

Maybe water board's makeup changes the aquifer's health

Submitted by [Ron Littlepage](#) on September 17, 2012 - 8:59am [Ron Littlepage's Blog](#)

The fact that the St. Johns River Water Management District launched a “Springs Protection Initiative” last week with a focus on Silver Springs is a good thing.

What’s happening to Silver Springs and our other iconic springs with dramatically decreased flows and increased nitrate loads that degrade water quality is a tragedy that requires action. However — with the water management district, there’s always a however.

Hal Wilkening, the district’s director of water resources, gave the first of what’s to be several presentations on the springs initiative to the district’s governing board last Tuesday. The district’s executive director, Hans Tanzler III, introduced Wilkening’s presentation by saying, “If this is like building a house, we are simply laying the slab here.”

Here’s the problem: After listening to the presentation, it appears that not only has the slab now been laid, but the design of the house has already been determined.

For instance, one concern of some scientists independent of the district is that the springshed for Silver Springs is migrating westward and that water that once fed Silver Springs is now going to Rainbow Springs.

Not happening, Wilkening said.

Another concern is that pumping too much water out of the aquifer for commercial, agricultural and domestic uses is causing the flow in Silver Springs to drop precipitously.

Nope, the board was told, water levels in the aquifer are tied to the amount of rainfall or the lack thereof, and pumping has minimal impact on the aquifer.

When one board member listed his takeaways from the presentation, Tanzler quickly interjected another.

“You can’t blame it on over pumping,” he said.

That in itself is intriguing if not head-scratching.

The previous executive director of the district, Kirby Green, spent months warning that too much water is being taken out of the aquifer and that alternate sources had to be found as early as 2013, such as pumping 260 million gallons of water a day out of the St. Johns River.

Then a new governor takes office, Green and a whole flock of district scientists are out, there’s a new executive director and, voila, pumping water out of the aquifer is no longer a problem.

Those permits to allow the pumping, of course, are issued by the district, which is now being dictated to by Tallahassee.

There was one concern with Silver Springs that wasn’t disputed in the presentation.

A nitrate overload is filling the springs and the Silver River with damaging algae. Conveniently, that problem falls to the Department of Environmental Protection.

The degradation of our springs has been happening over a period of years not months.

Hopefully, as the springs initiative proceeds, every possible cause will be thoroughly examined.

Responding to Wilkening's presentation, the board's chairman, Lad Daniels, praised the urgency with which the district staff has reacted.

"You jumped on this like a dog on a June bug," he said.

Let's see: In 1972, the Legislature ordered that minimum flows be set for the state's rivers and springs to protect the environment.

Forty years later, the minimum flow for Silver Springs has yet to be established.

That June bug has had a long life.

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Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Fwd: Former WMD Board Members Urge Gov. to Restore Lost Tax Revenue
September 18, 2012 8:26 PM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
Date: September 18, 2012 8:25:06 PM EDT
To: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Subject: Former WMD Board Members Urge Gov. to Restore Lost Tax Revenue

Former water district board members urge Gov. Scott to restore lost tax revenue
Bruce Ritchie, 09/18/2012 - 05:03 PM

Twenty former board members of Florida's five water management districts have written to Gov. Rick Scott this week asking him restore funding for the regional agencies.

The Legislature earlier this year passed **SB 1986**, repealing a 2011 bill that required the districts to cut property taxes by \$210 million.

Despite the repeal, the districts have proposed keeping the same or slightly lower tax rates under reported pressure from the **Florida Department of Environmental Protection**.

In their letter sent Monday, the 20 former board members recount the establishment of the districts by voters in the 1970s.

The former board members also describe the economic benefits of proper water management and threats to future water supplies from a growing population. They point out that the owner of a \$150,000 home in the **South Florida Water Management District** saved less than \$20 in taxes paid because of the cuts last year.

"In order to effectively manage our water resources, water management districts need to adopt budgets that are based upon science and best professional judgment planning for future water quality and quantity," the former board members wrote.

They further suggest the option of allowing "some discretion" for each of the five districts to adopt tax rates needed "to accomplish their core mission."

Asked how much the boards should raise taxes if needed, former **St. Johns River Water Management District** chairman **Bill Kerr** of Melbourne said the districts already have varying tax limits set under state law and the constitution.

"They ought to be able to take their maintenance and monitoring programs and determine what has been done and what needs to be done and base their budgets on what has to happen," he said.

Former **Suwannee River Water Management District** board member **David Flagg**, a former state representative from Gainesville, said the districts won't restore revenue that they lost last year without a signal from the governor.

"The governor and DEP more than previous administrations have lessened the independent decision-making of water management districts in my opinion," Flagg said. "I don't mean that DEP is irresponsible. I just believe they need to give the water management districts the latitude of independent thinking and decision they were created to have and not run out of Tallahassee all five of them."

There was no response on Tuesday to a request for comment from the governor's press office.

Last week, DEP spokesman **Patrick Gillespie** said that the department "collaborated" with the water management districts to help each of them "live within its means" without raising the cost of living for Floridians.

Kerr said the 20 letter signatures were the most that could be collected in a short period of time. The districts have until Sept. 30 to adopt their budgets because their fiscal year begins Oct. 1. The *Current* tried unsuccessfully to reach other former water district board members who didn't sign the letter.

Diane Salz <salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
get involved in water issues...
September 20, 2012 4:01 PM

Katie Tripp: Get involved in water issues

Published: Thursday, September 20, 2012 at 11:12 a.m.

It has been a big year for water issues in Florida, particularly north Florida. Folks in every corner of the state have likely heard about the Adena Springs Ranch permit application in Marion County, originally for 13.2 million gallons per day (mgd) from the Floridan aquifer, now for 5.3 mgd. A North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership has been convened to solve trans-boundary water issues between the lesser developed Suwanee River Water Management District and the ever-thirsty St. Johns River Water Management District.

In Crystal River, on Florida's Gulf Coast, residents and local government are outraged over a water bottling permit issued by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to allow 76,700-153,400 gallons to be withdrawn daily from the Floridan aquifer. This issuance came after residents and the environmental community worked arduously to purchase and protect local springs, only to have a well permitted in the city limits so water can be pumped, shipped, bottled, and sold by a private water bottling company. Meanwhile, no minimum flows and levels (MFLs) have been set for Crystal River and Kings Bay, where anyone who lives on or recreates on the water will tell you that the bay is saltier and the spring flows have been reduced. Just to the south, a group of stakeholders have been fighting MFL proposals from the SWFWMD for the Chassahowitzka and Homosassa Rivers that would allow reduced flows. All of these issues are integral to the future of our state's water supply and the vitality of our aquatic ecosystems and the species dependent upon those ecosystems, including manatees.

While these permit applications and the continued mindset of the Water Management Districts to find "more" water are disconcerting, there is one positive and it is this: people are angry. People are tired of business as usual while they watch the waters that they love continue to decline. They are angry at Florida's leadership for lacking vision and a sustainable long-term plan for water use. Folks are right to be angry, and if we are going to create positive change in the way we provide, use, and value water, we all need to channel that anger into action; to contact our water management districts and our local governments and to show up at the public meetings where these issues are being discussed, and let our leaders know that we want a more sustainable future for Florida's water resources.

What we need are safeguards that will curb our wasteful water use and move us toward water neutrality where we find creative ways to use what we already have. We need to stop giving our limited and precious water away to corporations that will turn around and use our public resources for private profit. New developments can find water from the existing permitted water supplies. They can install cisterns in those new developments; pay to install low flow fixtures in every home adjacent to and within those developments; and plant Florida-friendly landscapes that do not need intensive irrigation. Our existing developments must also do more to curb water use.

Our Water Management Districts are tasked with providing us water. As long as they see a demand, they will make it happen, but at what cost? Whether that means setting a lower MFL for state water bodies, drawing surface waters off our rivers like the St. Johns, or building a seawater desalination facility, they will "find" the water. Meanwhile, people and the environment will pay the price. By 2030, the Districts have estimated that Floridians will "need" 1.9 billion gallons more per day than they did in 2005, as our population is expected to grow by 48%. The price tag to construct the alternative water supply projects to meet this demand: \$3.6 billion.

Our state is at a crossroads, or perhaps more appropriately, a fork in the river. If we want to steer the ship down a path of sustainability, we must get and stay engaged. We must be vigilant in defending our natural resources and our water supply, and we must support laws and leaders that are committed to these principles. Ultimately, we must realize the true costs associated with the water that seems to flow so freely from our faucets.

Dr. Tripp has been Save the Manatee Club's Director of Science and Conservation (savethemanatee.org) since May of 2008. She received her Ph.D. in Veterinary Medical Sciences from the University of Florida, where she conducted research on manatee physiology.

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more on former water leaders...
September 20, 2012 4:04 PM

Former water leaders call on governor to restore \$210 million collectively slashed from budgets

By [Bill Thompson](#)
Staff Writer

Published: Wednesday, September 19, 2012 at 5:14 p.m.

Twenty former leading water managers from across Florida are calling on Gov. Rick Scott to restore the funding slashed from the budgets of the water management districts.

In a letter sent to Scott on Monday, the former district governors say their "simple" request to pump more money into the regulators' budgets would provide an environmental and economic "lift" to the state.

"Our 18.8 million residents and businesses rely on water management districts to effectively manage flooding and to ensure abundant water supply for their livelihoods and recreation," says the letter, whose signers include Ocala Realtor Clay Albright, who served eight years on the St. Johns River Water Management Governing Board. "With the possibility of climate change contributing to more weather extremes such as drought and sea level rise threatening Florida's freshwater resources, it is all the more urgent to invest now in solutions so that the people and new businesses coming to Florida can be assured of a clean water supply."

The letter is intended to urge Scott to reverse course on budget cuts that collectively drained the districts of \$210 million.

That is a large number from a fiscal point of view, yet the former governors maintain in the letter that the cuts have had little impact for taxpayers.

They offer the example of the owner a home valued at \$100,000 for tax purposes within the South Florida Water Management District who, after the budget cuts, would save less than \$20.

Locally, the picture is about the same.

Two years ago, St. Johns, which regulates water usage in Marion County east of Interstate 75, charged property owners under their jurisdiction a rate of 41.58 cents per \$1,000 of taxable value. That meant, for example, the owner of a home valued at \$100,000 for tax purposes would pay \$41.58.

In 2011 St. Johns' governors lowered the rate to \$33.13, a savings of \$8.45 for that same homeowner.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District, which oversees water use west of I-75, has enacted a slightly larger cut.

Two years ago, Swiftmud, as the district is commonly known, would have charged that homeowner used in the example \$60.78 in property taxes. Last year the tax bill came to \$39.38, or a savings of \$21.50.

Scott's petitioners maintain the districts are vital because water, as a resource, is best regulated regionally.

Doing so at the state level removes the necessary regional expertise that understands distinct waterways in given areas, the letter argues.

The district governors also write, though, that going down a notch and leaving it to the locals would invite the water wars that incited neighbors around Tampa Bay — and has Marion county residents ever on the defensive.

The science, testing and land conservation necessary to keeping the state's water supply healthy and abundant requires an "adequate" level of funding, they add in the letter.

"One thing is for certain," the letter states, "regional water solutions are a bargain for property owners in Florida."

"We think the average Floridian would rather pay a little more for water management solutions today than have to pay for much more expensive projects later."

"Restored, well managed ecosystems support a quality of life that is singular to Florida attracting people and business," the former governors write.

Albright, who served on St. Johns' Governing Board from 1999 to 2007, said in an interview that he joined the lobbying effort because of concern about the effects of reduced spending on land management.

"We made some dynamite acquisitions for recharge areas, stormwater management. But they cannot manage themselves. And in order to properly maintain them, the money has to come from somewhere," he said.

"We do a helluva lot more good than harm," added Albright, noting how St. Johns helped fund flood control and water quality projects in downtown Ocala and the so-called "monster pipe" that, until rerouted, once carried run-off from East Silver Springs Boulevard to Half Mile Creek, a small waterway that fed into the Silver River.

"We do have a lot of projects that need to move forward, and the thing you don't want to do is to diminish your foothold of state lands and get rid of them," he said.

"I don't think we need to start yard sale-ing everything."

Contact Bill Thompson at 352-867-4117 or bill.thompson@starbanner.com.

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Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Fw: St. Johns River Water Management District Water News
September 25, 2012 5:40 PM

----- Forwarded Message -----
From: Water News <walemews@sjrwmd.com>
To: disalz@yahoo.com
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2012 5:34 PM
Subject: St. Johns River Water Management District Water News

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St. Johns River Water Management District Water News

News, meetings
and notices

September 25, 2012

District Board adopts final 2012–2013 budget

The St. Johns River Water Management District's Governing Board on Sept. 25 approved a balanced budget that holds the line on property taxes while funding priority water quality protection activities and projects to enhance water supplies.

At the public meeting, the Board approved a 0.3313 millage rate that will generate \$80 million in revenue toward a \$120.7 million budget for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. The budget also will be funded with prior years' state appropriations, fund balance, timber sales, cattle leases, interest earnings and permit fees.

In July, the Board approved a revised budgeting method that provides funding to support only the expenditures anticipated during the fiscal year. The final budget applies \$17.6 million in fund balances to continue or complete planned major projects and initiatives.

The approved budget is 6 percent less than the current fiscal year 2011–2012 budget. Ad valorem (property tax) revenue also is reduced by about 6 percent.

Under a 0.3313 millage rate — 33.13 cents for every \$1,000 of assessed property value — the owner of a \$200,000 house with a \$50,000 homestead exemption will pay \$49.70 per year in property taxes to the District.

"This budget allocates District resources in a manner that will achieve our core mission responsibilities and reflects the District's continued commitment to developing water supplies and improving water quality in our rivers, lakes and springs,"

Connect with us



Upcoming meetings

For a listing of upcoming meeting dates, times and locations, visit our [meetings calendar page](#).

Contacts

District staff contacts for:

- [Local governments](#)
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About us

The St. Johns River Water Management District is a regional agency of the state of Florida whose mission is to protect and ensure the sustainable use of water resources. The District is responsible for managing groundwater and surface water resources in all or part of 18 counties in northeast and east-central Florida.

said Governing Board Chairman Lad Daniels of Jacksonville. "We also concentrated on being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars by applying a pay-as-we-go budgeting approach that uses committed fund balance to continue or complete priority projects and initiatives."

floridaswater.com

The adopted budget will fund major programs, including the District's springs protection initiative and the North Florida Aquifer Replenishment Initiative. Major projects funded in the budget include the Fellsmere Water Management Area, water quality improvement projects in the lower and middle St. Johns River basins, Ocklawaha River Basin gizzard shad harvesting and alum treatment, the Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area project and C-1/C-10 redirection to improve water quality and develop alternative water supplies.

In addition, the budget provides funds to rehabilitate flood control structures, conduct groundwater resource assessments and exploration, and maintain current staffing levels.

Areas of the budget where expenditures are being reduced include operating expenses, equipment purchases and fixed capital outlay.

Gov. Rick Scott approved the budget on Sept. 18.

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Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Fwd: District Approves Millage Rate and Budget
September 26, 2012 10:41 AM

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Chris Zajac <Chris.Zajac@swfwmd.state.fl.us>
Date: September 26, 2012 10:24:27 AM EDT
Subject: District Approves Millage Rate and Budget

Sept. 26, 2012

District Approves Millage Rate and Budget

The Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board Tuesday adopted its fiscal year 2012-13 (FY2012-13) millage rate and budget.

The Governing Board adopted a FY2012-13 millage rate of 0.3928 mill, which is the same as the current fiscal year. FY2012-13 will run from Oct. 1, 2012, through Sept. 30, 2013. With taxable property values declining by 2.9 percent, this rate will result in a \$3 million reduction in ad valorem property tax revenue.

The total FY2012-13 budget for the District is \$159.5 million, 2.5 percent higher than the adopted budget for FY2011-12, which was \$155.5 million. The \$3.9 million increase in the budget is primarily due to additional funding requests from local governments for water resources projects. The increase is funded from additional balances available from prior years due to the cancellation of projects and projects completed under budget.

The budget includes \$83.2 million for capital/infrastructure and other District projects. The District's funds leveraged with its partners will result in a total investment of more than \$132 million for water resource management projects benefitting the region.

Over the long term, the District has identified adequate fiscal resources to address the core mission areas of responsibility for water supply, water quality, flood protection and floodplain management, and natural systems. The District's fiscal resources supplemented with project reserves will adequately maintain a healthy investment in the economy and water resources during the next five to 10 years.

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Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
Fwd: SWFWMD Executive Director Announces Restructuring
September 27, 2012 5:09 PM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Chris Zajac <Chris.Zajac@swfwmd.state.fl.us>
Date: September 27, 2012 3:34:39 PM EDT
Subject: SWFWMD Executive Director Announces Restructuring

September 27, 2012

Executive Director Announces Restructuring

Plan calls for reducing and recruiting staff

Southwest Florida Water Management District Executive Director Blake Guillory announced today that the agency will undergo organizational restructuring in the coming months.

"We are committed to providing the greatest value to the taxpayer," said Guillory. "By implementing new business processes we have found opportunities to improve our efficiency and further reduce our operational costs."

The District currently has 617 full-time employees. This restructuring, to be implemented in phases during the next nine months, will affect approximately 30 employees, primarily administrative, IT and management staff.

The organizational changes include creating a Project Management Office to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of how the agency's more than 400 projects are managed.

Guillory also anticipates hiring approximately 15 additional scientific and engineering staff this year to support the District's groundwater and surface water modeling work as well as its springs and water quality initiatives.

"We've identified some areas in which we can use some additional expertise to meet our core mission," said Guillory. "Our pool of technical experts has eroded during the last decade with employees retiring or leaving for the private sector. This restructuring will ensure that we have a high level of scientific expertise to manage and protect the water resources of the region."

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Diane Salz <dialz@yahoo.com>
Fwd: Notice of Proposed Rule
October 2, 2012 7:59 PM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lou Kavouras <Lou.Kavouras@swfwmd.state.fl.us>
Date: October 2, 2012 4:31:56 PM EDT
Subject: Notice of Proposed Rule

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE: The Southwest Florida Water Management District is proposing to amend the following rule(s): 40D-2.091, F.A.C.

The purpose and effect of this rulemaking will be to amend Rule 40D-2.091, F.A.C., and Section 3.1 of the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Water Use Permitting Basis of Review to require permit applicants to utilize specific information, to be requested from and provided by a reuse utility, in an evaluation of the environmental, economic and technical feasibility of the use of reclaimed water to meet all or a portion of the applicant's needs.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking appeared in the Florida Administrative Weekly, Vol. 38, No. 40, on October 1, 2012. A copy of the proposed rule can be viewed on the District's website at the link below:

<http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/rules/proposed/>, <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/rules/proposed/details/61/>

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to provide comments on this rulemaking is asked to contact The Southwest Florida Water Management District Human Resources Director, 2379 Broad Street, Brooksville, Florida 34604-6899; telephone (352) 796-7211, ext. 4702 or 1-800-423-1476 (FL only), ext. 4702; TDD (FL only) 1-800-231-6103; or email to ADACoordinator@swfwmd.state.fl.us. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service, 1(800)955-8771 (TDD) or 1(800)955-8770 (Voice).

THE PERSON TO BE CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROPOSED RULES AND TO OBTAIN A COPY IS: Sonya White, Office of General Counsel, Southwest Florida Water Management District, 7601 Highway 301 North, Tampa, FL 33637-6759, (813) 985-7481 (Ext. 4660) (Ref OGC # 2011030).

Lou Kavouras
Southwest Florida Water Management District
1-352-796-7211 (x4604)

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Year-round water conservation rules are now in effect

Though water shortage restrictions imposed by the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) have expired, year-round water conservation rules are now in effect.

After a pattern of heavy rainfall this summer, the restrictions were allowed to expire on Sept. 30. The District declared a water shortage order in June to ease drought conditions. Conditions have improved considerably since that time.

“Groundwater levels have recovered to normal or above normal in most areas and river levels have not been this high since 2010,” said Megan Wetherington, District senior professional engineer.

In August, the District received an average of more than 9 inches of rainfall, with accumulations of up to 16 inches in localized areas. On Aug. 26, the Santa Fe River near Fort White experienced minor flooding after it crested at 0.3 feet above flood stage, and the Waccasassa River saw its third highest stage in 10 years. The

Ichetucknee River had sustained flows not seen since 2006.

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center is predicting a weak to moderate El Niño, which typically means cooler and wetter conditions in the fall and winter.

The water shortage restrictions mostly restricted outdoor watering, particularly lawn and landscape irrigation. Under the order, lawn and landscape irrigation was limited to once per week.

Since the order expired, residents and others fall under mandatory, year-round water conservation rules. The rules limit lawn and landscape irrigation to twice per week for this time of year, and apply to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public

YEAR-ROUND WATER CONSERVATION RULES

- Rules apply to lawn and landscape watering of residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public and commercial businesses
- Watering may take place twice-per-week
- Watering is prohibited between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

and commercial businesses. In addition, watering is prohibited between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Farmers are required to follow conservation measures included in their water use permit.

“Though the District does not feel it is necessary to prolong water restrictions at this time, we ask that all water users conserve water and help us sustain our water resources,” said District Executive Director Ann Shortelle.

SRWMD seeks to adopt monitoring requirements for largest water users

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board has moved forward with a water use monitoring rule for its largest users and to assist agricultural water users with the required monitoring.

The program will monitor 75 percent of the total water allocated in the District.

“The District needs actual water use data to accurately forecast sustainable, future water supply needs and to develop water supply plans,” said District Assistant Executive Director Jon Dinges.

The water use monitoring requirements have been developed with statewide consumptive use permitting consistency (CUPcon) in mind. CUPcon is a statewide effort led by the Department of Environmental Protection to improve consistency in water use permitting to

All stakeholders will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed rule at a public workshop on Oct. 11 at 5:30 p.m. at District headquarters, 9225 CR 49, Live Oak, FL 32060.

ensure less confusion for the applicant; treat applicants equally; protect the environment; streamline the process; and incentivize behavior that protects the environment.

In the District, agricultural producers hold the greatest number of water use permits. The District has collaborated with the agricultural community to provide incentives that should entice farmers to put in place a monitoring system before regulatory requirements kick in.

The new rule will require automated monitoring and reporting of withdrawals on a daily basis as a condition for new, renewed, and modified water use permits. The rule will apply to all groundwater wells with an inside diameter 8 inches or greater and to surfacewater withdrawals that have an outside diameter 6 inches or greater.

The Governing Board took the extra step that provides agricultural users a voluntary, convenient, no-cost method of measuring water use by calculating electric consumption. In cooperation with their electric utilities, producers would authorize the sharing of their power use data with the District. If electrical consumption data is not available, other run time monitoring methods may be used.

Donald Quincey reappointed to Governing Board



Quincey

Governor Rick Scott recently announced the reappointment of Donald J. Quincey Jr. to the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board.

Quincey is reappointed for a term beginning August 16, 2012, and ending March 1, 2016. He represents the Lower Suwannee Basin.

Quincey, 56, of Chiefland, is the president of Quincey Cattle Company. Quincey currently serves as the chairman of the District's Governing Board and he is the past president of the Florida Cattleman's Association.

White Springs dive will provide benefits for MFLs program

Two cave divers from Karst Environmental Services entered the cave system at White Sulphur Springs recently to assess the condition of the cave as a first step toward understanding the source aquifer(s) of the spring.

John Good, District chief professional engineer, said the exploratory dive will, among other things, help the District better understand why the spring isn't flowing consistently. This information is important in the District's efforts to establish an MFL and model for White Sulphur Springs, which has not flowed reliably for more than 20 years.

FY 2012-13 budget will fund resource protection initiatives and reduce taxes

On Sept. 25, the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board adopted a Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget of \$16.1 million. Maintaining the same millage rate of 0.4143 as last year means that a homeowner with a property value of \$150,000 with a \$50,000 homestead exemption would pay \$41.43 in property taxes to the District. With taxable property values declining by 2 percent, the District's millage rate will reduce taxpayers' burden by approximately \$280,000.

"The District is pleased to present a budget that enables the District to protect our water resources for the benefit of our citizens and natural systems while lessening the burden on taxpayers and establishing a high level of public service," said District Executive Director Ann Shortelle. "The final budget documents our dedication to implement cost efficiencies and enhance existing programs."

The District budget establishes two cost-share programs totaling \$3 million. One cost-share program will set aside \$1.5 million to partner with farmers to reduce groundwater use and to put in place best management practices to reduce nutrient loading to water resources. The other cost-share program will establish \$1.5 million to partner with public water suppliers to develop alternative water supply projects to offset groundwater withdrawals, protect springs, build flood protection projects, improve water quality, and to enhance our natural systems.

The budget is fiscally responsible and supports the agency's core mission of water supply, water quality, flood protection, and natural systems.

Key core mission projects in the budget include:

- More than \$2.2 million to establish **Minimum Flows and Levels** on the Upper and Middle Suwannee River and three Bradford County Lakes (Sampson, Crosby, and Rowell).
- **Santa Fe River Nutrient Reduction and Irrigation Retrofit Project** is a partnership with \$900,000 from DEP, \$180,000 from the District, and \$50,000 from the Department of Agriculture and

Consumer Services. The project will enhance water supplies through water conservation and protect natural systems by reducing nitrogen loading to streams and aquifers by up to 1 million pounds per year and save 670 million gallons of water per year.

- **Upper Floridan Aquifer Recharge Project** is a \$265,000 partnership project between the SRWMD and SJRWMD, through the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership to develop concepts for recharging the Upper Floridan Aquifer.

- **Alligator Creek Restoration Project** located in Bradford County is a partnership with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to construct a sediment control structure and reconnect a portion of the creek to its historic floodplain. The project will protect natural systems, Lake Rowell in particular, by capturing 169 tons per year of sediment, provide flood control benefits by directing water into the historic floodplain, and restore 31 acres of wetlands. The project invests \$250,000 from FWC and up to \$350,000 from the District.

- **Bell Springs Restoration Project** located in Columbia County is a partnership with the FWC to remove dams within a spring run on District lands. FWC is investing \$55,000 through a grant to the District to improve natural systems by restoring natural flows of water through the spring run and downstream to the adjacent Suwannee River.

- **Steinhatchee Rise Dispersed Water Storage Project** located in Dixie County is an environmental restoration project enhancing natural systems and flood control by placing water diversion structures in a canal on District lands that is currently draining wetlands directly to the Steinhatchee River. This is a \$20,000 project that will disperse 8.3 million gallons of water, providing hydrologic restoration to approximately 50 acres of wetlands.

"The Governing Board is proud to adopt a fiscally sound budget that efficiently and effectively implements our core mission," said District Board Chairman Don Quincey. "The budget ensures the Board's commitment to an exceptional level of customer service while reducing the tax burden on the taxpayer."