

**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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## Agriculture Enclave Passes This Year

After several years the Agricultural Economic Development (Ag Enclave) (HB1015/SB1880) legislation passed and has been approved by the Governor.

This legislation authorizes a cause of action for landowners aggrieved by specific changes to agricultural land use and reduces the notice period for legal action from 180 days to 90 days for property classified as agricultural under the Bert Harris Private Property Rights Protection Act.

It establishes an "agricultural enclave" designation. Specifically, an agricultural enclave is defined as land

that has been used for agricultural purposes for a period of five years, is surrounded on at least 75 percent of its perimeter by existing development, has public services, and does not exceed 1,280 acres. However, if the property is surrounded by existing or authorized residential development resulting in a build out of at least 1,000 residents per square mile, the parcel may not exceed 4,480 acres.

The legislation includes language stating that during the regional water supply planning process, the list of water supply development options must contain provisions that recognize that alternative water supply options

for agricultural self-suppliers are limited. Further, it requires water management districts to notify agricultural applicants for consumptive use permits of the right to apply for permits valid for 20 years and requires each water management district, by July 1, 2007, to enter into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to determine whether an existing or proposed activity qualifies for the agricultural statutory exemptions set forth in law. The District already has such an agreement.



## Appropriations: Ag Bill with Boost for Wetlands Headed to Senate Floor

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved an \$18.2 billion agriculture spending bill last week that would boost funds for wetlands restoration and programs that pay farmers to make environmental improvements on their land.

The committee voted unanimously in favor of the spending bill after accepting an amendment that would boost disaster funds for farmers affected by drought and other severe weather.

Overall, the bill provides \$18.2 billion in discretionary funds — \$1.4 billion higher than last year's spending levels and almost \$400 million above the House bill.

Conservation programs would see an increase in the Senate's proposal, specifically a program that pays farmers to restore wetlands on marginally productive land. The committee mark lifts any cap on the Wetlands Reserve Program and authorizes enrollment at the full 250,000-acre level set in the farm bill. The House limited the program to 144,776 acres, which represents a \$170 million difference.

The Senate committee also lifted the cap on the Conservation Security Program (CSP), the "green payments"

program that rewards environmentally friendly farming, giving about \$372 million for the program. The House bill has \$280 million for CSP, \$92 million less than the Senate.

The committee's mark gives other conservation programs higher funding than in the House, but limits them below farm bill levels. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program would receive \$63 million, Farm and Ranchland Protection Program comes in at \$58 million, and Ground and Surface Water Conservation would receive \$54 million.

The Senate committee also provided higher funding for conservation technical assistance than the House. The committee bill allots \$835 million, a slight increase from last year and \$40 million higher than the House number. The account pays for salaries for officials who help farmers do all their planning on the ground for conservation projects.

The bill is expected to come to the Senate floor in the coming weeks.



## 31st Annual Conference on Water Management

The 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference on Water Management will be held at the Westin-Innisbrook Resort in Tarpon Springs on September 6–8. This conference is the annual meeting of Florida's water management professionals who set water policy and laws.

This year's conference will explore the weather phenomenon of Atlantic multi-decadal oscillation and the severe storm events associated with it. The conference will examine the less recognizable effects of storm events, such as the destruction of environmental restoration projects; degradation of water quality in rivers, lakes and estuaries; and impacts to the financial and staff resources of water management districts and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, who respond to the emergencies generated by the storms.

Field studies to the Lake Maggiore Project and the Kapok Park Restoration Project have been arranged. In addition, there will be two half-day workshops —

Considerations for Development, Implementation and Expansion of Reuse Systems and Low Impact Development. Conference attendees may register for either the field studies or the workshops for an additional fee.

Additional information and registration is available online at [www.McRaeCo.com](http://www.McRaeCo.com). For registration and exhibitor information please contact the conference manager, Holly Banks, at McRae & Company, Inc., phone (850) 906-009, or email at [Holly@McRaeCo.com](mailto:Holly@McRaeCo.com).



### Mini-FARMS



The Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems Program

(FARMS) is a best management practice (BMP) cost-share

reimbursement program for agricultural projects located in the Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA). The program is a collaboration of the District, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and members of the agricultural community.

The newly created Mini-FARMS Program is a spin-off of FARMS and is designed to assist small-acreage

growers (defined as those growers with 100 irrigated acres or less) on water resource projects that reduce water use, improve water quality or assist in the conservation and restoration of natural systems.

Examples of projects eligible for District/FDACS funding include: soil moisture probes, water table observation wells, water-control structures, weather stations and other water conservation methods approved by the local Soil and Water Conservation District Board. Maximum funding is set at \$8,000 of cost-share reimbursement per project, split between the District and FDACS. The Mini-FARMS program will be implemented locally by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts within the SWUCA.

For more information, please contact: FDACS Office of Agricultural Water Policy, c/o the Southwest Florida Water Management District, Tampa, at 1-800-836-0797, ext. 2125, or Sarasota at 1-800-320-3503, ext. 6516.

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