



# SUWANNEE RIVER

WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

January 2022

# FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021

# LAND MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT



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

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fiscal Year 2020-2021 (FY 2021) 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 (District) during the fiscal year. The report is used by the District during the Land Management Review Team (LMRT) annual review of District lands, which is required by section 373.591, Florida Statutes (F.S.). The report summarizes objectives of the approved Fiscal Year 2017-2018 District Land Management Plan (DLMP) 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 established land management objectives.

The report illustrates 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, historical resources, and aesthetic and visual resources. It also 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's 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 159,906 acres in addition to approximately 127,145 acres of conservation easements (3.2% and 2.6% of the District's land area, respectively) as of October 21, 2021. The District also holds less-than-fee title to approximately 751 acres of access easements.

District management of these lands provides water resource benefits including:

- Preserving floodplain areas to maintain storage capacity, attenuate floodwaters, prevent flood-related injury and damage, and prevent inappropriate development.
- Preventing groundwater contamination by maintaining low-intensity land uses within the floodplain and high recharge areas.
- Preserving and/or restoring spring areas to improve surface and groundwater.
- Preserving and/or restoring natural communities throughout the area to support or enhance populations of native species.
- Preserving aquatic buffer zones from high impact uses that have a high potential to degrade surface water quality.
- Supporting water resource development initiatives.

The majority of District lands are considered conservation lands, and most are located along river corridors, streams, headwaters, and recharge areas. The District has also purchased real property for specific water resource projects such as wellfields, flood storage, water management, aquifer recharge, water resource development, water supply development, and preservation. These project lands are managed for specific purposes as identified in the acquisition.

Lands titled to the District are managed under a multiple-use policy that emphasizes water resource protection, maintenance, and restoration of the land's natural state and condition, and provides for public access and recreation. Planning land management activities and uses at the ownership level allows for efficient and effective implementation of Governing Board priorities and achievement of goals. The following four goals are outlined in the DLMP.

- Resource Protection
- Public Use
- Communications
- Fiscal Responsibility

To ensure the District is meeting its four land management goals, the Excellence in Land Management Program (ELM) was established in 2004. This program uses quantifiable data to measure and track qualitative goals. ELM is used in conjunction with the statutorily required annual LMRT evaluation. LMRT participants use the ELM scorecard to determine whether land management is meeting the goals of the DLMP by scoring the strategies used to achieve those goals.

Additionally, LMRT participants evaluate if the District is achieving its statutory requirements (section 259.036, F.S.) by scoring the following questions, the LMRT must evaluate:

- Are District lands being managed in a manner consistent with the purpose for which they were acquired, including public access?
- Are District land managers implementing the DLMP?

## GOALS OF THE DISTRICT LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Goal 1: Resource Protection

**Objectives** - ensure District lands are managed for natural resource protection and maintain/restore lands using natural community Desired Future Condition (DFC) guidelines when practical and as referenced in Appendix A of the DLMP.

#### Water Resource Strategies

- 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 DFC where possible.
- Maintain water management structures to achieve their intended function.
- Develop and maintain water resource projects on the lands to improve water quality and enhance water supply.

#### Soils, Topography, Ground Cover, and Natural Community Strategies

- Minimize soil degradation (e.g., erosion, compaction).
- Manage and/or restore historic natural communities for a given site to DFC standards to the extent practical.
- 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 were needed to achieve ecosystem functions.
- Update and maintain current reference data.

#### Forest Resource Strategies

- 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.

#### Rare Species Resource Strategies

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

#### Cultural and Historic Resource Strategies

- Protect and prevent negative impacts on 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.

#### Aesthetic and Visual Resource Strategies

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

### **Goal 2: Public Use**

**Objectives** - provide resource-based public use opportunities.

#### Public Use Strategies

- Establishing and maintaining public use on District lands.
- Provide Special Use Authorizations (SUA) for compatible public use activities.
- Follow Governing Board Directives 90-2 and 92-1 for exclusive use requests.
- Provide hunting and fishing opportunities on District lands.
- Coordinate with law enforcement agencies to enforce Florida statutes and administrative rules on District-managed lands.
- During emergency situations, staff will assist persons in danger and communicate responses with the appropriate agency.

### **Goal 3: Communications**

**Objectives** - encourage participation from outside agencies, organizations, and private citizens when developing management plans for the lands under its stewardship.

#### Communications Strategies

- Obtain public and private stakeholder input in the management of District lands.
- Use applicable modes of communication to encourage and promote public recreation on District lands.
- Ensure public inquiries into management activities or public use are addressed in a timely manner.
- Complete an annual land management report and conduct the annual LMRT following the guidance of the DLMP.

### **Goal 4: Fiscal Responsibility**

**Objectives** - minimize 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.

#### Fiscal Responsibility Strategies

- Ensure revenues are derived from operations conducted to achieve land management objectives.
- Minimize structural operational management approaches wherever practical.
- Contract with the most cost-effective and experienced firms to complete land management activities following District policies.

- Coordinate with other land management agencies and organizations to complete land management activities to reduce District costs.
- Attempt to locate and obtain grants to help fund projects on District lands.
- Assist with the surplus lands program to ensure funds derived from the disposals of unneeded land holdings are redirected to fund the purchase of higher value, water-resource lands.

## **FY 2021 REPORT OF LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### **I. RESOURCE PROTECTION**

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

#### **1. 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 silvicultural 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, 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. The District's Florida Forever Work Plan describes all District-wide projects. The projects listed below are specifically targeted for District fee-owned lands.

#### **Water Resource Projects**

- Alligator Lake Tract Stormwater Maintenance Project

In coordination with Columbia County the District completed necessary maintenance on the Alligator Lake Tract. The tract contains stormwater improvements completed by the County in the early 2000's. The project was to reduce frequent flooding by re-directing stormflow from Price Creek onto publicly owned lands which were considered part of the historic flow-way of Price Creek. The improvements had not been maintained in numerous years and much of the District-owned portions of the project were overgrown with trees and other vegetation. The District removed as much of the vegetation as possible. The County and District will monitor the site for future maintenance needs.

- Steinhatchee Wellfield Rain Gauge

On September 23, 2021, District staff installed a new rain gauge on the District-owned Steinhatchee Wellfield Tract near the City of Steinhatchee. This region had never had a rain gauge before. Today the public can obtain real-time rain data from the District's website. The gauge is titled Steinhatchee.

- Underwater Cave System Research

Many District lands contain springs, karst windows, and other geologically significant systems for North Florida. The District issues temporary ingress and egress special use authorization (SUAs) for underwater cave system mapping, water testing, and research to private non-profit research firms. The SUAs are for twelve separate tracts of land. The SUAs are re-issued each year to continue the research. This research is shared with the District at no obligation or cost.

- Hydrological Facility Restoration Projects

Hydrological improvement projects were completed on four District tracts (Steinhatchee Springs, Lamont, Sandlin Bay and Little Shoals tracts) resulting in the replacement of thirty-one damaged, destroyed, or non-functional culverts and the installation of two new low water crossings.

- West Ridge Water Resource Development Area

The West Ridge Water Resource Development Area project includes approximately 640 acres of District-owned land adjacent to the Florida National Guard's (Guard) Camp Blanding in Bradford County. The purchase was funded by a grant from the Guard through the Department of Defense (DOD) as part of a program designed to secure buffers around military installations. The Guard manages the property for the District at no cost.

The original Florida Environmental Protection Department (FDEP) mine reclamation permit required restoration of pre-development flows within the mined areas of Chemours Corporation and District lands however due to current concerns about westward stormwater flow the District and Chemours Corporation have collaborated on a permit modification. The modification will control the discharge rates by detaining the flows and releasing them slowly in a controlled manner. The modification also has the future potential for water conservation through water re-use and aquifer recharge to the Upper Floridan Aquifer to augment flows to the upper Santa Fe River basin. In FY 2020 Chemours Corporation received the modified FDEP permit to reclaim the mine which includes the work on the West Ridge Tract. In FY 2021 there was no activity.

## **2. Soils, Topography, Ground Cover, and Natural Communities**

Florida Statutes direct District staff to manage lands "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". The District uses existing desired future condition (DFC) standards as a guide for planning, implementing, and tracking natural community management activities on its



properties. The DFCs provide information about plant community structure, representative plant species, hydrologic regimes, and the frequency that prescribed fire or other vegetation management activities should be implemented to help meet and/or maintain DFC objectives. By using these standards, District staff can evaluate the current condition of a natural community and then determine what management activities are needed to help meet statutory requirements and DFC objectives.

Many District lands currently meet DFC objectives including floodplain swamps and other wetland areas. These areas are often easily maintained through passive management or natural processes such as periodic flooding. However, many upland natural communities or transitional communities require active management to help meet and/or maintain DFC objectives. Management practices that may be used in these areas include the installation of hydrologic facilities, prescribed fire, mechanical or chemical treatments, timber harvesting, and reforestation.

### Natural Community Management and Projects

- Prescribed Fire/Vegetation Management

Many natural plant communities on District lands were historically influenced and maintained by the periodic occurrence of fire and other disturbances on the landscape. The District continues to use prescribed fire and other vegetation management tools, such as mechanical and chemical treatments, to manage vegetation within these communities to help meet DFC objectives. The five main fire-adapted natural communities the District targets for management and restoration work include sandhills, upland pine, scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, and wet flatwoods. The District focuses on these communities because of their vegetation type or structure, their need for frequent fire or disturbance, and their proximity to other wetland communities that require periodic disturbance. Combined, these targeted communities make up approximately 59,594 acres or 71% of the total acres on District lands that were historically influenced by fire.

The remaining 29% of fire-influenced communities consist of wetland natural communities such as shrub bogs, depression marshes, and dome swamps. These communities are not actively targeted for prescribed burning or periodic disturbances. 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 issues, mortality to wetland timber, and prolonged consumption of organic soils. When necessary, firelines are installed to help avoid adverse impacts on wetlands, water resources, or the public.

The District has developed disturbance intervals (DI) for the five targeted communities listed above. These intervals are derived from the fire return intervals developed by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) for these communities (Table 1). These intervals indicate the disturbance rotation or the number of years that should occur between each disturbance.

Although these return intervals are listed as a range, the District's goal is to implement prescribed fire or create a similar disturbance within these natural communities on a two-to-three-year return interval. This interval falls within the low to mid-range of the FNAI standards and was chosen to better address the high productivity of woody vegetation

on many District lands. This targeted two-to-three-year return interval will also continue to be evaluated for effectiveness based on field results and any additional research or data made available. From a planning and budgeting standpoint, all land management core areas that contain these listed communities will be targeted for work on a two-to-three-year return interval. When measuring the success of meeting this fire or disturbance return interval standard, the District will use a three-year return interval to quantify individual fiscal year results. In this case, a three-year return interval was chosen because it is close or equal to the maximum range for many listed communities and it better reflects fluctuating results that are often influenced by factors such as weather.

Table 1. Fire Return/Disturbance Intervals (DI)

<b>Natural Community</b>	<b>Acres (approximate)</b>	<b>Interval</b>
Sandhill	10,097	1-3 yrs.
Upland Pine	6,722	1-3 yrs.
Scrubby Flatwoods	3,989	5-15 yrs.
Mesic Flatwoods	23,384	2-4 yrs.
Wet Flatwoods	12,685	1-10 yrs.

- Designating Land Management Core Areas

Within the five targeted natural communities listed above, the District allocates most of its resources to areas designated as land management core areas. These core areas contain one or more of the following attributes:

- Areas have a recent history of prescribed fire or other disturbance type
- Vegetation within these areas can be effectively maintained using prescribed fire or other mechanical/chemical treatments, and/or
- Areas have received other land management activities (timber thinning, reforestation, etc.) requiring additional vegetation management practices to complete a restoration prescription or help meet a DFC goal.

The total acreage of these core areas can increase or decrease based on various factors. For example, some District lands contain targeted natural communities that are not included in the core areas because the current vegetative structure/composition inhibits the successful application of prescribed fire. However, if a preliminary management practice such as a mechanical or chemical treatment is implemented that creates conditions favorable for the use of prescribed fire, these areas can then be added to the total core acreage. Conversely, there may be core areas removed from the system because of size, location, and/or vegetative characteristics that consistently inhibit the efficient use of prescribed fire. Core acreage can also increase or decrease if natural community lines are adjusted, or community designations are changed based on field observations or updated information.

The District's goal is to consistently increase the percentage of core areas that are within their designated disturbance interval (Table 2). This can be achieved by using prescribed fire or other disturbances to control targeted vegetation, and help the District

meet DFC objectives. Table 3 provides additional information on core areas and the status of their disturbance intervals.

Table 2. Land Management Core Areas - Disturbance Interval Status (District Lands)

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
% Core Acres within Disturbance Interval (DI) (All Disturbance Types)	<b>63%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>63%</b>		
Acres Planned (All Disturbance Types)	13,169	15,002	10,500	15,000	13,000
Acres Treated (All Disturbance Types)	10,161	14,545	6,308	18,065	6,398
Acres Burned That Met Objective	6,790	10,768	6,040	18,001	5,901
Wildfire Acres	0.00	11	0.20	0	29

Table 3. Acres of Managed Natural Communities by Classification (FY 2021).

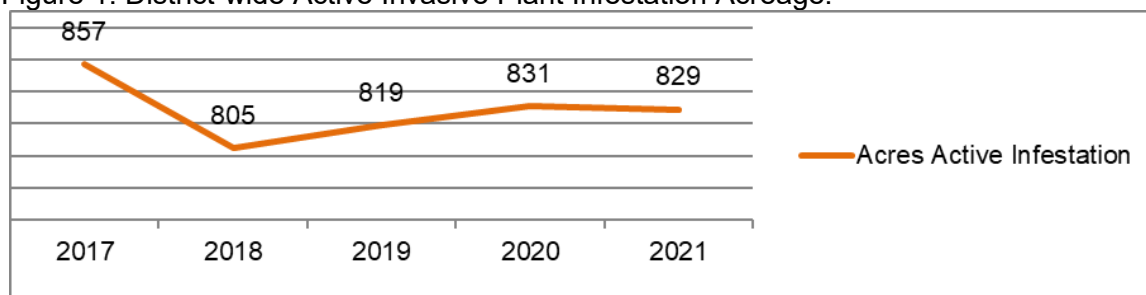
	Acres	% of total
<b>Fire Maintained Natural Communities - TOTAL</b>	<b>83,658</b>	
<i>Targeted Communities</i>	59,594	71
<i>Non-Targeted Communities</i>	24,064	29
<b>Land Management Core Areas - TOTAL</b>	<b>49,869</b>	
<b>Total Acres Within Disturbance Interval (end of 2021)</b>	<b>31,410</b>	<b>63</b>
<i>Last Disturbance Type Applied - Prescribed Fire</i>	24,782	50
<i>Last Disturbance Type Applied - Mechanical/Chemical</i>	6,628	13
<b>Total Acres Out Of Disturbance Interval (end of 2021)</b>	<b>18,459</b>	<b>37</b>
Acres where pine density is too thick or stand age is too young to safely burn*	7,862	16
Acres within Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area	5,801	12
Remaining Acreage	4,796	10

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

- Invasive Plant Control (District staff):

In FY 2021, District staff monitored 121 invasive plant infestations; 66 of those infestations were treated with herbicides. Total infestation acreage decreased during FY 2021 (Figure 1). This decrease was the result of some infestations being reclassified from active to inactive. Infestations are reclassified to inactive if the invasive plant is not found at the location for four consecutive years.

Figure 1. District-wide Active Invasive Plant Infestation Acreage.



- Invasive Plant Control (Contractors):

Contractors are used to treat larger more complex areas of invasive plant infestations. Contracts for this work are either procured by District or through cooperating agencies when grants are pursued. Work completed in FY 2021 is listed in Table 4.

Table 4. FY 2021 Completed Invasive Plant Treatment Projects (Contractors)

Work Location	County	Extent	Targeted Species	Contract Amount	Funding Source
Multiple	Multiple	36.5 acres	Japanese Climbing Fern, Chinese Tallow, Kudzu, Cogon Grass	\$15,804.50	SRWMD
Edwards Bottomland	Bradford	8.3 acres	Japanese Climbing Fern, Chinese Tallow, Camphor tree	\$3,593.50	SRWMD

- Vegetation Management (Mechanical)

Mechanical treatments such as whole tree chipping, roller chopping, woods mowing, and ditch mowing are used to help meet natural community DFC objectives, prepare sites for prescribed fire and reforestation, and protect District resources from the damaging effects of wildfires. Work completed in FY 2021 includes:

- Approximately 254 acres were roller-chopped, and 2,167 acres were mowed to help facilitate the use of prescribed fire and to help meet natural community management objectives.
- Approximately 101 miles of ditch edges were mechanically treated on multiple tracts including Sandlin Bay, Mossy Hammock, and Little River tracts. This work was done to

increase the width of areas along road edges to provide better fire break capabilities and/or improve access for equipment. This will facilitate the safe use of prescribed fire and help protect forest resources from the damaging effects of wildfire.

- Vegetation Management (Chemical)

The application of chemical herbicides on District lands is periodically used to help control hardwood competition on sites that are being prepared for pine reforestation or to facilitate the use of prescribed fire and help meet natural community DFC objectives. Work completed in FY 2021 includes:

- Approximately 626 acres were treated for reforestation site-prep purposes and 324 acres were treated to facilitate the use of prescribed fire and help meet natural community management objectives.

### 3. Forest Resources

- Timber Harvest

The District harvests timber resources to promote conditions that more closely resemble natural forests. In FY 2021, 10 sales were implemented (Table 6):

- One final harvest (conditions met to achieve DFCs).
- Eight stand improvement pine thinning's, and
- One restoration pine thinning with hardwood removal.

Timber harvest objectives include:

- Reducing overstory stocking to meet desired levels for the natural community.
- Improving forest health by removing poor health trees or stands, and
- Reducing species not native to the natural community.

Planning, advertising, contract oversight, timber sale security, and financial reconciliation are components of the timber sale process.

Table 6. FY 2021 Timber Sale Acres by Harvest Type and Species.

Species	Harvest Type	FY 21 Acres (12 sales)	FY 20 Acres (10 sales)	FY 19 Acres (11 sales)
Loblolly Pine	First Thin	--	72	--
	Second Thin	--	126	345
	Final Harvest	265	--	280
	SPB Salvage	--	--	55
	<b>ALL LOBLOLLY</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>680</b>
Slash Pine	First Thin	1,061	1,698	719
	Second Thin	--	137	--
	Final Harvest	194	62	73
	<b>ALL SLASH</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>1,897</b>	<b>792</b>
Longleaf Pine	First Thin	--	--	143
	BTB Salvage	5	--	--
	<b>ALL LONGLEAF</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>143</b>
Hardwood	Removal	541	--	--
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,066</b>	<b>2,095</b>	<b>1,615</b>

- Forest Resource Inventory

In FY 2021, the District initiated a contract to inventory 3,083 forest plots throughout the District. The contractor completed 3,010 plots (97.6%) with data collected, reported, and check cruised by District staff at a rate of 8%. High water levels prevented access for contractor to complete all allocated data plots. The data from these plots are used to quantify the acres that have achieved their natural community goals and provide data for areas that could be improved by silvicultural activities. This large-scale timber cruise also updates data in operational timber stands that were last cruised in FY 2011 and identified volumes and other species data in areas where a restoration project has been potentially identified.

- Reforestation

In FY 2021, the District reforested 195 acres of District lands with Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) tubelings, and 15 acres of District property with bare-root Slash Pine (*Pinus elliotii*). Reforestation on 75 acres is scheduled for FY 2022.

#### 4. Rare Species Resources

The District conducts rare species monitoring and survey work on a regular basis to help document the location of new species and to monitor the status of existing occurrences. This information is documented and recorded in a rare species geodatabase that is made available to District staff. To help lower the potential for negative impacts on existing species occurrences, District staff can consult the rare species geodatabase before planning and conducting management activities. If potential impacts from management activities are identified, staff locate and delineate areas to prevent potential conflicts. Management activities are also adjusted if needed to prevent impacts to these resources.

In FY 2021, staff conducted rare plant monitoring and survey work on many tracts throughout the District. Data collected during this work was uploaded into the District’s rare species geodatabase and is listed in Table 7. Many new rare plant locations were documented and included species such as Corkwood (*Leitneria floridana*) which is a state threatened species and Pinewoods Dainties (*Phyllanthus liebmannianus*) which is a state endangered species.

Table 7. FY 2021 Rare Plant Monitoring/Survey Work.

Number of Tracts Monitored/Surveyed	Number of Known Rare Plant Locations Monitored	Number of Monitoring Locations Rare Plants were Observed	Number of New Rare Plant Locations Documented
37	151	73	89

#### 5. Cultural and Historical Resources

The majority of District lands have been studied for cultural and historical resources by a professional archaeologist. One hundred sixty-nine known sites are located on District lands and can be found in the Florida Department of State Master Site Files. The Master Site Files

indicate that approximately 26 of these sites are considered significant cultural or historical sites and should be monitored by the District. Another 23 sites have been discovered by District staff over the years and are also monitored four new sites were added in FY 2021). Additionally, five of these sites are monitored by cooperating agencies and are generally not inspected by District staff.

Staff attempts to inspect these sites annually while working on other projects in the vicinity. During the inspections staff document damaged sites (i.e., looting) and other illegal activities. Staff provides Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) law enforcement with that information. In FY 2021 District staff inspected most of the sites. Table 8 summarizes staff monitoring activities.

Table 8. Status of Cultural and Historical Resource Sites.

<b>Measures</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019*</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
Significant sites inspected	26	26	2	23	12
Staff documented or looted sites	27	23	1	12	12
Sites managed by other agencies	5	5		1	
Number recently damaged sites	1	7	0	2	6

*\*The technology used to collect and process information during tract inspections was not available for almost the entire year.*

The District follows the “Protocol for Managing Cultural and Historical Resources on Suwannee River Water Management District Lands” to avoid damaging these resources. The area’s most likely for cultural resources, based on the known sites, are classified “High Probability Zones”, and are included as a geodatabase for planning purposes. Before District staff initiates any major ground disturbance activities staff reviews the Protocol and the geodatabases, including the Master Site Files, to determine if the activity could negatively impact a cultural or historical resource. If there are concerns a planned activity could be impactful, District staff may contract with a professional archaeologist to delineate a site or help plan the activity.

## **6. 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 of these resources, from facility planning to managing contractors or the public, has visual impacts.

There is a vast array of opportunities to improve or maintain aesthetic values during land management activities. Some of these include timing of operations, minimizing debris or litter along internal roads, minimizing clearcuts during timber harvests, consistency in facility designs, placement of signage, or maintaining the District’s unwritten rule of not posting boundaries or installing signs along riverbanks. District staff has found one of the greatest impacts to visual quality is education. When appropriate the District attempts to post interpretive information about activities (either on District lands or online) however our one-on-one conversations with the public about short-term and long-term objectives have and continue to be very effective. Overall, District staff desires to maintain our lands in such a way that the public perceives wilderness or natural beauty when visiting.

## II. PUBLIC USE

**Goal: Provide opportunities for high quality, compatible resource-based recreation, and educational programs to meet the public's needs while protecting water resources.**

District lands provide many resource-based recreational opportunities. Of the 159,897 acres owned by the District, approximately 97% are open to the public for recreation. Planning for public uses and facilities considers the sensitivity of the site, the proximity of similar recreational opportunities, time, financial requirements to provide the use, and public demand for the use. Within the DLMP the District provides the public with a Public Use Standard which lists allowable recreational uses approved by the Governing Board by tract, including uses that require a SUA.

Conservation lands not opened to the public are tracts located in gated communities or where access is otherwise restricted. Lands classified in the Public Use Standard as "project lands" may also be closed to the public. These fee-title lands were purchased to develop infrastructure for water resource development projects and these tracts may not be open to the public for recreational activities due to the primary purpose for which the properties were purchased. Public use may be allowed once a project is completed but only after a suitability study has been undertaken.

### Recreation Resources

The District has developed facility standards that detail recreational facilities, roads, trails, signs, kiosks, fence design and construction, and maintenance procedures. These standards ensure facilities provide a safe, aesthetically pleasing, outdoor environment for the public that can be effectively maintained and minimizes potential impacts to water resources. District staff inspects public use facilities, and schedules maintenance to help ensure longevity and safety. Table 9 indicates the facility type, number of facilities, and fiscal year.

Table 9. Public-Use Facilities\*

<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
Trailheads	31	32	31	31	31	31	30	29
Docks & Boat Ramps	8	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Hand & Canoe Launch Sites	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Picnic Areas	22	23	23	22	22	22	21	14
Interpretive Sites	8	11	11	9	9	9	10	10
Restrooms	14	16	18	15	15	15	15	15
Miles Trails**	279	228	228	228	232	232	237	226
Miles Driving Trails	377	383	381	334	332	332	325	313

\*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.

\*\*Additional roads were added to the ATV Trail in Mallory Swamp and the additional bicycle trails were added on the Gar Pond Tract.



### Public Use and Facility Maintenance and Construction

- The District made extensive repairs to a composting toilet located on the Atsena Otie Key Tract for Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge and the City of Cedar Key.
- The trash cans at Goose Pasture Campground were replaced with cans installed on posts and custom brackets to suspend the cans off the ground. Additional cans were added for the convenience of the campers.
- Approximately 20 gate repair, installation and improvement projects were completed on the following tracts: Alligator Creek, Little River, Steinhatchee Springs, Jones Mill Creek, Natural Well Branch, Alapahoochee, Mattair, Osteen, Cuba Bay, Lake Butler Wellfield and High Springs Wellfield tracts.
- Two tract clean-up projects were carried out by removing trash from old dump sites on Mossy Hammock and Alligator Creek tracts.
- 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 those efforts was a new road maintenance plan that centered on a three-year rotation for all roads deemed necessary for public access. In recent years, the District has had a renewed interest in increasing timber harvests and providing improved public access which have required additional road maintenance. Specifically, there have been renewed public and stakeholder interest in road maintenance on the Mallory Swamp Tract. The increased attention has challenged staff with adhering to the District-wide three-year rotation due to the amount of time and resources necessary to accomplish these activities. In FY 2021 the Executive Director approved a Road and Hydrological Maintenance Program Standard which does not adhere to the three-year rotation and instead directs staff to complete maintenance of the facilities at a level commensurate with their use.

Approximately 57 miles of road maintenance was completed on the following tracts: Mallory Swamp, Steinhatchee Springs, Seven Bridges, Bay Creek, Rolene, Lamont, Sandlin Bay, Steinhatchee Falls, Little River, Rock Bluff, Little Shoals, Gar Pond, Blue Sink, Swift Creek, Woods Ferry, Mattair Springs, Christian, Adams, Walker and Walker tracts. Approximately seven miles of the road maintenance in FY 2021 were associated with timber harvest.

- The District has a five-year rotation plan to mark and paint District land boundaries. The District has approximately 1,000 miles of property boundary line with 45 miles being marked or painted in FY 2021. There were less miles painted than planned due to extensive and persistent river flooding.

### **Special Use Authorizations**

To protect sensitive resources and reduce management costs sometimes it is necessary to limit some recreational opportunities and the use of certain roads or other accesses on District lands. Some uses, such as camping and other night uses, require a SUA. The Public Use Standard provides recreational users with a list of recreational activities that require an SUA. Examples of

these activities include all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use, night-time access, or access for persons with disabilities.

SUAs may also be issued for opportunities not listed in the Public Use Standard. By virtue of the Governing Board-approved DLMP, District staff have the responsibility of issuing SUAs associated with activities referenced in the Public Use Standard. Examples include research and data collection, adventure races, trail maintenance, placement of beehives, 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 10). 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 10. FY 2021 Special Use Authorizations

Recreation	Temporary Ingress and Egress <sup>1</sup>	Mallory Swamp ATV Trail	Non-Recreational <sup>2</sup>	Goose Pasture Camping	Total
375	49	32	26	236	669

<sup>1</sup>Temporary Ingress and Egress SUAs may include recreational use on the Lukens Tract in Cedar Key.

<sup>2</sup>Non-Recreational SUAs issued during the fiscal year include research and data collection, recreation competitions, hog removal, and apiary leases.

Requests for uses that are clearly or potentially exclusive require Governing Board consideration before any agreement, license, or authorization are approved. Such uses may include legal conveyance of property rights, such as rights-of-way or access easements; tract closures for research or media projects; or exclusive use of resources as in resource harvesting. Governing Board Directives 90-2 and 92-1 set guidelines for District staff involved with land acquisition or surplus to respond to public requests for certain exclusive uses.

**Hunting and Fishing**

The District’s goal for public hunting and fishing on District lands is to provide high-quality hunting opportunities and access to the rivers for fishing. The District meets annually with the FWC to review opportunities for public hunting on District lands. Public hunting on District lands is offered through management agreements with FWC and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Fishing is allowed on District tracts subject to FWC fishing regulations (Table 11).

Table 11. Hunting and Fishing Access.

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Number of acres open to public hunting	106,146	106,146	106,146	108,298*	108,292*	104,945
Number of fishing access locations	120	111	111	111	109	109

\*In FY 2017 the 2,157-acre Bay Creek Tract was added to the FWC public hunting program and was subsequently removed in FY 2018 due to legal issues.

- Starting in FY 2018, the District continues to partner with Suwannee River Strutters, Swamp Strutters, Jefferson County King of Springs, and Gator Gobblers Chapters of the National Wildlife Turkey Federation to sponsor women in the outdoors and youth special opportunity hunts. These special opportunity hunts allow additional hunting opportunities on 4,410 acres.
- Camp Blanding manages the District's Double Run Creek Tract and leases it to hunting (2,030 acres). The Double Run Creek Tract was purchased as part of the Blanding Buffers project and may be used for future water resource projects.

### **Law Enforcement**

The District relies on FWC and county sheriffs' offices to enforce Florida Statutes and administrative rules on District-managed lands. FWC and sheriffs perform regular patrols on District lands as part of their normal operations. The District also manages interagency contracts with FWC and various counties to utilize enhanced law enforcement services. The contracts allow the District to pay off-duty officers for enhanced patrols in areas with chronic violations or during periods of intensive use such as holiday weekends at high-use areas.

In FY 2021, the FWC officers who participated in the enhanced law enforcement program spent 625 hours patrolling District lands, the Suwannee County Sheriff's Office spent 48 hours patrolling Suwannee and Falmouth Springs, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office spent 36 hours patrolling Goose Pasture Campground, and Hamilton County Sheriff's Office spent 72 hours patrolling Pot Springs recreation area. The District also paid for additional patrols on Independence Day and Labor Day.

After completion of the Pot Springs Environmental Restoration and Enhancement Project the District has added Pot Springs to its enhanced law enforcement program. The presence of law enforcement at the springs has reduced vandalism and misbehavior.

FWC made several significant cases involving the destruction of District lands. In one case in the Northeast Region, the perpetrators who were caught riding ATV's damaging District lands. They were fined and were served no-trespass warnings. All perpetrators written citations for damaging District lands will receive a five-year no-trespass warning and, those charged with felony destruction will received a lifetime no-trespass order. A person was charged for damaging District lands at Goose Pasture Campground. The person was mudding through a wet area in the campground and got stuck.

### **Emergencies**

Staff encourages the public to dial 911 when emergencies arise on District lands. During emergencies involving facilities, natural disturbances, or hazard materials, the District's land management staff play an integral role. The District maintains a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) required by the Florida Department of Emergency Management and has an active District Staff Safety Team that is organized internally.

The COOP addresses coordinated post-disaster response and recovery, rapid deployment, and pre-deployment of resources, communications, and warning systems, and presents annual exercises to determine the District's ability to respond to an emergency. The essential role of land management staff during emergencies is associated with facilities, field operations, District headquarters, and public safety.

The District has established Tract Closing Procedures, which are followed during events that require COOP activation (e.g., hurricanes) or when conditions become unsafe for public access (e.g., flooding). Table 12 identifies all District tracts, facilities, or roads that were closed in FY 2021 due to emergencies, extreme weather events, or vandalism.

Table 12. FY 2021 District Land Closures

<b>Tract, Facilities or Roads</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Closure Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
47 Bridge	Gilchrist	3/1/2021	Flooding
Roline	Hamilton	3/1/2021	Flooding
Cypress Creek South	Hamilton	3/1/2021	Flooding
Hunter Creek	Hamilton	3/1/2021	Flooding
Holton Creek	Hamilton	3/1/2021	Flooding
Jennings Bluff	Hamilton	3/1/2021	Flooding
Withlacoochee Quail Farms	Madison	3/1/2021	Flooding
Ruth Springs	Lafayette	3/1/2021	Flooding
Walker	Lafayette	3/1/2021	Flooding
Little River	Suwannee		Flooding
All District Lands	District-wide	7/6/2021	TS Elsa
Steinhatchee Springs	Lafayette/Dixie	7/8/2021	Flooding
J. H. Anderson, Jr. Memorial Park - Rock Bluff Springs	Gilchrist	7/8/2021	Flooding
Steinhatchee Falls	Taylor	7/8/2021	Flooding
Devils Hammock – Andrews Grade	Levy	7/9/2021	Sink hole or collapsed culvert
Devil's Hammock	Levy	7/9/2021	Flooding
LA Bennett Bridge	Lafayette	8/5/2021	Flooding
Steinhatchee Falls	Taylor	8/13/2021	Flooding
Steinhatchee Springs	Lafayette	8/5/2021	Flooding
Mallory Swamp	Lafayette	8/13/2021	Flooding

### III. COMMUNICATIONS

#### **Goal – Coordinate with Public and Private Stakeholders in the Management of District Lands.**

The District encourages public and private stakeholder input for the management of District lands. Communication opportunities and public inquiries into management activities and recreation are facilitated through a variety of applications including but not limited to, phone calls, mail, print materials, press releases, outreach activities, social media, website, and other electronic applications. Discussions during the LMRT) and comments received during the ELM process are important communication opportunities that staff utilizes to determine management effectiveness each year.

#### **FY 2021 Land Management Review Team**

As indicated in the FY 2020 Land Management Annual Report, the District did not conduct a LMRT meeting for activities completed in FY 2019 because of the ongoing pandemic. To ensure we obtain the necessary information for FY 2019 land management activities staff asked LMRT participants to score the District for two fiscal years during the June 2, 2021, meeting. The FY 2020 meeting that was to be held in the Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfina river basins (AWE). The AWE review was scheduled for April 1, 2020, and staff had already created the FY 2019 annual report and the area specific tour handout. These documents, especially the annual report, are the steering documents for the review team to score the land management program each year. Additionally, the land management program is centered on a programmatic land management plan whereby the goals, objectives, and strategies in the land management plan are designed to work on all District lands no matter the region or tract. For example, what the review team toured in the Upper Suwannee River basin during the June 2, 2021, meeting can and is replicated across District on other tracts. Furthermore, the review team is scoring the District not on individual basins or regions but for all District land holdings. Therefore, staff believes that the scores obtained during the June 2, 2021, meeting, for canceled meeting, are accurate because the participants actually saw examples of what we do around the District and participants had all the information they would have ever had for any review team meeting. Not providing the field tour portion of the meeting during the pandemic would have left participants without the crucial onsite information they would have needed to accurately score the land management program.

The June 2, 2021, review team meeting and field tour was in the Upper Suwannee River basin (Suwannee and Columbia counties). The reviews focused on activities conducted during FY 2019 and 2020. The areas of the review included water resources, natural resource management, public use, and facilities in representative areas. The LMRT participants were 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 LMRT participants scored the District on the ten management strategies from the District DLMP and two core statutory requirements.

- For the activities conducted in FY 2019 the scores ranged from a low of 1.19 for Rare Species management to a high score of 1.81 for Soils, Topography and Natural Community management. Water Resource management obtained a 1.62. The overall

average score of the ten management strategies was 1.59. The scores for “managed for purposes acquired” was 1.76 and the score for “in accordance with the Management Plan” was 1.67; these scores are required statutorily.

- For activities conducted in FY 2020 the scores ranged from a low of 1.24 for Rare Species management to a high score of 1.81 for Forest Resource management. Water Resource management obtained a 1.62. The overall average score of the ten management strategies was 1.58. The scores for “managed for purposes acquired” was 1.76 and the score for “in accordance with the Management Plan” was 1.71; these scores are required statutorily.

The participants scores indicate substantial acceptance with the programmatic achievement of the management strategies set by the Governing Board and Florida Statutes. Overall, the participants approve the planning and methods used by District staff in managing the District’s fee owned lands in FY 2019 and 2020. Table 13 reflects participant responses.

Table 13. Questionnaire Responses from the District’s LMRT Meeting.

<b>Question 1</b>		<b>Are District lands being managed in a manner consistent with the purpose for which they were acquired, including public access?</b>
Number of Responses		
<b>FY 2019</b>	<b>FY 2020</b>	
0	0	SRWMD is not in compliance.
5	5	SRWMD compliance is adequate and acceptable.
16	16	SRWMD exceeds compliance regularly.
<b>Question 2</b>		<b>Does SRWMD land management implement the goals identified in the District Land Management Plan?</b>
Number of Responses		
<b>FY 2019</b>	<b>FY 2020</b>	
1	1	SRWMD is not in compliance.
5	4	SRWMD compliance is adequate and acceptable.
15	16	SRWMD exceeds compliance regularly.

*Note: Total scores may differ due to non-response on questionnaire.*

**District Land Management Plan**

On March 13, 2018, the Governing Board adopted an updated DLMP which retains the goals and guidance of the 2011 DLMP. A new section was added called Land Management Operations and Facilities. The section outlines the minimum requirements for operational activities such as the District’s DFC and silviculture best management practices. The new section also provided direction in five core programs: timber management, invasive exotic management, prescribed fire/vegetation management, public use management, and road/hydrologic facility management.

The revised DLMP requires staff to create and maintain documents detailing standards that provide guidance for each program. These standards are approved by the District’s Executive Office and are meant to communicate how each program functions, what is required, outline management activities, provide reliable information to users and improve land management continuity while achieving ELM goals. As of December 1, 2021, District’s Executive Office have approved three program standards, two are being revised, and one was recently drafted (rare species program).

**Land Management Communication Initiatives**

- All District Land Management Annual Reports and the District's Land Management Plan are posted on the District's website.
- Staff continues to provide images and text for the District's social media outreach efforts via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.
- Staff continues to use the "Important Notices" feature on the District web page to provide information to the public regarding flooding, tract closures, and management activities that may affect public use.
- Staff completed two new kiosk panels in FY 2021.

**Regional Resource Group Participation**

District staff participates in regional groups to provide input, understand issues, or gain more knowledge about managing publicly owned conservation lands.

- 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
- Sheriff Posse Adventure Racing
- Natural Resources Leadership Institute
- National Wild Turkey Federation and three local chapters
- Florida Master Loggers
- Society of American Foresters
- Florida Forestry Association
- North Central Florida Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area
- Florida Forest Stewardship Program
- Santa Fe River Basin Conservation Partnership (Alachua Conservation Trust)
- Aucilla River Watershed Coalition (Tall Timbers)
- Groundcover Restoration Workshop (Longleaf Alliance)
- Florida Feral Hog Working Group (FWC)
- Public Lands Acquisition and Management (FDEP)
- Levy County Coon Hunters Association
- Karst Underwater Research
- Karstreams
- North Florida Springs Alliance

#### IV. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Goal: Protect resources and efficiently manage District lands within the District's annual budget.**

District staff minimizes the costs associated with land management by contracting or collaborating with other agencies and private sector firms, entering into agreements with other land management agencies and organizations, and submitting proposals for land management grant funding. The District also tracks revenues, expenditures, land purchases, and the surplus of lands each year to ensure the District stays fiscally responsible and compliant with Florida Statutes.

#### **Management Agreements**

The District enters into management agreements and/or leases with organizations that reduce District management costs and still provide similar management, protection, and public access (Table 14).

Table 14. Agencies Managing District lands.

<b>Managing Agency</b>	<b>Tracts</b>	<b>Acres</b>
<i>No Cost Management Agreements</i>		
Alachua County	2	222
City of Lake City	1	26
City of Newberry	1	60
Columbia County	2	96
Florida Department of Environmental Protection	9	1,980
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	2	862
Florida National Guard	2	2,696
Gilchrist County	1	515
Hamilton County	3	17
Jefferson County	1	22
Levy County	1	4,274
University of Florida	2	737
US Fish and Wildlife Service	5	1,640
<b>No Cost Management Total Acres:</b>		<b>13,147</b>
<i>Shared Revenue Agreements</i>		
Alachua Conservation Trust	1	169
Florida Forest Service	13	12,452
<b>Shared Revenue Total Acres</b>		<b>12,621</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>25,768</b>

Under an existing lease agreement, the Florida Forest Service (FFS) manages approximately 12,452 acres of District lands as part of the Twin Rivers State Forest (TRSF). As part of the lease, the District has agreed to reimburse FFS for management expenses each year and FFS provides the District the revenue from timber sales on District lands associated with TRSF. In



FY 2021, the District reimbursed FFS \$139,595 for management expenses and the District received \$842,315 in revenue from timber sales.

R.O. Ranch Equestrian Park is located on the District-owned R.O. Ranch Tract which contains various structures and facilities that must be maintained. The R.O. Park was managed by R. O. Ranch, Inc., a Florida not-for-profit corporation, from 2006 to 2016. The R.O. Park area where most of the buildings and structures are located is closed to the public. However, many of the equestrian trails are still open for public use. In FY 2021 the District spent \$14,471 on building and property maintenance, utilities, and trails.

In January 2019, the District entered into a cooperative management agreement with Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT), a Florida not-for-profit corporation, to manage the District-owned J.H. Anderson, Jr., Memorial Park – Rock Bluff Springs Tract. At the time of the agreement, a management plan was approved that detailed the responsibilities of each party. As part of this management plan, the District agreed to provide quarterly funding until October 1, 2021 (\$14,843 per quarter) and allowing ACT to charge an entrance fee provided that revenues generated by ACT through fees would be used to fund ACT's budget and any remaining funds should be returned to the District. In FY 2021, the District paid ACT \$59,374 for operational expenses. No remaining funds were available or provided to the District in FY 2021. On July 27, 2021, the management plan was amended, and the annual management funding was reduced to \$22,822 until October 1, 2023.

Public hunting opportunities are provided on 106,146 acres (66%) of District-owned lands in cooperation with FWC and USFWS. These agencies manage the hunting opportunities, dates, bag limits, and law enforcement at no cost to the District. No fees for hunting are charged by the District and no revenues are received by the District.

The District has agreements with private and public entities to provide trail maintenance for 134 miles (59%) of the bike, horse, and multi-use trails on District lands. These trails are maintained at no cost to the District and are available for use by the public.

### **Collaborations**

- District staff met with Four Rivers Land and Timber Company to discuss and plan ongoing law enforcement and mutual road maintenance needs in the Northwest Region.
- The District partnered with Suwannee Bicycle Association to add additional off-road bicycle trails to the Gar Pond Tract. The project doubled the trail mileage on the tract.
- In a cooperative effort with Lafayette County and Four Rivers Timber Company extensive bridge repairs were made to the District-owned LA Bennett Bridge on the Steinhatchee Springs Tract. District staff also made repairs to the rub-rails on the LA Bennett Bridge and added new signage to the bridge approaches.

### **Grant Applications and Awards**

In FY 2021 the District received grant funding from the following sources to help reduce the cost of natural community management.

## Florida Forest Service - Prescribed Fire Enhancement Program:

- The District was reimbursed \$27,787.50 for completing approximately 73 acres of woods mowing on the Sandlin Bay Tract in Columbia County. This work was done to help reduce fuel loads, facilitate the use of prescribed fire, and help meet natural community DFC objectives.

## United State Fish and Wildlife Service - Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program:

- The District was reimbursed \$10,308.75 for completing approximately 127 acres of herbicide application work on the Christian and Mattair Springs tracts in Suwannee County. This work was done to help reduce fuel loads, facilitate the use of prescribed fire, and help meet natural community DFC objectives.

## National Fish and Wildlife Federation - Longleaf Landscape Stewardship Fund:

- The District partnered with the Ocala Longleaf Implementation Team and was awarded \$25,000 to fund the establishment of longleaf pine dominated stands on sites that include native groundcover. This grant money will supplement the costs associated with the establishment of two longleaf sites on Withlacoochee and Westwood (TRSF) with opportunities for reimbursement in the years to follow.

**Revenues**

The District has opportunities to generate revenues while implementing its natural resource management activities (Table 15). Timber sales generate most of the revenue from land management activities.

Table 15. FY 2021 Land Resources Revenues.

<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 2021</b>
Timber	\$1,024,101
Land Use (Apiary Leases)	\$250
Grants*	\$38,096
State Appropriation (Operations)	\$1,777,210
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,839,656</b>

\*Does not include awarded grants (funds have not yet been received).

In FY 2021, the District sold an estimated 103,872 tons of timber in 12 sales on 2,066 acres. The sale types were clear-cut, pine thinning, and hardwood removal. Total gross tons and revenues are estimated (since all sales have not been completed as of October 1, 2021) to be \$1,959,416. Additionally, District completed six timber sales totaling 858 acres and received \$1,024,101 in revenue for FY 2021.

**Expenditures**

Expenditures in the land management program can be divided into categories for review (Table 16):

- Natural Resource and Prescribed Fire Management – includes water resource projects, reforestation, timber sales, protected species, vegetative management, and prescribed fire.
- 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.
- Public Use – includes expenses for maintaining site-based and dispersed recreation activities, developing new sites, signs, maps, brochures, and sanitation.
- Facility and Road Management – includes costs for maintaining roads, hydrologic structures, boundaries, rental equipment, gates, debris removal, and other facility improvement projects.
- Administration and Planning – includes expenses for planning, GIS, real-estate activities, fees, permits, training, management plans and reviews, interagency law enforcement coordination, and other operational expenses.
- Florida Forest Service Agreement – includes expenses for Twin River State Forest which is explained on page 28 of this report.
- Other Expenditures – includes RO Ranch Equestrian Park, Rock Bluff Springs, Country Club Road Project, Mallory Swamp Project, and Legal Services for Conservation Easement Amendment

Table 16. FY 2021 Land Resources Expenditures.

<b>Category*</b>	<b>FY 2021</b>
Natural Resource & Prescribed Fire Management	\$1,108,860
Invasive Plant Management	\$33,227
Public Use	\$235,991
Facility & Road Management.	\$354,303
Administration and Planning	\$53,334
Florida Forest Service Agreement (Twin Rivers State Forest)	\$236,349
Other Expenditures	\$113,911
Salaries and Benefits	\$529,650
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,665,625</b>

\*Does not include Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)

### **Payments in Lieu of Taxes**

When the District purchases land 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 \$360,398. The state appropriated the District's \$352,909 for PILT in FY 2021.

**Land Acquisitions**

District lands are acquired following section 373.139 F.S. and 40B-9 Florida Administrative Code. District staff who are involved in processing acquisition-related activities are guided by Governing Board Directive 19-0005. Table 17 is a list of acquisitions completed in FY 2021.

Table 17: FY 2021 Land Acquisitions

<b>Tract</b>	<b>Seller</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Closing Date</b>	<b>Transaction</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Withlacoochee Hills Tract - Addition	Jean T. Drufner	10	Hamilton	12/8/2020	Fee	Florida Forever

**Surplus Lands**

Disposing of lands that are not needed for water-resource protection allows the District to redirect funds to a higher value, water-resource lands and/or reduce land management costs. Land Management staff participate in the review process of any potential surplus parcels and provides feedback to the Executive Office and Governing Board. No lands were conveyed in FY 2021.

**APPENDIX A****SRWMD STATUTORY SUMMARY***Verified November 2021***Land Acquisition and Management****Section 373.139(2) F.S. 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

**Section 373.1391 F.S. 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 section 373.056(2) F.S., 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.”
- (1b) “Whenever practical, such lands shall be open to the general public for recreational uses. General public recreational purposes shall include, but not 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, storm-water 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 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.

Section 373.591 F.S., 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 a land management review team to conduct periodic management reviews. The land management review team 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 section 259.036 F.S., 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 section 253.036 F.S. 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.

Section 259.036 F.S., 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."

Section 253.036 F.S., Forest Management.

"All land management plans described in section 253.034(5) F.S. 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.