



**GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2026 – 9:00 A.M.
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604-6899
(352) 796-7211**

Board Members Present

Jack Bispham, Chair
Ashley Bell Barnett, Vice Chair*
John Hall, Secretary
Dustin Rowland, Treasurer
Michelle Williamson, Member
James Holton, Member*
Robert Stern, Member
Nancy H. Watkins, Member
James Turner, Member
Brian Aungst, Jr., Member

*Attended via Electronic Media

Board Members Absent

Joshua Gamblin, Member
John Mitten, Member
Kelly Rice, Member

Staff Members

Brian J. Armstrong, Executive Director
Amanda Rice, Assistant Executive Director
Chris Tumminia, General Counsel
Brian Werthmiller, Inspector General
Michelle Hopkins, Division Director
Brian Starford, Division Director
Brandon Baldwin, Division Director
Randy Smith, 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 August 25 at 9:00 a.m., in the Brooksville office at 2379 Broad Street, Brooksville, Florida 34601. 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

The meeting was called to order. It was announced that the Board meeting was being recorded for broadcast on government access channels, and public input would be provided in person. 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. Comments would be limited to three minutes per speaker, and when appropriate, exceptions to the three-minute limit may be granted by the Chair. It was suggested, if there are several individuals requesting to speak on the same topic a spokesperson may be designated. Each member of the Governing Board and staff present at the dais was introduced (this served as roll call). A quorum was confirmed.

1.2 Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Board Member James Turner offered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Employee Recognition

Chair Bispham recognized Mark Fulkerson for his 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.

1.5 Public Input for Issues Not Listed on the Published Agenda

Mr. David Ballard Geddis, Jr., spoke regarding the United States Constitution.

Consent Agenda

Resource Management Committee

2.1 Starkey Road Watershed Management Plan Update Floodplain Information for Regulatory Use and to Update Flood Insurance Rate Maps – Q199 (Pinellas County)

Staff recommended the Board approve use of the Starkey Road Watershed Management Plan Update floodplain information for best information available by the District ERP program and to update Flood Insurance Rate Maps in Pinellas County.

Operations, Lands & Resource Monitoring Committee

2.2 FARMS – Bentley Ranch, Inc. – H852 (Hardee County)

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the Bentley Ranch, Inc. project for a not-to-exceed project reimbursement of \$277,442 provided by the Governing Board;
2. Authorize the transfer of \$277,442 from fund 010 H017 Governing Board FARMS Fund to the H852 Bentley Ranch, Inc. project fund;
3. Authorize the Assistant Executive Director to sign the agreement.

2.3 Knowledge Management: Land Management Policy

Staff recommended the Board approve the proposed changes to the Policy.

2.4 Conveyance of Channel A to Hillsborough County (Hillsborough County)

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the conveyance of Channel A to Hillsborough County
- Authorize the Chairman and Secretary of the Governing Board to execute the Quit Claim Deed; and
- Authorize the conveyance of the District's interest in all phosphate, minerals, metals, and petroleum in or on or under the land upon the request of the Buyer; and
- Authorize staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

Regulation Committee

2.5 Water Use Permit No. 20 013343.007 – Manatee County BOCC, Manatee County Utilities Consolidated Permit (Manatee County)

Staff recommended the Board approve the proposed permit attached as an exhibit.

2.6 Water Use Permit No. 20009791.012 – Citrus County Board of County Commissioners/ Sugarmill Woods Water System (Citrus County)

Staff recommended the Board approve the proposed permit attached as an exhibit.

General Counsel's Report

2.7 Approval of Consent Order – Environmental Resource Violations: Unauthorized Activities – Placida Pointe Homeowners Association, Inc. – CT No. 426096 –(Charlotte County)

Staff recommended the Board:

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

Executive Director's Report

2.8 Approve Calendar for Fiscal Year 2027 Meeting Dates

Staff recommended the Board approve Fiscal Year 2027 meeting dates as presented.

2.9 Approve Governing Board Minutes – July 23, 2026

Approve minutes as presented.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:09:40)

Discussion

Finance/Outreach & Planning Committee

Board Member Dustin Rowland called the committee to order.

3.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

3.2 Knowledge Management: Procurement Policy

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and Information Technology Division Director, provided background regarding the current Governing Board Procurement policy and outlined the proposed changes. The final policy will be presented at the September meeting for Board approval. Mr. Baldwin responded to questions.

This was for information only. No action was required.

3.3 Budget Transfer Report

This was for information only. No action was required.

Resource Management Committee

Board Member Robert Stern called the committee to order.

4.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

4.2 Initiation and Approval of Rulemaking to Amend Rule 40D-8.041, Florida Administrative Code, to Adopt Minimum Flows for the Upper Peace River and Accept the Final Draft Report

A Request to Speak card was submitted for this item.

Mr. Eric DeHaven, Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) Executive Director, spoke in opposition to adopting Minimum Flows (MFLs) for the Upper Peace River (UPR).

Secretary John Hall stated that in 2025 the Coastal Heartland National Estuary Program (CHNEP) considered establishing the UPR as a Wild and Scenic River. At that time, CHNEP agreed to delay that process to allow the District to complete its MFLs study. He stated if CHNEP reconsiders this idea again, any withdrawals will be problematic.

Dr. Lei Yang, Ph.D., P.E., Chief Professional Engineer, presented information on the establishment of Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) and the associated processes. She summarized the project timeline, the review process, and the outreach provided for this MFL. Dr. Yang stated that although not statutorily required, peer review was performed, and the best available data and scientific information was used. She explained baseline flow information, and summarized the recommended high, medium and low flow blocks for each index gage location. Staff responded to questions.

Board Members expressed support for setting MFLs to protect water resources.

Mr. Doug Manson, representing the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority, responded to questions.

Mr. Eric DeHaven, PRWC Executive Director, expressed concern that the adopting of this MFL may impact the 2018 settlement agreement between the PRWC and Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority. Discussion ensued.

A Request to Speak card was submitted for this item.

Mr. David Ballard Geddis, Jr., expressed his thoughts regarding riparian rights and responsible water use.

Staff recommended the Board:

- Accept the report titled "A Reevaluation of Minimum Flows for the Upper Peace River from Bartow to Zolfo Springs, Florida, Final Draft, August 2026."
- Authorize initiation of rulemaking to amend Rule 40D-8.041, F.A.C., to replace the previously approved minimum flows for the Upper Peace River.
- Approve the proposed rule language, as shown in Exhibit A to this recap, to replace the previously approved minimum flows for the Upper Peace River.
- Authorize staff to make any necessary minor or clarifying edits that may result from the rulemaking process to finalize the Upper Peace River minimum flows report.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:54:11/01:07:02)

4.3 Lower Hillsborough River Recovery Strategy Implementation– Annual Update

This was for information only. No action was required.

4.4 Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels Priority List and Schedule Update

This was for information only. No action was required.

Operations, Lands & Resource Monitoring Committee

Chair Jack Bispham called the committee to order.

5.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion – None

5.2 Hydrologic Conditions Report

Ms. Tamera McBride, P.G., Hydrologic Data Manager, presented the Hydrologic Conditions report. She stated that rainfall for July was below average and the Districtwide 12-month rainfall total also remained in a deficit. Information was presented regarding rainfall, streamflow, groundwater levels, lake levels, public supply reservoirs and climate forecasts. Ms. McBride stated that stored water supplies remain in use to offset dry conditions. She summarized the Climate Prediction Center's near-term climate forecast for September, October and November as related to temperatures and precipitation. A current tropical outlook was presented. Ms. McBride responded to questions.

This was for information only. No action was required.

5.3 Offer for Surplus Lands – Tampa Bypass Canal (TBC-33), SWF Parcel No. 13-001-765S (Hillsborough County)

Mr. Mike Singer, Real Estate Services Manager, provided a presentation which included historical information, a description of the property, and the offer amount.

Staff recommended the Board:

- Accept the offer of \$95,000; and
- Approve the Contract for Sale and Purchase and authorize the Executive Director to sign on the behalf of the District; and
- Authorize the Chairman and Secretary of the Governing Board to execute the Quit Claim Deed; and
- Authorize the conveyance of the District's interest in all phosphate, minerals, metals, and petroleum in or on or under the land upon the request of the Buyer; and
- Authorize staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:21:05)

Regulation Committee

6.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

No Items were presented.

General Counsel

7.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

7.2 Affirm Governing Board Committee Actions

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:21:53)

Committee/Liaison Reports

8.1 Environmental Advisory Committee

A written summary of the July 14 meeting was provided.

Executive Director's Report

9.1 Executive Director's Report

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, expressed appreciation for the informed discussion regarding item 4.2. He explained that although the adoption of MFLs can add additional responsibilities to the District, the benefit is to the environment.

Chair's Report

10.1 Chair's Report

Chair Bispham asked Board Member John Hall to keep the Board apprised of any decisions from CHNEP regarding consideration to establish the Upper Peace River (UPR) as a Wild and Scenic River.

Chair Bispham asked if the Board had any matters which they would like to discuss at the next meeting. None were presented.

Board Member Robert Stern asked about the protocol for Request to Speak cards. Board Member

Nancy Watkins stated the Board sets policy, but the Chair has discretion.

Mr. Chris Tumminia stated that staff will review the current Board policy and present suggested changes to the Board for consideration.

There will be a Tentative Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Budget Hearing on Tuesday, September 8 at 5:01 p.m., in our Tampa Service office. The next regularly scheduled Board meeting is for Tuesday, September 22 at 3:00 p.m., in the Tampa office. This will be followed by the Final FY2027 Budget Hearing at 5:01 p.m.

10.2 Employee Milestones

A written summary was provided.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.