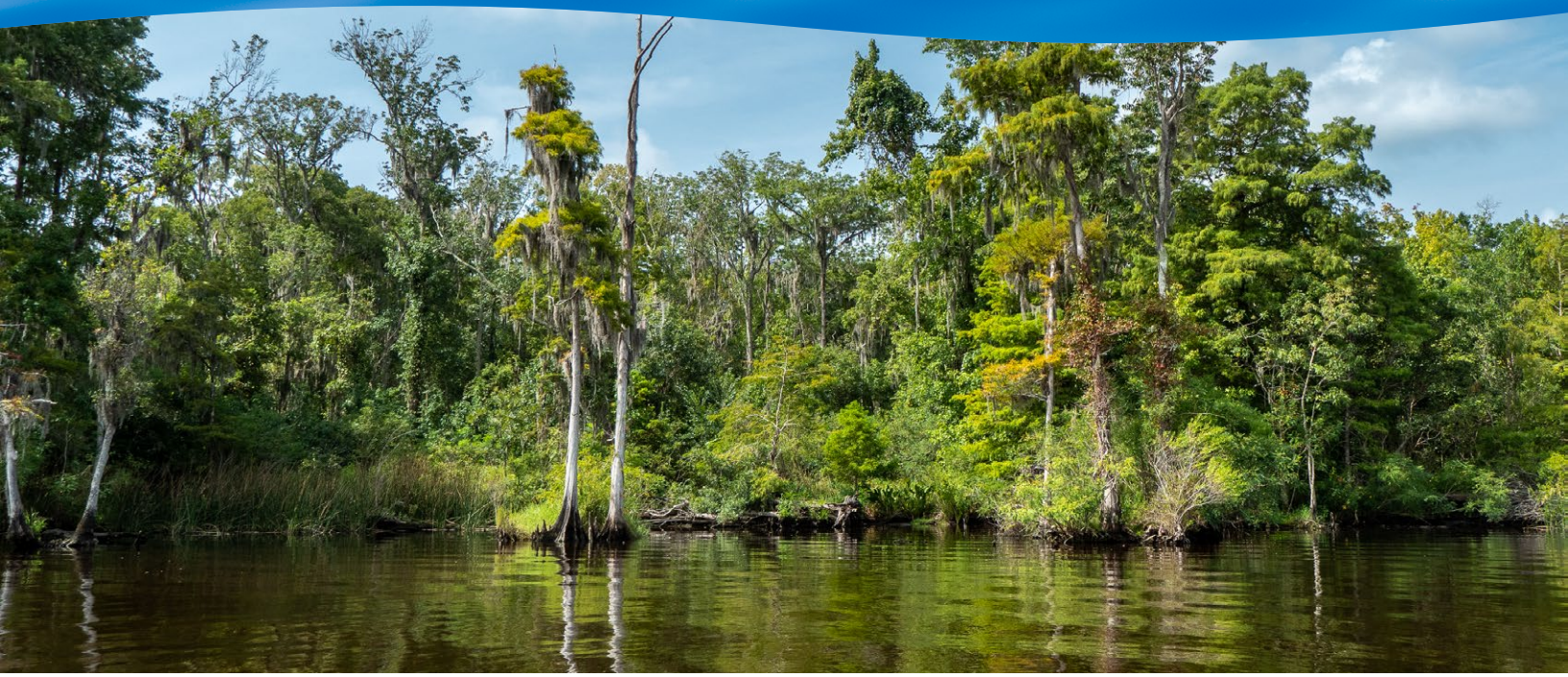
ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

2023–2027 STRATEGIC PLAN



January 2023

Message from the Chair

It was an honor to be appointed by Governor DeSantis to serve on the Governing Board and to be elected by my peers to serve as Chair. As Chair, I want to assure that the St. Johns River Water Management District fulfills its mission to protect our natural resources and support Florida's growth by ensuring the sustainable use of Florida's water for the benefit of the people of the District and the state.

This mission offers complex challenges. Florida is one of, if not the, fastest growing states in the country. There is little indication that our growth rate will slow down soon. With growth comes challenges. And, with proper planning, we can rise to meet these challenges.

We are funding an unprecedented number of District-led and cost-share projects. In alignment with Florida's Freedom First Budget, the District's Governing Board approved a budget that effectively allocates staff resources in support of the District's four core missions: water supply, water quality, natural systems, and flood protection. In addition, the District will continue its emphasis on implementing projects directly in support of Executive Order 19-12, "Achieving More Now for Florida's Environment."

By joining with local governments, the agricultural community, and business leaders, we can achieve more together for the benefit of Florida's environment and residents while ensuring water supply and water quality meet the demanding requirements of a growing state.

These important partnerships and coordinated cost-share investments continue to advance the use of alternative water supplies and water conservation technology, promote innovative programs to protect our natural systems, and help support flood protection and other resiliency initiatives in our District's coastal and inland communities.

Water management in Florida has a long history that has shaped and molded the Florida we know today. I am proud to present the 2023 Strategic Plan on behalf of my fellow Governing Board members and the District's executive leadership and staff.

We are thankful to the dedicated and skilled staff at the District who will expertly carry out the work needed to reach the goals my fellow Governing Board members and I have set for the coming years.

Governing Board Members

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- **Maryam Ghyabi-White**
  Vice Chair,
  Ormond Beach
- **Ron Howse**
  Treasurer, Cocoa
- **J. Chris Peterson**
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- **Cole Oliver**
  Merritt Island
- **Janet Price**
  Fernandina Beach

Rob Bradley, Chairman

AGENCY OVERVIEW

In Florida, water is a resource of the state, owned by no one individual, with the use of water overseen by water management districts acting in the public interest. Florida law recognizes the importance of balancing human needs for water with those of Florida's natural systems.

The five regional water management districts, established by the Legislature and recognized in the Florida Constitution, are set up largely on hydrologic boundaries. The District encompasses all or part* of 18 counties in northeast and east-central Florida, as further illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Counties in the St. Johns River Water Management District

- Alachua*
- Baker*
- Bradford*
- Brevard
- Clay
- Duval
- Flagler
- Indian River
- Lake*
- Marion*
- Nassau
- Okeechobee*
- Orange*
- Osceola*
- Putnam*
- St. Johns
- Seminole
- Volusia

The District has jurisdiction over 12,283 square miles, which is approximately 21 percent of the state's land area. It includes the entire St. Johns River watershed, the Ocklawaha River, the northern two thirds of the Indian River Lagoon, and the Florida portion of the St. Marys River Basin. The District is also home to eight "Outstanding Florida Springs" (OFS) — Silver Springs, Silver Glen Springs, Alexander Springs, Blue Spring, DeLeon Springs, Wekiwa Springs, Rock Springs, and Gemini Springs. In 2021, an estimated 5.9 million people resided within the District's boundaries, a population that is projected to reach approximately 6.6 million by 2040.

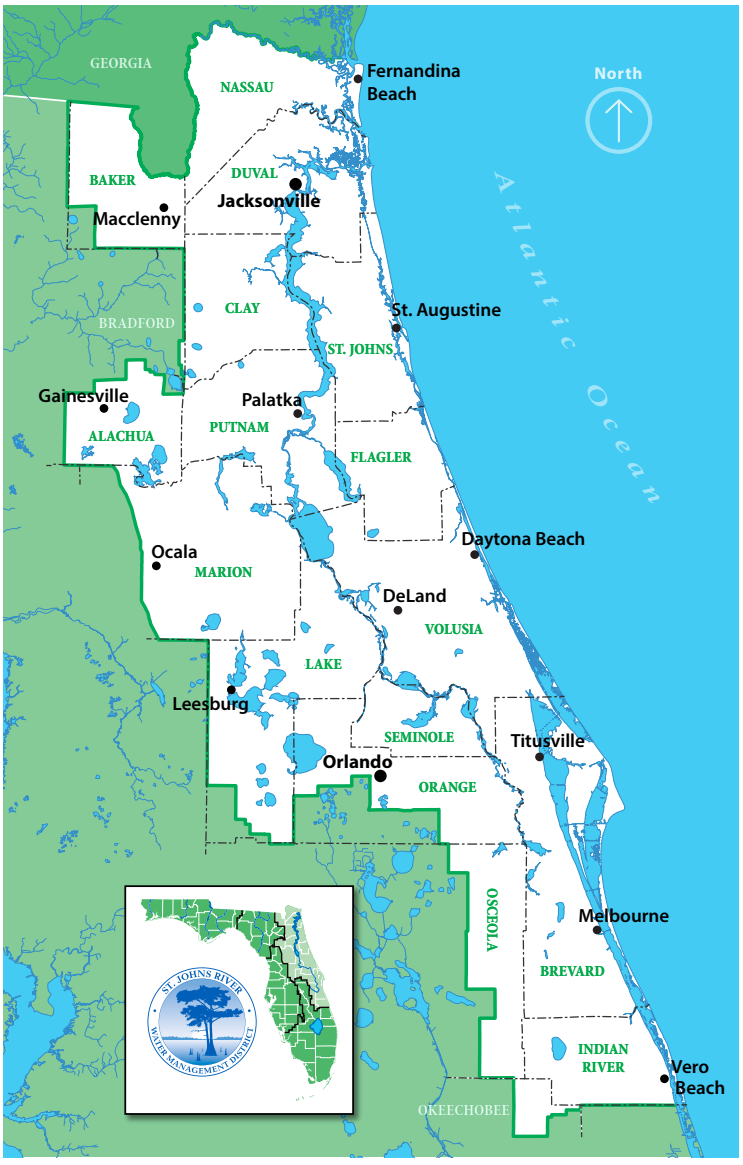


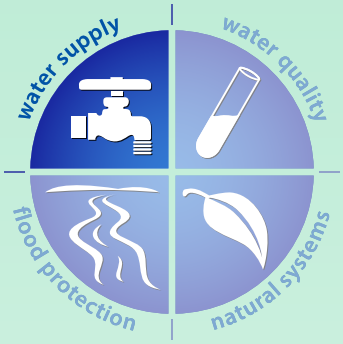
Figure 1 — St. Johns River Water Management District

The District's original focus on flood control has been expanded to include water resource development, water supply planning, water quality protection, and natural systems conservation. To meet these challenges, the District utilizes a variety of actions, including land acquisition, land management and restoration, water supply planning and permitting, wetland and stormwater permitting, the development of minimum flows and levels (MFLs), cost-share projects, and District-led projects.

Water management districts are funded by ad valorem (property) taxes normally reserved for local governments using taxing authority which emanates from a constitutional amendment passed by Floridians in 1976. The water management districts are governed regionally by boards appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. There is also general oversight at the state level by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The District is governed by a nine-member Governing Board, each with a four-year term. Under the direction of its Governing Board, the District's organization is structured by divisions, offices, and bureaus, which manage and implement District programs, projects, and activities.

The District maintains 115 miles of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) / District-constructed flood control levees, 175 miles of farm/project levees, 12 major flood control structures, 76 minor water control structures, 15 weirs, and 14 pump stations. The District maintains 69 miles of canals, more than 1,600 miles of roadways and trails, and three navigational locks. The District owns an interest in approximately 776,353 acres of land (through transfers, donations, fee-simple purchases, and less-than-fee acquisitions). The District is projected to fund 537 full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022–2023. The District's staff includes biologists, geologists, hydrologists, engineers, planners, financial officers, information technology specialists, land managers, laboratory technicians, and others from scientific and nonscientific fields. Many staff have advanced academic degrees and years of experience in their fields, both in the private and public sectors. In addition, many have been recognized for their work in the state, nationally, and internationally. The FTEs work out of multiple locations, which include the headquarters facility in Palatka, service centers in Palm Bay, Jacksonville, and Apopka, as well as various field stations.

S-96 structure at the Fellsmere Recreation Area in the Upper St. Johns River Basin



Goals

- Develop and implement regional water supply plans
- Develop and implement MFLs and prevention and recovery strategies
- Promote water conservation
- Develop alternative water supply and water resource development projects
- Plan for statutory funding requirements

WATER SUPPLY

Protect water supplies for users and the environment

One of the District's core missions is to implement regional strategies to provide sufficient water for both people and the environment. For most of the District, the main source of water comes from underground aquifers, primarily the Floridan aquifer, and that source of water is limited.

Water managers recognize the need to have water resources available for people, homes, businesses, agriculture, and other users, while at the same time ensuring that enough water is available to meet environmental needs. Pumping too much groundwater from the aquifer can result in unacceptable impacts, such as drying out wetlands, reducing spring flows, lowering lake levels, and degrading groundwater quality from saltwater intrusion. That is why water supply planning is so important. While the District's regulatory program works to ensure these types of impacts do not occur from permitted water withdrawals, the water supply planning program works to determine how much water will be needed during a 20-year planning horizon and develop options for alternative water supplies (AWS) to meet these future demands while ensuring the environment is protected.

In accordance with Chapters 163 and 373 of the *Florida Statutes*, the District conducts water supply planning for those regions where it determines that existing sources of water are not adequate to meet all existing and future reasonable beneficial uses and to sustain the water resources and related natural systems through the planning period. The District's water supply planning approach is comprised of three regional water supply plans (RWSPs) that will be updated at a minimum of once every five years, or as needed. RWSPs identify future water supply needs for at least a 20-year planning horizon and list projects and programs to ensure sustainable water supplies for all reasonable beneficial uses. The three water supply planning regions identified to address local resource concerns are the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) RWSP region, Central Springs / East Coast (CSEC) RWSP region, and the North Florida RWSP region.

As a part of fulfilling its mission and statutory responsibilities and to aid the water supply planning and regulatory programs, the District establishes MFLs for priority water bodies within its boundaries. MFLs define the limits at which further water withdrawals would be significantly harmful to the water resources or ecology of an area. The District is also responsible

for development of prevention and recovery strategies when a water body does not currently meet or is projected not to meet the adopted MFL for that water body. The District must develop a prevention and recovery strategy that identifies technically sound, science-based solutions to ensure availability of sufficient water for future uses and achieve the MFLs for those affected water bodies. In some cases, the District may develop projects as part of water supply plans that provide regional benefits. These projects are known as water resource development projects. The Black Creek Water Resource Development Project is among several projects identified in the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan (NFRWSP) to help meet future water supply demands while protecting natural resources. This project, located in southwest Clay County, focuses on providing recharge to the Upper Floridan aquifer in the Keystone Heights region and Lower Santa Fe River Basin. The project will divert up to 10 million gallons per day (mgd) of water from the South Fork of Black Creek during wet weather high-flow periods. The project is also expected to contribute to regional MFL recovery in lakes Brooklyn and Geneva.

The largest water resource development project in the CFWI RWSP planning region is the St. Johns River / Taylor Creek Reservoir project. The project will increase the capacity of the existing reservoir to supply up to 54 mgd of alternative water supplies, helping to ensure MFLs in the CFWI RWSP planning region are met while providing water for projected growth.

The District's planning process is ongoing, and plans are continually updated to reflect current and projected conditions, such as changes in anticipated population growth or decline that may result in changes to how much water a region will need and where the water may come from to meet those needs. Water conservation is a key component of ensuring an adequate water supply.

Black Creek is the focus of an aquifer recharge project

Water conservation is the cornerstone of the sustainability of Florida's water supply, whether it be belowground in the aquifer systems or aboveground in rivers, lakes, and streams. Water conservation continues to be a primary tool to meet the District's future water needs. While significant conservation efforts have already been implemented in the District, additional conservation is critical. The District currently has many active and ongoing water conservation programs, including outreach efforts, cost-share projects, and the Blue School Grant Program. In addition, the District participates in the statewide Florida Water Star℠ program.

The use of reservoirs or other surface water storage systems can be another tool to meet water supply needs by storing excess water on the landscape for future use. Reservoirs are currently an integral part of management of the Upper St. Johns River Basin (USJRB). These projects are intended to reclaim floodplain storage, provide natural habitat, serve as an alternative water supply source for local users, and protect the coastal estuaries that are affected by changing salinity and increased nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) and sediments from stormwater runoff. Several District projects have been built with a partnership between USACE and

the District. In addition to conventional reservoirs, the District has a contract for a dispersed water storage project on private property, which is an innovative approach to assist in achieving both water supply and water quality goals. This pilot program will provide storage for flood management, as an alternative source of irrigation and reduce nutrient loads to downstream water bodies. The dispersed water storage program incentivizes private property owners to retain water on their land for beneficial purposes, such as sequestering nutrients.

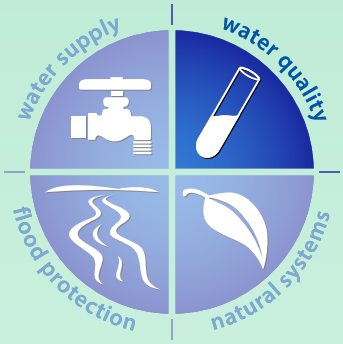
The District is also restoring historic watersheds as an additional water conservation tool to store water on the landscape, especially on parts of the USJRB. These projects are intended to reroute freshwater from the decades-old east-west drainage canals back to inland areas, where, after treatment, it can supply the St. Johns River. The Fellsmere Water Management Area (FWMA), Crane Creek/M-1 Canal Project and future C-10 reservoir are examples of projects which capture and treat such flows, benefiting both the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) and St. Johns River.

In addition, the District partners in the implementation of projects that improve the health of Florida's springs and their ecosystems, while also enhancing aquifer recharge. These projects support springs restoration in many ways. One of the more common types of projects involves the expanded use of reclaimed water. Reclaimed water projects protect spring flows by reducing demand for surface and groundwater withdrawals. For example, the District provided funding for the Ocala Wetland Recharge Park to provide protection for Silver Springs, one of the Outstanding Florida Springs in the District. This project provides 3–5 mgd of recharge to the Upper Floridan aquifer system that supports the flow of Silver Springs. In addition to the aquifer recharge benefits the project's wetlands also reduce total nitrogen loading and phosphorus loading to the aquifer by 59,000 and 30,000 pounds per year (lbs./yr.), respectively.

Ocala Wetland Recharge Park

Success indicators

- Develop and implement regional water supply plans to meet projected demand
- Establish MFLs and prevention and recovery strategies
- Increase awareness of the importance of water conservation and support local water conservation efforts
- Develop and implement water resource development projects
- Partner with local entities to provide alternative water supplies



Goals

- Protect and improve water quality in surface water and groundwater
- Collect and analyze data to support resource management decisions and restoration initiatives
- Develop innovative and cost-effective water quality projects
- Support the Governor's and DEP's restoration efforts

WATER QUALITY

Protect and improve the waters of the District

The quality of water in Florida is vitally important not only to the flora and fauna that live in and around the water, but also to the economy and wellbeing of residents. Governor DeSantis established water quality as a focus of his administration with Executive Order 19-12 "Achieving More Now for Florida's Environment," which outlined his environmental priorities. The District, along with the Governor, recognizes that where water quality goals are not being met, it is common to see negative impacts to natural systems, decreased recreational value, increased water treatment costs and impacts to property values.

Assessing and managing programs to protect and restore water quality is a critical component of water resource governance and a primary mission of the District. Water quality is essential to maintaining a high standard of living for residents and for the health of natural systems. Strategies to achieve these water quality goals include a commitment to comprehensive monitoring of the condition of water resources and, where water quality is impaired, working with partners to design and implement projects to improve water quality and beneficial ecosystem functions. The District's Bureau of Water Resource Information operates the districtwide water quantity and quality monitoring network and uses the monitoring information to guide impairment determinations. These efforts are closely coordinated with many partners, including DEP's total maximum daily

The Gabordy Canal cost-share project in Volusia County improves the quality of water flowing into the Mosquito Lagoon.

load (TMDL) and basin management action plan (BMAP) programs. Monitoring provides a wealth of information that enables the District to make resource decisions based on accurate and timely information and documents the condition of more pristine waters, such as the St. Marys River. In addition, the public can use the data to acquire a basic knowledge of groundwater, springs, and water bodies in which they have an interest.

The District also protects water quality and natural systems by implementation of environmental resource protection permits for activities that affect wetlands and/or runoff. In this way development occurs in a manner that minimizes environmental impacts and protects water quality.

The District works to address water quality issues through a variety of activities, including cost-share projects with local governments, aquatic systems restoration, and protection projects; permitting; and land acquisition and management activities. In the Ocklawaha River Basin, the District's acquisition and restoration to wetlands of former muck farms has contributed to water quality and habitat improvements in lakes Apopka, Beauclair, Dora, Eustis, and Griffin. The District partners with anglers and bait processors to harvest rough fish from certain lakes each year. This public-private partnership results in the most cost-effective phosphorus removal tool available to the District, while at the same time supporting the private anglers and local fish processors.

Silver Springs in Marion County.

Springs provide natural, recreational, and economic benefits for Florida's residents and visitors and ultimately reflect the health of the Floridan aquifer, the source of drinking water for a majority of the District's population. To ensure the aquifer is protected, the District is focused on generating scientifically sound approaches and projects to reduce or eliminate pollution-related problems. These projects are based upon comprehensive monitoring of the aquifer systems underlying the District. The District continues to facilitate cost-effective investment in springs protection through District and DEP cost-share programs with local partners.

The District collaborates in the management and restoration of two major coastal systems — the IRL and the Northern Coastal Basins (NCB). The District's commitment to these basins is exemplified by its ongoing support for the IRL National Estuary Program (NEP) and completion of applied research into water quality problems within the IRL, including algal blooms and losses of seagrass. These coastal waters yield substantial social, economic, and ecological benefits, and their health reveals the efficacy of collective management because the watersheds integrate the influences of stressors from their tributaries. Management focuses on reducing excessive loads of freshwater, sediments, nutrients, revitalizing altered habitats, tracking key indicators of ecosystem health, and expanding the District's understanding of existing and future threats to these complex estuarine systems. Through this applied research, District staff have the information to identify more effective management actions. For example, the District funded work that identified fine, organic rich sediments — or muck — as an important source of nitrogen and phosphorus in the IRL. In the NCB, the District helped partners target

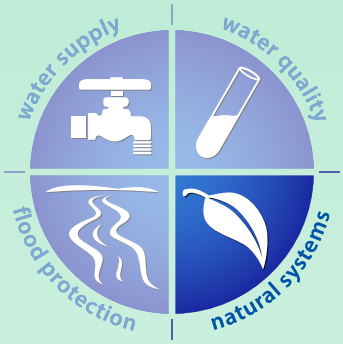
A mobile algal harvesting unit mounted to a barge remove algae from Lake Jesup during a pilot project.

their conversion of onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems (septic systems) to municipal sewer systems by gathering, collating, and evaluating information that identified high priority areas.

The District also has ongoing management and restoration efforts in the St. Johns River Basin. The St. Johns River and its tributaries is comprised of the Lower, Middle and Upper St. Johns River basins, Lake Apopka, and the Ocklawaha River Basin. Ongoing efforts are focused on improving water quality throughout these basins, primarily to address nutrient pollution. The District's DEP-funded investigation into the land application of biosolids is supporting DEP's efforts to better manage this source of phosphorus to the environment. The District is also dedicated to continuing to fund major water quality projects, such as the Crane Creek/M-1 Canal Project, which has a budget of $22 million and a construction completion date in 2024. The total funding for budgeted capital water quality construction projected in FY 2023–2024 is over $50 million. Also, future projects on Lake Jesup for nutrient removal and flow enhancement support DEP-adopted BMAPs to address water quality impairments, as does an innovative intact cellular algae harvesting pilot project. The operational phase of the algae harvesting project was completed and the final draft report was submitted in FY 2021–2022. Nutrient load reductions are the focus of many efforts due to the role of nutrients in stimulating excessive algal growth and bloom frequency and intensity, which harm both native communities and human water uses.

Success indicators

- Implement projects that improve water quality
- Reduce nutrient loading into waters within the District through District projects
- Collect and analyze data to assess ambient conditions and projects' efficacy
- Publish water quality data on the District's website
- Identify, fund, and implement innovative water quality improvement projects
- Assist DEP's TMDL and BMAP efforts with monitoring, modeling and water quality improvement projects
- Coordinate with DEP on water quality data collection and projects



Goals

- Maintain District lands for natural resources and people
- Manage invasive exotic and nuisance vegetation in a protective and sustainable manner
- Provide access and recreational opportunities on District properties
- Preserve, protect, and restore natural systems to support their natural hydrologic and ecologic functions

NATURAL SYSTEMS

Protect and improve ecosystems

The District's stewardship duties toward natural systems are split between lands in which the District has acquired a legal interest (fee or less-than-fee acquisitions) and the general natural lands and waters within the District. Aquatic natural systems are enhanced through efforts to improve water quality, restore hydrology, planting native species and management of invasive and/or exotic species. Most of the natural systems benefits to the lands not owned by the District are derived through effective permitting, water quality improvement projects, MFL adoption, water supply planning and cost-share projects. While these efforts all protect and conserve natural systems, they are tracked in other areas within this plan.

Of the approximately 615,000 acres of land the District has acquired in fee (full and joint), District staff is responsible for managing approximately 422,000 acres. The remaining approximately 193,000 acres are managed by partners, including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Forest Service, and a number of counties. In addition, the District manages approximately 5,500 acres owned by partner agencies. The District's investment in land has focused on wetlands because of the many water resource values and services they provide, such as water quality treatment, flood water storage and habitat for important species. The District has purchased conservation or flowage easements

The public can enjoy many recreational opportunities on District conservation areas, including along the Lake Apopka Loop Trail, North Shore property.

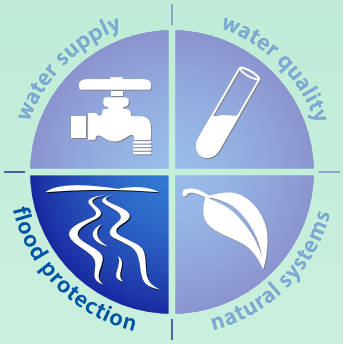
Some District conservation areas host apiary leases.

over more than 162,000 acres of land. These lands are inspected to ensure the private landowner is managing within the easements' requirements. While performing the inspections, District staff also assist landowners with land management issues they may encounter such as how to manage the newest invasive species.

Providing the right balance between public access, outdoor recreation and restoration activities can prove challenging at times, but currently more than 98 percent of District land is open for recreation. In addition, the District has many active special use authorizations that allow compatible and appropriate uses on District lands. Examples include use for research, trail running competitions, special opportunity hunts for disabled veterans, and outdoor wildlife appreciation festivals. Ongoing management activities, such as prescribed burning and invasive plant management, are key to the protection of the natural systems' condition. Restoration activities focus on encouraging native vegetation through planting and by managing or removing competitive invasive species. Because conditions change over time, use of an adaptive management approach includes prescribed fire, hydrologic management, invasive species control, and native species planting. Sound adaptive management requires an effective monitoring system to evaluate how past treatments have worked, if new treatments are needed, and when actions should be taken. Managing the lands and restoring them can also include leases for a variety of resource-backed activities that partner the public and private sectors to use public lands for a public good, for example grazing leases and apiary leases. All revenues generated by these leases are invested in future land acquisition, restoration, or management.

Success indicators

- Develop and implement District land management plans
- Conserve and restore native communities
- Implement prescribed fire program
- Maintain public access points to District lands
- Report on no-net-loss of wetlands inventory



Goals

- Minimize flood damage to protect people, property, and infrastructure
- Operate water management systems to meet flood protection, water resource, and future water supply needs
- Maintain data collection to support federal flood prediction collaboration
- Strategically acquire and restore floodplains to improve resilience
- Coordinate with state and local governments and the public during and after emergency events

FLOOD PROTECTION

Protect people, property and infrastructure

Florida has long been susceptible to flooding from natural disasters. Extreme rainfall can cause rivers and streams — such as the north-flowing, 310-mile-long St. Johns River — to surge beyond their banks, damaging homes and businesses. Since the 1920s, state and federal agencies have funded enormous projects to protect homes and families from the dangers of flooding. When the decision was made to form the District in 1972, the Legislature decided one of the four core missions must be flood protection. As of today, the District maintains 69 miles of canals in addition to the 115 miles of federal/District flood protection levees. Working with state, federal, and regional partners, the District's water control structures not only provide flood protection that will support local communities, but also support the core missions of water supply, water quality, and natural systems.

The District continues to emphasize and support resiliency projects that incorporate multiple core missions, especially flood protection and water supply. Recently, the District began developing green or nature-based infrastructure resiliency projects and continues to provide technical assistance to local governments that are addressing and planning for sea-level rise, flooding, and water supply issues. Additionally, as in the

A levee system at Sunnyhill Restoration Area helps manage water on the property.

past, the District will continue to support projects that provide flood protection, promote clean waters and resilient communities, and assist with shoreline restoration. Some examples of these projects include:

- Brevard County Oyster Reef Living Shorelines project which, in addition to annual nutrient load reductions of 639 pounds (lbs.) of total nitrogen (TN) and 48 lbs. of total phosphorus (TP), provided native habitat restoration and shoreline stabilization.
- City of St. Augustine Davis Shores project that provided flood protection for 380 acres through the installation of 17 stormwater check valves which reduce tidal flooding when king and lunar tides, which occur 12 to 16 times per year, back water up into roadways.
- Riverside Conservancy Living Shoreline project, located adjacent to the Mosquito Lagoon Aquatic Preserve in Volusia County, which promotes clean water, healthy habitats, and resilient communities while also creating a model for large-scale shoreline restoration efforts that can be utilized as mitigation for impacts to shorelines in the region.
- City of Cocoa Beach Convair Cove Low Impact Development (LID) and Living Shoreline Project that involves installation of a stormwater LID treatment train, including permeable pavers, underground rain tanks, bioactivated media barrier wall, and rain garden bioswales, as well as an installation of a living shoreline that includes mangroves, oysters, and grasses.

The District employs both structural and non-structural techniques to provide flood protection. The District operates water control structures in the Upper Ocklawaha River Basin and the Upper St. Johns River Basin. Structural techniques include federal and non-federal flood control structures and levees. The District is the local sponsor of two USACE federal flood management projects (the Upper St. Johns River Basin Project and the Ocklawaha River Basin portion of the Four River

Wetland restoration projects include the North Peninsula State Park oyster reef project (top) and the Fellsmere Water Management Area (bottom).

Basins, Florida Project), as well as the owner of a District-constructed flood control project (Fellsmere Water Management Area). These projects include approximately 115 miles of levees, 12 major water control structures and approximately 76 minor water control structures. As the local sponsor, the District is responsible for operation and maintenance of these facilities, and for acquisition of lands required for operation and maintenance of the federal projects.

In addition, the District is responsible for maintaining nearly 175 miles of non-federal project levees, several minor water control structures, weirs,

The Moss Bluff structure helps regulate water levels.

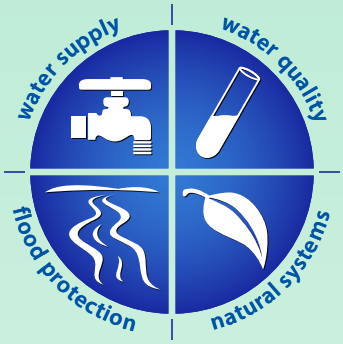
navigational locks, and pump stations. The District maintains more than 1,600 miles of roadways and trails, and other associated infrastructure.

Non-structural flood protection is achieved through stormwater management rules, acquisition, and conservation of floodplain wetlands to provide passive floodwater storage. The District has also purchased full-fee or flowage easements of riverine floodplain that provide non-structural water storage and flood management. In April 2022, the Governor signed into law Senate Bill 882, which amended section 373.039, *Florida Statutes* (F.S.), effective July 1, 2022, to require water management districts, in cooperation with local governments, to develop a list of critical wetlands to be acquired through the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. The St. Johns River Water Management District met with its local government partners, members of the Florida legislature and non-government stakeholders and advocacy groups in developing the list. A major consideration for including a parcel was the ability of the wetland to provide floodplain storage.

The District also, in coordination and cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, operates a monitoring network that provides critical real-time hydrologic data to other agencies, governmental entities, and the public for flood management activities throughout the District. This data is used in real-time by the National Weather Service to make flood predictions.

Success indicators

- Maintain and operate flood control structures and conveyances
- Perform semi-annual infrastructure inspections
- Evaluate structural and management modifications for hydrologic enhancement
- Collect water elevation data and publish on the District's and partners' websites
- Inspect, calibrate, and maintain flood management water level data sites
- Maintain coordination with emergency operation centers and respond to requests for need
- Implement the District's emergency plan



Goals

- Strengthen relationships through outreach and communication
- Provide transparent, efficient, and effective service
- Utilize regulatory permitting and compliance authority to protect water supplies, water resources, and natural systems
- Implement effective cost-share programs that reflect the goals of core missions
- Invest in staff development and expertise

SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

Provide exceptional service

The District strives for constant self-evaluation and improvement in all areas to successfully manage and protect natural resources. The District's focus is on providing exceptional service to taxpayers, businesses and other government entities through communication, fiscal efficiency, and implementation of core missions. Project and operational progress, along with overall organizational efficiency and effectiveness, are continuously measured and reported. A highly skilled, motivated work force is the key to achieving the goals set out in this strategic plan. As such, the District is committed to investing in and empowering District employees so that they can develop personally and professionally and provide high-quality service.

The District recognizes that it cannot support each core mission without reaching out to local stakeholders and businesses within the District. In accordance with Chapter 373, *Florida Statutes*, the Governing Board may participate and cooperate with county governments, municipalities, water supply authorities, and other interested public and private entities in water management programs and projects of mutual benefit. These programs and projects must be consistent with the District's statutory authority and ensure proper development, utilization and conservation of water resources and ecology within the jurisdictional boundaries of the District. The District currently funds multiple cost-share programs on an annual

Solar panels power pumps in a surface water conversion cost-share project at Hammond Groves in Indian River County.

A cost-share project in the City of Ocala.

basis to support the core mission areas; these are the Districtwide Program, Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Communities/Innovative Projects Program and the Agricultural Program.

The District, at the Governing Board's direction, continues to develop and improve its communications strategies, which has resulted in a high level of success of reaching and interacting with its users. In addition, the District's award-winning Water Less campaign has measurably increased awareness of the need for outdoor water conservation with surveyed respondents showing a willingness to reduce water use once equipped with actionable information. This holistic approach to communications allows us to drive messaging at the District and keep leadership well informed about emerging issues and innovative ideas. District team members also reach thousands of students and residents each year by attending community events where staff have the opportunity to share educational materials and make personal connections that drive the positive perception of the District. In recent years the District has also revamped its blog and weekly newsletter to drive email traffic in order to help the public better understand all the information available at their fingertips.

Since the 2013–2014 fiscal year, the District has awarded over $301 million in cost-share funding toward 623 projects with total construction costs of nearly $806 million. Through these projects, estimated benefits include 134 mgd of alternative water supply developed, 47 million gallons of alternative water storage made available, 22 mgd of water conserved, nearly 2.5 million lbs./yr. total nitrogen load reduction; 443,000 lbs./yr. reduction in total phosphorus load, and over 5,100 acres protected from flooding. The District is proud to partner with communities throughout the District, and of the 623 funded projects, 502 have been completed.

Success indicators

- Coordinate permit preapplication meetings to enhance complete application submittals
- Share success stories and educational materials with stakeholders
- Report regulatory metrics
- Provide access to regulatory data and information on the District's website
- Report on cost-share projects and estimated benefits
- Prioritize AWS projects
- Provide staff access to professional development opportunities

Mission/vision statement

To protect our natural resources and support Florida's growth by ensuring the sustainable use of Florida's water for the benefit of the people of the District and the state.

Our Values

Trust
What we say is what we do

Partnership
We can achieve more together.

Accountability
We care about the work we do and how we do it.

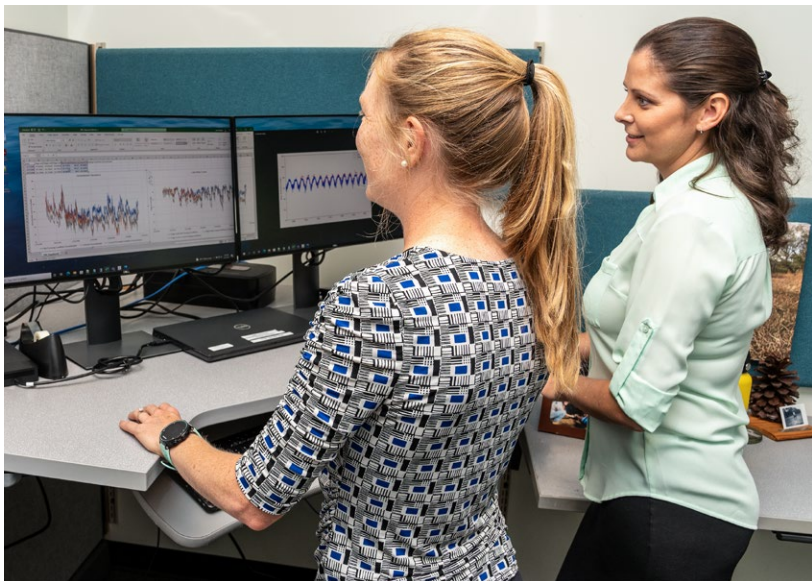
Results
We provide effective solutions

Strategic Plan Annual Work Plan Report FY 2021–2022

The Strategic Plan Annual Work Plan Report for FY 2021–2022, a "report card" of how well the District achieved its FY 2021–2022 milestones/deliverables and success indicators, will be available in the Consolidated Annual Report (CAR). Once published, the CAR can be found at: *www.sjrwmd.com/documents/plans*.

List of critical wetlands to be acquired using funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund

In 2022, the Legislature enacted new legislation (i.e., Senate Bill 882) that requires the District's strategic plan to include a list of critical wetlands to be acquired using funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, in accordance with sections 373.036(2)(e) and 373.036(2)(f)5., *Florida Statues* (F.S.). This Strategic Plan includes the District's list of critical wetlands, which was approved by the Governing Board on January 10, 2023. The list of critical wetlands is available on the District's website at: *www.sjrwmd.com/documents/plans*.



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