

MEETING MINUTES

Southwest Florida Water Management District Basin Board Education Committee

Tampa Service Office

July 10, 2008

The Basin Board Education Committee (BBEC) of the Southwest Florida Water Management District met at 9:30 a.m. on July 10, 2008, at the District's Tampa Service Office, Tampa, Florida.

BBEC Members Present

Maritza Rovira-Forino, Chair
Mac Carraway, Vice Chair, Manasota
William Bunch, Coastal Rivers
Devon Higginbotham, Hillsborough River
Cheryl Johnson, Alafia River
Patsy Nathe, Withlacoochee River
Fred Trippensee, Peace River

Staff Members

Lou Kavouras
Michael Molligan
Beth Putnam
Sylvia Durell
Robin Grantham
Mary Margaret Hull
Melissa Roe

Recording Secretary

Toi Basso

A list of others present who signed the attendance roster is filed in the permanent files of the BBEC.

Call to Order

Chair Maritza Rovira-Forino called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and indicated a quorum was present.

Approve BBEC Meeting Minutes

Chair Rovira-Forino presented for approval the minutes from the BBEC meeting of March 11, 2008. Following consideration, **Mac Carraway moved, seconded by Patsy Nathe, to approve as presented the BBEC minutes. Motion carried unanimously.**

Report of Committee Chair

Chair Rovira-Forino recognized new BBEC members. Devon Higginbotham is the primary representative for the Hillsborough River basin, Chet Renfro is the primary representative for the Pinellas-Anclote River basin, Patricia Crisman is the primary representative for the Peace River basin and Betsy Benac is the alternate for the Manasota basin. Chair Rovira-Forino discussed the District's Partners In Watershed Education Awards scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 2008. Every two years, the District recognizes outstanding partners who have effectively promoted water resources conservation and protection through education. This year's event will include an awards luncheon and educational sessions to help District partners improve their skills in program design and evaluation. Chair Rovira-Forino also discussed the grand opening event of the Polk County Discovery Center at the Circle B Bar Reserve that is scheduled to open November 1, 2008. She encouraged BBEC members to plan to attend the opening. The Polk County Discovery Center is being built on District-owned land using funds reimbursed by the Water Management Lands Trust Fund. Several exhibits at the center are being funded by the Peace River, Alafia River and Hillsborough River Basin Boards. In conjunction with the grand opening, Polk County is holding its annual Water, Wings and Wild Things special event at the center.

Water Program for Restaurant Outreach

Robin Grantham coordinates both the Water CHAMP and Water PRO programs for the District. Ms. Grantham began her presentation with updated information about the growth of the District's Water Conservation Hotel and Motel Program (Water CHAMP). Currently the District has 403 properties enrolled, or 44 percent of the hotels and motels Districtwide, representing an estimated total water savings of more than 173 million gallons a year. Ms. Grantham also discussed new promotional activities, including bill stuffers for several utility companies throughout the District, and posters and housekeeping guides, which will be distributed to Water CHAMP properties that purchase electricity from Progress Energy. The District's Water Program for Restaurant Outreach (Water PRO) began in May 2008. Restaurants who register with the program will receive table tents, children's coloring sheets and coasters that display water conservation tips and facts. Beef 'O' Brady's encouraged their 62 franchised stores within the District to participate in Water PRO and currently 44 of the 56 Water PRO participants are Beef 'O' Brady's restaurants. Ms. Grantham recognized Oysters Restaurant, owned by Coastal Rivers Basin Board Member William Bunch, as the first restaurant within the Coastal Rivers basin to register with Water PRO. Chair Rovira-Forino encouraged BBEC members to promote the program at restaurants they visit by leaving a brochure or referring restaurant owners and managers to the District's web site. The District's Water PRO materials have been presented to other water management districts for review.

Establishing Funding Criteria for Landscape Demonstration Sites

At the request of the Hillsborough River Basin Board, Beth Putnam presented for BBEC input the proposed criteria addressing two types of projects:

- Projects that demonstrate new technologies or unique practices that significantly reduce water use and/or improve water quality.
- Projects that educate the audience on Florida-friendly landscaping techniques or other best management practices consistent with the objectives of that program.

The criteria requires those requesting more than \$5,000 in District funding for such projects to avoid redundancy; justify need; provide a long-term maintenance plan; and report education strategy, continuing benefits and project evaluation. Consistent signage will be a requirement for all such projects. (Criteria included in packet).

Florida Water StarSM — Gold Certification

Sylvia Durell presented a new-home certification program that provides incentives to builders and developers who meet criteria in indoor and outdoor water efficiency and best management practices in landscapes. She reported that Florida Water StarSM (FWS) was originally developed, service-marked and is currently being implemented by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD). District staff researched the program, adapted it for this District and included it in the FY2009 budget (B277), with costs to be shared among the District and Basin Boards. FWS's point-based program is similar to the federal Energy Star® program and includes both indoor and outdoor conservation components. When approached by SJRWMD staff about implementing the program within this District, staff recognized a need for advanced criteria to ensure more consistency with landscaping and water conservation practices promoted by this District since FY2001 through its partnership with the UF/IFAS Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program. This advanced level, which will be exclusively promoted in this District, will be called Florida Water StarSM — Gold Certification (FWSG) to distinguish it from the SJRWMD's Florida Water Star Silver. Currently, the SJRWMD is promoting only Florida Water Star Silver, but it has participated in the development of the gold certification and hopes to offer the more advanced gold level in the future as the builders and developers in the SJRWMD become more educated about landscape best management practices. Mr. Carraway expressed his concerns as a turf grower about FWSG's proposed

criteria limiting turf irrigation to 50 percent. He stated the 50 percent limitation translates to a 20 percent reduction in sales for the industry. He fears the 50 percent limitation will begin showing up in proposed ordinances, although he is not aware of research justifying a change. Over-irrigation is a consumer practice and not the fault of the turf. He suggested promoting better water management practices among homeowners and businesses and using soil moisture sensors as better alternatives to reducing turf. Michael Molligan agreed that residents can save substantial amounts of water by irrigating more efficiently, and the District does promote irrigation efficiency through its education programs. However, even though you can increase the efficiencies, some turf still requires high-volume irrigation. Taking the same property and using micro-irrigation or no irrigation will use less water than high-volume irrigation. The challenge is to find some balance with percentages of landscaping that require high-volume irrigation. Also, the FWSG program is a merit program intended to award those who excel in water conservation, but it is not the District's intent to require everyone to participate in the program. The District is very sensitive to impacts and is trying to define an acceptable balance for most concerns. Mr. Carraway agreed he thinks everyone is striving to reach the right outcomes.

Splash Mini-Grant Sharing Days

Mary Margaret Hull, the District's new lead youth education coordinator, reported on the Splash! mini-grant sharing days. Sharing days are opportunities to highlight the innovative and effective education projects that take place in classrooms across the District as a result of the District's Splash! mini-grant program. There are two types of sharing days school districts may choose: (1) a school site visit for District staff to observe how the grant was implemented and talk to involved students or (2) a meeting where the county's grant recipients come together to present their school's project. Sharing days are held during April and May each year. During the 2007–2008 school year, the District funded 137 mini-grants (maximum of \$5,000 per school) totaling \$318,126 in pre-kindergarten through high school classrooms. This year's mini-grants involved 66,667 students. Classrooms participating in the FY2007 mini-grant program documented a 31 percent gain in knowledge. The 2008–2009 Splash! mini-grant application is available at WaterMatters.org/minigrants. Approximately 3,500 mini-grant postcards were mailed to curriculum specialists and assistant principals in public and private schools within the District. Applications are due September 12, 2008.

Director's Report

Mr. Molligan discussed new District publications that have become available since the last BBEC meeting in March. He referred to upcoming events and stated that a list will be sent to all BBEC members.

Closing Comments and Adjournment

With no further business or announcements to come before the BBEC, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m. The next BBEC meeting will be held November 4, 2008, at 9:30 a.m. at the Tampa Service Office.