Peak Flows of Water to Protect Our Communities and Augment Our Aquifer

The District works with multiple cooperators including the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), local governments, and landowners to implement regional and local flood protection and flood control projects. Such projects assist local governments to manage, maintain, or expand stormwater infrastructure to better capture runoff, increase stormwater storage, and reduce peak discharge rates.

In addition to flood control projects, the District provides information to the public to reduce and mitigate flood risks. The District partners with FEMA to update floodplain maps to help the public make informed decisions that reduce risk to life and property. Further, the District is the primary source of current flooding information for other agencies and the public, including real-time river levels and rainfall amounts.

Through the Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) and Works of the District program, the District ensures that development does not result in flooding. Permit reviews are performed to prevent net loss of the 100-year floodplain and increases in flood levels. Permit evaluations also consider specific storm design conditions and any associated impacts to upstream and downstream properties.

Goal One

Reduce and Mitigate Flooding Risk

STRATEGIES

- Promote naturally occurring recharge by increasing water storage through hydrologic restoration.
- Identify and study 100-year flood elevations of unstudied parcels/areas which are prone to flooding.
- Identify unmet flood protection needs of local governments.
- Conduct frequent river inspections for unpermitted activities and structures.
- Communicate best available data on flood risk to stakeholders.

Goal Two

Encourage Non-Structural Flood Plain Management Approaches

STRATEGIES

- Maximize land acquisition and/or development restrictions of land within 100-year floodplain / Seek opportunities and evaluate all purchases.
- Coordinate with appropriate governmental entities on data sharing and consistency for flood forecasts.

- Increase public awareness of flood protection tools, permit requirements, and flood risk.
- Strategically partner with stakeholders to identify and implement flood projects.
- Coordinate with FDEP to develop a consistent message to evaluate flood risk of single-family homes.

Success Indicators and Milestones for Flood Control

The District will measure progress towards the completion of individual tasks contained within the aforementioned goals and strategies by tracking the completion of the planning, funding, construction, or implementation phases of the tasks. In addition, success will be measured by the percentage of riverine floodplain under protection; whether the District's cost-share programs have funded at least one flood control project each year; funding opportunities identified for the Bradford County surface water management projects; the acres of hydrologic restoration implemented and maintained, as well as the associated recharge benefits; and the number of compliance cases addressed, and trainings provided.

- The District awarded two projects for flood protection, totaling \$550,000 across all funding programs. These projects will protect 135 acres in the floodplain.
 1. Alligator Creek Study - The District continues to work worked with Bradford County and City of Starke to identify projects throughout the county that would reduce natural resource and property loss due to flooding. Additionally, the District is working partnering with the USACE on a feasibility study to address flooding along Alligator Creek in Bradford County. This project is in the Santa Fe BMAP and supports the Upper Santa Fe River MFL.
 2. Cross City Flood Management - The District initiated an agreement with Dixie County for a flood abatement project in Dixie County.
- The District completed one flood protection project in FY 2020.
 1. Alleviate Flooding in Mayo - Construct retention ponds to reduce flooding in Mayo. This project is in the Suwannee BMAP, Troy Peacock and Lafayette Blue Priority Focus Area (PFA) and supports the Middle Suwannee MFL.
- The District has three ongoing flood protection projects as of November 2020, including Edwards Bottomlands Wetlands Mitigation, Country Club Road Analysis and Ichetucknee Trace-Cannon Creek.
- There are 2,739,495 acres within the 100-year floodplain in the District. The District currently has 8.2% (226,774 acres) of the total acreage under ownership or conservation easement.
- The District continues use of its Current River and Lake Levels webpage to maintain flood warning awareness. This page was operated and updated throughout the ongoing 2019/2020 La Niña event and coastal groundwater flooding events. It is one of the most visited locations on the District webpage.
- The District has continued its utilization of social media to communicate water level and flood-related information on a routine basis, as well as in times of high-water incidences. This outreach includes ongoing Aquifer Alert on our website that can be subscribed to for

hydrologic news.

- In FY 2020, there were 265 ERPs issued of which 180 or approximately 68% were within the 100-year floodplain.
- New FEMA flood risk maps were completed for Hamilton and Madison counties.
- The District was awarded \$334,900 in grant funding from FEMA for flood risk awareness education and outreach. The grant will include website upgrades and a regional outreach campaign that is expected to kick off in 2021.

Natural Systems

Maintaining the Ecosystem Services Provided by the Natural Resources of the District

District projects, regulations, and land acquisition and management activities protect and restore the overall health of the ecological system. As discussed above, hydrologic restoration projects in the District re-establish and improve natural systems such as wetlands, floodplains, native ecological communities, and aquifer recharge areas, which provide valuable water resource functions including water quality treatment, water supply, flood water conveyance and attenuation, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation.

Through land acquisition, the District protects springs, wetlands, floodplains, lakes, rivers, estuaries and related resources. Land management strategies include prescribed fire to restore and enhance habitat and natural communities and, where appropriate, the promotion of sustainable forestry activities. ERP evaluations consider avoidance and minimization of impacts to wetlands and other natural systems. Additionally, permit review addresses erosion and sedimentation control measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs), thereby helping to protecting Outstanding Florida Springs, Outstanding Florida Waters, and other water bodies; and improving protecting water quality to receiving water bodies.

The District establishes Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels (MFLs) for priority rivers, springs, and lakes to ensure there is an adequate supply of water to support natural systems. MFLs are established to prevent significant harm to the water resources and ecology of an area resulting from consumptive water withdrawals permitted by the District. MFLs define how much water body levels and/or flows may change and still prevent significant harm.

Goal One

Establish Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels for Priority Water Bodies

STRATEGIES

- Implement the approved MFL priority list
- Conduct scheduled MFL water body status assessments
- Maintain the District monitoring network to establish/assess MFLs
- Evaluate existing and develop new water resource value criteria; update and refine MFL methods

Goal Two

Steward District Lands to Balance the Needs of Natural Resources and People

STRATEGIES

- Manage District lands to achieve the highest natural resource value possible, leading the region in quality of public lands, while still generating sustainable revenue streams from the properties.
- Implement and support the District Land Management Plan.

Goal Three

Preserve and Protect Water Resources

STRATEGIES

- Document permit mitigation and conservation easements in a GIS format.

Goal Four

Optimize Public Use of District Lands

STRATEGIES

- Optimize maintenance and restoration of District land and resources.
- Focus communication and outreach efforts on land management opportunities to maximize exposure and encourage public use.

Success Indicators and Milestones for Natural Systems

The District will measure progress towards the completion of individual tasks contained within the aforementioned goals and strategies by tracking the completion of the planning, funding, construction, or implementation phases of the tasks. In addition, success will be measured by the completion of MFLs for all remaining priority water bodies per the District schedule, and the quantity of water achieved from conservation and water resource development projects under contract with the District. The success of the District's land acquisition and management goals and strategies will be determined by the number of acres acquired and disposed of; the number of acres that protect Outstanding Florida Springs and Priority Focus Areas (PFAs), the number of acreages that protect or improve water quality; the number of acres acquired by the District that enhance aquifer recharge or flood protection; the number of acres of restored hydrology; and the number of acres of prescribed fire and invasive plant treatment.

- The District awarded two natural systems restoration projects, totaling \$143,970.00 across all funding programs. These projects are estimated to reduce sediment loading by 185,185 pounds per year.
 1. Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge - Hydrologic Restoration using RESTORE funding to protect the Lower Suwannee National Refuge. This project supports the Lower Suwannee MFL.
 2. Gilchrist 2nd Way Park - Stormwater improvement project to reduce sediment entering the Santa Fe River and protect the shoreline. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP.

- The District completed two natural systems restoration projects in FY 2020.
 1. Pot Springs Restoration Project which stabilized the bank to reduce erosion and sediment in the spring pool. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP and is in the Madison Blue PFA.
 2. Rum Island Springs Park Bank Restoration project which will reduce erosion and sediment in the spring pool. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP and is in the Devil's Ear PFA.
- The District has five ongoing natural systems restoration projects as of November 2020, including Edwards Bottomlands, Ruth Springs Restoration, Starke Bypass Wetland Mitigation, Mill Creek Suwannee and Santa Fe Land Acquisition and Mill Creek Sink.
- As of December 2020, 326.7 riverine miles contain an MFL. Tributaries of major rivers not mentioned in a rule are not included in the total mileage. In addition, 43 springs are protected by MFLs.
- The District continues to work on developing MFLs for all remaining priority water bodies per the District schedule.
- The District continued coordination with FDEP and SJRWMD to finalize the Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels Re-Evaluation for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Priority Springs.

FOREST RESOURCES

- In FY 2020, the District completed ten timber sales totaling 2,095 acres.
- One timber sale was a final harvest in preparation for a wellfield.
- Nine timber sales were pine thinnings for improving forest health and aiding in natural community restoration.
- In FY 2020, the District received its final forest inventory products from F4-Tech. This inventory will improve data collecting, reporting, and planning for silvicultural operations. The FY 2020 improvements were custom modifications specifically for the District which will improve data collection and interpretation. Inventory data was collected on 812 plots by Land Management staff in FY 2020. The data from these plots is used to quantify the acres that have achieved their natural community goals and provide data for areas that could be improved by silvicultural activities. As part of this planned project the District has contracted with a firm to complete 3,080 plots using the new inventory system in FY 2021, which will update data within operational timber stands that were last cruised in FY 2011 and identify volumes and other species data in areas where potential for a restoration project has been identified.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

- In FY 2020, prescribed burning was conducted on approximately 10,768 acres of District lands.

MECHANICAL VEGETATION CONTROL

- In FY 2020, approximately 1,043 acres were roller-chopped, and 1,888 acres were mowed to help facilitate the use of prescribed fire and to help meet natural community restoration/management objectives.
- Of the approximate 2,931 acres roller-chopped and mowed in FY 2020 the District received \$98,838 in grant funding from the Florida Forest Service to pay for 557 acres of that work on various tracts throughout the District.
- Approximately 152 miles of ditch edges were mechanically treated on the Steinhatchee Springs and Mallory Swamp tracts in FY 2020. This work was done to increase the width of areas along road edges to provide better fire break capabilities; facilitating use of prescribed fire and help protect forest resources from the damaging effects of wildfires.

CHEMICAL VEGETATION CONTROL

- In FY 2020, approximately 626 acres were treated with herbicide to prepare sites for reforestation, to help meet natural community restoration/management objectives and to help facilitate the use of prescribed fire.

INVASIVE PLANT CONTROL

- In FY 2020, District staff monitored 171 invasive plant infestations and treated 97 of those infestations with herbicides.
- In FY 2020, District contractors treated approximately 107 acres of invasive plant infestations throughout the District.

RARE SPECIES SURVEY/MONITORING

- In FY 2020, District staff monitored 92 documented rare plant occurrences throughout the District. Rare plant species were observed at 63 of these locations. These occurrences included species listed as state endangered, state threatened, or commercially exploited.

PUBLIC USE

- In FY 2010, the District completed a restoration and improvement project at an old and very large erosion scar on the bank of the Suwannee River in the Blue Sink Tract. The site was fully developed into a canoe/kayak launch and included paved parking, ADA improvements, and mending of the erosion scar. Shortly after construction was complete the river flooded and the new construction within the erosion scar catastrophically failed. The site was closed and was unmaintained for approximately 10 years. The District contracted with a firm to make improvements to the launch area for public access and to further reduce erosion potential without removing any large portions of the reoccupied vegetation. In FY 2020, the contractor for the project had to start and stop work often because of high river levels. A small wildfire adjacent to the site further damaged existing facilities which required a contract amendment to be employed. On September 11, 2020, the District re-opened the Blue Sink Canoe and Kayak Launch.
- A new all-terrain vehicle (ATV) parking area was constructed along the McCall's Chapel Grade to provide better access for ATV users who access Mallory Swamp Tract from the southern entrance. The original ATV parking area on Sandy Grade will be abandoned and moved to the old hunter check station parking area near the north entrance when the trail re-opens.

- A road sign project was completed within the Mallory Swamp Tract to improve visitor service and to identify which roads can be legally traveled by the public. All the named roads in Mallory Swamp had new road signs installed; visitors should only travel on named roads. Additionally, closed roads were marked with signage. A road hierarchy sign was added at each entrance describing road types and explaining the user expectation.
- The District installed 6,725 feet of perimeter fencing around the J. H. Anderson, Jr. Memorial Park – Rock Bluff Tract.
- The District completed a Cultural Resource Assessment Survey on 33 acres of the J. H. Anderson, Jr. Memorial Park – Rock Bluff Tract and defined the high and low archaeological probability zones for the tract. This work was completed in anticipation of future improvement projects related to tract management and public use.
- Ninety-four percent of fee title lands owned by the District are open to the public for recreation. Lands which are not open to the public include wellfields, spray fields and water resource development project sites.
- The District cooperated with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and United States Fish and Wildlife Service to provide public hunting opportunities on approximately 106,146 acres.
- The District partnered with Lake City Longbeards, Jefferson County King of Springs, and Gator Gobblers Chapters of the National Wildlife Turkey Federation to sponsor women in the outdoors and youth special opportunity hunts. These special opportunity hunts allow additional hunting opportunities on 6,169 acres. The 2,030-acre Double Run Creek Tract managed by Camp Blanding is leased for hunting.
- In FY 2020, 356 Special Use Authorizations (SUAs) were issued for a wide variety of recreation opportunities or needs. Seventeen SUAs were completed for Mallory Swamp ATV Trail, 168 SUAs were completed for camping at the Goose Pasture Campground, 37 SUAs were issued for temporary ingress and egress and 18 non-recreation SUAs were issued as well. A total of 596 SUAs were issued during FY 2020.

FACILITIES PROJECTS

- Land Management staff continues to work with GIS staff to improve GIS apps for use on smart devices that enable staff and contractors to use and collect real-time data. In FY 2020, Land Management staff inspected all major tracts and existing facilities (1,463 individual facility and culture resource inspection locations visited) and staff even visited many individual small lots. Of the 803 observations found in FY 2020, staff completed 195 before October 1.
- Approximately 85 miles of road maintenance was completed on the following tracts: Goose Pasture, Mt. Gilead, Cabbage Grove, Cuba Bay, Lamont, Wolf Creek, Roline, Cabbage Creek, Jones Mill Creek, and Mallory Swamp tracts. Of the 85 total miles of road work completed in FY 2020, approximately 7 miles were associated with timber harvest operations.
- Three hydrological improvement projects were completed within the Cabbage Grove Tract. These projects were conducted at various water access locations for the purpose of reducing erosion and sediment loading into the water bodies while maintaining or improving public access.

- Six hydrological facilities (two culverts and four low-water crossings) were replaced or repaired in the Jones Mill Creek Tract. One culvert was replaced in the Mt. Gilead Tract.
- Approximately 12 gate replacement projects were completed throughout the District to replace antiquated cable gates and to protect District land from illegal access.

Water Quality

Preserving and Restoring the Foundation of North Florida's Economy

Water quality refers to the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of water. Data shows persistent elevated nutrient levels, primarily nitrate, in rivers and springs throughout the District. Nitrate, in some instances, is the limiting nutrient that can cause imbalances in the ecosystem and impact the health of springs, rivers, and estuaries. Increased nutrient loads not only adversely impact the ecological health of rivers and springs but also the health of Gulf estuaries downstream.

The FDEP has established a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Lower and Middle Suwannee and Santa Fe Rivers of 0.35 mg/L of nitrate as nitrogen (N). To meet this target, nitrate loads from non-point pollution sources need to be reduced anywhere from 30-90 percent on the Suwannee River and associated springs, and 35 percent on the Santa Fe River. To assist the FDEP in achieving these targets, the District partners with state agencies, local governments, land owners, and other stakeholders to implement projects to reduce nutrient loading, including implementing agricultural best management practices (BMPs), stormwater treatment, and erosion control and bank restoration. The District actively monitors nitrate concentrations throughout the District in both groundwater and surface water.

Goal One

Reduce Nitrate Levels to Achieve Water Quality Criteria

STRATEGIES

- Consolidate existing research for nutrient sourcing and identify gaps for additional research
- Expand the monitoring network to include strategic sampling and sampling of non-standard parameters
- Develop project monitoring strategies to measure benefits accurately
- Develop a collaborative strategy with stakeholders for project prioritization in BMAP Regions
- Implement projects to assist in meeting BMAP nitrate load reduction targets
- Ensure permit and project authorizations meet statewide water quality criteria for erosion and sediment control
- Develop rule language requiring nutrient load reductions in stormwater systems

Success Indicators and Milestones for Water Quality

The District will measure progress towards the completion of individual tasks contained within the aforementioned goals and strategies by tracking the completion of the planning, funding,

construction, or implementation phases of the tasks. In addition, success will be measured by the percentage of Outstanding Florida Springs that meet the state numeric nutrient criteria; the percentage of enrollment for the FDACS BMPs program; and the pounds of nitrate reduced by projects receiving District cost-share.

* Project has both water quality and water supply benefits.

- The District awarded 11 water quality projects, plus 27 agricultural cost-share contracts, totaling \$24 million across all funding programs. These projects are estimated to reduce 1.2 million pounds of total nitrogen, reduce 84 pounds of phosphorus and reduce over 73,000 pounds of sediment annually.
 1. Gwen Lake Phase 2 - Extension of stormwater controls up gradient of Gwen Lake project. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP and is in the Ichetucknee PFA.
 2. Otter Springs Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems Improvement - project will convert existing septic systems to a Distributed Wastewater Treatment System to reduce nitrogen. This projects supports the Suwannee BMAP and is in the Fanning Manatee PFA.
 3. High Springs Gravity Sewer Extension Phase A2 project will extend wastewater collection system to remove 43 septic systems. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP and is in the Columbia Hornsby Treehouse PFA.
 4. Lake Butler Advanced Wastewater Treatment (AWT) Upgrade Phases I and II - Feasibility study and design of a 1.0 mgd AWT facility with reclaimed water for offset and a constructed wetland for polishing. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP and the Lower Santa Fe River MFL.
 5. Southern Street Lift Station Replacement - Relocation of a sanitary system out of the floodplain.
 6. Bronson Wastewater - Extension of wastewater collection system to remove septic systems. This project supports the Rainbow Springs BMAP.
 7. Lake Frances Sediment Control - Pilot project to install a stormwater nutrient reduction system to improve water quality. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP.
 8. Greenville Sewer Phases I and II*- Wastewater collection system extension to phase out approx. 67 septic systems. This project supports the Wacissa BMAP.
 9. Accelerating Suwannee*- Incentivize silviculture and rural land conservation to reduce groundwater pumping and nitrogen loading. This project supports the Santa Fe and Suwannee BMAPS, is in the Troy Peacock and Lafayette Blue PFA, supports the Ichetucknee Springs MFL and is in the Western Water Supply Planning Area (WSPA).
 10. Fanning Springs Wastewater Expansion Phase VI* - Construct a regional advanced wastewater treatment near Fanning Springs with a 0.4 mgd recharge constructed wetland. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP, is in the Fanning Manatee PFA, supports the Lower Suwannee MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.

11. Ichetucknee Springs Quality and Quantity Enhancement*- Increase wetland polishing and recharge for Lake City's Wetland. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP, is in the Ichetucknee PFA, supports the Ichetucknee Springs MFL and is in the Easter WSPA.
- The District completed five water quality projects in FY 2020.
 1. Cedar Key Water and Sewer District Pipe Relocation – Relocation sewer main to protect natural resources. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP.
 2. Otter and Hart Springs Water Quality Improvement – Develop engineering design needed to update septic for water quality improvements. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP.
 3. Fanning Springs Water Quality Improvement Phases II – Septic to sewer conversion to reduce 4,300 pounds of nitrogen per year. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP and is in the Fanning Manatee PFA.
 4. Fanning Springs Water Quality Improvement Phase III - Septic to sewer conversion to reduce 4,554 pounds of nitrogen per year. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP and is in the Fanning Manatee PFA.
 5. Jasper Wastewater Systems - Repair concrete pond and add lift station to reduce overflows during high water events
 - The District has 16 ongoing water quality projects including Poe Springs Domestic Sewage Infrastructure Upgrade, Gwen Lake, Mill Creek Sink Land Acquisition Phase II, Fertigation, Sustainable Suwannee Ag Pilot Program, Dairy Wastewater Improvements*, Dairy Screen Separators*, Madison Blue Springs Aquifer Recharge*, Sustainable Suwannee Ag Pilot*, Precision Agricultural Practices Hornsby Spring Habitat Restoration, I75/CR 136 Wastewater Improvement, I15/SR 47 Cannon Creek Sink Wastewater Improvement, Infiltrative Wetlands for Wastewater Treatment and Ichetucknee Trace – Clayhole/Alligator Creek. (* Project has both water quality and water supply benefits)
 - Notably, the District continues to manage 235 agricultural contracts in FY 2020 with both water supply and water quality benefits.
 - Four of the 14 Outstanding Florida Springs meet state numeric nutrient criteria based on current available data - Poe, Treehouse, Ichetucknee Springs Group and Wacissa Springs group.
 - The District worked with communities to identify new technologies for water quality improvements.
 - The District continues to engage and lead the Suwannee River Partnership, which works to overcome water quality challenges in the Suwannee River Valley by pooling resources with sister agencies and cooperating stakeholder groups who have similar goals for water quality throughout the District.
 - The District removed over 18.63 tons of debris from locations along the Suwannee River to improve water quality and reduce flooding risk.
 - The District relaunched the “Leave No Litter” campaign to raise public awareness of water

quality concerns and the importance of keeping water resources free of litter and debris. The campaign reached 19,046 people and 783 people engaged with the content. The campaign runs three times per year during the summer when people are enjoying the springs and rivers.

- 2019 Water Quality Summary was presented to the Governing Board August 2020. A written water quality report is in draft phase.
- The District was awarded a \$300,000 grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and FDEP for non-point source pollution education and outreach. The outreach materials for the campaign include development of a micro-website, educational print materials for students, stakeholder engagement through events and a digital outreach initiative. The campaign launched in spring 2020.
- The District was awarded \$865,000 in grant funds from FDEP for the Enhancement and Expansion of Water Quality Monitoring. \$260,725 of these funds were spent on equipment and data collection services in FY 2020. The remaining amount is scheduled to be spent in FY 2021.
- The District performed a District-wide internal review of the water quality monitoring program to identify and prioritize the data collection needs of the District in anticipation of expanding the water quality network in FY 2021.

Water Supply

Ensuring a Sustainable Supply of Water for People and the Environment

The District is responsible for managing water resources to ensure there is an adequate supply to satisfy all existing and projected reasonable and beneficial uses while sustaining water resources and protecting natural systems. In the District, over 90 percent of the water supply demands are met with fresh groundwater, virtually all from the Upper Floridan aquifer system. This region's ability to continue to grow and develop is therefore dependent on sustainably managing a growing demand for groundwater. Coordinated water use permitting, water resource planning, and water resource development projects are key to protecting and managing fresh groundwater supply.

Resource planning efforts include water supply assessments and regional water supply planning. Every five years, the District evaluates current and future water supply needs and water supplies within the District. Water supply assessments help determine whether water supplies will be adequate to satisfy projected demands. Recognizing that water supplies are constrained by demands both within and outside of District boundaries, the District, along with the FDEP and SJRWMD, formed the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership (Partnership). The Partnership developed a joint regional water supply plan, the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan, which established fresh groundwater alone cannot supply the projected increase in demand over the 20-year planning horizon.

The regulation and monitoring of water use within the District is a critical part of managing the resource. Water Use Permits protect water resources, ensuring proposed uses are reasonable and beneficial, within the public interest, and do not adversely impact existing legal uses. To ensure proposed uses are reasonable and beneficial, the permit application review includes, among other

things, an analysis to prevent environmental harm and ensure consistency with established MFLs.

Goal One

Sustainably Manage District Water Resources

STRATEGIES

- Implement projects to reduce groundwater withdrawal impacts in all surface water bodies.
- Implement water resource development and alternative water supply projects to ensure an adequate water supply for all reasonable-beneficial uses.
- Identify and implement comprehensive feasibility and design studies necessary to evaluate projects.
- Research and implement innovations for sustainable agriculture.
- Maximize alternative water supply and reuse benefits.
- Achieve 10% or less losses for all public supply systems.
- Implement a net resource benefit program.
- Develop a collaborative strategy for assisting public utilities with long-range water supply planning prior to water use permit renewals.
- Maintain and enhance existing data-driven processes to assess cumulative withdrawals for the potential of harm to water resources and ability to sustain natural systems.

Success Indicators and Milestones for Water Supply

The District will measure progress towards the completion of individual tasks contained within the aforementioned goals and strategies by tracking the completion of the planning, funding, construction, or implementation phases of the tasks. In addition, success will be measured by the amount of estimated water supply demand that can be met with projects identified in District water supply plans; the year-to-year percentage of impact of groundwater use within the District on the aquifer.

* Project has both water quality and water supply benefits.

- The District awarded approximately \$26 million for 19 projects, plus 74 agriculture cost-share to increase water supply across all funding programs. These projects will conserve an estimated 20.8 mgd across all funding programs.
 1. Accelerating Suwannee River Restoration and Silviculture Management* - Incentivize silviculture and rural land conservation to reduce groundwater pumping and nitrogen loading. This project supports the Santa Fe and Suwannee BMAPS, is in the Troy Peacock and Lafayette Blue PFA, supports the Ichetucknee Springs MFL and is in the Western Water Supply Planning Area (WSPA).

2. Ft. White Water Main Loop - Construct loops in Ft. White's watermain in the Eastern Water Supply Planning area to conserve 200 gpd. This project is in the Devil's Ear PFA, supports the Lower Santa Fe MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
3. Lake City Conservation and Alternative Water Supply (AWS) - Feasibility study to which will identify AWS and water conservation projects for implementation for a 20-year planning horizon.
4. minimumBee Haven Bay Water Resource Development - Construct an alternative discharge line to increase re-use capacity by 0.7 mgd. This project supports the Lower Suwannee River MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
5. Bradford County Silviculture Enhancement & Recharge Project - Direct excess water to recharge features or wells and provide an estimated three mgd. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP, supports the Lower Santa Fe MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
6. Hamilton County Aquifer Recharge Replacement Wells and Water Quality Improvement - Replacement of existing drainage wells to provide recharge and flood protection. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP, is in the Troy Peacock Lafayette Blue PFA, supports the Lower Suwannee River MFL and is in the Western WSPA.
7. Drainage Well and Conveyance Replacement - Replacement of drainage wells in Live Oak, FL for recharge and flood protection. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP, is in the Troy Peacock Lafayette Blue PFA, supports the Lower Suwannee MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
8. Hampton Water Main Loop - Construct loops and isolation valves in Hampton's watermain in the Eastern Water Supply Planning area to conserve 500 gpd. This project supports the Lower Santa Fe MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
9. Mallory Swamp - Data collection of surface and groundwater flows to develop a management plan. This project supports the Lower Suwannee MFL.
10. Alachua County Turf Swap - Reduce irrigated turf to conserve 0.074 mgd. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP, supports the Lower Santa Fe MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
11. University Oaks Phase III - Extend and replace water main to reduce water loss by 0.18 mgd. This project supports the Waccasassa MFL.
12. Dixie County Multiple Basin Aquifer Recharge - Design and construct a wetland restoration system, re-establish natural drainage, and recharge 1.1 mgd. This project supports the Lower Suwannee River MFL and is in the Western WSPA.
13. Groundwater Recharge Wetland - Construct a wetland in western Gainesville to recharge 1.5 mgd of reclaimed water. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP, supports the Lower Santa Fe Ichetucknee MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
14. Pivot Retrofits - Retrofit pivot irrigation districtwide to reduce 1.1 mgd of groundwater withdrawals. This project is in the Santa Fe BMAP, is in the Ichetucknee PFA, supports the Lower Santa Fe Ichetucknee MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.

15. Public Supply Efficiency Improvements - District-wide infrastructure and conservation improvements to reduce water loss and use. This project supports the Lower Santa Fe MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
 16. Fanning Springs Wastewater Expansion Phase VI* - Construct a regional advanced wastewater treatment near Fanning Springs with a 0.4 mgd recharge constructed wetland. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP, is in the Fanning Manatee PFA, supports the Lower Suwannee MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
 17. Ichetucknee Springs Quality and Quantity Enhancement*- Increase wetland polishing and recharge for Lake City's Wetland. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP, is in the Ichetucknee PFA, supports the Ichetucknee Springs MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
 18. Oakmont Reclaimed Water Ph III and IV - Extend reclaimed water lines to provide 0.05 mgd of public access reuse to Oakmont Subdivision. This project supports the Santa Fe BMAP, supports the Lower Santa Fe Ichetucknee MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
 19. Agricultural Cost-Share* - Dairy wastewater system upgrades, precision agriculture practices, pivot retrofits, and irrigation system upgrades.
- The District completed three water supply projects in FY 2020:
 1. Scriven Avenue Drainage Improvements - Replace a drainage well in Live Oak to provide recharge and flood protection. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP, is in the Troy Peacock Lafayette Blue PFA, supports the Lower Suwannee MFL and is in the Eastern WSPA.
 2. Lower Suwannee Drainage Basin Aquifer Recharge - Restore sand ponds and rehydrate 1,250 acres. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP, supports the Lower Suwannee MFL and is in the Western WSPA.
 3. Cow Pond Drainage Basin Aquifer Recharge - Restore sand ponds and rehydrate 1,750 acres. This project supports the Suwannee BMAP, supports the Lower Suwannee MFL and is in the Western WSPA.
 - The District has 15 ongoing water supply projects, including Dairy Wastewater Improvements*, Dairy Screen Separators*, Madison Blue Springs Aquifer Recharge*, Sustainable Suwannee Ag Pilot*, Precision Agricultural Practices*, Upper Suwannee Aquifer Recharge, District Cost-Share, Dixie County Water Main, Soil Moisture Probes, Ag Cost-Share/AWS, Infiltrative Wetlands for Wastewater Treatment*, Ichetucknee Trace - Clayhole/Alligator Lake*.
 - Notably, the District continues to manage 235 agricultural contracts in FY 2020 with both water supply and water quality benefits.
 - The District continues to secure funding for water resource development projects listed in or supporting the North Florida Regional Water Supply Initiative and North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan. These projects have targeted the Suwannee and Santa Fe basins in this District and Region 1 of SJRWMD.
 - Preparations are underway to update water supply planning documents.

- The District is coordinating with SJRWMD to update the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan with a planning horizon through 2045.
- Updated regional water use estimates and projections are being prepared for stakeholder review.
- The District conducted water conservation education and public outreach to local communities and stakeholders through online education, presentations, civic engagement, tours, and demonstrations.
- The District continues to work through the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership and with FDEP and other water management districts on regional concerns through planning, project implementation, and model implementation.
- FDEP, at the request of the District's Governing Board, agreed to adopt the Upper and Middle Suwannee River and Priority spring MFLs. The District is also conducting technical work pertaining to the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers MFLs in support of FDEP. These MFLs are currently being reassessed as a result of the recent completion of the joint North Florida Southeast Georgia (NFSEG) model.
- As of November 2, 2020, the District monitored 97.4% of existing active wells with an agricultural water use permit monitoring conditions (an increase of 1.2% from 2019). These wells were monitored either by electric consumption or telemetry. Active wells with a monitoring condition make up 60% of total agricultural water use allocations in the District (217.0 mgd/~360 mgd). The remaining 40% of agricultural water use allocations will require the addition of a monitoring condition in the course of a permit modification or permit renewal.
- The District conducted its annual water conservation campaign for Water Conservation Month in April to enhance public awareness of the need to conserve water. The digital campaign included social media and streaming radio outreach strategies. Overall, the campaign reached 77,068 people with 338 people engaged with the content.

Mission Support

Creating a Culture of Excellence, Efficiency, and Passion for the Region's Resources

Investing in and empowering District employees is critical to achieving the goals set out in this strategic plan. As the smallest water management district, District employees often wear multiple hats and each employee performs a diversity of job functions. Engaging employees, providing development opportunities, and leadership support will ensure staff has the tools and guidance to achieve District goals. Operational efficiency is also an important focus so employees and District operations can be as effective as possible.

Goal One

Reduce Risks Through the Management of Information and Data

STRATEGIES

- Implement a District-wide comprehensive data management system including but not limited to hydrologic conditions, water use, water quality, permitting data, flood zones, flood occurrence, land use changes, land acquisition, surplus properties, projects, and project benefits.
- Collect and manage high quality data to allow for data-driven, science-based decision making in water resource projects, flood hazard information, and water resource protection.
- Reduce paper and place-bound information access by maximizing cloud-based file storage and automated authorization.
- Optimize accessibility in facilities and information.

Goal Two

Maintain Institutional Knowledge

STRATEGY

- Establish programmatic documentation that captures and identifies necessary steps to complete or implement essential work functions, priority project tasks objectives, and other critical processes to maintain consistent program standards and provide efficient transfer of institutional knowledge
- Retain employees through succession planning, mentoring, and professional development initiatives

Goal Three

Strengthen Stakeholder Relationships and District Partnerships

STRATEGIES

- Build trust in District messages, staff, and science through factual, transparent, consistent, and standardized engagements with internal and external stakeholders.
- Increase public awareness of District functions in planning, projects, and permitting.

- Sustain water resources through education of challenges and maximization of project opportunities.
- Engage and educate stakeholders who are critical to water resource sustainability.

Success Indicators and Milestones for Mission Support

The District will measure progress towards the completion of individual tasks contained within the above goals and strategies by tracking the completion of the planning, funding, construction, or implementation phases of the tasks. In addition, success will be measured by the number of professional certifications, graduate degrees, and leadership positions within professional organizations held by its staff; the District's administrative overhead; the percentage of the District's budget utilized for projects that benefit water quality and water quantity; the percentage of the District's budget that is recurring but not funded with recurring revenues; the percentage of facility repairs identified in the last 10-year facility inspection report that have been addressed; and the number of educational activities and Suwannee River Partnership meetings held in the last year.

Professional Development

- District houses 12 professionally licensed staff and 48 professional certifications.
- Staff have attained two associate degrees, 21 undergraduate degrees, 21 graduate degrees and five doctoral degrees.
- Four staff are working toward master's degree programs using the District's tuition reimbursement program. Twenty-three staff are members of professional development organizations.
- District leadership has adopted a culture of succession and knowledge transfer for retiring employees in mission-critical and leadership positions. New hires are being brought on early to overlap and shadow work processes for a seamless transition.
- District leadership provided four sessions of human resources and supervisory compliance training

Finance

- The District's administrative overhead for FY 2020 was 7.62%. The FY 2021 Adopted Budget administrative overhead is 3.26%.
- Based on the FY 2020 Adopted Budget, approximately 87% of the budget was allocated for water quality, water supply and natural systems projects.
- Assuming appropriations and District revenues remain at current levels, the District's recurring budget is projected to be funded by recurring dollars.

Facilities

- Almost 37%, or six of the 16 items, identified on the 2016 Property Condition Report have been completed. For 2020, 62% or 10 of the 16 items listed on the 10-year facility inspection report have been completed.
- The District contracted for a complete survey of the HVAC systems and identified systems by age, service area and remaining life expectancy. In FY 2021 the District will establish and

implement an HVAC upgrade plan with priority focus being on critical systems relating to IT and records storage. Additionally, the District anticipates contracting for the relocation/reconfiguration of a portion of the HVAC system to increase efficiency and replace aging units thus reducing maintenance costs.

- The District is continuing to update facilities to meet ADA compliance, improve interior structures, correct exterior roofing issues, and improving air quality with annual duct cleaning.
- In FY 2020, the District completed renovations, remodeling and expansion of the public lobby restrooms enhancing ADA compliance.
- In FY 2021, the District anticipates contracting with a consultant for the preliminary evaluation and planning of extensive exterior renovation of the entire District Headquarters facility.
- In FY 2020, the District completed energy conservation measures by the installation of motion sensor lighting controls in all offices.
- In FY 2020, the District consolidated the electrical service for the Headquarters facility putting the executive wing on the same service as the main building and providing emergency generator back-up power to both buildings.

Communications, Outreach and Customer Service

- An accessibility audit of the District's three most popular websites and documents was conducted for ADA compliance. District websites were found to be highly compliant. Staff received accessibility training to configure documents and better serve customers.
- The District continued to support the Suwannee River Partnership (Partnership) by including new environmental, utility, and agricultural stakeholders on the Steering Committee to represent a broad scope of interests. A total of three Steering Committee meetings and six partnership breakfast meetings were held in FY 2020.
- The Suwannee River Partnership (SRP) steering committee created a work plan for the next year and decided to pursue funding for the 4R Grant Project. This project will be an on-farm demonstration. They also developed a new logo to rebrand the SRP, launched several BMP educational videos, and published BMP success stories.
- District staff participated in 60 educational outreach activities including tours, speaking engagements, project showcases, demonstrations, school activities, and festivals. Educational outreach activities shifted to online in March and for the remainder of the year.
- Regulatory staff provided District stakeholders outstanding customer service in the timely issuance of WUPs and ERPs by meeting or exceeding stretch goals (33 days for WUPs and 25 days for ERPs) for 81% of FY 2020, while experiencing a 31% increase in permit ERP reviews.
- The District participated in the 2020 Statewide Springs Outreach Campaign with the other water management districts and FDEP in an effort to bring awareness to springs and springs' issues. Over the course of the three-month campaign, the District posted content to three social media platforms. The campaign reached 76,895 people and 3,598 people were engaged by the content.

- The District relaunched the “Well Wellness” campaign in January 2020 to raise public awareness of the need for protection and upkeep of their domestic water wells. The campaign reached a total of 46,435 people and 1,577 people were engaged by the content.

Emergency Response

- The District completed major revisions to its Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) in 2020 to better respond to stakeholder needs and ensure employee safety. The COOP is updated and provided annually to FDEM by March 1.
- The District staff were able to effectively operate from remote workstations during the COVID-19 pandemic under Emergency Final Order 20-0002.

Legislative and Community Affairs

- Provided Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) of more than \$357,000 to 12 counties within the District in the form of where these counties were updated and informed on activities both District-wide and specific to the individual county,