



**AGRICULTURAL AND GREEN INDUSTRY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, June 11, 2024 – 10:00 AM**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Eric Muecke, City of Tampa Parks & Recreation Dept.
Michael Matteson., FL Citrus Mutual
Curt Williams, FL Farm Bureau Federation
Ellen Cruz, FL Farm Bureau Federation (alt)
Jay Vogel, FL Forestry Association
Alan Jones, FL Fruit & Vegetable Association
Mike Joyner, FL Fruit & Vegetable Association (alt)
Kenneth Parker, FL Strawberry Growers Association (alt)
David Boozer, FL Tropical Fish Farms Association
Simon Bollin, Hillsborough Co. Extension Service
Andy Jorgensen, On Top of the World Utilities
Brandon Sites, On Top of the World Utilities (alt)
Betsy McGill, Turfgrass Producers of FL (alt)
Don Rainey, UF Institute of Food & Agricultural Science (alt)

Staff Members

Adrienne Vining
Allen Milligan
Bob Thompson
Brent White
Brian Starford
Cassidy Hampton
Jay Hoecker
Jennette Seachrist
Jeremy McKay
Joe Quinn
Kaitlyn Maze
Ken Griner
Mark Maggard
Michelle Weaver
Robyn Felix
Ryan Pearson
Seung Park
Tamera McBride

Governing Board Liaison
Dustin Rowland

Board Administrative Support
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, June 11, 2024.

Chair Alan Jones called the meeting to order, and attendance was called.

Governing Board Liaison Dustin Rowland welcomed the committee.

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Approval of the December 5, 2023 and March 8, 2024 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the December 5, 2023 meeting and the March 8, 2024 tour. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comments

None.

5. Hydrologic Conditions Update

Ms. Tamera McBride, Hydrologic Data Manager, provided a hydrologic conditions update. The District is in the first month of the four-month wet season. May rainfall has been wetter than normal in the north and below normal to very dry in portions of the central and southern regions. El Niño is transitioning to a neutral phase and the probability of La Niña starts to increase by late summer or early fall, which could drive an active hurricane season. For the month of May, the District typically averages 3.6 inches of rainfall, but this past May received 1.6 inches, which was a 2.0-inch deficit.

Ms. McBride showed a graph of the 12-month rainfall distribution from June 2023 through May 2024. The District typically averages 52.7 inches of rainfall for the 12-month period, but this past 12-month period through May only received 44.3 inches. This resulted in a 7.3-inch rainfall deficit, which is in the below normal range. Last year at this time we were close to average with a -0.59-inch surplus.

Looking at the provisional rainfall data for the month of June, the District typically averages 7.7 inches of rainfall, but so far for the month of June has only received 0.4 inches of rainfall, which is a 7.3-inch rainfall deficit; however, it is early in the month and more rainfall is predicted.

Ms. McBride then discussed recent groundwater levels in the northern, central, and southern counties, as well as surface water levels in the Northern Lakes, Tampa Bay Lakes, Polk Upland Lakes, and Lake Wales Ridge Lakes regions. She showed another set of graphs and discussed the eight-week mean discharge of the Withlacoochee, Hillsborough, Alafia, and Peace rivers. She also discussed public supply levels for the City of Tampa's Hillsborough Reservoir, public supply volumes for the C.W. Bill Young Regional Reservoir, and the water quantities stored in the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority's reservoir and aquifer storage and recovery wellfield.

Ms. McBride discussed the 7-day total precipitation forecast from the National Weather Service, which shows the rainfall totals being predicted within the District. She concluded by discussing the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) Near-Term Climate Forecast showing seasonal outlooks for temperature and precipitation from June through August 2024. The CPC is predicting above-normal temperatures for the next three months. For the extended climate forecast for precipitation, the CPC is predicting above-normal rainfall from now and moving into the fall. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts a very active hurricane season due to warm ocean temperatures in the Atlantic, the presence of the La Niña, and the absence of windshear. The 2024 Atlantic hurricane seasonal outlook predicts 25 named storms, 13 hurricanes and up to seven major hurricanes. June storms form in the western Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. In July, storm origins start to shift East to western Atlantic.

6. District Cattle Leases: An Overview

Mr. Mark Maggard, Senior Land Manager, gave an overview of District cattle leases. The District owns 460,000 acres of conservation lands in both fee and less than fee. Fee lands are lands in which the Governing Board owns full title to without restriction. Less-than-fee lands are lands that the District owns only a certain interest in such as a specific use or development rights of a conservation easement. Out of the 460,000 total acres, the District manages approximately 300,000 acres. Land ownership is pivotal for the District because it helps support the District's core mission of protecting the region's water resources. Each of these properties were strategically acquired through the last few decades to meet the District's areas of responsibilities, which are water supply, flood protection, water quality, and natural systems. The specific purposes and attributes for which each of these lands were acquired provide the foundation for designating the appropriate land use and management strategies on those lands.

Florida Statute (F.S.) 373 states that lands shall be managed and maintained, to the extent practicable, to ensure a balance between public access, general public recreational purposes, and restoration and protection of their natural state and condition. The Land Management section of the District has five primary programs to oversee and manage the conservation lands and fulfill the

responsibilities set forth in the statute. The programs include prescribed burning, forest management, exotic species control, natural systems restoration, recreation, less-than-fee monitoring, resource protection and security, and revenue generation.

Cattle grazing leases are a management strategy employed by the District in cooperation with the private sector. These allow for the continuation of a historic use of the property while also providing multiple benefits, including an onsite presence on the property for additional security purposes, maintenance of the properties under Water Quality Best Management Practice guidelines, prescribed burns and exotic species control, payment of ad valorem and other local assessments. They also serve as a revenue generating opportunity for the District to help offset management costs elsewhere. Currently the District has 10 leases that range in size from 100 acres to 1,800 acres all across the District from Lake Panasoffkee in Sumter County to Gilley Creek in Manatee County and total 6,856 acres altogether.

Many factors are taken into consideration when selecting sites for grazing leases, including existing agreements on the property, unit size, hydrologic impacts, infrastructure, stocking rates and forage availability and condition. Once a property becomes available for leasing, it is competitively bid out pursuant to Chapter 373, F.S. A Request for Offers is advertised on the District website and in newspapers in the county in which the lease is located. An optional site visit is held prior to the sealed bid due date. Leases are awarded to the responsive bidder with the highest offer per acre. A typical duration for a lease is five years with the option to renew for an additional five.

Another requirement is that all lessees must follow Florida Cattle Operations Best Management Practices. Annual inspections are conducted each year by District staff. Cattle leases are currently bringing in \$131,650 annually. District staff are currently conducting a comprehensive review of District altered lands to determine if there are other opportunities for cattle grazing leases.

Mr. Curt Williams asked if the District allows drought insurance and what is permitted for cattle leases. Mr. Maggard responded that the District does allow drought insurance coverage but that it is between the cattle lessee and the insurance agent it is purchased through. He also added that all of the District's cattle leases have cattle on them.

Mr. Dustin Rowland asked if the District ever identified property that would not sustain cattle year-round but that the adjacent landowner could possibly graze for six months during the winter or dry season to utilize the property to get funds back for the District and possibly decrease the fire load. Mr. Maggard responded that the District is currently doing an altered lands assessment and looking into these things specifically to see if there are any opportunities. He also noted that if a specific cattle lessee borders the District, due to the competitive bid, it is hard to say that the individual owner would get the rights to it.

Mr. Simon Bollin asked how successful hog hunting has been. Mr. Maggard responded that it has been successful and that the District has a pretty good program. Mr. Bollin asked if the District's program has figured out the avoided cost of management through these leases for the costs of exotic species treatment, control burns, and management of the property. Mr. Chris Reed responded that they have not compiled metrics for this and that it is site-specific for each property.

7. 2025 Regional Water Supply Plan Update

Ms. Cassidy Hampton, Environmental Project Manager, provided an update on the 2025 Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP). Regional water supply planning is required per Section 373.709 F.S. and is also included within the District's Strategic Plan. A RWSP assesses projected water demands and potential sources of water to meet those demands and is required where water sources are not adequate to supply existing and future uses and sustain water resources and related natural systems. The District's RWSP is divided by four planning regions: Northern, Tampa Bay, Heartland, and Southern regions. The plan is updated every five years and covers a planning horizon of 20 years. The last update was in 2020 and covered through 2040, and the next update will be completed in

2025 and will go through 2045. One key component of this plan is water demand estimates and projections.

The District's RWSP develops demand projections for five water use sectors including public supply (PS), which includes domestic self-supply and landscape/recreational use serviced by a public supply utility, agriculture (AG), industrial/commercial (I/C) and mining/dewatering (M/D), power generation (PG), and landscape/recreation (LRA), which is not serviced by a public supply utility. The draft demands in general utilize the same methodology as the 2020 RWSP. For the District's portions of Lake and Polk counties, projections are from the draft 2025 Central Florida Water Initiative Regional Water Supply Plan. Other data incorporated into these draft demand projections includes data from the University of Florida (UF) Bureau of Economic and Business Research, the District's Estimated Water Use Reports, and the Florida Statewide Agricultural Irrigation Demand Model X by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Ms. Hampton discussed population and stated that it is projected to increase Districtwide across the course of the planning horizon, with an overall increase of over 1.7 million people, or 29%. In terms of absolute growth, the most growth can be seen in Hillsborough, Polk, Pasco, Sumter and Manatee counties; however, when looking at percentage growth, the highest growth is in Lake, Sumter, Polk, Manatee and Pasco counties. She discussed a comparison of the make-up of water demands in 2020 and 2045, showing the percent of total Districtwide demands going toward each water use sector. In 2045, public supply continues to comprise most of Districtwide water demands at 62%, with agriculture comprising the second-largest piece at 24% of Districtwide water demands. She then showed a table and graph to further illustrate the draft Districtwide water demands. The draft projections show an increase in total water demands from 2020 to 2045 of just over 207 million gallons per day (mgd), for a total of nearly 1,300 mgd in 2045. This corresponds to an increase of nearly 19 percent. The highest absolute growth is expected to occur in public supply at an increase of 177.2 mgd as large population growth continues; however, percentage-wise, power generation is highest at approximately 7.6 mgd or 67%. All other water use sectors are also expected to continue growing, with the exception of agriculture, which is expected to decline in all four planning regions for an overall net decrease of about 4.8%.

Ms. Hampton then discussed the draft demands for each of the four planning regions. In the Northern region, which includes District portions of Marion, Citrus, Lake, Levy, Sumter, and Hernando counties, the largest absolute growth can be seen in the public supply sector, with an increase of approximately 35.9 mgd from 2020 to 2045, or about 37%. The greatest growth percentage-wise can be seen in the power generation sector with an increase of just under 1.4 mgd, which corresponds to a 96% increase due to the small amount of use in this sector. Overall, all water use sectors are expected to increase over the planning horizon for this region, with the exception of agriculture, which is expected to decrease slightly at -0.33% or 0.07 mgd, even though Levy, Hernando, and Citrus counties are collectively expected to increase by 1.75 mgd. In the Tampa Bay planning region, which encompasses Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough counties, the highest absolute growth is in the public supply sector with the highest percentage growth in power generation. Similar to the Northern region, the Tampa Bay region is expected to see a decline in agriculture, this time of nearly 12 mgd or 24%. In the Heartland region, which includes District portions of Polk, Hardee, and Highlands counties, the highest absolute growth is in public supply, with an increase of 34.4 mgd or 37%. The only use sector expected to decline in this region is agriculture, with a projected decrease of 2.25 mgd or nearly 2%. The largest percentage of growth here can be seen in the industrial/commercial and mining/dewatering sectors at 65%. Finally, in the Southern planning region, which includes Manatee, Sarasota, DeSoto, and Charlotte counties, there are similar trends with increases in all water use sectors, except for agriculture, which is projected to decline about 1% over the planning horizon.

Ms. Hampton concluded by providing an overview of the proposed regional water supply plan timeline. The 2025 RWSP is currently in development and will continue through next year. Ultimately, the public draft is anticipated to be released in early 2025, with the final draft to be completed by the

end of 2025. Another presentation is planned to be given to the committee upon release of the public draft.

8. Advisory Committee Survey Results

Ms. Robyn Felix, Communications and Board Services Bureau Chief provided the results of the 2024 Advisory Committee Engagement Survey. There are four advisory committees: Agricultural and Green Industry (AGIAC), Environmental, Industrial and Public Supply. This is the third survey that has been conducted. Previous surveys were conducted in 2014 and 2020. The survey was conducted from March 25 through April 5, 2024. There were 48 surveys submitted resulting in a 74% response rate. Nine members of the AGIAC took the survey, which made up 19% of the overall responses.

To gauge satisfaction and approval, a series of satisfaction questions and agreement questions were asked. Looking at the overall survey results for all four committees, the average satisfaction rate of very satisfied and satisfied for all statements in the survey was 84%. This rating has stayed about the same from previous year's results of 83% in 2014 and 85% in 2020. The average agreement rating of strongly agree and agree for all statements in the survey was 76%. It was 66% in 2014 and 80% in 2020, so the number falls in the middle.

The AGIAC committee has a good mix of experience among its members with 44% reporting that they have been on the AGIAC committee for more than five years, 33% have been on the committee one to three years, and 22% have been on the committee less than a year. In terms of meeting logistics, 56% said they preferred to meet four times a year as opposed to two, three, or five times a year. 56% said they preferred having hybrid meetings, and 67% said they would like to have one of the meetings each year be a tour of a site or operation.

Ms. Felix discussed the satisfaction ratings to statements in the survey by the AGIAC members compared to the previous surveys in 2014 and 2020 and noted that the Agricultural and Green Industry were separate committees in 2014, so the results of the two committees were combined for better comparison. 100% of members who responded to the survey were either very satisfied or satisfied with three out of four of the statements on the topics, quality and timeliness of presentations to the advisory committee. 89% of the AGIAC survey respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the role this advisory committee plays in the overall function of the District (11% was dissatisfied).

Ms. Felix then discussed the ratings of agreement for the AGIAC members who responded strongly agree or agree. 89% strongly agree or agree that the District values the feedback provided by the Committee (11% were neutral.) 67% strongly agree or agree that the committee feedback is used by the Governing Board and the District to shape policies and practices (22% were neutral and 11% disagreed.) 89% strongly agree or agree that they regularly share information they receive at committee meetings with the industries they represent. 100% strongly agreed or agreed that the makeup of the committee provides appropriate representation. And 100% strongly agreed or agreed that the meetings are valuable for members as well as their organization.

Ms. Felix concluded by stating that they did receive some good open-ended feedback for topics that committee members would like to see at future meetings.

9. Development of Agenda Topics

Mr. Bollin opened the floor and asked for topics to bring back for future meetings. Mr. Mike Joyner complimented the committee and the topics presented and stated that he was thankful to be on the committee. Mr. Curt Williams suggested a presentation from FDACS on the revising of the new BMP manuals. Mr. Dustin Rowland commented that he was happy to be in attendance and added that committee members should feel free to reach out to him at any time if they had any issues that needed to be addressed by the Governing Board.

10. Announcements and Other Business

None.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.