

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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FARMS Program Rapidly Expanding

The District and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services developed the Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems (FARMS) program to promote agricultural best management practices (BMPs) that conserve water and protect water quality. The program began in 2003 with five projects and in the course of three years has successfully expanded to six counties.

To date, 33 FARMS projects have been Board-approved with a projected groundwater offset of 10.2 million gallons per day. FARMS is a critical component to the Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA) Recovery Strategy — a plan designed to restore minimum levels to priority lakes, restore minimum flows to the upper Peace River, reduce the rate of saltwater intrusion and ensure sufficient water supplies within a 5,100 square-mile-area in the southern part of the District. The FARMS program is intended to offset 40 mgd of ground water within the SWUCA by 2025.

Representative Mike Grant and his legislative assistant, Maureen Garrard; Charlotte County Commissioner Tricia Duffy; District Executive Director Dave Moore; FARMS staff; and Community and Legislative Affairs staff recently toured two citrus groves that are FARMS participants in DeSoto and Charlotte counties. Project goals in these two groves include water quality improvement, irrigation resource management, an increase in

irrigation conservation and an increase in groundwater savings.

This year the District is requesting \$2.5 million from the state for the FARMS program. In addition to contributions from the state, the cost of these projects is shared by the District, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the FARMS participants.



Representative Mike Grant and Charlotte County Commissioner Tricia Duffy (in white attire) recently toured two FARMS projects in Charlotte and DeSoto counties.

Department of Interior Proposed

State Representative Mitch Needleman recently introduced House Joint Resolution (HJR) 79, “Conservation and Protection of Natural Resources and Scenic Beauty, Including Fish and Wildlife” which would authorize a proposed constitutional amendment to create a Department of Interior. HJR 79 would remove the constitutional mandate for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and establish the Department of Interior.

The Department of Interior would be responsible for conserving and protecting the state’s natural resources and

scenic beauty, including fish and wildlife. The legislation would also create an office of Commissioner of the Interior, a Cabinet office filled by statewide election.

Currently in Florida, two governmental entities handle matters pertaining to Florida’s Natural Resources: the Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Florida is one of four states which have constitutionally created game and fish agencies.



WRDA Is Back

Federal Update

Leaders in both the House and Senate have indicated that the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) is on its way to passage during the first few months of the 110th Congress.

This legislation authorizes the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct water resource studies and undertake water projects around the country for flood control, inland navigation, shoreline protection and environmental restoration. The WRDA bill is traditionally reauthorized every two years. Although both the House and Senate passed versions of the WRDA in 2005 and 2006, respectively, a consensus on the legislation did not occur before the 109th Congress adjourned. Subsequently, a bill has not been passed since 2000.

Florida's senior senator, Bill Nelson, has released a letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid asking him to schedule a floor vote on the WRDA bill, which, in addition to other projects, could provide \$283 million for Everglades projects. The Congressional Budget Office analysis of the legislation, as passed by the House of Representatives in 2005, estimated the cost of implementation of the WRDA bill to be approximately \$4.1 billion

through 2010 and an additional \$5.9 billion (over the 10 years after 2010).

While the legislation contains hundreds of water projects, Lt. General Carl Strock, chief of the Army Corps of Engineers, has recently indicated the need for the WRDA bill to move away from specific project focus and more toward watersheds and basins.

Both Senate Majority Leader Reid and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar have indicated support for the WRDA bill's passage within a short time frame.



Everglades nutrient removal site (SFWMMD photo).

2008 Cooperative Funding Cycle Begins

More than 270 cooperative funding projects were submitted for fiscal year 2008 from a variety of cooperators. The program allows local governments and other partners to share costs for projects that assist in creating sustainable water resources, provide flood protection or enhance conservation efforts.

Staff will begin the review of the applications and rank projects by basin. The proposed projects will then be presented to the Basin Boards for review and a final Basin Board budget will be approved in August 2007.

There were a large number of new projects this year submitted by a variety of local governments and other interested organizations. Out of the 75 applications submitted to the Sarasota service office, 26 projects were new. In the Tampa area there were 64 new projects out of 123 total submissions. The Bartow office received 40 applications and 20 projects were new. Out of 35 applications submitted to the Brooksville headquarters, 21 were new projects. Approximately \$25 million is available Districtwide through the cooperative funding program.

District staff is also undertaking a review of the current application process to determine if any changes are needed. Expect modifications to the application and additional workshops prior to the next cooperative funding program deadline in December 2007.

Southwest Florida
Water Management District

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