

**SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**  
**GOVERNING BOARD DIRECTIVE**

**Directive Number:** GBD22-0006  
**Date Approved:** December 13, 2022  
**Subject:** Agricultural Cost-Share Program  
**Approval:**



  
Virginia Johns, Chair

  
Charles Keith, Secretary/Treasurer

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**1.0 Reference to Prior Directive**

Supersedes Directives GD12-0005, GBD19-0003, GBD20-0002, GBD20-0006 and GBD22-0001.

**2.0 Purpose and Intent**

The purpose of this Directive is to establish a policy and procedure for the District's Agricultural Cost-Share Program. The intent of this directive is to offer District funding assistance to agricultural producers and to accept and administer funding from external funding sources, such as, but not limited to, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, through an application and evaluation process, to implement projects that increase irrigation efficiency, implement water conservation practices and assist with nutrient management.

**3.0 Statement of Directive**

In accordance with section 373.083 Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Governing Board may participate and cooperate with landowners in water management projects of mutual benefit, provided such projects are consistent with the District's statutory authority and will ensure proper development, utilization and conservation of the water resources and ecology within the jurisdictional boundaries of the District.

**4.0 Program Eligibility Requirements**

An applicant shall adhere to the below list to enter into contract with the District. If an applicant believes that the project should be funded although they do not adhere to the below list, they may present their case for acceptance into the program, as an item to the Governing Board for consideration. The Governing Board may waive the eligibility requirements for cost share. At a minimum, the following will be considered:

1. An applicant must own or have control of all property (parcels). If the applicant does not own the property, proof of control outside of ownership can be established.
2. The project area must have an active Water Use Permit, if required.
3. The applicant must be enrolled in the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Notice of Intent to implement best management practices.
4. The applicant must not have received more than \$300,000 for District funded items in Attachment A over five years. Limits on funding from external funding sources may be set by that funding source.

5. The applicant must not be a District employee, or an immediate family member of a District employee.
6. The landowner and/or applicant shall be in compliance with all District Water Use, Water Well, and/or Environmental Resource Permits as well as be in compliance with the terms of any previous or current District contracts.

### **5.0 Review Guidelines**

At a minimum, staff will consider:

1. Applications for District or external entity Cost-Share funding will be open year-round for consideration, subject to funding availability.
2. Staff shall give priority consideration to those projects designed to further the implementation of District's core mission.
3. Priority will be given to projects located within a Water Supply Planning Area, Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels Prevention or Recovery Strategy, Outstanding Florida Spring Priority Focus Area and/or Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP).
4. Each application shall include a completed application form. At a minimum, this information should include point of contact, address, phone number, project description, and location information.
5. Staff shall consider the quality of the application as measured by thoroughness and clarity including the location information; the effectiveness of the project to protect, conserve, restore, or augment the areas of water resource and ecology; the use of best management practices; the cost benefit of the project (for multi-year or phased projects, the project benefits to be realized if future phases are not funded); the location of the project; the potential of the project to start, and proceed in a timely manner.
6. Staff shall review the application to ensure the proposed project aligns with the District's core mission. Applicants may be required to modify any water use permits associated with the project if deemed necessary by District Staff.
7. Contingency is capped at 10% of the estimated cost for the entire project.
8. Funding assistance is contingent upon availability of District and/or external agency funds and in accordance with the agreement between the District and the producer.
9. Funding may be provided to assist with the cost of alternative water supplies, water conservation, advanced irrigation management, and nutrient management technology.
10. Final approval for funding of the project proposals are the exclusive responsibility of the Governing Board and the Executive Director in accordance with the District's procurement procedures relating to signature authority as found in section 25 of the Procedures Manual.
11. The Executive Director's signature authority and maximum funding allowed under said authority are established by the Governing Board and can be found in the Procedures Manual. The signature authority applies to each individual or contract entity over the course of the contractual agreement. Requests to enter into or amend a contract that meet or exceed the signature authority for an individual or entity during the fiscal year or in aggregate, must be brought to the Governing Board for approval.

### **6.0 Project Monitoring**

Staff shall adhere to the following:

1. Water quality projects located within BMAP areas will be monitored and assessed regionally by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection BMAP program. For any water quality project not associated with a BMAP area, District staff will identify the water body affected where possible and use already established long-term water quality monitoring sites to assess regional water quality changes as appropriate.
2. Staff shall assess water savings for irrigation system retrofits and efficiency improvements through evaluation of pre-retrofit and post-retrofit mobile irrigation lab's evaluations as applicable and rely upon accepted science-based data and computational tools to determine the project benefit.

3. Where agricultural monitoring can be implemented, staff shall monitor groundwater withdrawal through the District's agricultural monitoring program in accordance with the established Governing Board Directive and associated procedures. These data will be submitted annually to FDACS for incorporation into agricultural water demand projections and to the Office of Water Supply for incorporation into annual estimates of water use.
4. Staff shall assess agricultural water use and projected demands as a part of the District's water supply planning process.
5. In lieu of project specific monitoring, staff may rely upon current best available research data and information to determine the project benefit.
6. An individual Water Use Permit holder must implement monitoring of groundwater withdrawals in accordance with Section 4.0, of the District's Water Use Permit Applicant's Handbook and the District's Agricultural Water Use Monitoring Directive (GBD21-007) prior to re-imbursement. Projects which are considered a General Permit by Rule are exempt from this requirement.

### **7.0 Additional Considerations**

Staff shall adhere to the following:

1. Staff shall make cost-share funding applications and information packets available to applicants on the District's webpage or social media outlets.
2. The Governing Board has set payment percentages and funding maximums for District Agriculture cost-share Best Management Practices that are found in Attachment A. For external funding sourced Ag cost share program applications, District staff shall adhere to payment percentages and funding maximums established by an external funding source.
3. Agricultural cost-share funds may be used for administrative expenditures provided by a cooperator implementing one or more of the District's agricultural cost share programs.

### **8.0 Notice of Potential Conflict**

Paragraph 112.313(7)(a), F.S. prohibits the District's officers and employees from having or holding any employment or contractual relationship with any business entity which is doing business with the District. In CEO 15-1, 98-3, 90-76 and 77-65 the Florida Commission on Ethics held that receiving a grant, such as the funding offered under the District's Agriculture Cost Share Program, constitutes "doing business with" an agency. Therefore, paragraph 112.313(7)(a), F.S. prohibits the District's officers and employees from having or holding any employment or contractual relationship with any business entity which is participating in the District's Agriculture Cost Share Program.

However, the prohibition set out in paragraph 112.313(7)(a), F.S. does not apply to members of the Governing Board. In CEO 20-09, the Florida Commission on Ethics held that paragraph 112.313(7)(a), F.S. does not prohibit members of the Governing Board from having or holding any employment or contractual relationship with an agricultural producer that applies for and receives a cost-share grant from the District. Provided that such member's actions are still subject to the prohibition against misuse of public position set out in subsection 112.313(6), F.S., and were such matter to come before the Governing Board, the voting conflict law codified in section 112.3143, F.S., would apply.

**Attachment A**

**District Agriculture Cost Share Best Management Practices**

BMP*	Percent Reimbursed	Maximum share amount/Item
Irrigation retrofit	75%	\$8,250
Soil Moisture Probe purchase (projects located in a BMAP or PFA)	90%	\$2,000
Soil Moisture Probe purchase	75%	\$1,700
Soil Moisture Probe 2nd and 3rd year service agreements	75%	\$650
Soil Moisture Probe 4th through 6th year service agreements	50%	\$435
Centralized remote-control system	75%	\$9,000
Controller panel upgrade	75%	\$4,500
Remote control center pivot (radio)	75%	\$2,200
Pump upgrade (high to low pressure)	75%	\$5,500
Variable frequency drive (VFD) upgrade	75%	\$15,000
GPS end-gun shut-offs	75%	\$1,500
Weather station with ET measurement	75%	\$2,500
Grid soil sampling	75%	\$7.00/acre
AWS existing surface water source	75%	\$300,000
AWS reclaimed water source	75%	\$300,000
AWS Tailwater recovery/surface water pond construction	75%	-*
Irrigation replacement	75%	-*
Compost and ground cover	75%	-*

\*Cost-Share BMPs that are not listed or do not have an established maximum fund share amount shall be presented to the Governing Board for approval.