



**GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026 – 9:00 A.M.
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604
(352) 796-7211**

Board Members Present

John Mitten, Chair
Jack Bispham, Vice Chair
Ashley Bell Barnett, Secretary
John Hall, Treasurer
Kelly Rice, Member
Michelle Williamson, Member
Dustin Rowland, Member
James Holton, Member*
Robert Stern, Member
Nancy H. Watkins, Member
Josh Gamblin, Member
James Turner, Member

*Attended via Electronic Media

Board Member(s) Absent

Brian Aungst, Jr., Member

Staff Members

Brian J. Armstrong, Executive Director
Amanda Rice, Assistant Executive Director
Chris Tumminia, General Counsel
Brian Werthmiller, Inspector General
Jennette Seachrist, Division Director
Michelle Hopkins, Division Director
Brian Starford, Division Director
Brandon Baldwin, Division Director
Michelle Weaver, Division Director

Board Administrative Support

Virginia Singer, Manager
Lori Manuel, Administrative Coordinator

1. Convene Public Meeting

The Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) met for its regular meeting on February 24 at 9:00 a.m., in the Brooksville Office at 2379 Broad Street, Brooksville, Florida 34604. This meeting was available for live viewing through internet streaming. An attendance roster is archived in the District's permanent records. Approved minutes from meetings can be found on the District's website at WaterMatters.org.

1.1 Call to Order

Chair John Mitten called the meeting to order. He noted that the Board meeting was being recorded for broadcast on government access channels, and public input would be provided in person. Chair Mitten stated that anyone wishing to address the Governing Board concerning any item listed on the agenda or any item that does not appear on the agenda should complete and submit a "Request to Speak" card. He stated that comments would be limited to three minutes per speaker, and when appropriate, exceptions to the three-minute limit may be granted by the Chair. Chair Mitten also requested that several individuals requesting to speak on the same topic designate a

spokesperson. He introduced each member of the Governing Board and staff present at the dais (this served as roll call). A quorum was confirmed.

1.2 Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Board Member Josh Gamblin offered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Employee Recognition

Chair Mitten recognized Kim Dymond for her milestone years of service with the District.

1.4 Additions/Deletions to Agenda

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, stated there were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

Board Member James Turner requested the following agenda item be moved from Consent to Discussion:

General Counsel's Report

2.12 Approval of Settlement Agreement – Southwest Florida Water Management District and Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., – Gully Branch Upland Restoration Project (Hillsborough County)

There was good cause to approve the amended agenda as allowed by Section 120.525, Florida Statutes.

1.5 Public Input for Issues Not Listed on the Published Agenda

Mr. David Ballard Geddis, Jr., spoke in opposition to proposed legislative bills.

Mr. David Gore spoke regarding protecting environmental resources in Florida and requested a show of hands in response to a question posed to the Board and staff. The Board did not respond.

Ms. Aja Moore spoke regarding water shortage restrictions imposed during drought conditions.

Consent Agenda

Finance/Outreach and Planning Committee

2.1 Approval of the 2026 Consolidated Annual Report

Staff recommended the Board approve the 2026 Consolidated Annual Report and authorize its transmittal to the required agencies.

Resource Management Committee

2.2 FARMS – Oak Ridge Fish Hatchery, Inc. – H842 (Hillsborough County)

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the Oak Ridge Fish Hatchery, Inc. project for a not-to-exceed project reimbursement of \$178,360 provided by the Governing Board;
2. Authorize the transfer of \$178,360 from fund 010 H017 Governing Board FARMS Fund to the H842 Oak Ridge Fish Hatchery, Inc. project fund;
3. Authorize the Assistant Executive Director to sign the agreement.

Operations, Lands & Resource Monitoring Committee

2.3 Amendment to Easement to Tampa Electric Company – Little Manatee River Corridor – SWF Parcel No. 11-058-125XB (Hillsborough County)

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the Amendment to Easement and authorize the Chair and Secretary to execute on behalf of the District; and
- Authorize staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

2.4 Amendment to Utility Easement to Tampa Electric Company – Tampa Bypass Canal – SWF Parcel No. 13-001-752X (Hillsborough County)

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the Amendment to Easement and authorize the Chair and Secretary to execute on behalf of the District; and
- Authorize staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

2.5 Easement Agreement – ROMP 86 Replacement Well Site – SWF Parcel No. 13-020-160 (Pasco County)

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the Easement Agreement and authorize the Chair and Secretary to sign on behalf of the District.
- Authorize staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

General Counsel's Report

2.6 Approval of Consent Order between Southwest Florida Water Management District and New Florida Ventures Corp. – Water Use Permit and Well Construction Violations – Water Use Permit No.: 20001796.005 (DeSoto County)

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the Consent Order.
2. Authorize District staff to pursue additional enforcement measures against any necessary party to obtain compliance with the terms and conditions of the Consent Order, including filing any appropriate actions in circuit court, if necessary.

2.7 Interagency Agreement between the Florida Department of Transportation and Southwest Florida Water Management District for Environmental Mitigation

Staff recommended the Board approve the Interagency Agreement between the Florida Department of Transportation and Southwest Florida Water Management District.

2.8 Authorization to Initiate Litigation – Edward Medard Reservoir Toe Drain Replacement Project (Hillsborough County)

Staff recommended the Board authorize District staff to file a civil lawsuit against any necessary party for the recovery of damages, investigative costs, legal costs, and attorneys' fees associated with the Edward Medard Reservoir Toe Drain Replacement, including the filing of any appeals, if necessary.

2.9 Approval of Well Construction Permitting Delegation Agreements between the Southwest Florida Water Management District and Manatee County, Sarasota County, and the Department of Health (Marion County), and Initiation and Approval of Rulemaking to Incorporate the Agreements by Reference

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the Well Construction Permitting Agreement between the District and the Florida Department of Health for Marion County, Florida, which shall be in effect from June 1, 2026, until May 31, 2031.
2. Approve the Well Construction Permitting Agreement between the District and Sarasota County, Florida, which shall be in effect from June 1, 2026, until May 31, 2031.
3. Approve the Well Construction Permitting Agreement between the District and Manatee County, Florida, which shall be in effect from June 1, 2026, until May 31, 2031.
4. Initiate and approve rulemaking to amend Rule 40D-1.002, Florida Administrative Code, to incorporate the Agreement by reference, and authorize staff to make any necessary minor clarifying edits that may result from the rulemaking process.

2.10 Approval of Rulemaking to Amend Rule 40D-2.321, Florida Administrative Code, to Promote the Use of Reclaimed Water and Encourage Quantifiable Potable Water Offsets, in Accordance with Section 373.250(9), Florida Statutes

Staff recommended the Board approve the proposed rule language to amend Rule 40D-2.321, F.A.C., to add the proposed language shown in Exhibit 1, in accordance with s. 373.250(9), F.S.

2.11 Partial Release of Conservation Easement – Environmental Resource Permit Application No. 925397 – Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative, Inc. Transmission Line at Pasco Town Center (Pasco County)

Staff recommended the Board approve, accept, and execute the attached Partial Release of Conservation Easement and Quit Claim Deed for the WREC Transmission Line at Pasco Town Center.

2.12 Approval of Settlement Agreement – Southwest Florida Water Management District and Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., – Gully Branch Upland Restoration Project (Hillsborough County)

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the proposed Settlement Agreement.
2. Authorize the General Counsel to execute all documents necessary to implement the Settlement Agreement and to make minor, non-substantive revisions as needed to correct errors or ensure consistency with the terms of the Settlement Agreement.

Executive Director's Report

2.13 Approve Governing Board Minutes

Staff recommended the Board approve minutes as presented.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:19:21)

Resource Management Committee

Board Member Dustin Rowland called the committee to order.

3.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

3.2 Knowledge Management: Cooperative Funding Initiative Governing Board Policy

Mr. Kevin Wills, Cooperative Funding Initiative Lead, presented proposed revisions to the Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) Governing Board policy. These revisions include the elimination of the CFI subcommittees. He explained the full Board would review project information, scoring results, staff funding recommendations, and provide final funding approval. Mr. Wills stated the proposed changes align the policy with the process the Board has been using in practice. He stated the Board will be requested to approve the final policy at the March meeting. He requested that any comments from the Board be received by March 6.

This item was for information only. No action was required.

3.3 Fiscal Year 2027 Cooperative Funding Initiative Preliminary Project Evaluations

Mr. Kevin Wills, Cooperative Funding Initiative Lead, presented a summary of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 applications, project locations map, preliminary scoring, staff funding recommendations, and a timeline. He provided an evaluation summary and an overview of projects submitted for FY2027. This included Alternative Water Supply (AWS), new projects, projects not recommended for funding and withdrawn submittals. Mr. Wills asked the Board to request any projects they would like to have presented at the April Board meeting. Mr. Wills responded to questions.

This item was for information only. No action was required.

Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Committee

Board Member Robert Stern called the committee to order.

4.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

4.2 Hydrologic Conditions Report

A Request to Speak card was received for this item.

Mr. David Gore spoke regarding the pertinence of hydrologic data.

Ms. Tamera McBride, P.G., Hydrologic Data Manager, presented the Hydrologic Conditions report. Districtwide monthly rainfall has been below average. Hydrologic indicators have declined. Tampa Bay area water supply storage systems reserves are in use. Ms. McBride provided information regarding rainfall, streamflow, groundwater levels, lake levels, public supply reservoirs and climate forecasts. She stated the near-term climate forecast indicates chances of above-normal temperatures and equal changes of above and below-normal precipitation. The extended climate forecast indicates a transition from La Niña to a neutral condition and then possibly to El Niño by late summer. A modified Phase 2 Water Shortage Order is in effect and without rainfall, some minimum flows managed with water diversions may not be met. Staff responded to questions.

Board Member Michelle Williamson asked if Tampa Bay Water (TBW) would be able to provide the number of days of water availability in their system. Mr. Warren Hogg, TBW, responded that the system utilized by TBW is multi-sourced and this type of reporting is not easily obtained. However, a rough approximation can be provided. He stated he would coordinate with District staff.

This item was for information only. No action was required.

Mr. Brian Starford, Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Division Director, provided an update to a Request to Speak card submitted by Mr. Vincent Accomando at the January meeting. Mr. Accomando spoke regarding trees falling on his property from District's adjacent property and the District not properly maintaining a fire break on the ' adjacent property. Mr. Starford summarized a timeline of historical communications, outreach and site work completed by the District. Mr. Starford also provided an update regarding recent site visits by Management and a staff member who is a certified arborist. Mr. Starford stated that the District will perform some additional limb and tree removal on District property to avoid any possible impacts on Mr. Accomando's property and within the Thousand Oaks Subdivision. It was also determined that the fire break does not appear to be impacting a tree on his property, causing it to lean over his house. Staff recommended he trim some limbs on the tree. Staff are coordinating with Mr. Accomando to obtain a license agreement to allow a contractor to access to his property if needed to facilitate tree removal on District property. The District will not remove trees on property not owned by the District.

Finance/Outreach and Planning Committee

No items were presented.

5.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

5.2 Submit & File: Budget Transfer Report

This item was for information only. No action was required.

Regulation Committee

No items were presented.

6.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion – None

General Counsel's Report

7.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion

2.12 Approval of Settlement Agreement – Southwest Florida Water Management District and Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., – Gully Branch Upland Restoration Project (Hillsborough County)

Board Member James Turner requested this item be moved to allow him to recuse himself from any discussion and voting regarding this item. He explained his family maintains a contractual relationship with Stantec.

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the proposed Settlement Agreement.
2. Authorize the General Counsel to execute all documents necessary to implement the Settlement Agreement and to make minor, non-substantive revisions as needed to correct errors or ensure consistency with the terms of the Settlement Agreement.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried with eleven in favor and Board Member James Turner abstaining. (Audio – 01:01:53)

7.2 Affirm Governing Board Committee Actions

No items were presented for approval.

Mr. Chris Tumminia, General Counsel, provided an update regarding a legal challenge to Water Use Permit No. 20011794.003, Tampa Bay Water/Alafia River Withdrawal Facility. He stated this permit was approved by the Board at the July 2025 meeting. Mr. Tumminia explained that the parties participated in mediation that resulted in reaching an agreement in principle. The case has been placed on hold for 60 days to allow the parties to settle the final details. The final agreement will be presented at an upcoming Board meeting.

Board Member Williamson asked the status of the Inverness Village IV project in Citrus County. Mr. Tumminia stated it is currently in litigation in the Circuit Court, and the parties have been ordered to mediation. The developers have voluntarily agreed to participate in mediation. A mediator is currently being selected. Mr. Tumminia will keep the Board apprised.

Committee/Liaison Reports

8.1 Environmental Advisory Committee

A written summary of the January 13 meeting was provided.

Executive Director's Report

9.1 Executive Director's Report

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, recognized the passing of District employee, Danielle Sailler.

Chair's Report

10.1 Chair's Report

Chair Mitten asked if the Board had any matters which they would like to present.

Board Member Nancy Watkins requested that correct processes be followed related to Request to Speak cards.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 24 at 9:00 a.m., at the Tampa office.

10.2 Employee Milestones

A written summary was provided.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 a.m.