

Suwannee River Water Management District

January 2017

2016 Land Management Report

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WATER FOR NATURE
WATER FOR PEOPLE



2016 Land Management Report
Suwannee River Water Management District

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 Land Management Report is an annual overview of management objectives and activities conducted on fee-simple title lands held by the Governing Board of the Suwannee River Water Management District (hereafter District or SRWMD). The report is used by the District during the Land Management Review Team annual review of District lands which is required by Florida Statute 373.591. The report summarizes objectives of the approved 2011 Land Management Plan and generally follows its organizational format addressing key topics that provide information as to whether District lands are being managed for the purposes for which they were acquired and in accordance with land management objectives.

The report indicates an ongoing effort by District's land management program staff to include and participate in water resource related projects on District lands. It provides details and accomplishments on natural community resource projects which are designed to maintain or improve natural communities, forest resources, rare species, cultural and historical resources, and aesthetic and visual resources. It addresses social and economic management goals and activities which are key components of the land management program and include public use, communications and fiscal responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

The District jurisdictional boundary includes approximately 7,640 square miles across all or part of 15 north-central Florida counties.

The District holds fee-simple title to approximately 160,162 acres in addition to approximately 126,825 acres of conservation easements (3.3% and 2.6% of the District's land area, respectively) as of November 1, 2016.

District management of these lands provides water resource benefits including:

- Preserving floodplain areas to maintain storage capacity, attenuate floodwaters, and prevent inappropriate development,
- Preventing contamination by maintaining low intensity land uses within the floodplain and high recharge areas,
- Preserving and/or restoring spring areas to maintain or improve ground and surface water,
- Preserving and/or restoring natural communities throughout the area to support or enhance populations of wetland-dependent native species, and
- Providing buffer zones to more intense land uses to protect water quality.

The majority of the parcels are conservation lands that are located along rivers and streams, headwaters, and recharge areas. The District also purchases parcels for specific water resource projects such as wellfields, flood storage, water management, aquifer recharge and water resource development, water supply development and preservation. These project lands are managed for the specific purposes as identified in the acquisition.

The District Land Management Plan (DLMP) articulates the goals of the Governing Board that guide the management of all fee title lands held by the District. Lands titled to the Board are managed under a multiple-use policy that emphasizes:

- Water resource protection and management,
- Maintenance and restoration of the land's natural state and condition, and
- Provisions for public access and recreation opportunities on those lands.

The following four goals are outlined in the DLMP:

- Resource Protection
- Public Use
- Communications
- Fiscal Responsibility

The purpose of this land management report is to document activities implemented in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 on District-owned lands.

OBJECTIVES OF THE 2011 DISTRICT LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Resource Protection

Water Resources

1. Water Resource Objectives

- Minimize structural floodplain management on District-managed conservation lands.
- Maintain ground and surface water quantity and quality during land management activities by using enhanced silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Restore hydrologic regimes to the Desired Future Condition (DFC) where possible.
- Maintain water management structures so they achieve their intended function.
- Develop and maintain water resource projects on the lands to improve water quality and enhance water supply.

Natural Community Resources

1. Soils, Topography, Ground Cover and Natural Community Objectives

- Minimize soil degradation (erosion, compaction).
- Manage and/or restore historic natural communities for a given site to DFC standards to the extent practicable.
- Reduce degradation of the existing native groundcover.
- Monitor the grass, herbaceous and shrub layers to detect if the resource falls within the DFC standard acceptable range.
- Reintroduce or supplement current native ground covers with local stock where needed to achieve ecosystem functions.
- Update and maintain current reference data.

2. Forest Resource Objectives

- Manage for natural community heterogeneity to attain a multi-aged and vertically diverse forest, including retaining dominant and/or old growth trees and snags.
- Maintain the dominant and co-dominant tree species within the DFC acceptable parameter range.
- Reforest within DFC standards using techniques that minimize damage to other natural resources.
- Ensure that commercial harvests provide the maximum financial returns that are possible with the consistent attainment of primary natural resource values.
- Maintain an accurate and current forest resource inventory.

3. Rare Species Resource Objectives

- Protect and manage biodiversity on District lands.
- Track rare species locations, status, and use rare species BMPs.
- Maintain and/or increase existing rare and imperiled species populations on District lands.

4. Cultural and Historic Resource Objectives

- Protect and prevent negative impacts to cultural and historical resources during all activities.
- Document location of significant cultural and historical resources on District-owned lands and share information with the Division of Historic Resources within the Florida Department of State.
- Monitor the condition of cultural and historical resources on District-managed lands.

5. Aesthetic and Visual Resource Objectives

- Maintain or enhance overall visual quality of District lands.
- Minimize or mitigate short-term negative appearances of land management activities.

6. Public Use Objectives*

- Provide as many opportunities for resource-based recreation compatible with water resource protection as possible.
- Protect health and safety of visitors.
- Use cooperating agencies and volunteers whenever possible.

7. Communications Objectives

- Maintain and update the District Land Management Plan as needed with a major plan update scheduled for 2021.
- Conduct the Land Management Review Team process and report to the Governing Board.
- Develop and implement communication tools to enhance public recreational use.

8. Fiscal Responsibility Objectives

- Protect and manage resources on District lands in an efficient manner within the limits of the annual operating budget.
- Revenues generated from land management will be from operations conducted to achieve resource objectives.
- The District will implement the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program for eligible counties in accordance with statutory directives.

*Objectives from April 9, 2013, Governing Board Workshop.

SRWMD FY 2016 REPORT OF LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

I. RESOURCE PROTECTION

Goal – to protect, enhance and/or restore natural, archaeological, and historical resources on lands owned by the District.

Water Resources

District lands provide unique water resource opportunities because of their proximity to major rivers and their tributaries. At the tract level, there may be opportunities to impact altered water flows and water retention capacities to allow more natural buffering characteristics of the floodplain, such as flood attenuation, to be enhanced and provide protection to the receiving water body. At the site level, many facilities such as river access points, hydrologic facilities and roads require review, construction and maintenance to function in the floodplain without adverse water resource impacts. The objective of facilities' design is to make them transparent to high- and low-flow conditions within the floodplain.

Natural community and facility projects are generally implemented using silviculture BMPs as a minimum standard for implementation. Silvicultural practices, natural community restoration projects, hydrological improvements and road maintenance operations are planned to protect or enhance water resources.

Specific Governing Board-approved water resource projects may be initiated for flood control, water storage, water management, conservation and protection of water resources, aquifer recharge, water resource and water supply development. These projects typically require engineered solutions and have project-specific goals and management. In many cases, the water resource benefits are designed to extend beyond the tract.

Active Water Resource Projects

- *Silviculture Water Yield Research Project*
This project is part of a statewide effort to advance the understanding of the impact of forest management practices on water yield, and whether this water is held in surficial systems or makes it way to the aquifer. The project, within SRWMD, has five plots on District-owned lands near the Little River Tract, one plot on adjacent private land and six plots near the Gainesville wellfield on private land and Gainesville Regional Utilities land. Collection of data on surficial water status and vegetation characteristics continued this year. This project will continue through 2019.
- *Woods Ferry Hydrologic Restoration Project*
This project is to replace nine damaged or destroyed culverts on the Woods Ferry Tract which will solve erosion problems and reconnect hydrological flow between existing wetlands.
- *Monitoring Well Improvement Plan*
In 2014, the divisions of Water Supply and Water Resources identified groundwater monitoring data gaps areas throughout the District and developed a monitoring well

network improvement plan to close the gaps. This plan included the installation of 25 new monitoring wells. Closing these gaps is essential for groundwater modeling improvements and long-term trend monitoring assessments. In FY 2016 land management staff assisted with identifying well locations and land clearing to make way for the installation of five monitoring wells on District lands.

Water Projects in Planning and Design

- *Bradford County Water Resource Development Project*
The District is coordinating with Camp Blanding to purchase lands as part of the military base buffering initiative. The lands are being analyzed for water resource development opportunities including localized flood protection and aquifer recharge to the Upper Floridian aquifer. Approximately 2,673 acres have been purchased as of October 2016.
- *Public Use Area Erosion Control Project*
The District is partnering with the University of Florida Conserved Forest Ecosystems Outreach and Research Program to review approximately 90 river access locations on District lands and provide a feasibility study focused on resolving possible erosion problems at those public use areas.

Natural Community Resources

1. Soils, Topography and Natural Community and Groundcover

The District plans and implements land management operations to maintain and enhance natural resources. The District uses existing DFC standards as a guide to plan, implement and track natural community management activities. These DFCs detail plant community structure, representative plant species, average hydrologic regime, and the frequency of fire that is required to maintain the plant community. By using DFCs, the District determines if management activities are needed to “restore or maintain the natural condition” as directed by statute.

District lands that meet the DFC structural standards are maintained by natural processes (flooding events) or passive management. Most floodplains and wetlands are in this category. Communities that do not meet standards may receive active management (installation of hydrologic structures, prescribed fire, timber harvest, and reforestation) to move the community towards the defined community standards. Most uplands and transitional areas are in this category.

Active Natural Communities Projects

- *Prescribed Fire*
Many of Florida’s natural plant communities were historically influenced by lightning-ignited fires. Of those fire-adapted natural communities, the District’s prescribed fire program targets sandhills, upland pine, scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods and wet flatwoods communities for maintenance and restoration purposes. Combined, these targeted communities make up approximately 59,879 acres or 71% of the total acres that were historically influenced by fire.

The remaining 29% of fire-influenced communities on District lands consist of wetland natural communities such as shrub bogs, depression marshes and dome swamps.

These communities are not actively targeted for prescribed burning. Fire is allowed to spread into these areas from adjacent communities that are being burned, but only when the risk is minimal for long-term smoke-management problems, mortality to wetland vegetation and prolonged organic soil consumption. When necessary, containment firelines are installed and maintained in such a manner as to avoid adverse impacts to wetlands and water resources.

Within the five targeted natural communities, the District focuses most of its efforts on designated core areas. Factors used to distinguish many of these core areas include:

- 1) Areas have a history of successful prescribed burns,
- 2) Vegetation within these areas can easily be burned without other inputs such as mechanical or chemical treatments,
- 3) Areas have undergone management activities that require the use of prescribed fire for continued maintenance or to complete a management prescription.

The District uses DFCs to determine the Natural Fire Return Interval (NFRI) for each community. These intervals are derived from information provided by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI). These intervals are the rotation or the number of years that occur between each scheduled prescribed burn. The District's goal is to increase the number of targeted core areas that are within their NFRI (Table 1).

Table 2 provides natural community acreage information for all non-targeted and targeted cores areas. Acreage for targeted core areas is further separated to identify NFRI status. For areas out of their NFRI, information is also provided to help identify some of the factors affecting this status.

Table 1. Natural Fire Return Interval and Burn Acreages on District lands

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
% Targeted Core Areas within Natural Fire Return Interval	54%	53%	59%	66%	47%
Acres Planned	12,000	12,750	11,800	12,000	16,000
Acres Burned	12,528	8,919	13,581	12,277	7,212
Acres Burned That Met Objective	12,289	8,088	12,996	11,843	6,529
Wildfire Acres	54	25	0	11	457

Table 2. Acres of fire maintained natural communities by classification (FY 2016).

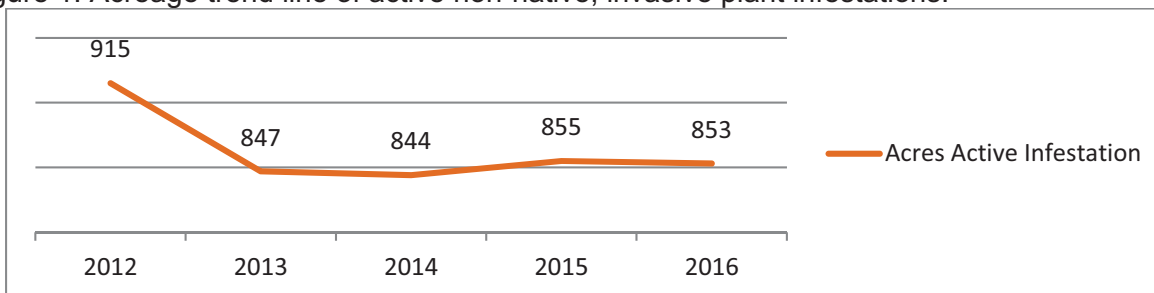
SRWMD Fire Maintained Communities	Acres	% of total
<i>Total Fire Maintained Natural Communities</i>	83,932	
Targeted Communities	59,879	71
Non-Targeted Communities	24,053	29
<i>Total Targeted Core Areas</i>	49,301	
Acres in NFRI* (end of 2016)	26,821	54
Acres out of NFRI (end of 2016)	22,480	46
<i>Total Acres Out of NFRI</i>	22,480	
Acres where pine density is too thick or stand age is too young to safely burn**	11,993	53
Acres within Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area	2,832	13
Remaining Acreage	7,655	34

*NFRI is Natural Fire Return Interval

**Stand age only applies to slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*)

- Non-native, Invasive Plant Control*
 Fifty-three (53) infestations were monitored and 65 infestations were treated with herbicides during FY 2016. Total infestation acreage decreased in FY 2016 (Figure 1). Decreases resulted from infestation area reconfiguration, the removal of infestations due to land disposal actions as well as six infestations being reclassified as “Inactive”. Active infestations are reclassified inactive when no remaining living plants are observed at/or within close proximity of the infestation for four consecutive years.

Figure 1. Acreage trend line of active non-native, invasive plant infestations.



2. Forest Resources

- Timber Harvests*
 The District harvests timber resources to promote conditions that more closely resemble natural forests. Four sales were offered; (Table 3) three harvests were thinning’s of pine plantations and one was a salvage operation due to Southern Pine Beetle at the Twin Rivers State Forest Mill Creek South tract.

The District has initiated the use of operator select first thinning. In these sales the trees are not marked in advance. The logger works under the supervision of the District to implement the sale. This approach, if it proves to be acceptable, will save money and allow the District to sell timber faster and reduce the acres that do not meet current stocking standards for the natural community more quickly. This trial approach led to a significant increase in acres harvested from the previous two years.

Timber harvest objectives include:

- o Reducing over story stocking to meet desired levels for the natural community,
 - o Improving forest health by removing suppressed and diseased trees, and
 - o Reducing species not native to the natural community, if commercially viable.

Planning, advertising, contract oversight, timber sale security and financial reconciliation are part of this timber sale process.

Table 3. Acres of timber harvest and revenue as percent of reported sources.

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
# Acres Timber Sold	1,214	1,071	731	267	1,074
Total Value as a Percent of Published Florida Market Rate for Pine Products (source: FL. Land Steward Newsletters)	117%	114%	105%	117%	114%

- *Vegetation Management with Herbicides*
Herbicides are applied to create conditions consistent with the natural community desired future conditions and to help with general land management activities. Two hundred fifty-two (252) acres were chemically treated in 2016. Herbicide applications were done to release planted pine stands from hardwood encroachment and facilitate the use of prescribed fire.
- *Little River Tract Upland Pine Restoration Multi-Year Project*
This is a joint project with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the National Wild Turkey Federation. The District received multi-year grant funding to reduce mesic oaks on about 473 acres of upland pine plantation. The first activity in FY 2014 was a timber harvest to reduce pine density and the amount of mesic oaks present on the sandhill community. In FY 2015, 106 acres of hardwood re-sprout were treated with herbicides and 319 acres were prescribed burned. In 2016, 225 acres were treated with herbicides to control hardwood re-sprouting and 83 acres were prescribed burned.

This area is also being used for the Silviculture Water Yield Project. Soil moisture probes measure water use by various densities and species of trees.

- *Forest Resource Inventory*
Data was collected on 448 inventory plots in FY 2016. The data from these plots can be used to quantify the acres that have achieved their natural community goals and provide data for areas that could be improved by a timber harvest.

3. Rare Species Resources

The District has in place procedures for identifying and avoiding detrimental impacts to imperiled species on its lands. Rare species are documented on District lands by surveys and opportunistic observations. Species locations and rare species BMP information are maintained within a geodatabase.

To lower the potential for negative impacts on existing species occurrences, District staff consults the rare species GIS layer file and rare species BMPs before planning and conducting management activities. If potential impacts are identified, staff will delineate occurrence areas to avoid or adjust management activities to prevent potential conflicts.

No specific surveys were conducted in FY 2016.

4. Cultural and Historical Resources

District lands have been reviewed for cultural and historical resources by a professional archaeologist. One hundred sixty-nine (169) known sites were found in the Florida Master Site Files of the Florida Department of State. Archaeological review determined that 23 sites should be classified as significant cultural sites due to the reported description of the site in the master site files.

The District continues plans to inspect the 23 significant cultural resource sites, while working on other projects in the vicinity, in order to monitor and document any potential impacts by looting or other activities in the past year (Table 4). Two sites have no land access and was not inspected. Inspections are conducted to monitor these resources and identify if any are being

negatively impacted beyond the two sites impacted prior to District implementing inspections in 2011.

Table 4. Status of significant cultural resources sites.

Measures	2016
Number of 23 known significant cultural-resources sites inspected	7
Number of 23 known sites damaged since last inspection	1

The District follows “Protocol for Managing Cultural and Historical Resources on Suwannee River Water Management District Lands” to avoid damaging these resources. The most likely areas for cultural resources, based on the known sites, are classified “High Probability Zones” and are included as a GIS layer for planning purposes.

5. Aesthetic and Visual Resources

The consideration of the visual or aesthetic resources while managing property is a key component of the land management program. Every aspect from signs and facilities design to managing contractors and the public has visual impacts.

Key management strategies are to review every activity implemented on the land and try to minimize short-term negative perceptions. Strategies included timing of the operation, minimizing debris or litter, utilizing timber that has been harvested, and in some cases, placing signs to explain the activity.

II. PUBLIC USE

Goal – to provide opportunities for high quality, compatible resource-based recreation and education programs to meet the public’s needs while protecting water resources.

District lands provide many resource-based recreational opportunities. Of the 160,162 acres owned by the District, over 97% are open to the public for recreation. Planning for public uses and facilities takes into account the sensitivity of the site, the proximity of similar recreational opportunities, the time and financial requirements to provide the use, and public demand for the particular use. The District’s Public Use Guide lists allowable recreational uses approved by the Governing Board by tract, including uses that require a Special Use Authorization (SUA).

Recreation Resources

The District has developed facility standards that detail recreational facility, road and trail, sign and kiosk, and fence design, construction and maintenance procedures. These standards ensure that facilities provide a safe, aesthetically pleasing, outdoor environment for the public that can be effectively maintained (Table 5), and minimizes potential impacts to water resources. District staff inspects public-use facilities, and schedules maintenance required to ensure longevity and continued safe use.

Table 5. Public-use facilities*

Facility	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
# Trailheads	31	30	29	30	26	26
# Docks & Boat Ramps	11	11	11	11	10	10
# Hand & Canoe Launch Sites	19	19	19	19	27	27
# Picnic Areas	22	21	14	17	16	16
# Interpretive Sites	9	10	10	11	9	9
# Restrooms	15	15	15	18	18	18
# Miles Trails	232	237	226	242	203	190
# Miles Driving Trails**	332	325	313	310	310	345

*Recreation facilities in GIS were reviewed and updated during the recreation guide upgrades on the web site. The review process allows staff to evaluate the facilities for changes or upgrades of use.

**Driving trails are drivable surfaces owned by the District or other entities that may or may not be maintain by the District.

Recreation Maintenance

- Devil’s Hammock in Levy County was closed due to flooding on August 10, 2016.
- The Steinhatchee Springs, Steinhatchee Rise, Steinhatchee Falls, Steinhatchee Falls Park tracts and the Buckeye Bridge on the L. A. Bennet Road over the Steinhatchee River was closed on August 8, 2016 due to flooding.
- All District lands in Levy, Dixie, Taylor, Jefferson, Madison, and Lafayette Counties were closed on August 31, 2016 due on to the impending landfall of Tropical Storm Hermine and all special use authorizations were suspended.
- The following District tracts and road were closed from flooding and storm Damage from Tropical Storm Hermine: Columbia County – Gar Pond, Dixie County - Steinhatchee Rise, Steinhatchee Springs, Hamilton County - Swift Creek, Jennings

Bluff, Jefferson County - Goose Pasture Campground, Lafayette County — McCall’s’ Chapel Grade in Mallory Swamp, Steinhatchee Springs, Levy County — Devil’s Hammock and Taylor County — Steinhatchee Springs, Steinhatchee Falls.

- Suwannee Bicycle Association continues to make minor adjustments to the bicycle trails in the White Springs area.
- The Florida Trail Association continues to make reroutes and trail adjustments to enhance the trail user experience.
- District coordinated with Cedar National Wildlife Refuge to open and manage the Lukens Tract near Cedar Key, FL.
- *Special Use Authorizations*
Members of the public may apply for a SUA to engage in those recreational opportunities requiring special authorization as listed in the public use guide. Examples include all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use, night-time access or persons with disabilities. An SUA may also be issued for opportunities not listed in the Public Use Guide; examples include research and data collection, placement of bee hives and nuisance hog removal.

An SUA serves as an agreement between the District and user; it details terms, conditions, liability protection and time frame of the proposed use (Table 6). The District issues SUAs and reserves the right to refuse anyone an SUA if the proposed use threatens water resources, public safety or other natural resources on District lands.

Table 6. The number and types of Special Use Authorizations issued.

Recreation	Temporary Ingress and Egress	Mallory Swamp ATV Trail	Non-Recreational*	Goose Pasture Camping	Total
413	86	0	20	123	642

*Non-Recreational SUAs issued during the fiscal year include research and data collection, competitions, hog removal and apiary leases.

- *Hunting and Fishing*
The District’s goal for public hunting is to provide high-quality hunting opportunities. The District meets annually with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to review opportunities for public hunting on District lands. Public hunting on District lands is offered through management agreements with FWC and the US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. Fishing is allowed on District tracts subject to FWC fishing regulations (Table 7).

In FY 2016 the acreage of available hunting lands remained the same. District is coordinating with FWC to open additional lands for the 2017 to hunting season. These tracts include Withlacoochee Quail Farms (696 acres), Bay Creek (2,125 acres) and Westwood West (504 acres).

Table 7. Hunting and fishing access.

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
# acres open to public hunting	104,945	104,945	105,019	105,131	105,016	96,444
# fishing access locations	109	107	103	101	130	102

III. COMMUNICATIONS

Goal – to coordinate with public and private stakeholders in the management of District lands.

The District encourages participation from outside agencies, organizations and private citizens when developing management plans for the lands under its stewardship. However, District lands and facilities and other communication opportunities likely provide greater visibility of land management activities to the general public. Public inquiries are addressed by visiting the District or contacting District staff by phone, mail, email, or the website.

- *District Land Management Plan*
The DLMP articulates the Governing Board goals and objectives that guide the management of all fee lands held by the District. The Board approved the DLMP in April 2011.

No revisions were made to the DLMP in FY 2016.

- *Land Management Review Team*
To ensure that the District is meeting its land management goals, the Excellence in Land Management Program (ELM) was established. This program quantifies the input of the Land Management Review Team (LMRT) to determine whether land management is meeting the objectives of the DLMP. Statutorily, the LMRT must evaluate:
 - 1) Whether District lands are being managed for the purposes for which they were acquired, and
 - 2) If the management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the management plan.

District staff conducted a Land Management Review Team meeting and tour in April 2016. The reviews focused on activities that were conducted in FY 2015. Areas of review included water resources, natural resource management, public use and facilities on representative areas. The LMRT was asked to score whether the District was achieving its objectives using the following scores:

- 0 – not meeting objectives;
- 1 – meeting objectives; and
- 2 – exceeding objectives.

The review of District managed land was in the Steinhatchee River basins. This area encompasses 60,222 acres of fee lands and 16,500 acres of Conservation Easement lands. This inspection was held on April 20, 2016.

Nine objectives of the DLMP were scored during the inspection ranging from a low score of 1.33 for rare species resources to a high score of 1.73 for fiscal responsibility. Water resource objectives were scored 1.40. The overall average score was 1.53 signifying that the management activities were both meeting and exceeding the Governing Board's objectives. The overall average score of 1.53 was equal to last year's LMRT. The scores for "managed for purposes acquired" were higher (2.0 compared to 1.76) than last year. The score for "in accordance with Management Plan" was also slightly higher (1.79 compared to 1.65) than last year. Questions and responses to the statutory component of this review are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Questionnaire responses from the District's LMRT meeting.

Question 1 # of Responses	Are District lands being managed in a manner consistent with the purpose for which they were acquired, including public access?
1	SRWMD is not in compliance.
4	SRWMD compliance is adequate and acceptable.
16	SRWMD exceeds compliance regularly.
Question 2 # of Responses	Does SRWMD land management implement the goals identified in the District Land Management Plan?
0	SRWMD is not in compliance.
8	SRWMD compliance is adequate and acceptable.
12	SRWMD exceeds compliance regularly.

- *Communication Initiatives*
 - Staff provided the Communications Staff with current status and information of District lands during Tropical Storm Hermine and Hurricane Matthew.
 - Land Management staff assisted the Executive Office in planning and implementing the District's Annual Legislative Education Tour.
 - Land Management staff provides images and text for District's social media outreach efforts including Facebook and Twitter.
 - Staff is using the "Important Notices" feature on the District web page to provide information to the public regarding flooding and tract closures, and management activities that may affect public use.
 - Staff has completed five new kiosk panels.

Staff worked with the North Florida Regional Planning Council's Natural North Florida Tourism Group to reprint the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail Paddling Guide.

- *Regional Resource Group Participation*
District staff participates in regional groups in order to understand issues that affect District lands and their management, and also to provide input to other managers of recreation and natural resources regarding water resource issues.
 - North Florida Prescribed Fire Council
 - San Pedro Bay Landowners Association
 - FWC - Invasive Plant Management Section's Weed Control Project
 - USFS/Florida Trail Association Florida National Scenic Trail
 - Suwannee Bicycle Association
 - UF Conserved Forest Ecosystem: Outreach and Research Cooperative
 - FWC Wildlife Management Areas and Management Plan
 - Fire Adapted Communities, Baker County

IV. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Goal – to protect resources and manage District lands in an efficient manner within the District’s annual budget.

District staff minimizes the costs associated with land management by contracting with the private sector, partnering with other land management agencies and organizations, and submitting proposals for land management grant funding.

- *Facility Construction and Maintenance*
In FY 2014 the District reduced road coverage, revised management practices and added a progressive review and approval process for general road maintenance. The culmination of this effort was a new general road maintenance plan that centers on a three-year rotation for all roads deemed necessary for public access. Road maintenance completed in FY 2016 is the second year of the three-year rotation. The District completed approximately 46 miles of general road maintenance at Mallory Swamp, Gar Pond, Little Shoals, Withlacoochee Quail Farm, Jennings Bluff, Alapaha Bluff, Woods Ferry, Little River, Little Creek, Swift Creek, Blue Sink, McAlpin, Turner Bridge, Roline, Bay Creek, Cuba Bay and Lamont tracts.
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission purchased, transported and stockpiled approximately 2,907 tons of crushed limerock for road repairs in Mallory Swamp (1,818 tons) and Holton Creek (1,089 tons) tracts. Majority of the road material at Mallory Swamp was utilized during fiscal year 2016 and the plans are to utilize the material at Holton Creek during fiscal year 2017.
- *Boundary Line Marking and Painting*
The District has a five-year rotation plan to mark and paint District land boundaries. The District has approximately 1,000 miles of boundary lines. One hundred twenty-eight (128) miles was marked or painted.
- *Cooperative Management Agreements*
The District enters into cooperative management agreements and/or leases with government agencies to reduce the cost of management to the District (Table 9), while providing similar management and protection and public access.

Table 9 Agencies managing District lands.

Managing Agency	Tracts	Acres
<i>No Cost Management Agreements</i>		
Alachua County	2	222
City of Lake City	1	27
City of Newberry	1	1
City of White Springs	1	7
Columbia County	2	139
Department of Environmental Protection	9	1,980
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	2	862
Florida National Guard	2	2,678
Gilchrist County	1	513
Hamilton County	3	17
Jefferson County	1	22
Levy County	1	4,274
Suwannee County	2	11
University of Florida	2	738
US Fish and Wildlife Service	5	1,635
No Cost Management Total Acres:		13,126
<i>Shared Revenue Agreements</i>		
Florida Forest Service	13	12,444
Shared Revenue Total Acres		12,444
Total All		25,570

The Twin Rivers State Forest is managed by the Florida Forest Service (FFS). In FY 2016, there were a total of \$139,524 state expenses, which were reimbursed by the District.

The District has a Cooperative Management Agreement with FFS for lands not under lease at Twin Rivers. This agreement is used primarily to allow FFS to manage and conduct fire-line installation and prescribe fires on District lands. This agreement reduces District costs since the FFS rate for prescribed burning is less than the District's private contractor's rates. During FY 2016, 789 acres were burned under this agreement. Approximately \$4,576 was saved by utilizing FFS for these services.

Public hunting is provided on 104,945 acres of District-owned lands in cooperation with FWC and USFWS. These agencies manage hunting dates and limits and provide law enforcement at no cost to the District. No fees for hunting are charged by the District.

The District has agreements with private and public entities to provide trail maintenance for 70% of the bike, horse and multi-use trails on District lands. These trails are maintained at no cost to the District and available for use by the general public.

- *Grant Applications and Awards*
In FY 2016 the District received several sources of grant funding to help reduce the cost of natural community management work listed in Table 12.

National Wild Turkey Federation/Florida Fish and Wildlife Cost-Share Grant Dispersals:

- Received \$26,480.00 for herbicide application work on the Little River tract in association with the five-year upland restoration project on this site. Herbicide was applied on 225 acres to control hardwood re-sprouts and help facilitate the use of prescribed fire.
- Received \$20,250.00 to help fund aerially burning operations on the Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) Invasive Plant Management Section Dispersals:

- FFWCC paid contractors \$17,877.00 to treat 59 acres of invasive plant infestations on the District owned Lake Rowell tract in Bradford County.

- *Revenues and Expenditures*
The District has opportunities to generate revenues while implementing its natural resource management activities. Timber sales generate the vast majority of revenue from land management activities, Table 10.

Table 10. Land resources revenues.

Category	FY 2016
Timber	\$1,164,405
Land Use	\$500
FWC	\$20,250
State Appropriation (Operations)	\$825,000
General Fund/Reserves.	\$490,019
Total	\$2,500,174

In FY 2016, the District sold an estimated 54,000 tons of pine timber in 4 sales on 1,214 acres. These sales were thinning's of pine plantations and a salvage operation due to Southern Pine beetle infestation. Total gross revenues are estimated (since all sales have not been completed as of October 1, 2016) to be \$956,337.

Expenditures in the land management program are divided into categories for budgeting as follows, Table 11:

- Natural Resource Management – includes water resource projects, reforestation, timber sales, and protected species management.

- Invasive Plant Management - includes the costs associated with invasive plant treatments including hiring private contractors and staff time/field supplies needed to conduct in-house treatments.
- Prescribed Fire – includes FFS and private contractor costs for prescribed burning and fire-line establishment and maintenance.
- Public Use – includes expenses for maintaining site-based and dispersed recreation activities, developing new sites, signs, maps, brochures, and sanitation.
- Facility Management – includes costs for maintaining roads, hydrologic structures, boundaries and gates.
- Administration and Planning - includes expenses for planning, GIS, training, real-estate activities, management plans and reviews, interagency coordination and Payment in Lieu of Taxes.

Table 11. Land resources expenditures.

Category	FY 2016
Natural Resource Mgt.	\$112,477
Exotic Invasive Mgt.	\$27,288
Prescribed Fire	\$425,101
Public Use	\$263,921
Facility Mgt.	\$193,033
Administration and Planning*	\$199,063
Total	\$1,220,883

*Includes Payments in Lieu of Taxes, inspecting and reporting on Conservation Easements on 126,825 acres, and non-native invasive plant control monitoring

- *Payments in Lieu of Taxes*
When the District purchases lands in fee simple (all ownership rights), the lands are taken off the county ad valorem tax roll. The Legislature established a payment in lieu of taxes program in 1992 to reimburse local governments for the loss of revenue. To qualify for this program, the county must have a population of less than 150,000. Payments were made to counties in the amount of \$319,529.
- *Surplus Lands*
Disposing of lands that are not needed for water-resource protection allows the District to redirect these funds to higher value, water-resource lands. The surplus lands indicated in Table 12 were conveyed to municipalities at no cost. Alligator Creek Mitigation property was purchased using DOT mitigation funds for the Starke bypass project and from the beginning it was to be given to the county for long term management of the mitigation area. The portion of the 47 Bridge Tract conveyed to Gilchrist County is for a future boat ramp and safety improvement project along the Santa Fe River and the portion of the Shingle Landing Tract conveyed to the county is

for the long term management of a retention area constructed at that location during a past boat ramp improvement project along the Suwannee River. In exchange for those properties the District received a desirable 2.31-acre parcel surrounded on three sides by the Shingle Landing Tract.

Table 12. Surplus lands sold or conveyed.

Closing Date	Tract	County	Transaction	Acres	Price
11/24/2015	Conveyance to City of Starke - Starke Bypass/Alligator Creek Mitigation	Bradford	Conveyed to Municipality	14.00	
9/29/2016	Gilchrist County Exchange - 47 Bridge and Shingle Landing	Gilchrist	Conveyed to Municipality	4.68	
Conveyed or Exchanged				18.68	0
Total Sold				0	\$0

APPENDIX A**SRWMD STATUTORY SUMMARY**

Checked January 2017

Land Acquisition and Management**Ch. 373.139(2) Acquisition of real property.**

- “Flood control
- Water storage
- Water management
- Conservation and protection of water resources
- Aquifer recharge
- Water resource and water supply development
- Preservation of wetlands, streams and lakes.”

Ch. 373.1391 Management of real property.

- (1a) “Managed and maintained, to the extent practicable, in such a way as to ensure a balance between public access, general public recreational purposes, and the restoration of their natural state and condition. Except when prohibited by a covenant or condition in s. 373.056(2), lands owned, managed, and controlled by the district may be used for multiple purposes including, but not limited to, agriculture, silviculture, and water supply, as well as boating and other recreational uses.”
- (b) “Whenever practicable, such lands shall be open to the general public for recreational uses. General public recreational purposes shall include, but not be limited to, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, swimming, camping, hiking, canoeing, boating, diving, birding, sailing, jogging, and other related outdoor activities to the maximum extent possible considering the environmental sensitivity and suitability of those lands. These public lands shall be evaluated for their resource value for the purpose of establishing which parcels, in whole or in part, annually or seasonally, would be conducive to general public recreational purposes. Such findings shall be included in management plans which are developed for such public lands.”
- (5) “The following additional uses of lands acquired pursuant to the Florida Forever program and other state-funded land purchase program shall be authorized, upon a finding by the governing board, if they meet the criteria specified in (a) – (e): water resource development projects, water supply development projects, stormwater management projects, linear facilities, and sustainable agriculture and forestry. Such additional uses are authorized where:
- (a) Not inconsistent with the management plan for such lands;
 - (b) Compatible with the ecosystem and resource values of such lands;
 - (c) The proposed use is appropriately located on such lands and where due consideration is given to the use of other available lands;
 - (d) The using entity reasonably compensates the titleholder for such use based upon an appropriate measure of value; and
 - (e) The use is consistent with the public interest.”

373.591 Management review teams.

(1) To determine whether conservation, preservation, and recreation lands titled in the names of the water management districts are being managed for the purposes for which they were acquired and in accordance with land management objectives, the water management districts shall establish land management review teams to conduct periodic management reviews. The land management review teams shall be composed of the following members:

- (a) One individual from the county or local community in which the parcel is located.
- (b) One employee of the water management district.
- (c) A private land manager mutually agreeable to the governmental agency representatives.
- (d) A member of the local soil and water conservation district board of supervisors.
- (e) One individual from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- (f) One individual from the Department of Environmental Protection.
- (g) One individual representing a conservation organization.
- (h) One individual from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Florida Forest Service.

(2) The management review team shall use the criteria provided in s. 259.036 in conducting its reviews.

(3) In determining which lands shall be reviewed in any given year, the water management district may prioritize the properties to be reviewed.

(4) If the land management review team finds that the lands reviewed are not being managed in accordance with their management plan, prepared in a manner and form prescribed by the governing board of the district and otherwise meeting the timber resource management requirements of s. 253.036, the land managing agency shall provide a written explanation to the management review team.

(5) Each water management district shall, by October 1 of each year, provide its governing board with a report indicating which properties have been reviewed and the review team's findings.

Ch. 259.036 Management review teams.

(3)“In conducting a review, the land management review team shall evaluate the extent to which the existing management plan provides sufficient protection to threatened or endangered species, unique or important natural or physical features, geologic or hydrologic functions or archaeological features. The review shall also evaluate the extent to which the land is being managed for the purposes for which it was acquired and the degree to which actual management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the adopted management plan.”

Ch. 253.036 Forest management.

“All land management plans described in s.253.034(5) which are prepared for parcels larger than 1,000 acres shall contain an analysis of the multiple-use potential of the parcel, which analysis shall include the potential of the parcel to generate revenues to enhance the management of the parcel. The lead agency shall prepare the analysis, which shall contain a component or section prepared by a qualified forester which assesses the feasibility of managing timber resources on the parcel for resource conservation and revenue generation purposes through a stewardship ethic that embraces sustainable forest management practices if the lead management agency determines that the timber resource management is not in conflict with the primary management objectives of the parcel.”...”All additional revenues generated through multiple-use management or compatible secondary use management shall be returned to the lead agency responsible for such management and shall be used to pay for management activities on all conservation, preservation and recreation lands under the agency’s jurisdiction. In addition, such revenue shall be segregated in an agency trust fund and shall remain available to the agency in subsequent fiscal years to support land management appropriations.”



January 2017

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