

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

IN RE:

DECLARATION OF PHASE I WATER SHORTAGE
IN CHARLOTTE, CITRUS, DESOTO, HARDEE, HERNANDO, HIGHLANDS,
HILLSBOROUGH, LAKE, LEVY, MANATEE, MARION, PASCO, PINELLAS,
POLK, SARASOTA, AND SUMTER COUNTIES

WATER SHORTAGE ORDER NO. SWF 25-015

During a public hearing held at its regularly scheduled meeting on November 18, 2025, at the Southwest Florida Water Management District's (District) Tampa Service Office in Tampa, Florida, the District's Governing Board received data and recommendations from District staff and provided an opportunity for public comment regarding hydrologic conditions and other pertinent facts regarding a developing water shortage within a portion of the District. Based upon testimony, data, staff recommendations, and public comment, the Governing Board makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The District's Water Shortage Plan (Plan), adopted as Chapter 40D-21, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), specifies that the District will collect water resource data and water demand data to evaluate Drought Indicators, current regional lake levels, current and recent U.S. Drought Monitor values, current precipitation outlooks, and public supply storage status.
2. As of November 3, 2025, one Drought Indicator within the District's northern counties is classified as Severely Abnormal, and one Drought Indicator is classified as Moderately Abnormal in accordance with Table 21-2 of the Plan. Specifically, the 12-month moving sum for rainfall in the northern counties was at the 19th percentile, and the 7-day average streamflow of the Withlacoochee River at Trilby was at the 21st percentile. The District's northern region received below normal rainfall in September. Rainfall for that month was equal to the 14th percentile. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the District's northern counties are mostly under "abnormally dry" conditions.
3. As of November 3, 2025, two Drought Indicators within the District's southern counties are classified as Extremely Abnormal, one Drought Indicator is classified as Severely Abnormal, and one Drought Indicator is classified as Moderately Abnormal in accordance with Table 21-2 of the Plan. Specifically, the 8-week moving average streamflow of the Peace River at Arcadia was at the 10th percentile, the 7-day average streamflow for the Peace River at Arcadia was at the 4th percentile, the 12-month moving sum for rainfall in the District's southern counties was at the 20th percentile, and the Aquifer Resource Indicator for the District's southern counties was at the 16th percentile.

The District's southern counties received 25% of expected rainfall for October, and September rainfall was considered below normal in the District's southern region, equal to the 5th percentile. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the District's southern counties are under "abnormally dry" conditions.

4. As of November 3, 2025, four Drought Indicators within the District's central counties were classified as Severely Abnormal in accordance with Table 21-2 of the Plan. Specifically, the 8-week moving average streamflow of the Hillsborough River at Zephyrhills was at the 11th percentile, the 7-day average streamflow of the Hillsborough River at Zephyrhills was at the 12th percentile, the 8-week moving average streamflow of the Alafia River at Lithia was at the 15th percentile, and the 7-day average streamflow of the Alafia River at Lithia was at the 12th percentile. September rainfall in the District's central counties was considered below normal, and was equal to the 14th percentile. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the District's central counties are under "abnormally dry" conditions.

5. Due to the factors described above, circumstances warrant that the District alert the general public, local governments, water utilities, and other water users that hydrologic conditions are deteriorating, and additional measures may be necessary if conditions deteriorate further.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

6. Pursuant to Section 373.246(2), Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Governing Board by order may declare the existence of a Water Shortage within all or part of the District when insufficient water is or will be available to meet the present and anticipated requirements of the users or when conditions are such as to require temporary reduction in total use within the area to protect water resources from serious harm.

7. Section 373.246(3), F.S., provides that, in accordance with the Plan, the Governing Board may impose such restrictions as may be necessary to protect the water resources of the area from serious harm and to restore them to their previous condition.

8. The Plan requires the District to assign a Water Shortage Phase based upon consideration of the following factors:

- a. Drought Indicators and Drought Condition Levels;
- b. Current regional lake levels, current and recent U.S. Drought Monitor values, current precipitation outlooks, and public supply storage status;
- c. Seasonal characterizations of collected data;
- d. The relative impact of withdrawals used to supply various categories of water uses on the affected Source Class(es) and any specific water body for which the shortage is declared;
- e. The availability and practicality of alternative sources for each category of water user;

- f. To the degree practical, how the District can implement phased restrictions and other required actions in a manner that distributes the burden of the required actions equitably among water users, relative to their impact on the affected Source Class(es) and specific water bodies experiencing the Water Shortage;
 - g. The potential for serious harm to natural systems as a result of the drought or other Water Shortage;
 - h. The appropriate geographic scope of potential water use restrictions and other required actions, relative to the affected source;
 - i. The effectiveness of current and potential water use restrictions and other required actions in containing or reducing water use to protect the affected source; and
 - j. Any adverse impact of current and potential water use restrictions and other required actions on public health, safety and welfare.
9. Based upon consideration of all relevant information, a Phase I Water Shortage exists throughout all counties within the jurisdiction of the District.
10. Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby **ORDERED**:
- a. A Phase I "Moderate Water Shortage," as defined in the Plan, is declared for all ground and surface waters within the District's sixteen-county jurisdiction.
 - b. Phase I "Moderate Water Shortage" restrictions and other response mechanisms are hereby ordered for all categories of water users within the District's sixteen-county area, except for those areas specifically excluded in subparagraph "d.", below, and shall go into effect as of December 1, 2025. These restrictions and other response mechanisms are specified in Rule 40D-21.601(4), F.A.C., and Rule 40D-21.621, F.A.C. A copy of these rules is attached hereto as "Exhibit A."
 - c. For Water Utility Uses, this order specifically includes monthly enforcement reporting. As part of the customer messaging that is also required, Water Utilities shall specifically inform customers that more aggressive water shortage action may become necessary if conditions worsen.
 - d. The area affected by this order specifically includes The Villages, but specifically excludes the City of Ocala and portions of unincorporated Marion County not within The Villages, as restrictions in those areas are managed by the St. Johns River Water Management District in accordance with an interagency agreement between the two Water Management Districts, a copy of which is attached hereto as "Exhibit B." This area specifically excludes unincorporated Levy County, since restrictions in those areas are managed by the Suwannee River Water Management District in accordance with an interagency agreement between the two

Water Management Districts, a copy of which is attached hereto as "Exhibit C."

- e. These restrictions shall apply regardless of whether the use is associated with a Water Use Permit.
- f. The above-described restrictions and other required actions shall remain in effect through July 1, 2026, unless extended, modified, or rescinded by the Governing Board prior to that date.
- g. Except as modified herein, all other provisions of the District's Year-Round Water Conservation Measures provided in Chapter 40D-22, F.A.C., shall remain in full force and effect.
- h. Pursuant to Section 373.609, F.S., and Rule 40D-21.421, F.A.C., county and city officials and all law enforcement authorities shall assist the Governing Board in the enforcement of the provisions of this Order.

DONE AND ORDERED in Hillsborough County, Florida, on this 18th day of November, 2025.

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

By: _____
John Mitten, Chair

(Seal)

Approved as to Legal Form & Content
_____ Attorney

Filed this _____ day of
_____, 2025.

Deputy Agency Clerk

NOTICE OF RIGHTS

Persons whose substantial interests are affected may petition for an administrative hearing in accordance with Sections 120.569 and 120.57, F.S., and Chapter 28-106, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). A request for a hearing must: 1) explain how the petitioner's or other person's substantial interests will be affected by the District's action; 2) state all material facts disputed by the petitioner or other person, or state that there are no disputed facts; and 3) otherwise comply with Chapter 28-106, F.A.C.

A request for hearing must be filed with and received by the Agency Clerk at the District's Tampa Service Office, 7601 US Highway 301 North, Tampa, Florida 33637-6759, or by facsimile transmission to the Agency Clerk at (813) 367-9776, within twenty-one (21) days of receipt of this notice. Receipt is deemed to be the fifth day after the date on which this notice is deposited in the United States mail. Failure to file a request for hearing within this time period shall constitute a waiver of any right you or any other person may have to request a hearing under Sections 120.569 and 120.57, F.S.

Mediation pursuant to Section 120.573, F.S., and Rule 28-106.111, F.A.C., to settle an administrative dispute regarding the District's action in this matter is not available prior to the filing of a request for hearing.

In accordance with subsection 120.569(1), F.S., the following additional administrative or judicial review may be available.

A party who is adversely affected by final agency action may seek review of the action in the appropriate District Court of Appeal pursuant to Section 120.68, F.S., by filing a Notice of Appeal pursuant to Rule 9.110, Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure, within thirty (30) days after the rendering of the final action by the District.