



**AGRICULTURAL AND GREEN INDUSTRY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, March 14, 2023 – 10:00 AM
7601 US HIGHWAY 301 NORTH, TAMPA, FLORIDA 33637**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Eric Muecke, City of Tampa Parks & Recreation Dept.
Dennis Carlton, Jr., FL Cattleman's Association
Curt Williams, Chair, FL Farm Bureau
Jay Vogel, FL Forestry Association
Kerry Kates, FL Fruit & Vegetable Assoc. (alternate)
Gail Huff, FL Irrigation Society
David Boozer, FL Tropical Fish Farms Association
Simon Bollin, Hillsborough Co. Extension Service
Travis Council, Turfgrass Producers of FL
Don Rainey, UF Institute of Food & Agricultural
Science (alternate)

Staff Members

Michael Molligan
Jennette Seachrist
Michelle Hopkins
Jay Hoecker
Randy Smith
April Breton
Chris Zajac
Doug Leeper
Jordan Miller
Joe Quinn
Kevin Vought
Ken Griner
Carole Estes
Adrienne Vining
Jerry Harding
Josh Campbell

Board Administrative Support

Virginia Singer
Barbara Matrone

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The Agricultural and Green Industry Advisory Committee (AGIAC) of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) met for its regular meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

Chair Curt Williams called the meeting to order, and attendance was called.

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Approval of the December 16, 2022, Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the December 16, 2022 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comments

A Request to Speak blue card was submitted by Don Ellison for agenda item #5. A Request to Speak blue card was submitted by Daniel Bott for agenda item #6.

5. SWUCA Five-Year Assessment

Mr. Randy Smith, Natural Systems and Restoration Bureau Chief, provided an overview of the Five-Year Assessment of the Southern Water Use Caution Area (SWUCA) for the period of 2017 through 2021. The SWUCA is a 5,100-square-mile area which includes all or part of eight counties and is essentially the southern half of the District. The SWUCA was established by the Governing Board in 1992 due to long-term declines in aquifer levels. In 2006 the Governing Board approved the SWUCA Recovery Strategy due to the minimum flows and minimum water levels not being achieved. On January 1, 2007, the Recovery Strategy became effective by rule which required annual assessments to be provided to the Governing Board as well as five-year reviews to assess progress. The first five-year assessment was completed for the 2007-2011 period and the second assessment was completed for the 2012-2016 period. The third assessment is in the final draft phase for the period of 2017-2021. There are four Recovery Strategy goals to achieve by 2025: 1) Restore minimum levels to priority lakes in the Ridge area; 2) Restore minimum flows to the upper Peace River; 3) Reduce the rate of saltwater intrusion in coastal Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota counties by achieving the saltwater intrusion minimum aquifer level (SWIMAL); and 4) Ensure that there are sufficient water supplies for all existing and projected reasonable beneficial uses.

The six major elements needed to accomplish these goals are development of a regional water supply plan, the use of existing rules, enhancements to the existing rules, providing financial incentives for conservation and development of alternative water supplies, the development and implementation of water resource projects to aid in meeting minimum flows to rivers and enhance recharge, and for resource monitoring, reporting and cumulative impact analysis.

Mr. Smith discussed each goal and gave the status and recommendations for each.

- Goal one is to restore minimum levels to priority lakes by 2025. During the first assessment of the 2007-2011 period, there were 27 lakes with adopted minimum lake levels (MLL) and 11 of the 27 were being met (41%). In the second assessment of the 2012-2016 period, there were 28 lakes with adopted MLL with 12 of the 28 were being met (43%). For the current assessment period of 2017-2021, there are 32 lakes with adopted MLL with 23 of the 32 being met (72%). Eight of the nine lakes that are not currently meeting their MLL have moved closer to being met. The recommendations for goal one are to continue implementation of previously identified options, including conservation and Alternative Water Supply (AWS) development, continue to support the Lake Eva Aquifer Recharge Project, enhance and continue monitoring, and complete future lake MLL reevaluations. District staff recently completed peer review of the new xeric wetland/lake standard and will use this new information to reevaluate the 9 lakes that are not currently achieving their MLL over the next few years. This will ensure the MLLs are set based on the best available information and the outcomes of the reevaluations will help guide the determination of any additional lake recovery projects.
- Goal two is to restore minimum flows in the upper Peace River by 2025. During the first assessment of the 2007-2011 period, MFLs were not being met. For the second assessment of the 2012-2016 period, MFLs were not met however in 2015 the Lake Hancock Lake Level Modification project became operational. The Lake Hancock Lake Level Modification project is a large water resource development project completed by the District. It involved constructing a new water control structure on Lake Hancock raising the lake level by approximately 1.5 feet, allowing more water to be stored during the wet season that could be strategically released during the dry season to meet the minimum low flows in the Upper peace river. For the current assessment period of 2017 – 2021, the upper Peace river MFLs were met and achieved in 2020. For the upper Peace River MFLs to be considered met they had to be achieved for three consecutive years. Achievement of this goal can largely be attributed to the Lake Hancock Lake Level Modification project, which was a major element of the recovery strategy and was operational throughout the current status assessment period. District staff continued collecting data and monitoring during this assessment period. The Governing Board adopted Lake Hancock/lower Saddle

Creek Reservation. District staff continued to refine operational protocols for the Lake Hancock project. District staff are currently working on the development of medium and high flows MFLs for the upper Peace River along with the reevaluation of the currently adopted low flow minimum level which are both scheduled to be completed in 2025. The recommendations for goal two are to continue operation and monitoring of Lake Hancock Lake Level Modification and Outfall Treatment projects, continue to establish medium and high flow MFLs and reevaluate the low flow MFL and the Lake Hancock Reservation, continue to refine operational protocols for Lake Hancock, and to continue the adaptive management approach.

- Goal three is to reduce the rate of saltwater intrusion by 2025 by achieving the SWIMAL. During the first assessment of the 2007-2011 period, the SWIMAL was not met, and groundwater usage was declining. In the second assessment of the 2012-2016 period, the SWIMAL was not met, there was a continuation of declining groundwater use in the region, and aquifer levels were trending up and within 0.5 feet of the SWIMAL. For the current assessment period of 2017-2021, the SWIMAL is not met, there is a continuation of declining groundwater use in the region, the 10-year moving average has been above the SWIMAL for four consecutive years, and it is anticipated that the SWIMAL will be met when the 2022 status assessment is completed later this year. For the SWIMAL to be considered met it must be achieved five consecutive years. The recommendations for goal three are to continue expansion of coastal monitoring network, continue support for aquifer recharge projects, and continue conservation efforts through FARMS, regulation and Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) funding for AWS projects.
- Goal four is to ensure sufficient water supplies. Since 2007, the District has made significant efforts to ensure a sustainable and sufficient water supply for the region. This included a substantial investment, by the District, in the development of regional alternative water supplies (AWS), beneficial reclaimed water projects, conservation and FARMS projects that have resulted in significantly offsetting the use of traditional groundwater sources within the SWUCA. These projects and their resulting water supply and conservation savings have included: Between 2007-2011 46 million gallons a day (mgd) was made available through AWS conservation and FARMS projects. From 2012-2016, 51 mgd was made available through AWS conservation and FARMS projects. For the current assessment period of 2017-2021, 18 mgd was made available through AWS conservation and FARMS projects. This goal continues to be met as the District and its partners have been able to meet all reasonable and beneficial uses since 2007. The District aims to invest more than \$600 million for AWS projects in the SWUCA including up to 9 mgd from ongoing CFI and District initiative projects by 2025. Recommendations for goal four are to continue support of regional water supply entities and regional water supply development initiatives, continue conservation efforts through FARMS, Mini-FARMS, CFI and WISE programs, regulation, and outreach efforts such as Florida Water Star, prioritize development of AWS projects, maintain participation in the CFWI, and continue regional water supply planning efforts.

In summary, the District continues to make progress toward achieving the four SWUCA Recovery Strategy goals. Two of the four SWUCA Recovery goals are currently being met and achievement of an additional goal is anticipated later this year when the 2022 status assessment for the SWIMAL is completed.

Mr. Simon Bollin asked how many years of normal rainfall will bring us back to levels where the lakes will come back to where they need to be, and the Peace River will do the same.

Mr. Smith responded that it would be difficult to provide an exact answer to that question. For the last four years the 10-year moving average rainfall has equaled or slightly exceeded the period of record average rainfall for the region.

Mr. Kerry Kates asked with the eight of the nine lakes that are currently not meeting the minimum lake levels, are we anticipating a bump as well attributable to hurricanes Nicole and Ian.

Mr. Smith responded that there are nine lakes that are currently not meeting their minimum level. Hurricanes do help out, but when looking at MFL status it is more of a long-term status condition.

Discussion ensued.

Chair Williams asked regarding the Lake Hancock project and nutrient reduction, what are the numbers and what type of reductions have we experienced.

Mr. Smith responded that he is in the process of putting some numbers together and would be happy to send that information to him.

6. WUP Quantities for Citrus in the Ridge Area

Ms. April Breton, Water Use Evaluation and Compliance Manager, gave a brief presentation on water use permitting quantities for citrus in the ridge area. There are statutes and rules that need to be followed when reviewing a water use permit application: Chapter 373 Part II, F.S. Permitting of Consumptive Uses of Water and the Water use Permit Applicant Handbook are used. When reviewing a water use permit, staff look for reasonable and beneficial uses and conditions for issuance. Some of the conditions include: whether the quantities are necessary and of economic and efficient use, if they are both reasonable and consistent with public interest, if the source is suitable for consumptive use, if the source is capable of producing the requested amount, if the lowest quality water source is suitable for the purpose, if there is no harm to existing offsite land uses and no harm to the water resources, and if it meets minimum flow or levels and implementation of recovery strategies. There are three different withdrawal quantities on a water use permit: the annual average quantity, the peak month quantity, and the maximum day/freeze protection quantity. All of these are reflected on the permit in gallons per day. The District uses the Agricultural Modeling Tool (AGMOD) for calculations for the ridge lakes. In addition, 80 plus years of rainfall data is factored in along with effective rainfall, soil type, root zone, and system efficiency. During the Citrus Task Force, they added 10.6% to the AGMOD adjustment to help permittees that were along the ridge. They also take research changes from the Institute of Food and Agricultural Science which are considered as they go through the permit process. Ms. Breton concluded by showing a calculation of permitted irrigation requirements in the SWUCA.

Mr. Bollin asked how much would increase funding for weather stations, soil moisture probes, soil amendments like compost help in gathering data and making more efficient accurate water quantity analysis.

Ms. Breton responded that more data is always better, and it helps the permittees to know what is happening on their farm. She added that any additional help for projects like that is always beneficial.

Chair Williams asked if Ms. Breton would explain conservation credits and how the process works.

Ms. Breton explained that conservation credits are added to a permit during the time of renewal or modification, and they can be used during a time of drought. Conservation credits are the difference between the drought quantity and the annual average quantity on the permit times two. Also, letters are sent out to permittees to let them know when they are using their conservation credits.

7. Development of agenda topics for the next Agricultural and Green Advisory Committee meeting tentatively at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 13, 2023

Mr. Dennis Carlton expressed an interest in a presentation regarding the conservation easement program. Ms. Gail Huff requested an update on hydrologic conditions. Mr. Jay Vogel suggested two topics: a post-session legislative review from Tallahassee and a presentation on the wetland

ERP process for mitigation banking within the District. Mr. Kerry Kates requested a presentation on DEP's stormwater rule, and Travis Council asked for an update on the Florida Water Star program.

8. Announcements and Other Business

None.

9. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.