



**GOVERNING BOARD MEETING TUESDAY,
AUGUST 26, 2025 – 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
Ed Armstrong, Member*
Kelly Rice, Member
Dustin Rowland, Member
James Holton, Member
Robert Stern, Member*
Nancy H. Watkins, Member
Josh Gamblin, Member*

*Attended via Electronic Media

Board Members Absent

Michelle Williamson, 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 August 26 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.

1.1a Oath of Office

Chair Mitten stated that Governor DeSantis appointed Mr. James Turner to the Governing Board and reappointed and reappointed Jack Bispham, John Hall and Nancy Watkins. Mr. Turner will attend and be sworn in at the September meeting.

Ms. Virginia Singer administered the Oath of Office to the reappointed Board Members.

1.2 Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Secretary Ashley Bell Barnett offered the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Employee Recognition

Chair Mitten recognized Mr. Terry Burrell for his 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.

Vice Chair Jack Bispham requested the following item be moved from Consent to Discussion:

Regulation Committee

2.4 Water Use Permit No. 20 006040.012, City of Zephyrhills / City of Zephyrhills (Pasco 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

There were 23 Request to Speak Cards received.

Mr. David Ballard Geddis, Jr., spoke regarding the constitution.

Mr. Dennis Blauer, Chassahowitzka Campground general manager, spoke in opposition to closing the campground.

Ms. Elaine Moore, Chassahowitzka Campground staff, spoke in opposition to closing the campground.

Mr. John Meyers spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Ms. Heather Blauer spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. Peter Carter spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. Ryan Worthington, Floridians Advancing Florida Outdoors, spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Ms. Jeanene Arrington-Fisher spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Board Member Nancy Watkins asked for clarification regarding the association between the boat ramp and the campground. Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, stated that Citrus County (County) will be voting on the settlement agreement with the District today. He explained that in the settlement agreement, the Governing Board agreed to give the boat ramp, the parking lot and

the access road to Citrus County.

Ms. Ashley Albani spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Ms. Danielle Mosichun spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. Bernard Berauer, Adventure Coast Group of Sierra Club, spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. BJ Blockyou spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. Austin Brantley spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Ms. Karen DeVries completed a Request to Speak Card but was not present.

Mr. Ben Garmen spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. Eugene Kelly, Native Plant Society, spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. Dean Fraser spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Ms. Aja Moore spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Ms. Stacy Whittum spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Ms. Currie Leggoe spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. David Gore spoke regarding the lower Floridan aquifer.

Ms. Terese Miller spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Ms. Alex Groves spoke in opposition to closing the Chassahowitzka campground.

Chair Mitten stated that there is no public action at today's meeting regarding the Chassahowitzka campground.

Mr. Brian Armstrong provided background information regarding the Chassahowitzka property. Discussion ensued.

Consent Agenda

Finance/Outreach and Planning Committee

2.1 Knowledge Management: Fund Balance Policy

Staff recommended the Board approve the Fund Balance Governing Board Policy as revised.

Resource Management Committee

2.2 FARMS – Sandhill Native Growers – Phase 2 – H829 (DeSoto County)

Staff recommend the Board:

1. Approve the Sandhill Native Growers, Inc. – Phase 2 project for a not-to-exceed project reimbursement of \$64,687 provided by the Governing Board;
2. Authorize the transfer of \$64,687 from fund 010 H017 Governing Board FARMS Fund to the H829 Sandhill Native Growers, Inc. – Phase 2 project fund;

3. Authorize the Division Director to sign the agreement.

Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Committee

2.3 Consent to Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative Easement Agreement – Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract – SWF Parcel No. 10-411-127X (Pasco County)

Staff recommended the Board:

- Consent to the 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.

Regulation Committee

2.4 Water Use Permit No. 20 006040.012, City of Zephyrhills / City of Zephyrhills (Pasco County)

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

General Counsel's Report

2.5 Authorization to Issue Administrative Complaint and Order – Environmental Resource Permit Violations; As-Built Deviations – Piper Road Owner, LLC – Environmental Resource Permit No. 43045609.000 – (Charlotte County)

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Authorize District staff to issue an Administrative Complaint and Order to Piper Road Owner, LLC, and any other necessary party to obtain compliance with District rules.
2. Authorize District staff to initiate an action in the Division of Administrative Hearings and/or Circuit Court against Piper Road, Owner, LLC, and any other necessary party to recover a civil penalty/administrative fine, enforcement costs, litigation costs, and attorney's fees, if appropriate.
3. Authorize District staff to obtain compliance with the terms of the Administrative Complaint and Order in Circuit Court, if necessary.

Executive Director's Report

2.6 Approve Calendar for Fiscal Year 2026 Meeting Dates

Staff recommended the Board approve Fiscal Year 2026 meeting dates as presented.

2.7 Approve Governing Board Minutes – July 22, 2025

Staff recommended the Board approve the minutes as presented.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:27:58)

Finance/Outreach & Planning Committee

Treasurer John Hall called the committee to order.

3.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

3.2 Kirkland Ranch Land Acquisition

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and IT Services Division Director, presented Budget Amendment #25-02 that outlined the specific appropriation funding for acquisition of Kirkland Ranch property. He stated funds in the amount of \$30.8 million have been appropriated by the Florida legislature, signed into law by Governor Desantis, and are to be allocated through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to the District for purchase of this property. Mr. Baldwin stated that this budget amendment has been approved as required by statute by the

Executive Office of the Governor. He provided an overview of the original amended budget and the requested amendment.

Ms. Ellen Morrison, Land Resources Bureau Chief, presented information regarding Kirkland Ranch. This included background, maps and how the property meets the District's Four Areas of Responsibility. Staff responded to questions.

Board Member Robert Stern stated he was recusing himself from voting on this item due his law firm representing the property owner.

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve Resolution 25-07, Second Amendment of the Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Service Budget and Resolution 25-08, Requesting Funds from the State General Revenue Fund for Acquisition of SWF Parcel No. 13-500-405 Pasco County, Florida to appropriate funds from the State's General Revenue Fund for a specific appropriation to acquire the Kirkland Ranch property, located in Pasco County, for the purposes of land and water conservation in the amount of \$30,800,000; and
2. Approve the Purchase and Sale Agreement, contingent upon receipt of updated appraisals that support the offered price, and authorize the Executive Director or designee to sign on behalf of the District; and
3. Designate SWF Parcel No. 13-500-405 as having been acquired for conservation purposes; and
4. Authorize staff to make minor changes or corrections to conform documents or correct errors; any substantive changes will be subject to Governing Board review and approval; and
5. Approve the encumbrance and roll of the \$30,800,000 for payment in the following fiscal year, in the event the closing does not occur before the end of the current fiscal year; and
6. 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 – 01:38:25)

3.3 Review of Self-Funded Health Plans

Ms. Melanie Stegall, Brown & Brown, presented an overview of the District's self-funded health insurance plan. She explained the differences between self-funded plans versus fully insured plans. Overall, the District is benefiting by being self-insured for health insurance. Ms. Stegall responded to questions.

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

3.4 Budget Transfer Report

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

Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Committee

Chair Mitten 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 concerning questions related to aquifer confinement.

Ms. Tamera McBride, P.G., Hydrologic Data Manager, presented the Hydrologic Conditions report. She stated that the wet season has been relatively dry. Provisional rainfall data through August 24 indicates a 1.6-inch deficit from the historic average. Districtwide monthly rainfall since Hurricane Milton has generally been below average. Many hydrologic indicators are declining but still in the normal range. Tampa Bay area water supply storage systems are refilling but are not at full capacity. 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 precipitation. Ms. McBride responded to questions.

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

Resource Management Committee

No items were presented for discussion.

5.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

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

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

5.3 Lower Hillsborough River Recovery Strategy Implementation – Annual Update

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

5.4 Proposed Minimum Levels for Lakes Angelo and Denton Prior to Independent Scientific Peer Review

Mr. Randy Smith, Natural Systems & Restorations Bureau Chief, stated that the District normally only provides a peer review for flowing systems. For lake systems, the methodology is peer reviewed and then applied to develop the minimum lake level. However, because of some unique characteristics with these two lakes which required a deviation from the peer-reviewed methodology, a peer review is recommended. He explained the process the District will follow, and the associated timeline.

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

Regulation Committee

Board Member James Holton called the committee to order.

6.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion

2.4 Water Use Permit No. 20 006040.012, City of Zephyrhills / City of Zephyrhills (Pasco County)

Vice Chair Bispham requested for clarification regarding the additional quantities. Ms. April Breton, Water Use Permitting Bureau Chief, explained that as a result of the groundwater modeling, additional allowable quantities without offsets were obtained before impacts. Mr. Brian Armstrong explained that the issuance of water use permits involves both quantity and impacts. Ms. Breton responded to questions.

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

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion

carried unanimously. (Audio – 02:11:40)

General Counsel's Report

7.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion – None

7.2 Affirm Governing Board Committee Actions

Staff recommended the Board affirm the actions taken by the Governing Board Committees.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 02:12:57)

Committee/Liaison Reports

8.1 Environmental Advisory Committee

A written summary of the July 8 meeting was provided.

Executive Director's Report

9.1 Executive Director's Report

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, stated the District has been recognized again for its communications during Hurricane Milton. The District received the Radiance Award from the Public Relations Society of America, the Golden Image Award of Distinction from the Florida Public Relations Association, and a Golden Image Award of Distinction for the Water 101 educational campaign.

Mr. Armstrong stated the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) awarded the District \$3.3 million for the Tampa Bypass Canal Structure S-160 gate and lift system replacement. This will assist the District in continuing to provide flood protection to the cities of Tampa and Temple Terrace. Mr. Armstrong thanked Governor DeSantis, the Florida legislature and FDEP for the funding.

Mr. Brian Starford, Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Division Director, provided an update of the flooding associated with the Bellows Creek Outlet that was submitted for public input at the July Board meeting from Ms. Kizuwanda Everett. He summarized his and Mrs. Hopkins' communications with Ms. Everett regarding what the District is able to provide. Mr. Starford explained that the Sugar Creek and Buffalo Estates subdivision were built prior to the creation of the Environmental Resource Permitting rules. The District has no regulatory jurisdiction regarding the subdivision. Staff have been communicating with Hillsborough County (County), and he summarized actions that were taken and are being taken by both the County and the District.

Chair's Report

10.1 Chair's Report

Chair Mitten asked if the Board had any additional comments.

Board Member Kelly Rice expressed his appreciation regarding the way the meeting was conducted and the respect demonstrated by both the District and the public during the meeting.

The Tentative Budget Hearing is scheduled for 5:01 p.m., Tuesday, September 9 at the Tampa Service Office. The next regularly scheduled Governing Board meeting is at 3 p.m., Tuesday, September 23 followed by the Final Budget Hearing at 5:01 p.m. both meetings are in the Tampa Service Office.

10.2 Employee Milestones

A written summary was provided.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 a.m.