PUBLIC SUPPLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025 – 1:00 PM
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604

MINUTES

Committee Members Present
Bryan Schmalz – Bay Laurel Center Community Dev.
Margaret Dorge – Citrus County Water Resources (alternate)
Tania McMillan – City of Lakeland Water Utilities
Michael Acosta – City of North Port Utilities
Lynn Spivey – City of Plant City Utilities
Steve Adams – City of Punta Gorda Utilities
Sheree Greer – City of St. Petersburg Utilities
James Kramer – City of St. Petersburg Utilities (alternate)
Greg Harris – DeSoto County Utilities
Alys Brockway – Hernando County Utilities
David Glicksberg – Hillsborough County Utilities
Kathryn Quilty – Manatee County Utilities
Olga Wolanin – Manatee County Utilities (Chair) (alternate)
Tony Cunningham – Marion County Utilities
Josh Kramer – Marion County Utilities (alternate)
David Adams – Pinellas County Utilities
Dan Umberger – Pinellas County Utilities (alternate)
Eric DeHaven – Polk Regional Water Cooperative
Brian Fagan – Sarasota County Utilities (alternate)
Cathleen Jonas – Tampa Bay Water
Erin Hayes – Tampa Bay Water (alternate)

Staff Members
Brian Starford
Devon Villareal
Elizabeth Fernandez
Frank Gargano
Jay Hoecker
Jennette Seachrist
Jeremy McKay
Jerry Harding
Joe Quinn
Kaitlyn Maze
Katherine Squitieri
Kristi Bono
Mandi Rice
Patience Harper
Reed Putnall
Robyn Felix
Ryan Pearson

Board Administrative Support
Virginia Singer
Barbara Matrone

Interested Parties
Lauren Tersen – City of St. Petersburg
Katie Gilmore – PRMRWSA

Governing Board Liaison
Robert Stern

1. **Call to Order and Introductions**
   The Public Supply Advisory Committee (PSAC) of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) met for its regular meeting at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, via Microsoft Teams.

   Chair Olga Wolanin called the meeting to order, and attendance was called.

2. **Additions and Deletions to the Agenda**
   None.

3. **Approval of November 5, 2024, and February 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes**
   A motion was made to approve the minutes from the November 5, 2024, and February 28, 2025 meetings. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Public Comments**
None.

5. **Water Conservation Summary Report**
Ms. Katherine Squitieri, Lead Communications Coordinator, provided a FY2024 water conservation summary report. The District has a robust water conservation program that has been incredibly successful over the years and is a leader in water conservation with the lowest per capita in the state of Florida. Over the past several years the District has developed an annual Water Conservation Report to help capture all the efforts that take place across multiple bureaus and divisions.

Water conservation is one of the 12 strategic initiatives in the current Strategic Plan with the goal of enhancing efficiencies in all water-use sectors to ensure beneficial use. Conservation is generally one of the most cost-effective tools in maintaining current water resources and delaying the need for more expensive alternative water supplies. This is the seventh year the District has produced the Water Conservation Summary Report which is broken down into seven key areas.

Ms. Squitieri discussed the District's four cost-share programs for water conservation projects: the Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI), the Water Incentives Supporting Efficiency (WISE) program, the Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems (FARMS) program and the Mini-FARMS program. She provided the number of projects, the District cost share and the estimated savings for each. She also reviewed a few agricultural programs and utilities services that assist public water suppliers to increase system efficiency and reduce system losses.

The District's Water Conservation Initiative began in FY2017 and is an ongoing, multidivisional effort that works collaboratively with utilities. District staff meet with utilities to evaluate their conservation efforts, provide assistance and encourage utilities use of the District's conservation programs and services. The WISE Program and the Conservation Education Program are two programs that were developed as a direct result of feedback the Water Conservation Initiative Team received from public supply utilities. FY2024 was the sixth year of the WISE cost-share program, which funds smaller projects than the CFI program. Projects may be implemented by small utilities, apartment complexes, schools, homeowner associations, golf courses, hotels and other commercial users. Approved applicants are eligible to receive up to $20,000 per project. In FY2024, WISE funded nine projects at a District cost of nearly $74,000 and estimated water savings of about 57,000 gpd. FY2024 was the fifth year of the Conservation Education Program, which supported six project partners to implement a multitude of conservation outreach components, including educational signage, billboard advertisements, a Florida-Friendly Landscaping demonstration site, direct mailouts and low-cost conservation giveaways.

The District promotes conservation through a variety of education and outreach programs including the Florida Water Star℠ (FWS) program, which is a water conservation certification program for new residential and commercial construction. The program encourages water efficiency in appliances, plumbing fixtures, irrigation systems and landscapes, as well as water quality benefits through best management practices in landscapes. An average FWS homeowner with outdoor irrigation can save up to 48,000 gallons of water per year per home. Through the CFI, the District offers FWS rebates in the amount of $1,000 per home in partnership with Tampa Bay Water. District staff also work with local municipalities to incorporate FWS certification and criteria into their local building codes, including Polk and Hardee counties in FY2024.

The District provides water conservation messaging through both traditional news and social media and promotes several annual campaigns including Skip a Week, Water Conservation Month, Watch the Weather, Wait to Water, and Water 101. Free publications are also available for order or download on the District's website for residents living within its 16-county region. Funding is also provided to school districts within the District's region to help support water conservation both in and outside of the classroom, including field trips, teacher training, classroom project supplies and Splash! school grants. District staff conduct water conservation speaking engagements to a variety

of audiences and provide small grants for decision-maker water schools which are attended by elected officials, community leaders and other decision makers. The District also provides funding to the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences primarily for research projects involving agricultural best management practices, including water conservation. In FY2024, the District funded three conservation-related research projects, at a cost of $293,000.

Ms. Squitieri concluded by discussing the District's regulatory programs that establish effective conservation practices, including water use permit conditions, water conservation plans, year-round water conservation measures and water shortage plans.

Ms. Alys Brockway asked what the watering restrictions are in south Florida and St. Johns. Ms. Squitieri responded that she did not feel confident enough to answer and she would need to cross check to find out what their restrictions are currently.

Ms. Wolanin asked how far in advance applications are due to the WISE program to be approved for funding. Ms. Squitieri responded that she believes it is typically a two to three-month lead time for all the planning and logistics, but the funding is available on a rolling first-come first-served basis. Those interested in WISE should contact Josh Madden, who manages the program, to confirm application details.

Mr. Dave Glicksberg asked for a description of the three research projects. Ms. Squitierii responded that she knew the names of them but would need to reach out to the program manager to get more of a description. Mr. Hoecker provided a description for one of the projects and offered to send a description of the other two at a later date.

6. <u>Prioritized AWS Projects and Potable Reuse Overview</u>

Mr. Jay Hoecker, Water Resources Bureau Chief, provided an update on the District's prioritized large-scale alternative water supply (AWS) projects. Projecting water supply needs is one of the District's primary responsibilities and is part of the Regional Water Supply Planning (RWSP) process. In the draft 2025 RWSP, the demand was expected to increase by 215.4 mgd through 2045, with 145 mgd or 70% of that being for public supply. District staff will be presenting the draft 2025 RWSP at the May Governing Board meeting. AWS will be required to meet most of the projected increases because there are limited traditional groundwater supplies available. The District has historically utilized incentive-based funding to encourage the development of fully integrated, multijurisdictional water supply systems composed of diverse sources. Through the Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) policy, the District has prioritized funding for AWS projects that are owned and operated by a Regional Water Supply Authority.

Mr. Hoecker discussed the demand growth by planning region and how the net increase of 215 mgd growth is spread across the four planning regions. Most of the growth is in the Tampa Bay Planning Region, but while it is expected to experience the most growth on an mgd basis, percentage wise, the Northern Planning Region is expected to experience the largest growth.

The draft 2025 plan will be posted to the District's website following the May Governing Board meeting, and from June through August there will be a public comment period along with stakeholder outreach. It will also be presented to the Industrial and Public Supply advisory committees in August as a part of the stakeholder outreach. The final plan will be brought to the Governing Board in December for approval. The District's continued support of alternative water supply development includes over $600 million of committed funding for seven prioritized regional AWS projects. Over the last 10 years, the average CFI program budget has been about $50 million per year. With the Board's prioritization of these seven AWS projects, $78 million was set aside in FY2025 and that level is expected to continue for about seven years.

Mr. Hoecker then provided additional information on each of the prioritized projects.

1. The Polk Regional Water Cooperative's (PRWC) Southeast Wellfield Water Treatment Facility project includes a Lower Floridan Aquifer (LFA) brackish wellfield, reverse osmosis facility to treat the LFA groundwater, and concentrate disposal wells.
2. The Southeast Wellfield Regional Transmission will connect the Southeast Water Treatment Facility to multiple municipalities along the US 27 and Highway 60 corridors in Polk County. Construction of the 60-mile pipeline has commenced and will be ready to deliver AWS in 2028.
3. PRWC's West Polk project includes an LFA brackish wellfield, reverse osmosis facility to treat the LFA groundwater, a concentrate disposal well and finished water transmission mains.
4. The Tampa Bay Water (TBW) Southern Hillsborough transmission project includes approximately 26-mile pipelines and is expected to have a maximum daily capacity of 65 mgd.
5. The Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority's (PRMRWSA) 9 billion-gallon Peace River Reservoir Number Three project includes a new river intake pump station, new reservoir pump station, and conveyance pipelines to transport water from the Peace River intake to the reservoir and treatment facility.
6. The PRMRWSA Regional Integrated Loop System Phase 2B project will extend the existing transmission system further south in Charlotte County.
7. The PRMRWSA 3C Regional Integrated Loop System project will extend the Authority's existing transmission system further north in Sarasota County from Clark Road to Fruitville Road.

Mr. Hoecker then gave a quick update on the FY2026 CFI cycle. The District received 35 applications requesting nearly $197 million. Through the evaluation process, District staff recommend 15 projects to be awarded with FY26 CFI funding including the six prioritized AWS projects, three ongoing 1A projects, one springs project and five new projects. For the prioritized AWS funding, FY26 funding was aligned with the District's Long Term Funding Plan. In total, more than $98 million dollars was recommended. He then shared some updates regarding potable reuse and discussed the beneficial reuse stats within the District, state and national potable reuse programs as well as the cooperatively funded potable reuse projects.

Plant City initially began their potable reuse feasibility with a goal to develop an indirect potable reuse project. However, after a positive evaluation, the City switched to pilot testing a direct potable reuse (DPR) system. The pilot was initially planned for one year to collect testing data, but it was extended by three additional months to provide operator training opportunities and public outreach. The City was able to successfully complete the pilot test utilizing advanced technologies consisting of membrane filtration, reverse osmosis, and ultraviolet advanced oxidation. The treatment processes were continuously monitored and finished water was thoroughly examined for chemical pollutants and pathogens. The pilot testing demonstrated full compliance with existing and proposed Florida Department of Environmental Protection drinking water requirements for potable water reuse with over 450 regulated and unregulated contaminants being analyzed through multiple sampling events. The City also embarked on an extensive public engagement program with the pilot test to promote awareness of existing water supply conditions, projected water supply needs, and potential solutions through branding, educational materials, facility tours, promotional videos, and a partnership with a farm-to-table restaurant/brewery event. Feedback from the community has indicated strong support for the project and the City's commission approved $1.2 million to prepare a 60% design for a full-scale DPR project.

Mr. Hoecker concluded by stating that the District will not be able to meet the 75% reuse goal without implementation of potable reuse. The alternative water supply, including DPR will be a critical part of closing the gap in projected water supply demands over the next decade. District staff anticipate evaluating future projects to fully realize resource potential and to ensure a long-term, regional sustainable water supply.

Ms. Brockway asked Mr. Hoecker if he planned to repeat the sentence about the highest percentage of growth being in the Northern Region at the Governing Board meeting. Mr. Hoecker responded yes, he would repeat it because it is a region of the RWSP that will be presented to the Governing Board later this month.

7. **Overview of the Quality of Water Improvement Program (QWIP)**

Mr. Reed Putnall, Hydrogeologist, provided an overview of the Quality of Water Improvement Program (QWIP). There are two statutes in the Florida Administrative Code that cover artesian wells. The Florida Statute (F.S.) 373.206 requires landowners to control discharge from flowing artesian wells and plug wells that are a detriment to water resources. F.S. 373.207 requires water management districts to develop a work plan to ensure all known abandoned artesian wells are properly plugged. The District started a well-plugging program in the 1970s that was funded 100% by the Peace River Basin, but by 2009 QWIP reimbursements increased to $6,000 per well and $18,000 yearly per landowner. The QWIP funding assistance initiative was approved by the Governing Board in 1994 and is a cost-share program that incentivizes landowners to properly plug abandoned artesian wells.

The benefits of QWIP are that it maintains and improves aquifer water quality and protects water supplies which eliminates interconnection of aquifers and stops uncontrolled flow. It provides an opportunity to fill in data gaps by the collection of borehole geophysical logs and water quality samples that are formally collected.

Mr. Putnall discussed how properly abandoned wells improve water quality and the upward mobility of groundwater from areas of poor to good quality. He explained the four criteria needed to qualify and the reimbursement schedule. The four basic steps of the QWIP process are that staff confirm subject well eligibility, fill out the reimbursement claim form, the landowner hires Florida licensed water well contractors to properly abandon the well, and then the landowner submits the paperwork to QWIP staff, and the reimbursement is issued.

Mr. Putnall showed a map of wells that have been historically funded by QWIP. The District has either performed or reimbursed just under 7,000 well-pluggings since the inception of QWIP. QWIP has only reimbursed well-plugging in its current form since 1994. He also displayed a map of the wells plugged annually which showed a spike in 1994. On average 200 wells are funded annually.

Mr. Putnall concluded by discussing program improvements. In the future, the application will be a PDF that can be submitted online instead of by email and geophysical logs will be available to the public. Mr. Putnall encouraged everyone to visit the website at www.watermatters.org/quip.

Ms. Wolanin asked if there was a list of qualified well-drilling companies who did that type of work. Mr. Putnall responded that he had a list of Florida licensed water well contractors that can be accessed from the District's ePermitting website at https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/epermitting/well-contractors.

8. **Development of Agenda Topics**

Ms. Wolanin requested an update on hydrologic conditions and also the development of Water Sense labels for household fixtures. Ms. Brockway requested a presentation on Basin Management Action Plan revisions. Mr. Hoecker mentioned that staff will provide a presentation on the RWSP to the committee at the August meeting.

9. **Announcements and Other Business**

None.

10. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:13 p.m.