Status of Implementation of Agricultural BMPs 2024

May 24, 2024

Executive Summary

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Office of Agricultural Water Policy (OAWP) collaborates with Florida's agricultural landowners and producers to implement best management practices (BMPs) for nutrient reduction, irrigation management, and protection of water resources. Agricultural BMPs are an integral part of water resource protection required under the BMP Program implemented by FDACS OAWP. This report presents information required annually pursuant to Section 403.0675(2), Florida Statutes (F.S.), on the status of implementation of the FDACS BMP Program.

During 2023, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Agricultural Water Policy (OAWP) continued its efforts to successfully implement the requirements of section 403.067, Florida Statutes (F.S.), by enrolling new agricultural producers and

performing site visits to verify the proper implementation of applicable agricultural best management practices (BMP) for producers enrolled in the BMP Program. In 2023, there were weather events that necessitated Emergency Orders deferring implementation verification (IV) site visits while producers recovered. During the deferral of IV site visits for the eighteen counties listed in the Emergency Orders, staff focused on new enrollment visits when possible.

OAWP successfully provided cost share and Mobile Irrigation Lab (MIL) assistance to many enrolled agricultural producers facilitating the implementation of BMPs, and it continues to design and build essential data collection and management systems, field staff tools, and training materials to meet data quality, storage, analysis, and reporting requirements. This report includes information on the status of BMP implementation statewide and within basin management action plans (BMAPs) for calendar year 2023, OAWP's cost share program and Mobile Irrigation Lab program, BMP research, program improvements and next steps.

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BMAP Locator

BMAP Areas

Under the Florida Watershed Restoration Act (FWRA), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is directed to develop water quality restoration goals for impaired waterbodies. These water quality restoration goals, known as total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), are the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can assimilate and remain suitable for its designated use. Once a TMDL is adopted, FDEP may develop a BMAP that identifies enforceable strategies for restoring the impaired waterbody. The agricultural industry is one of many stakeholders identified in most BMAPs. Florida law requires agricultural landowners located within BMAPs to either enroll in the FDACS BMP Program and properly implement the BMPs applicable to their property and operation or conduct water quality monitoring activities. Proper implementation of FDACS agricultural BMPs is the industry's strategy to address agricultural nonpoint pollution sources. Enrollment in the BMP Program and the proper implementation of applicable BMPs provides a presumption of compliance with state water quality standards that is not provided otherwise.

Do you live in a BMAP area?

On the right side of the map, click the "Find my location" button or use the magnifying glass in the left corner to type in your address. The map will automatically navigate to your home. If you see a blue tint over your home, you're in a BMAP area.

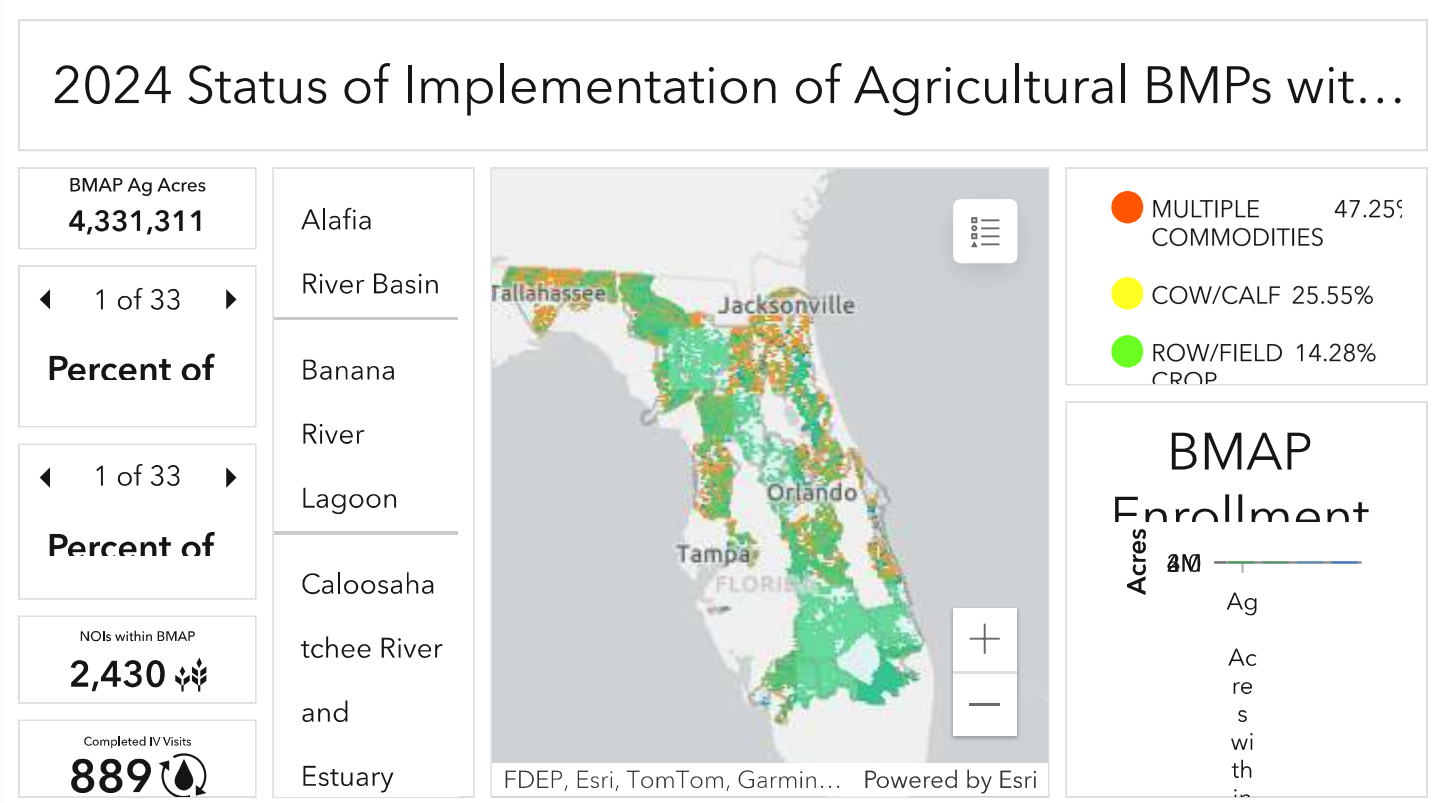
BMAP Metrics

This map displays BMP Enrollment Layer within Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) as of December 31, 2023, superimposed over an Agricultural Lands layer.

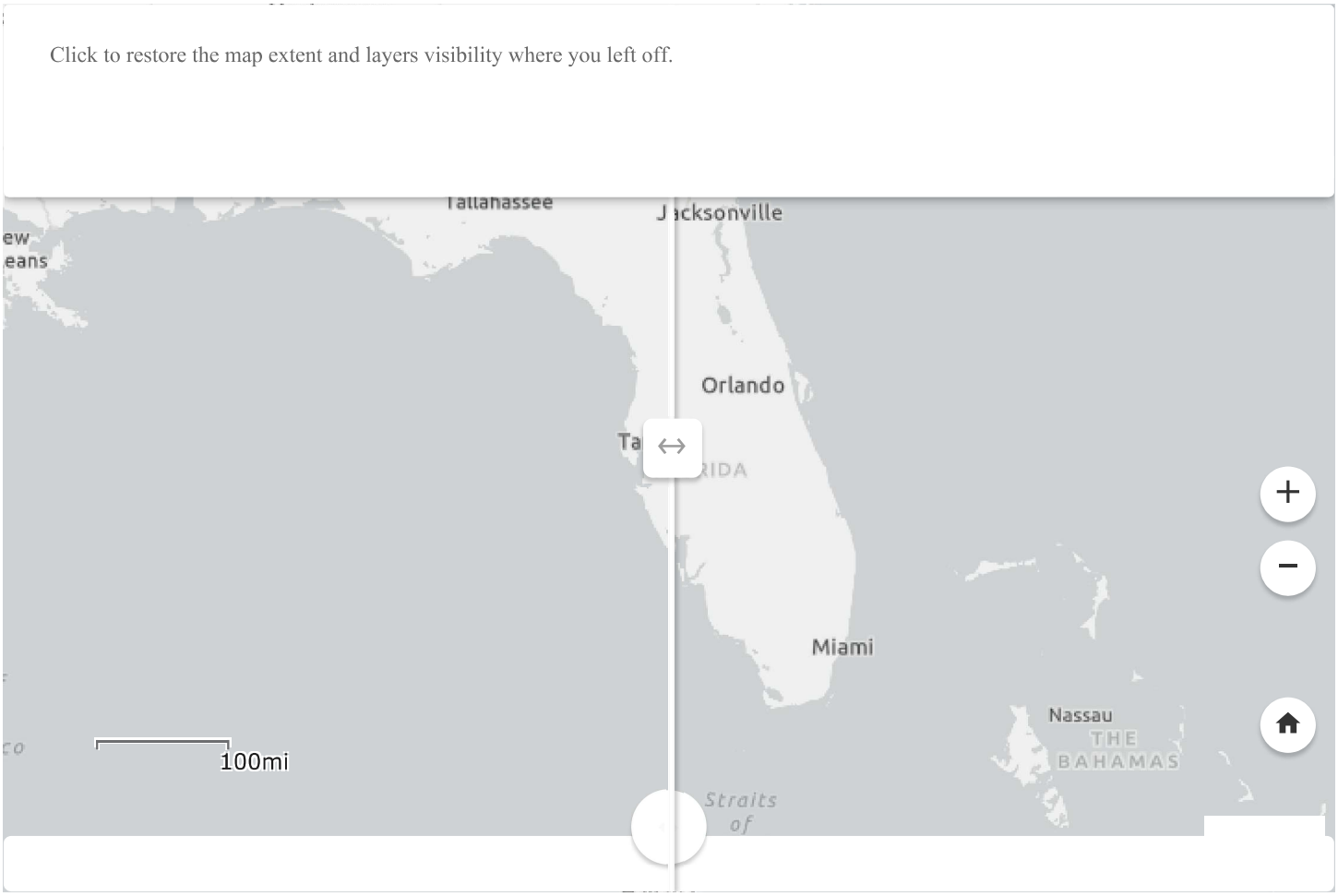
Select a BMAP from the dropdown menu on the left side of the map and click apply to zoom to the BMAP of your choice. The swipe widget in the center of the map can be clicked and dragged to visually compare the Enrollment layer with the underlying Agricultural Lands layer.

Status of Implementation of Agricultural BMPs within BMAPS

The dashboard below summarizes important statistics for the 2024 Status of Implementation of Agricultural BMPs within BMAPs. Select a BMAP from the menu on the left side of the dashboard to display statistics from the BMAP of your choice.



Statewide Metrics



Comparison of Enrollment Layer with Agricultural Lands Statewide

This map displays BMP Enrollment layer throughout the state as of December 31, 2023 superimposed over a statewide Agricultural Lands layer.

The swipe widget in the center of the map can be clicked and dragged to visually compare the Enrollment layer with the underlying Agricultural Lands layer.

Sign in

Please sign in to
https://gis.fdacs.gov/portal.

OK Cancel

Status of Implementation of Agricultural BMPs Statewide

This dashboard displays BMP enrollment metrics as of December 31, 2023, throughout the State.

Agricultural and Enrollment acreages through 2023 are summarized in the dashboard's statistics panel on the right side of your screen.

Unenrolled Agricultural Characterization

As BMAPs vary in size and land use, knowing what percent of the BMAP is in agricultural use is highly indicative of agriculture's potential significance in the restoration strategy. FDACS uses the FSAID as a starting point for estimating agricultural acreages within a BMAP. Agricultural acres enrolled in the FDACS BMP program and how many of those acres are irrigated are estimated by overlaying FSAID and BMP enrollment data. Agricultural acres not enrolled in the BMP Program, are estimated by removing from FSAID any areas that overlapped with the BMP enrollment boundaries.

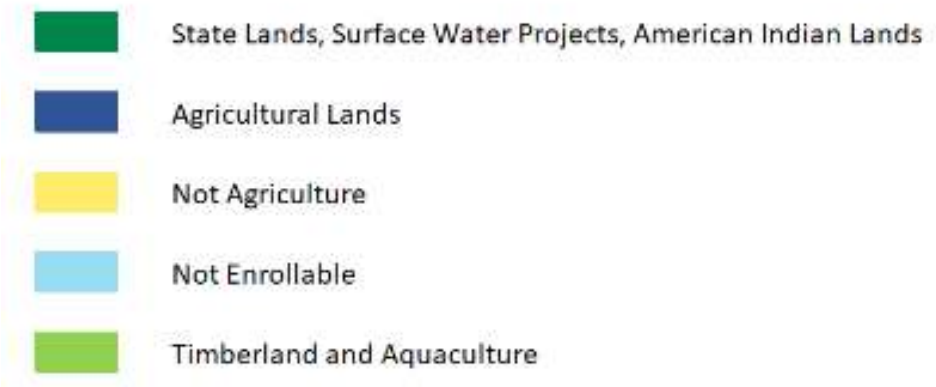
FDACS analyzes unenrolled agricultural lands annually for all BMAPs at the parcel level to inform staffing and budget requests as well as FDACS's discussions related to inactive operations, urban

agriculture, rural homesteads, and fallow agricultural lands. The result of this analysis also provides insight when evaluating where best to focus staff resources to meet the 100% enrollment goals outlined in the BMAPs.

Areas located within state-owned lands and/or water restoration project boundaries are considered unlikely enrollable as there is a low probability they contain agricultural activity. For the remaining unenrolled areas, analyses are performed using property appraiser data such as parcel owner information, agricultural tax valuation for exemption purposes, and other parcel land use detail to determine whether the remaining are potentially enrollable.

There are 7,539,880 acres agricultural acres statewide of which 4,571,656 acres are enrolled in FDACS BMPs. Of the agricultural acres that remain to be enrolled, based the unenrolled characterization analysis, approximately 1,082,303 acres are unlikely enrollable, and 1,883,959 acres are potentially enrollable.

Explore the unenrolled agricultural makeup of the state by zooming and panning to any points interest.



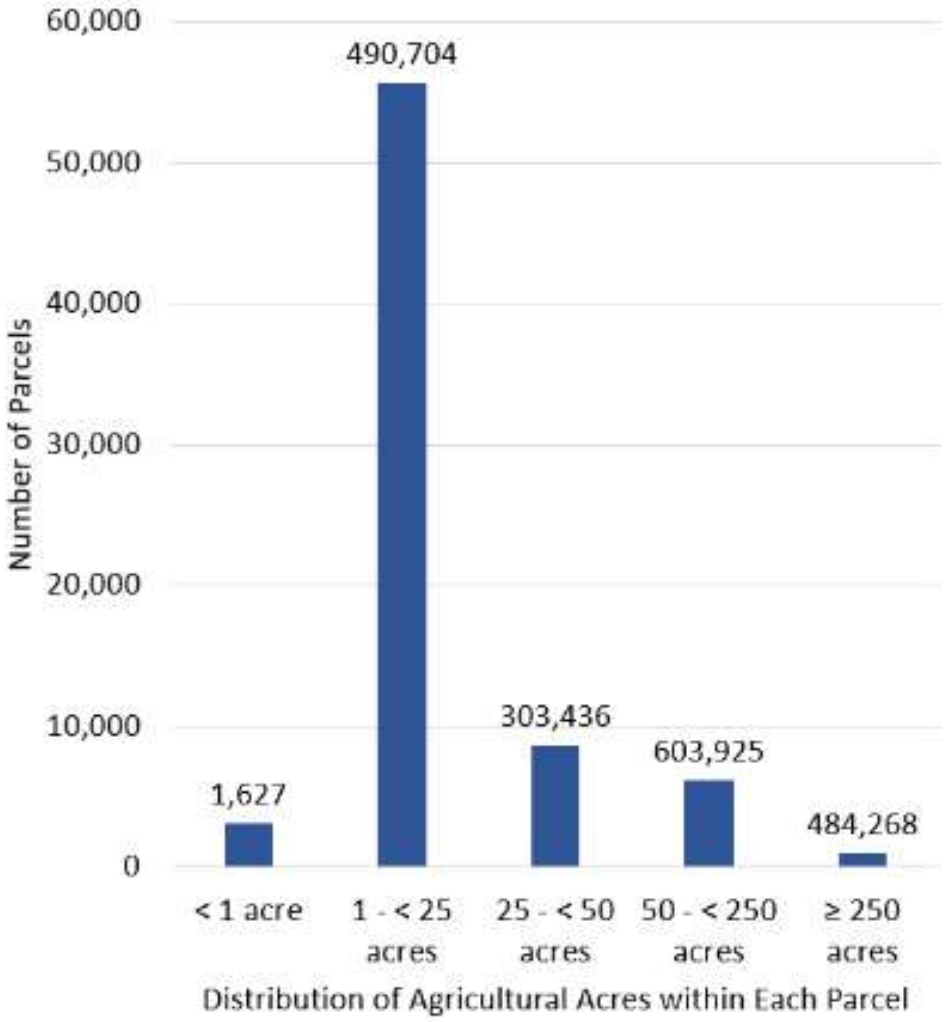
Map Legend

Unenrolled - Unlikely Enrollable Acres

Category	Acres
State Lands, Surface Water Projects, American Indian Lands	224,972
Timberland and Aquaculture**	224,775
Not Agriculture [e.g., DOR Use Code 70-99 (industrial or institutional use, acreage not zoned agricultural)]	503,490
Not Enrollable [e.g., missing parcel information, no overlap, conflicting parcel info, slivers]	130,066

This table provides an overview the parcels determined to be unlikely enrollable. For more information on how these categories were determined please see Appendix III: Land Use Characterization in the annual report.

Unenrolled - Potentially Enrollable Acres



This table shows the distribution, by acreage, of the unenrolled lands that are potentially enrollable.

BMP Cost Share and Regional Projects

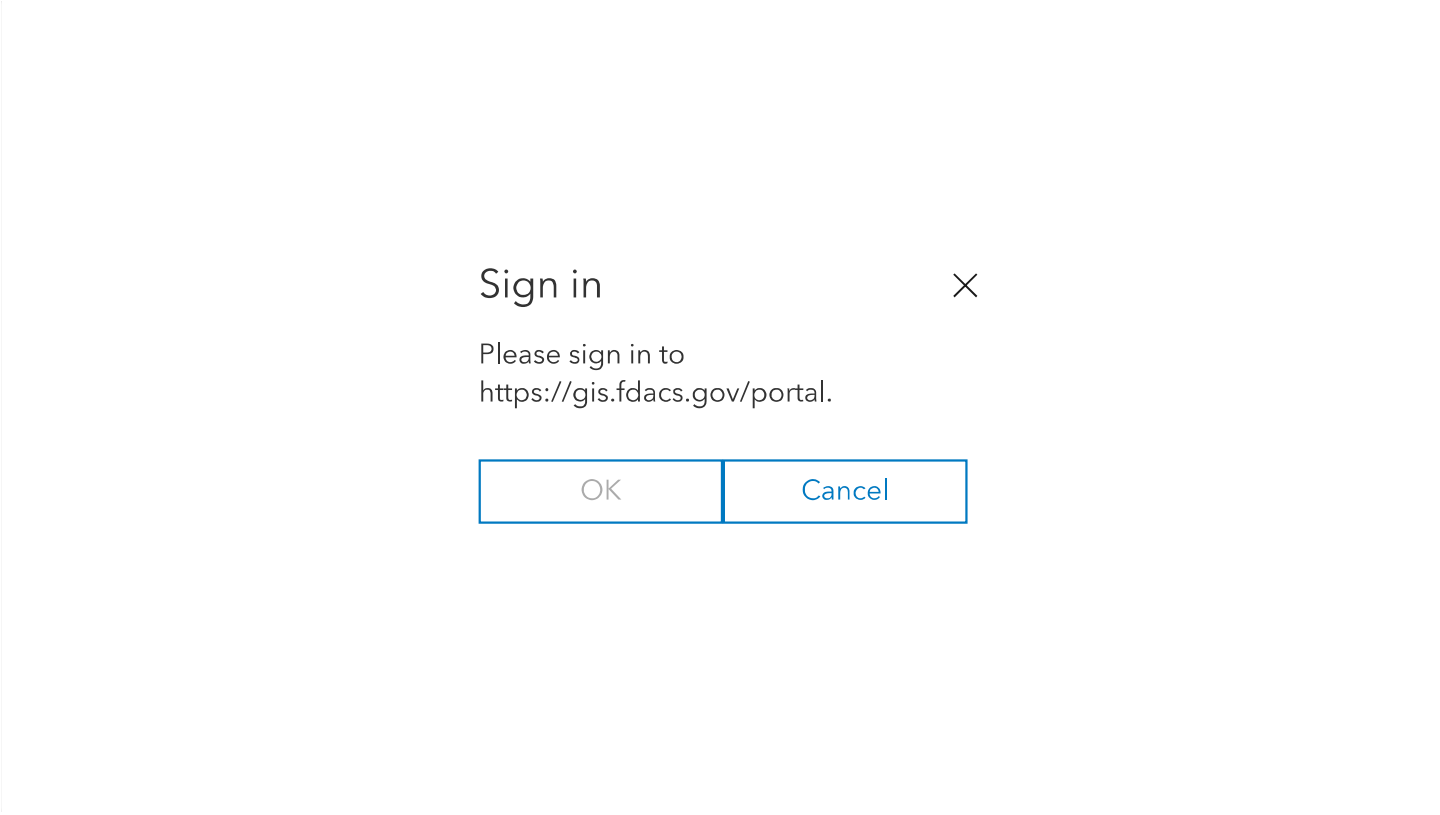
The BMP cost share program enhances the implementation of BMPs and other practices and projects, especially in priority areas where precision nutrient management strategies have the greatest impact on water quality. The cost share program makes innovative agricultural production and nutrient use efficiency methods more affordable for producers so that they can meet water quality goals while remaining financially viable.

The availability of cost share funds depends on annual appropriations by the Florida Legislature, thus the amount available can vary each year. Cost share for large-scale, regional innovative technologies is provided in South Florida through Fixed Capital

Outlay funding in the state budget. Cost share applications may be submitted once a producer has enrolled in the BMP Program and has been assigned a NOI number. Cost share practices are categorized as nutrient management, irrigation management, or water resource protection. BMPs, other practices, and projects eligible for cost share funding may include precision agriculture technologies, variable rate irrigation methods, water control structures, and tailwater recovery systems.

During 2023, 418 cost share projects were completed statewide. The total cost share reimbursement for projects completed in 2023 was $11,714,948. With larger projects, the timing of engineering, designing, permitting, securing of easements and other activities result in expenditures varying greatly from year to year.

The dashboard below symbolizes the enrolled cost share projects with green dots. From there they are broken down by BMAP, cost share category, and commodity. Select a BMAP or a cost share category to explore the data.



Regional Projects

Next Steps

In 2024, OAWP will continue improving programmatic aspects in support of the agricultural industry while addressing the water quality goals of the state by:

- Updating BMP manuals by using a standard template to help clarify the intent of each practice and to ensure consistent implementation by producers and evaluation of each practice by field staff.
- Working to improve the perception of BMPs with stakeholders, partner agencies, and the general public by (1) improving how data relating to BMP implementation is collected, organized, and presented, (2) funding research that evaluates BMP nutrient and water use efficiency, and (3) engaging more individuals through public outreach and presenting the office's successes at conferences.
- Developing a clearly defined process for soliciting, identifying, and funding cost share projects that will help agriculture producers implement BMPs.

- Updating the cost share project agreements to encourage more participation and collection of information that demonstrates the effectiveness of the projects at meeting statutory goals.
- Developing a clearly defined process for soliciting, identifying, and funding agricultural regional projects that will help agriculture further achieve the required load reductions in BMAPs.
- Initiating a program to increase BMP enrollment in the springs coast BMAPs using a web-based tool to identify unenrolled properties that have an ag tax exemption and agricultural land use, executing targeted mailout efforts, and tracking landowner responses to make sure OAWP is maximizing our effectiveness with enrollment.
- Continuing work with cooperative agency partners including FDEP, the water management districts, and local government agencies to better characterize and identify effective solutions to protect and conserve the water resources while maintaining the viability of agricultural production throughout Florida.
- Continuing to develop Learning Management Systems and training modules specific to OAWP staff needs, and programs for inclusion in a new AgWater Academy training catalog.
- Maintaining contractual partnerships with the SWCDs for technicians to assist OAWP in implementing its statutory obligations.
- Improving contract management processes and coordination with state agencies and SWCD partners to ensure the efficient and effective use of funds to achieve water resource conservation goals.
- Developing automated workflows for receiving and tracking research and demonstration projects, funding, and contracts
- Developing a template for FDACS research data to facilitate data analyses and usability across datasets. This is a critical step in OAWP's long-term goal of standardizing FDACS BMP past, present, and future project data following the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) concept of data management.

- Continuing work with the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) on transitioning the IV process to a digital format to reduce paperwork and the amount of time needed for staff to complete an IV.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Office of Agricultural Water Policy (OAWP) GIS

Contact us for further information AgBmpHelp@fdacs.gov