Southwest Florida Water Management District

Fiscal Year 2026
BUDGET–IN–BRIEF

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Executive Director
Brian J. Armstrong, P.G.

Southwest Florida Water Management District
WaterMatters.org · 1-800-423-1476

Message From The Executive Director

On behalf of the Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board, I am pleased to present the District's adopted budget for fiscal year (FY) 2026, which runs from October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026. The Final Annual Service Budget report has been prepared pursuant to section 373.536, Florida Statutes.

The budget emphasizes our commitment to protecting water resources, minimizing flood risks and meeting the public's water needs in our four areas of responsibility: water supply, water quality, flood protection and natural systems. The budget aligns with Governing Board priorities, outlines how the District will achieve its Five-Year Strategic Plan, and complies with legislative directives while furthering the Governor's environmental agenda through key projects focused on restoring springs, ensuring a coordinated approach to Florida's coastal and inland resiliency, reducing nutrient pollution from waterways, and developing alternative water supplies (AWS). Finally, the FY2026 budget communicates the long-term funding plan, which connects the District's vision, mission and goals with strategic allocation of fiscal resources and project reserves, demonstrating the District's continued investment in water resources.

On September 23, 2025, the District's Governing Board adopted a final millage rate of 0.1831 mill, which is the rolled-back rate. This is a rate reduction of 4.1 percent and will save taxpayers $5.9 million in property taxes.

The budget for FY2026 is $256.2 million, compared to $231.6 million for FY2025. More than $155 million, representing over 60 percent of the total budget, is dedicated to projects. The District will commit $114.3 million to cooperative public and private partnerships resulting in a total investment of approximately $217 million for sustainable AWS development, water quality improvements and other water resource management projects, illustrating the District's commitment to putting tax dollars to work. Since 1988, the District and its partners have made a combined investment of more than $4.3 billion in critical water resource projects.

Springs continue to be a unique destination for both residents and visitors. The District has committed a total of $1.7 million in the budget toward restoring springs and spring-fed rivers within our region's coastal springs systems. These efforts will provide maximum ecologic benefits in strategic locations through a variety of techniques such as monitoring, research and development, restoration and septic to sewer conversions.

The District has prioritized implementing water resource development projects, as outlined in the Regional Water Supply Plan. The budget includes $102.9 million for AWS projects to continue to reduce the region's dependency on fresh groundwater.

We deliver a fiscally responsible budget that meets all statutory requirements and avoids debt by operating on a pay-as-you-go basis. This demonstrates our continuous commitment to increasing efficiencies while enhancing the quality of public services.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Armstrong, P.G.
Executive Director

FY2026 Budget – Key Highlights

- ✓ **$102.9 million** for development of AWS to ensure an adequate supply of water resources for all existing and future reasonable and beneficial uses. This includes $10 million anticipated from the 2025 Florida Legislature appropriation for AWS.

- ✓ **$14.2 million** for the improvement and management of 84 water control structures, 63 miles of canals, 8 miles of dam embankments and 171 secondary drainage culverts.

- ✓ **$9.9 million** for surface water restoration initiatives and water quality improvement projects to treat stormwater runoff before discharging directly or indirectly to water bodies.

- ✓ **$7.5 million** for Watershed Management Program modeling and planning phases to support floodplain management decisions and initiatives and for the implementation of preventive and remedial Best Management Practices (BMPs) projects to address potential and existing flooding issues. This includes $0.2 million awarded by the Department of Environmental Protection for Resilient Florida Planning.

- ✓ **$6.1 million** to manage more than 460,000 acres of conservation lands for the statutorily-mandated purposes of protecting and restoring their natural condition and where appropriate, providing for compatible recreational uses for the public. This includes $2.25 million appropriated by the 2025 Florida Legislature from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF).

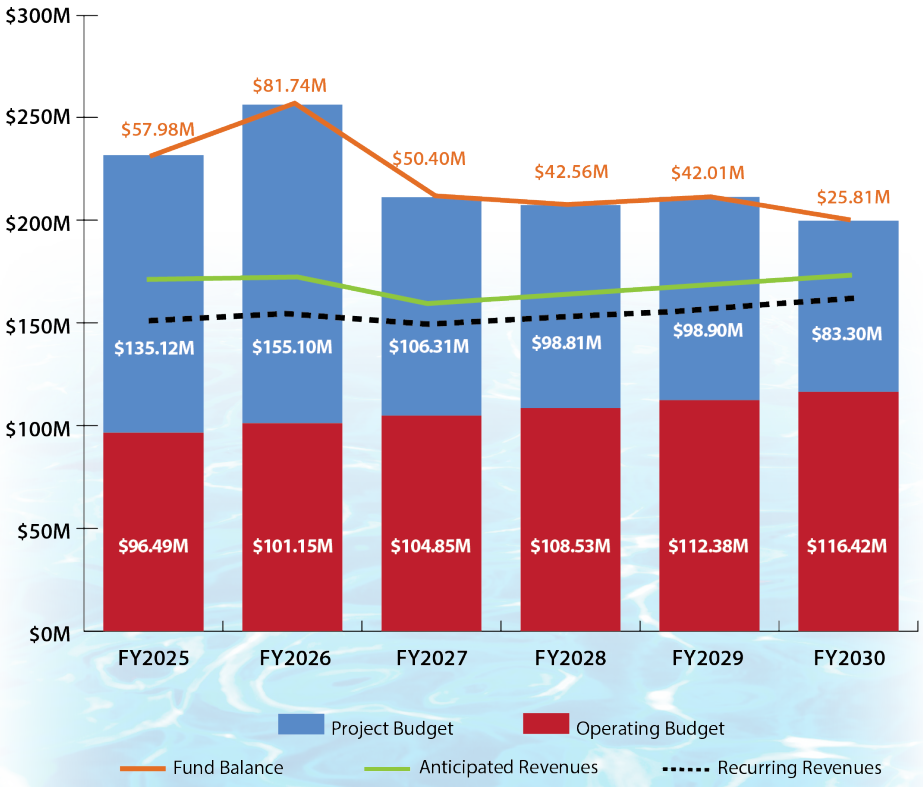
- ✓ **$5.4 million** for the Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems (FARMS) program to implement agricultural BMPs.

- ✓ **$2.1 million** for Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels (MFLs) activities for streams, estuaries, lakes, aquifers, wetlands and springs to support the establishment and evaluation of MFLs and implement recovery efforts to prevent significant harm and re-establish the natural ecosystem.

- ✓ **$1.7 million** for springs initiatives to restore springs and spring-fed rivers to improve water quality and clarity and restore natural habitats such as shoreline restoration, wetland treatment, beneficial reclaimed water reuse and septic to sewer conversions.

Long-Term Funding Plan

The graph below represents a snapshot of the District's financial model. This model shows how the District plans to 1) control its operating expenditures; 2) schedule its long-range project funding needs; and 3) use reserves to supplement long-range project funding. Maintaining our operational costs below the current ad valorem revenue levels (approximately 76 percent of ad valorem) allows the District to continue a healthy investment in our water resources over the next five years.



How the District is Funded

FY2026 Budget	Revenues	Percent of Total
Ad Valorem Taxes	**$133,299,444**	**52.0%**

Property taxes levied on the taxable value of real and personal property as certified by the property appraiser in each county. The adopted millage rate for FY2026 is 0.1831 mill, which is the rolled-back rate.

State/Federal/Local	**$15,205,038**	**5.9%**

- State funding of $13,970,164 includes:
  - $10,000,000 from the General Revenue Fund for the District's Water Supply and Water Resource Development Grant Program
  - $2,250,000 from the LATF for land management activities
  - $1,099,113 for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Mitigation program
  - $175,000 from the Resilient Florida Trust Fund for Flint Creek Real-Time Flood Forecasting
  - $446,051 from other recurring state programs
- Federal funding of $29,694 for the FDOT Mitigation program.
- Local funding of $1,205,180 for cooperatively funded projects where the District serves as the lead party.

Other Revenue	**$25,999,629**	**10.2%**

Various funding sources such as $23,100,000 from interest earnings on investments, $2,168,229 from permit and well construction contractor license fees and $731,400 from miscellaneous revenue sources.

Balance from Prior Years	**$42,438,618**	**16.6%**

Fund balances available from prior years to be utilized as a resource to fund the upcoming budget. These funds result from revenues received greater than budgeted, including the sale of District assets, or unexpended funds primarily due to projects completed under budget or canceled.

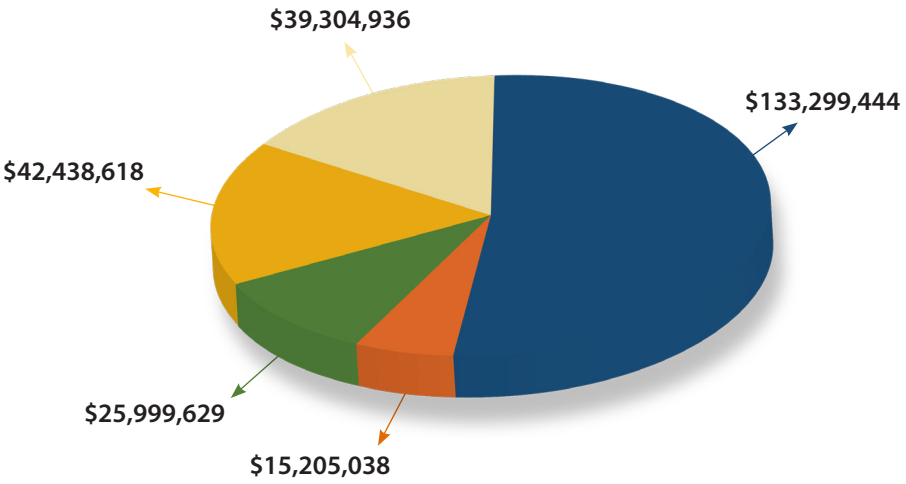
Use of Project Reserves	**$39,304,936**	**15.3%**

Project reserves to fund vital water resource management projects.

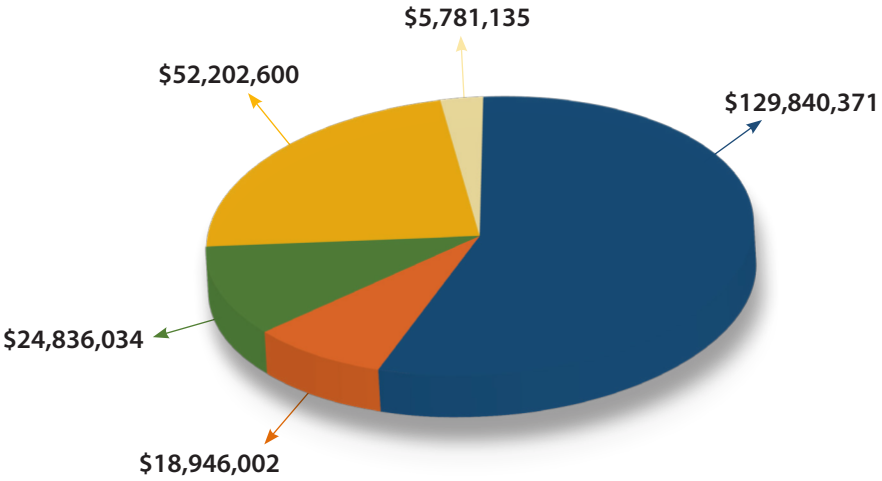
TOTAL REVENUES	**$256,247,665**	**100%**

Year-to-Year Comparison

FY2026 Adopted Budget — $256,247,665



FY2025 Adopted Budget — $231,606,142



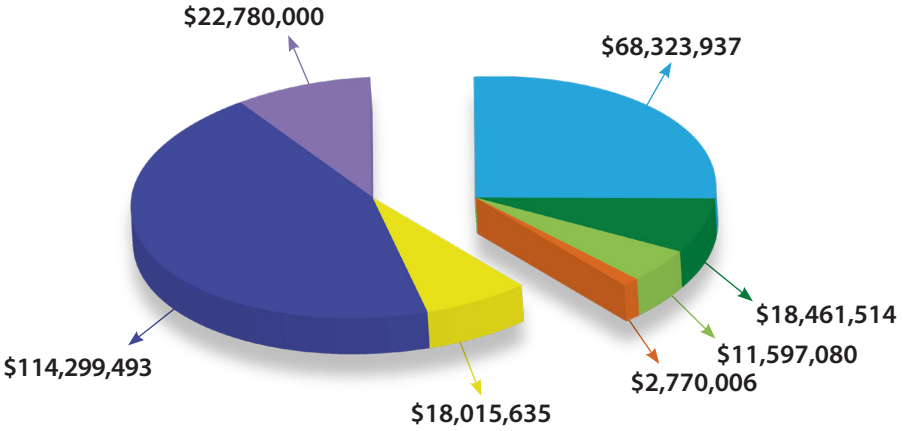
- Ad Valorem Taxes
- State/Federal/Local
- Other Revenue
- Balance from Prior Years
- Use of Project Reserves

How the District Allocates Resources by Category

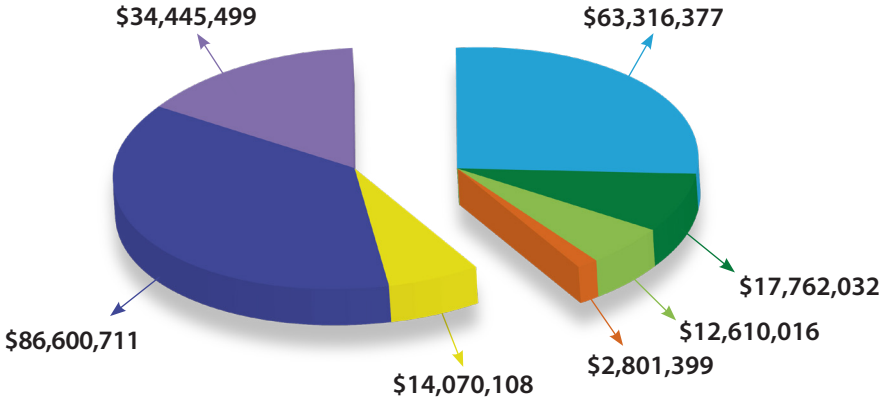
FY2026 Budget	Expenditures	Percent of Total
Salaries & Benefits	**$68,323,937**	**26.7%**
Salaries and benefits for District regular full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. The budget includes 603 FTE positions, an increase of 20 compared to 583 in FY2025.		
Operating Expenses	**$18,461,514**	**7.2%**
Items such as software licensing and maintenance; property tax commissions; maintenance and repair of buildings and structures; insurance and bonds; non-capital equipment; parts and supplies; travel for staff duties and training; utilities; fuels and lubricants; maintenance and repair of equipment; and telecommunications.		
Contracted Services for Operations	**$11,597,080**	**4.5%**
Outsourced services in support of District operations such as research, data collection, analysis and monitoring; land management and use; operation and maintenance of structures; management and maintenance of canals, dam embankments and culverts; technology and information services; minimum flows and minimum water levels; and regulation permitting.		
Operating Capital Outlay	**$2,770,006**	**1.1%**
Purchases and leases of heavy equipment, vehicles, watercraft, computer hardware and other equipment with a value per item of at least $5,000 and an estimated useful life of one or more years.		
Contracted Services for District Projects	**$18,015,635**	**7.0%**
District-led projects such as Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM), conservation lands restoration, watershed management planning, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) research and FDOT Mitigation.		
Cooperative Funding / District Grants	**$114,299,493**	**44.6%**
Matching funds provided through the District's Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) and District grants, such as the FARMS program. The CFI generally provides 50 percent matching funds toward the cost of projects that help create sustainable water resources, enhance conservation efforts, improve water quality, provide flood protection and restore natural ecosystems.		
Fixed Capital Outlay	**$22,780,000**	**8.9%**
Potential purchases of land and land easements, and the construction or improvement of water control structures, wells, buildings, bridges and other capital structures.		
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$256,247,665**	**100%**

Year-to-Year Comparison

FY2026 Adopted Budget — $256,247,665



FY2025 Adopted Budget — $231,606,142



Projects

- Cooperative Funding/District Grants
- Contracted Services for District Projects
- Fixed Capital Outlay

Operating

- Salaries & Benefits
- Operating Expenses
- Contracted Services for Operations
- Operating Capital Outlay

How the District Allocates Resources by Program

FY2026 Budget	Expenditures	Percent of Total
Water Resource Planning and Monitoring	**$33,359,181**	**13.0%**

All research, data collection, analysis and monitoring activities ($17,364,435); water resources planning activities including watershed management planning ($8,875,701); development of MFLs for springs, wetlands, aquifers, lakes and rivers ($1,725,209); technical assistance which includes local/regional plan and program review ($1,063,678); water supply planning ($777,620); and technology and information services ($3,552,538).

Land Acquisition, Restoration and Public Works	**$145,412,028**	**56.7%**

Water resource and water supply development projects such as potable water supply with regional water supply authorities, reclaimed water, FARMS program and conservation projects in partnership with local governments ($112,289,817); acquisition of land for the protection and management of water resources ($17,294,708); development and construction of surface water projects for the restoration of lands and water bodies with water quality, flood protection and natural systems benefits ($13,771,034); facilities construction and capital improvements ($979,000); and technology and information services ($1,077,469).

Operation and Maintenance of Works and Lands	**$31,469,026**	**12.3%**

Operation and maintenance of water control structures and management and maintenance of canals, dam embankments and culverts ($14,326,697); management of public conservation lands by restoring their natural conditions and providing for compatible recreational use ($6,125,116); management and maintenance of District fleet ($3,717,985); operation and maintenance of District facilities ($3,463,753); emergency operations management ($1,029,570); invasive plant control ($446,802); and technology and information services ($2,359,103).

Regulation	**$28,105,278**	**11.0%**

All environmental resource/surface water management permitting ($11,401,546); permit administration/enforcement or any delegated regulatory program ($4,622,012); consumptive use permitting ($4,274,983); water well construction permitting and contractor licensing ($1,059,489); and technology and information services ($6,747,248).

Outreach	**$3,168,113**	**1.2%**

All outreach initiatives including public information activities ($1,542,202); youth education, springs protection campaigns and water conservation programs for builders and the hospitality industry ($1,127,441); all regional, state and federal legislative activities ($131,818); and technology and information services ($366,652).

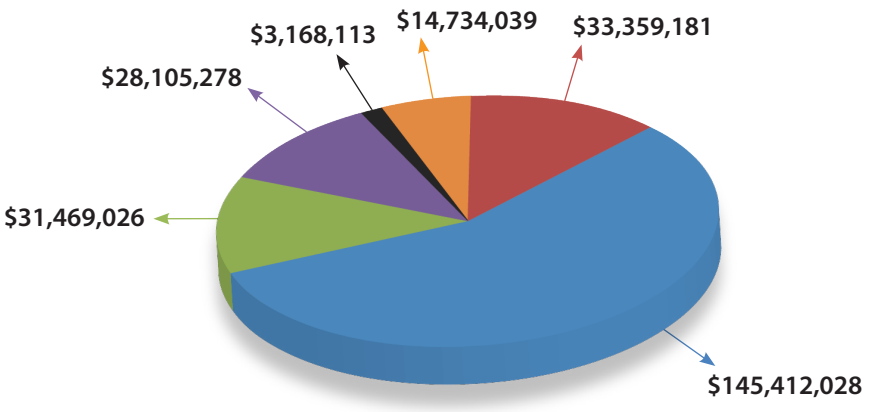
Management and Administration	**$14,734,039**	**5.8%**

All administrative and operations support ($11,455,859 or 4.5%), and commissions to county tax collectors and property appraisers ($3,278,180 or 1.3%).

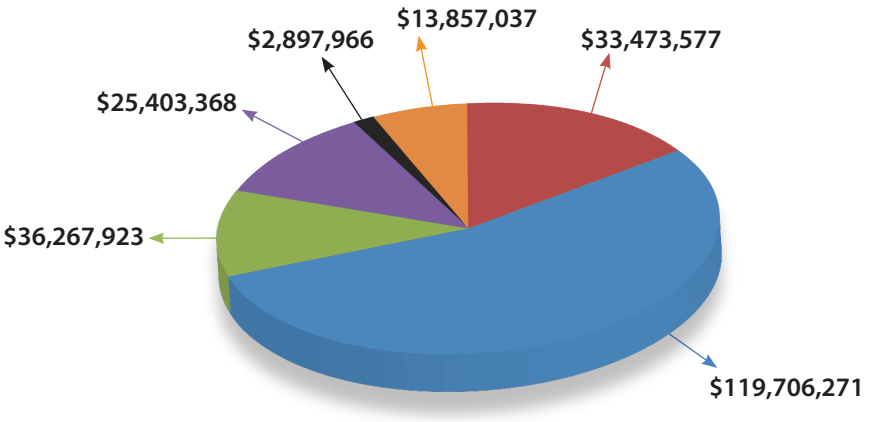
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$256,247,665**	**100%**

Year-to-Year Comparison

FY2026 Adopted Budget — $256,247,665



FY2025 Adopted Budget — $231,606,142



- 1.0 Water Resource Planning and Monitoring
- 2.0 Land Acquisition, Restoration and Public Works
- 3.0 Operation and Maintenance of Works and Lands
- 4.0 Regulation
- 5.0 Outreach
- 6.0 Management and Administration

Mission Statement

To protect water resources, minimize flood risks and ensure the public's water needs are met.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) does not discriminate on the basis of disability. This nondiscrimination policy involves every aspect of the District's functions, including access to and participation in the District's programs, services and activities. Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation, or who would like information as to the existence and location of accessible services, activities, and facilities, as provided for in the Americans with Disabilities Act, should contact the Human Resources Office Chief, at 2379 Broad St., Brooksville, FL 34604-6899; telephone (352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476 (FL only); or email *ADACoordinator@WaterMatters.org*. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service, 1-800-955-8771 (TDD) or 1-800-955-8770 (Voice). If requested, appropriate auxiliary aids and services will be provided at any public meeting, forum, or event of the District. In the event of a complaint, please follow the grievance procedure located at *WaterMatters.org/ADA*.

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