

**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.



**Issue 29**  
 March–April 2008  
 To subscribe, email us at  
 CommunityAffairs@WaterMatters.org

## *State Update* **Additional Budget Reductions Taken**



The Legislature passed House Bill 7009 that further reduces the 2007–08 budget by approximately \$500 million. This is due to revenue shortfalls and is in addition to a reduction of \$1.5 billion during Special Session last year. Additionally, state agencies began presenting additional reductions to legislative committees in anticipation of the fact that the 2008–09 budget of \$70 billion will need to be reduced by approximately \$3.8 billion. The Legislature has requested state agencies take a 10 percent cut. The proposal from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) included a \$43 million reduction in

general revenue through fund shifts and program cuts.

The House Environment and Natural Resources Council recommended a number of trust fund cuts that would impact water management districts. The council was tasked with cutting approximately \$210 million from its proposed budget. To that end, the following recommendations relating to the DEP and the water management districts were adopted:

- Sweeping the entire Water Protection and Sustainability Trust Fund to general revenue (less \$18 million for total maximum daily load projects) — sunset after five years

- Not funding Florida Forever for the upcoming year (except for the bond debt — \$30 million)
- Reducing \$30 million from the Water Management Lands Trust Fund — sunset after five years

Conversely, the Senate General Government Appropriations Committee also moved forward with their budget recommendations and kept all three of these programs intact and fully funded.

## **WRAP Legislation Moving Forward**

The West-Central Florida Water Restoration Action Plan (WRAP) is an eight-county regional response led by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) to provide environmental restoration along with sustainable water supplies. Representative Mike Grant, House sponsor of HB 1415, recently presented the WRAP legislation to the House Environmental Protection Committee. He described the need for this codification legislation and asked for the committee's approval.

The legislation related to the District's WRAP is intended to enhance the visibility and long-term viability of the program by incorporating the program into statute. In addition to outlining the components of the plan, the legislation would require the District to annually report on the progress of the program.

The bill passed the committee unanimously and will next be heard in the House Environment and Natural Resources Council. The companion bill, SB 2580, filed by Senator J.D. Alexander, passed the Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee unanimously. There are a number of cosponsors on both bills, including Representatives Attkisson, Bowen, Fitzgerald, Galvano, Glorioso, Holder, Kreegel,

McKeel, Reagan and Traviesa, and Senators Aronberg, Bennett, Carlton and Storms.

The District has also secured support for the WRAP from local government, chambers of commerce and organizations. The support list includes:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Audubon Society   | • North Port Chamber of Commerce                       |
| • Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce                    | • Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority |
| • Department of Environmental Protection                  | • Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association        |
| • Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services | • Polk County  |
| • Florida Farm Bureau                                     | • Polk County Builders Association                     |
| • Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association                 | • Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce                 |
| • Hardee County Economic Development Council              | • Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation     |
| • Manasota League of Cities                               | • Tampa Bay Partnership                                |
| • Manatee County Chamber of Commerce                      | • Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers Association              |



## Legislative Sunset Committee Recommends No Substantive Changes to Water Management Districts

The Joint Legislative Sunset Committee has held multiple meetings to discuss water management district governance. Several motions have been proposed and discussed, but not passed. One motion was with regard to water management districts' fiscal year. Water management districts are on the same fiscal year as local governments, October 1 through September 30. The committee voted not to change the fiscal year to coincide with the state fiscal year but did make a recommendation that the Districts submit tentative budgets to the Legislature by February 15 each year. These would be nonbinding budget submittals.

After much debate, the committee also voted against elected Governing Board members. Senator Don Gaetz (Ft. Walton Beach) made a motion to elect water management district Governing Board members. In the case of this District, his

motion was to have seven members elected from geographic boundaries and six members at-large. That recommendation failed.

The committee also passed a recommendation stating that the Legislature could direct the water management districts to periodically assess the costs and benefits of their Basin Boards to ensure that the Boards provide adequate value to justify their continued existence and taxpayers support.

The final recommendation was to eliminate the Citrus/Hernando Waterways, Lake Panasoffkee, Ocklawaha River and Harris Chain of Lakes restoration councils. However, to move any of these recommendations forward, both the Senate and House would have to include them in legislation.

## District Governing Board and Basin Board Members Tour Peace River Facility

In March, Governing Board and Basin Board members toured the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority's (PR/MRWSA) water treatment expansion construction site and the construction site of the new reservoir. It was a well-received tour and the Board members appreciated the opportunity to see a project in which they have invested substantial District funding.

The Regional Expansion Program will provide the resources needed to continue to supply the region with high-quality, sustainable drinking water. The expansion will also provide the PR/MRWSA with the ability to better integrate the region's sources.

The Regional Expansion Project will include the following elements:

- The facility currently treats 24 million gallons of water per day (mgd). The expansion will provide the additional capacity to treat a total of 48 mgd.
- A new offstream, aboveground reservoir will provide the PR/MRWSA

with an additional 6 billion gallons of storage capacity. The reservoir will be located adjacent to the existing reservoir in southwest DeSoto County. This project includes restoration of the remaining RV Griffin Reserve owned by the District and managed by the PR/MRWSA.

- The intake structure from the river will be enlarged to draw the maximum river quantities allowed by the permit while still saving 95 percent or more for the Charlotte Harbor estuary.

Through the District's cooperative funding program, the PR/MRWSA has received roughly \$60 million toward this important regional initiative. Additionally, the PR/MRWSA received a grant of \$9 million from the Environmental Protection Agency.

**Fix leaking faucets and save several gallons to hundreds of gallons of water per day.**



Southwest Florida  
Water Management District

WATERMATTERS.ORG · 1-800-423-1476

The District does not discriminate based on disability. Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the Community and Legislative Affairs Department at (352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476 (FL only).