

e-Resource is a monthly electronic communiqué designed to keep you apprised of the community and legislative activities undertaken by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and provide up-to-date information on important water issues.



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Legislature Enters Final Week **Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council**

The regular session of the Legislature will wrap up this week. One piece of legislation that impacts the northern area of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) is already on its way to the Governor for final approval. Senate Bill 496/House Bill 341, sponsored by Senator Nancy Argenziano and Representative Charlie Dean, amends the makeup and duties of the Citrus/Hernando Waterways Restoration Council.

The Council was originally formed in 2003 within the District's Withlacoochee and Coastal Rivers Basin Boards and currently consists of 12 voting members, appointed by the Senate President and the Speaker of the House.

Currently, Council members are charged with forming two separate county task forces to review and make recommendations for the restoration of the Weeki Wachee River and Springs in Hernando County and plans for the restoration of the Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes in Citrus County. Also in place is a technical advisory group consisting of representatives from the District, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Transportation, the Coastal Rivers Basin Board, the Withlacoochee River Basin Board and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

This legislation adds two members to the Council. Specifically, the Council will now consist of two waterfront property owners from both Hernando and Citrus, and it is clarified that one property owner shall represent the east side of each county and one shall represent the west side of each county. The Hernando County Task Force will now be required to develop plans for the restoration of the waterways in Hernando County and the Citrus County Task Force is to develop plans for the restoration of waterways in Citrus County. The technical advisory group is expanded to include public works representatives from each county.

Both bills passed unanimously and the legislation will take effect when the Governor signs it.



The Hernando Pool of the Tsala Apopka Chain of Lakes in Citrus County.

Federal Update **Water Resources Development Act**

The Senate has placed the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), S. 728, on the Senate legislative calendar, and supporters of the legislation hope the Senate will take action on the legislation by the end of May.

WRDA authorizes more than \$10 billion of Army Corps of Engineers projects, with the majority of the dollars for flood protection, navigation and environmental restoration efforts. Almost 60 percent of the bill authorizes environmental and ecosystem restoration activities, including environmental restoration of the Everglades. While the law is supposed to be reauthorized every two years, it has not been reauthorized since 2000, primarily due to debate over how to reform the Army Corps.

Proponents of the legislation remain concerned that if the bill is not brought up on the Senate floor in the near future, costs will continue to rise. "The longer we wait, the more unmet needs pile up," said Senator Christopher Bond, the bill's prime sponsor. "The programs administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are invaluable and provide drinking water, electric power production, river transportation, environmental protection and restoration, protection from floods, emergency response and recreation."

The House version of the legislation, H.R. 2864, passed nearly unanimously last summer. It offers a regular authorization schedule for the Army Corps to address emerging water resources needs.



Federal Update

Federal Budget Process Begins

The federal appropriations process is underway and the District again has two requests for funding pending.

- The purpose of the **Peace River and Myakka River Watersheds Restoration Initiative** is to restore surface water storage, flows, aquifer recharge, water quality and ecosystems that have been lost, degraded or significantly altered in the Peace River and Myakka River watersheds, which contribute essential freshwater flows to Charlotte Harbor, a national estuary. The request for this project is \$10 million.

This initiative will also provide a critical link to a major greenway that extends from Florida's lower west coast up through the Peace River watershed and Green Swamp to the Ocala National Forest. This initiative also serves as a major component of the Southern Water Use Caution Area Recovery Strategy by providing a cost-effective means of restoring minimum flows to the upper Peace River, slowing saltwater intrusion and allowing ground water to continue to be a significant source of water supply for urban, agricultural and industrial users in the area.



The Myakka River watershed in Sarasota County.

- The District has also requested \$10 million for the **Tampa Bay Regional Reclaimed Water and Downstream Augmentation Project**. This project is a regional partnership of the City of Tampa, Hillsborough County, Pasco County, Tampa Bay Water and the District and would construct a regional reclaimed water system that will return highly treated water to the area of its origin as part of a comprehensive watershed management approach.

This multi-year project, totaling more than \$262 million, will serve the region's fast-growing population and result in:

- An offset of treated potable water with reclaimed water for irrigation and other uses.
- An increase in freshwater availability by augmenting surface water systems below existing withdrawal points, achieving a one-to-one drinking water supply benefit.
- The ability to meet mandated minimum flows in the lower Hillsborough River during low-flow conditions.
- Restoration of water-dependent systems in the Hillsborough River and Alafia River watersheds from which much of the regional drinking water supply is taken.
- Creation of a wet season storage system that will allow for the beneficial use of additional water available during seasonal rains that are currently discharged to Tampa Bay.
- Further expansion of the beneficial use of reclaimed water during the dry season.
- An increase in the overall efficiency of reclaimed water use in southwest Florida.

Work will now begin on the appropriations bills at the Subcommittee level, and this is expected to continue throughout the summer and into the fall.

Southwest Florida
Water Management District

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