

# Suwannee River Water Management District

January 2020

**Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Land Management Report**

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WATER FOR NATURE  
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**Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Land Management Report**  
***Suwannee River Water Management District***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Land Management Report is an annual overview of management objectives and activities conducted on fee-simple title lands held by the Governing Board of the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) during the fiscal year (FY). The report is used by the District during the Land Management Review Team (LMRT) annual review of District lands which is required by section 373.591, Florida Statutes (F.S.). The report summarizes objectives of the approved FY 2018 District Land Management Plan (DLMP) and generally follows its organizational format addressing key topics that provide information as to whether District lands are being managed for the purposes for which they were acquired and in accordance with land management objectives.

The report indicates an ongoing effort by District's land management program staff to include and participate in water resource-related projects on District lands. It provides details and accomplishments on natural community resource projects which are designed to maintain or improve natural communities, forest resources, rare species, cultural, historical resources, and aesthetic and visual resources. It addresses social and economic management goals and activities which are key components of the land management program and include public use, communications, and fiscal responsibility.

## INTRODUCTION

The District jurisdictional boundary includes approximately 7,640 square miles across all or part of 15 north-central Florida counties.

Based on the most recent District Florida Forever Work Plan, the District holds fee-simple title to approximately 160,207 acres in addition to approximately 127,731 acres of conservation easements (3.2% and 2.6% of the District's land area, respectively) as of November 4, 2019. The District also holds less-than-fee title to approximately 751 acres of access easements.

District management of these lands provides water resource benefits including:

- Preserving floodplain areas to maintain storage capacity, attenuate floodwaters, and prevent inappropriate development;
- Preventing groundwater contamination by maintaining low-intensity land uses within the floodplain and high recharge areas;
- Preserving and/or restoring spring areas to improve surface and groundwater;
- Preserving and/or restoring natural communities throughout the area to support or enhance populations of native species;
- Preserving aquatic buffer zones from high impact uses that have a high potential to degrade surface water quality;
- Supporting water resource development initiatives.

The majority of the lands are considered conservation lands, and most are located along rivers, streams, headwaters, and recharge areas. The District also purchased real property for specific water resource projects such as wellfields, flood storage, water management, aquifer recharge, water resource development, water supply development, and preservation. These project lands are managed for specific purposes as identified in the acquisition.

Lands titled to the District are managed under a multiple-use policy that emphasizes water resource protection, maintenance, and restoration of the land's natural state and condition, and provisions for public access and recreation. Planning land management activities and uses at the ownership level allows for efficient and effective implementation of Governing Board priorities and achievement of goals. The following four goals are outlined in the DLMP.

- Resource Protection
- Public Use
- Communications
- Fiscal Responsibility

To ensure the District is meeting its four land management goals, the Excellence in Land Management Program (ELM) was established in 2004. This program uses quantifiable data to measure and track qualitative goals. ELM is used in conjunction with the statutorily required annual LMRT evaluation. LMRT participants use the ELM scorecard to determine whether land management is meeting the goals of the DLMP by scoring the strategies used to achieve those goals.

Additionally, LMRT participants evaluate if the District is achieving its statutory requirements (section 259.036, F.S.) by scoring the following questions, the LMRT must evaluate:

- Are District lands being managed in a manner consistent with the purpose for which they were acquired, including public access?
- Are District land managers implementing the DLMP?

## GOALS OF THE DISTRICT LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Goal 1: Resource Protection

**Objectives** - ensure District lands are managed for natural resource protection and maintain/restore lands using natural community Desired Future Condition (DFC) guidelines when practical and as referenced in Appendix A of the DLMP.

#### Water Resource Strategies

- Minimize structural floodplain management on District-managed conservation lands.
- Maintain ground and surface water quantity and quality during land management activities by using enhanced silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Restore hydrologic regimes to the DFC where possible.
- Maintain water management structures to achieve their intended function.
- Develop and maintain water resource projects on the lands to improve water quality and enhance water supply.

#### Soils, Topography, Ground Cover and Natural Community Strategies

- Minimize soil degradation (e.g., erosion, compaction).
- Manage and/or restore historic natural communities for a given site to DFC standards to the extent practical.
- Reduce degradation of the existing native groundcover.
- Monitor the grass, herbaceous and shrub layers to detect if the resource falls within the DFC standard acceptable range.
- Reintroduce or supplement current native ground covers with local stock where needed to achieve ecosystem functions.
- Update and maintain current reference data.

#### Forest Resource Strategies

- Manage for natural community heterogeneity to attain a multi-aged and vertically diverse forest, including retaining dominant and/or old-growth trees and snags.
- Maintain the dominant and co-dominant tree species within the DFC acceptable parameter range.
- Reforest within DFC standards using techniques that minimize damage to other natural resources.
- Ensure that commercial harvests provide the maximum financial returns that are possible with the consistent attainment of primary natural resource values.
- Maintain an accurate and current forest resource inventory.

#### Rare Species Resource Strategies

- Protect and manage biodiversity on District lands.
- Track rare species locations, status, and implement rare species BMPs.
- Maintain and/or increase existing rare and imperiled species populations on District lands.

#### Cultural and Historic Resource Strategies

- Protect and prevent negative impacts on cultural and historical resources during all activities.

- Document location of significant cultural and historical resources on District-owned lands and share information with the Division of Historic Resources within the Florida Department of State.
- Monitor the condition of cultural and historical resources on District-managed lands.

#### Aesthetic and Visual Resource Strategies

- Maintain or enhance the overall visual quality of District lands.
- Minimize or mitigate short-term negative appearances of land management activities.

### **Goal 2: Public Use**

**Objectives** - provide resource-based public use opportunities.

#### Public Use Strategies

- Establishing and maintaining public use on District lands.
- Provide Special Use Authorizations (SUA) for compatible public use activities.
- Follow Governing Board Directives 90-2 and 92-1 for exclusive use requests.
- Provide hunting and fishing opportunities on District lands.
- Coordinate with law enforcement agencies to enforce Florida statutes and administrative rules on District-managed lands.
- During emergency situations, staff will assist persons in danger and communicate responses with the appropriate agency.

### **Goal 3: Communications**

**Objectives** - encourage participation from outside agencies, organizations and private citizens when developing management plans for the lands under its stewardship.

#### Communications Strategies

- Obtain public and private stakeholder's input in the management of District lands.
- Use applicable modes of communication to encourage and promote public recreation on District lands.
- Ensure public inquiries into management activities or public use are addressed in a timely manner.
- Complete an annual land management report and conduct the annual LMRT following the guidance of the DLMP.

### **Goal 4: Fiscal Responsibility**

**Objectives** - minimize the costs associated with land management by contracting with the private sector, partnering with other land management agencies and organizations, and submitting proposals for land management grant funding.

#### Fiscal Responsibility Strategies

- Ensure revenues are derived from operations conducted to achieve land management objectives.
- Minimize structural operational management approaches wherever practical.
- Contract with the most cost-effective and experienced firms to complete land management activities following District policies.

- Coordinate with other land management agencies and organizations to complete land management activities to reduce District costs.
- Attempt to locate and obtain grants to help fund projects on District lands.
- Assist with the surplus lands program to ensure funds derived from the disposals of unneeded land holdings are redirected to fund the purchase of higher value, water-resource lands.



## **FISCAL YEAR 2019 REPORT OF LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### **I. RESOURCE PROTECTION**

**Goal - protect, enhance, and/or restore natural, archaeological, and historical resources on lands owned by the District.**

#### **1. Water Resources**

District lands provide unique water resource opportunities because of their proximity to major rivers and their tributaries. At the tract level, there may be opportunities to impact altered water flows and water retention capacities to allow more natural buffering characteristics of the floodplain, such as flood attenuation, to be enhanced and provide protection to the receiving water body. At the site level, many facilities such as river access points, hydrologic facilities, and roads require review, construction, and maintenance to function in the floodplain without adverse water resource impacts. The objective of facilities' design is to make them transparent to high and low-flow conditions within the floodplain.

Natural community and facility projects are generally implemented using silviculture BMPs as a minimum standard for implementation. Silvicultural practices, natural community restoration projects, hydrological improvements, and road maintenance operations are planned to protect or enhance water resources.

Specific Governing Board-approved water resource projects may be initiated for flood control, water storage, water management, conservation, protection of water resources, aquifer recharge, water resource, and water supply development. These projects typically require engineered solutions and have project-specific goals and management. In many cases, the water resource benefits are designed to extend beyond the tract. The District's Florida Forever Work Plan describes all District-wide projects. The projects listed below are specifically targeted for District fee-owned lands.

#### **Water Resource Projects**

- *Jennings Bluff River Access Project*

In FY 2019, the District completed the Jennings Bluff River Access Project to improve recreational access and decrease bank erosion along the Alapaha and Dead rivers. The Jennings Bluff Tract has two popular recreational locations. The first is located on the Alapaha River. This river access had a 30-foot-long wooden stair system that had reached the end of its service life. The stair system was replaced with a poured concrete stair system of the same dimension. The new stairs improved access to the river, included erosion control measures and have a longer service life than the wooden stairs.

The second recreational location is located at the sink of the Dead River. This location is popular for fishing and nature watching; unfortunately, there had never been a stair system at this location. Access is reduced, unsafe, and foot traffic had caused severe bank erosion. The District had this site improved by constructing a set of poured concrete stairs, included erosion control measures at the stairs, and added a gravel walkway approaching the stairs to reduce stormwater runoff velocity. This project has

accomplished the intended goal of improving access and reducing erosion into the waterways.

- *Underwater Cave System Research*

Many District lands contain springs, karst windows, and other geologically significant systems for North Florida. The District has issued two temporary ingress and egress SUAs (2013 and 2015) for underwater cave system mapping, water testing, and research to private non-profit research firms. The SUAs are for 12 separate tracts of land. The SUAs are re-issued each year to continue the research. This research is at no obligation or cost to the District and the information obtained is shared with the District.

- *District Lands Hydrological Facilities Improvement Plan*

The District has had a hydrological facilities geodatabase where any information related to water conveyance is stored (culverts, surface crossing, bridges, etc.). The database has not had any significant updates for more than a decade. In FY 2019 District staff and the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) improved the database making it viable for annual tract inspections. In FY 2020, District land management staff is attempting to update the database with existing facility conditions and information collected on previously unknown facilities. The goal of this project is to have a robust geodatabase that has all hydrological facilities and conditions which will lead to a more proactive annual approach to hydrological facility maintenance.

- *Hydrological Facility Restoration Projects*

This ongoing project essentially stalled due to wet weather conditions that persisted during FY 2019, however the District was able to conduct one hydrological restoration project. The project took place within the Seven Bridges Tract, where the District replaced three collapsed culverts. This project greatly improved the hydrology within the tract by reconnecting wetlands and limiting the impoundment of water. Due to this past year's wet conditions, District staff had the opportunity to improve the above referenced hydrological facilities geodatabase and obtain needed field observations of other hydrologic issues associated with our road network.

- *West Ridge Water Resource Development Area*

The West Ridge Water Resource Development Area project includes nearly 667 acres of District-owned land adjacent to the Florida National Guard's (Guard) Camp Blanding. The purchase was funded by a grant from the Guard through the Department of Defense (DOD) as part of a program designed to secure buffers around military installations. The project provides an opportunity for natural resource enhancement and restoration (particularly wetlands), flood protection, potential aquifer recharge to the Upper Floridan Aquifer, and to augment flows to the upper Santa Fe River. The cost of this project is yet to be determined.

- *Monitor Well Network Improvement Project*

In 2014, the divisions of Water Supply and Water Resources identified groundwater monitoring data gaps areas throughout the District and developed a monitoring well

network improvement project to close the gaps. This project included the installation of 40 new monitoring wells. Closing the gaps is essential for groundwater modeling improvements and long-term trend monitoring assessments. Land Management staff assisted and supported Water Supply and Water Resources divisions in the installation of monitoring wells. The Monitor Well Network Improvement Project was completed in FY 2019.

- *Pot Springs Environmental Restoration and Enhancement Project*

In 2017, Springs funding was approved to restore the site. Improvements will consist of bank stabilization, access to the spring and improvements to limit erosion from uplands. Funding for this project will come from the Florida Department of Environment Protection (FDEP) through the Pot Springs Restoration contract and the District. The project is currently underway and should be completed by the first quarter of FY 2020.

## **2. Soils, Topography, Ground Cover and Natural Communities**

Florida Statutes direct District staff to manage lands “in such a way as to ensure a balance between public access, general public recreational purposes, and the restoration of their natural state and condition”. The District uses existing Desired Future Condition (DFC) standards as a guide for planning, implementing, and tracking natural community restoration/management activities on its properties. The DFCs provide information about plant community structure, representative plant species, hydrologic regimes, and the frequency that prescribed fire or other vegetation management activities should be implemented to help meet and/or maintain DFC objectives. By using these standards, District staff can evaluate the current condition of a natural community and then determine what management activities are needed to help meet statutory requirements and DFC objectives.

Many District lands, including floodplain swamps and other wetland areas, currently meet DFC objectives; these areas are often easily maintained through passive management or natural processes such as periodic flooding. However, many upland natural communities or transitional areas require active management to help meet and/or maintain DFC objectives. Management practices that may be used in these areas include the installation of hydrologic structures, prescribed fire, mechanical or chemical treatments, timber harvesting, and reforestation.

### **Natural Community Management/Restoration Projects**

- *Prescribed Fire/Vegetation Management*

Many natural plant communities on District lands were historically influenced and maintained by the periodic occurrence of fire and other disturbances on the landscape. The District continues to use prescribed fire and other vegetation management tools, such as mechanical and chemical treatments, to manage vegetation within these communities to help meet DFC objectives. The five main fire-adapted natural communities that the District targets for management and restoration work include: sandhills, upland pine, scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, and wet flatwoods. The District focuses on these communities because of their vegetation type or structure, their need for frequent fire or disturbance and their proximity to other wetland communities that require periodic disturbance. Combined, these targeted communities make up approximately 59,594 acres or 71% of the total acres on District lands that were historically influenced by fire.

The remaining 29% of fire-influenced communities consist of wetland natural communities such as shrub bogs, depression marshes, and dome swamps. These communities are not actively targeted for prescribed burning or periodic disturbances. Fire is allowed to spread into these areas from adjacent communities that are being burned, but only when the risk is minimal for long-term smoke-management issues, mortality to wetland timber and prolonged consumption of organic soils. When necessary, firelines are installed to help avoid adverse impacts on wetlands, water resources or the public.

The District has developed Disturbance Intervals (DI) for the five targeted communities listed above. These intervals are derived from the fire return intervals developed by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) for these communities (Table 1). These intervals indicate the disturbance rotation or the number of years that should occur between each disturbance.

Although these return intervals are listed as a range, the District’s goal is to implement prescribed fire or create a similar disturbance within these natural communities on a 2-3-year return interval. This interval falls within the low to mid-range of the FNAI standards and was chosen to better address the high productivity of woody vegetation on many District lands. This targeted 2-3-year return interval will also continue to be evaluated for effectiveness based on field results and any additional research or data made available. From a planning and budgeting standpoint, all Land Management Core Areas that contain these listed communities will be targeted for work on a 2-3-year return interval. When measuring the success of meeting this fire or disturbance return interval standard, the District will use a 3-year return interval to quantify individual fiscal year results. In this case, a 3-year return interval was chosen because it is close or equal to the maximum range for many listed communities and it better reflects fluctuating results that are often influenced by factors such as weather.

Table 1. Fire Return/Disturbance Intervals (DI)

<b>Natural Community</b>	<b>Acres (approximate)</b>	<b>FRI</b>
Sandhill	10,097	1-3 yrs.
Upland Pine	6,722	1-3 yrs.
Scrubby Flatwoods	3,989	5-15 yrs.
Mesic Flatwoods	23,384	2-4 yrs.
Wet Flatwoods	12,685	1-10 yrs.

- *Designating Land Management Core Areas*

Within the five targeted natural communities listed above, the District allocates most of its resources to areas designated as Land Management Core Areas. These core areas contain one or more of the following attributes:

- areas have a recent history of prescribed burning or disturbance,
- vegetation within these areas can be effectively maintained using prescribed fire

- or other mechanical/chemical treatments, and/or
- areas have received other land management activities (timber thinning, reforestation, etc.) that require additional vegetation management practices to complete a restoration prescription or help meet a DFC goal.

The total acreage of these core areas can increase or decrease based on various factors. For example, some District lands contain targeted natural communities that are not included in the core areas because the current vegetative structure/composition inhibits the successful application of prescribed fire. However, if a preliminary management practice such as a mechanical or chemical treatment is implemented that creates conditions favorable for the use of prescribed fire, these areas can then be added to the total core acreage. Conversely, there may be core areas removed from the system because size, location, and/or vegetative characteristics consistently inhibit the efficient use of prescribed fire. Core acreage can also increase or decrease if natural community lines are adjusted or community designations are changed based on field observations or updated information.

The District’s goal is to consistently increase the percentage of Land Management Core Areas that are within their designated Disturbance Intervals (Table 2). This can be achieved by using prescribed fire or other disturbances that cause a similar disturbance, control targeted vegetation, and help the District meet DFC objectives.

Table 2. Land Management Core Areas - Disturbance Interval Status (District Lands)

	<i>2019</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2015</i>
% Core Areas within Disturbance Interval <b>TOTAL</b>	63%				
% Core Areas within Disturbance Interval <b>PRESCRIBED FIRE</b>	57%	57%	51%	54%	53%
Acres Planned	10,500	15,000	13,000	12,000	12,750
Acres Treated	6,308	18,065	6,398	12,528	8,919
Acres That Met Objective	6,040	18,001	5,901	12,289	8,088
Wildfire Acres	0.20	0	29	54	25

Table 3 provides additional information on Land Management Core Areas and the status of their disturbance intervals.

Table 3. Acres of Targeted Natural Communities by Classification

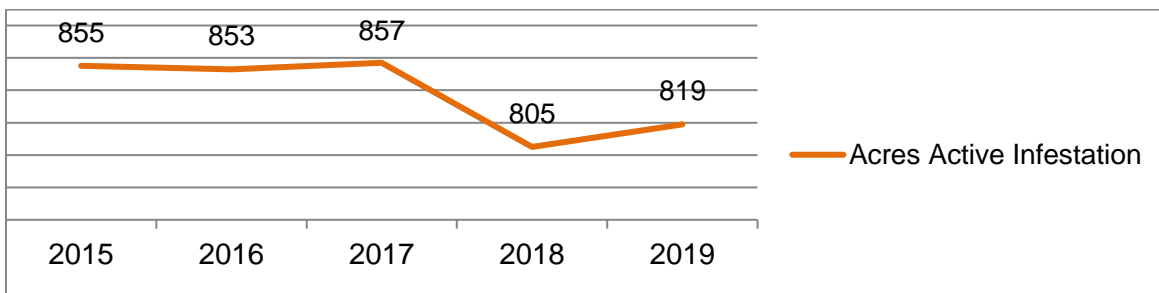
FY 2019	Acres	% of total
Fire Maintained Natural Communities - <b>TOTAL</b>	83,658	
<i>Targeted Communities</i>	59,594	71
<i>Non-Targeted Communities</i>	24,064	29
Land Management Core Areas - <b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,302</b>	
<b>Total Acres “IN” Disturbance Interval (end of 2019)</b>	<b>31,079</b>	<b>63</b>
<i>Last Management Tool Used - Prescribed Fire</i>	28,185	57
<i>Last Management Tool Used - Mechanical/Chemical</i>	2,894	6
<b>Total Acres “OUT” of Disturbance Interval (end of 2019)</b>	<b>18,223</b>	<b>37</b>
Acres, where pine density is too thick or stand age, is too young to safely burn*	9,302	19
Acres within Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area	3,424	7
Remaining Acreage	5,497	11

\*Stand age only applies to slash pine (*Pinus elliotii*)

- Invasive Plant Control (District staff):*

In FY 2019, District staff monitored 41 invasive plant infestations; 22 of those infestations were treated with herbicides. Total infestation acreage increased during FY 2019 (Figure 1). This increase was the result of some infestation areas increasing in size and some new infestation areas being added.

Figure 1. District-wide Active Invasive Plant Infestation Acreage.



- *Invasive Plant Control (Contractors):*

Contractors are used to treat larger more complex areas of invasive plant infestations. Contracts for this work are either procured by District staff or through cooperating agencies when grants are pursued. Work completed in FY 2019 is listed in Table 4:

Table 4. FY 2019 Completed Invasive Plant Treatment Projects (Contractors)

<i>Work Location</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Extent</i>	<i>Targeted Species</i>	<i>Payment Amount</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Edwards Bottomland	Bradford	10 acres	Japanese Climbing Fern, Chinese Tallow, Camphor tree	\$1,980.94	SRWMD

- *Vegetation Management (Mechanical)*

Mechanical treatments such as whole tree chipping, roller chopping, woods mowing, and ditch mowing are used to help meet natural community DFC objectives, prepare sites for prescribed fire, reforestation, and protect District resources from the damaging effects of wildfires. Work completed in FY 2019 includes:

- Approximately 147 acres were roller-chopped, and 2,379 acres were mowed to help facilitate the use of prescribed fire and to help meet natural community restoration/management objectives.
- Approximately 40 miles of ditch edges were mechanically treated on the Steinhatchee Springs Tract in FY 2019. This work was done to increase the width of areas along road edges to provide better fire break capabilities; this will facilitate the safe use of prescribed fire and help protect forest resources from the damaging effects of wildfires.

### **3. Forest Resources**

- *Timber Harvest*

The District harvests timber resources to promote conditions that more closely resemble natural forests. Eleven sales were conducted (Table 6): two stands were final harvests (conditions met to achieve DFCs), seven stand improvement pine thinning, one timber salvage due to a bark beetle infestation, and one sandhill restoration hardwood removal-thinning.

Timber harvest objectives include:

- Reducing overstory stocking to meet desired levels for the natural community,
- Improving forest health by removing poor health trees or stands, and
- Reducing species not native to the natural community.

Planning, advertising, contract oversight, timber sale security and financial reconciliation are part of the timber sale process.

Table 6. FY 2019 Acres of Timber Harvested and Revenue as a Percent of Reported Sources.

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Acres of timber sold	1,615	742	1,472	1,214	1,071
Total Value as a Percent of Published Florida Market Rate for Pine Products <i>(source: FL. Land Steward Newsletters)</i>	124%	124%	115%	117%	114%

- *Forest Resource Inventory*

Data was collected on 143 inventory plots during FY 2019. The data from these plots can be used to quantify the acres that have achieved their natural community goals and provide data for areas that could be improved by timber harvest.

Additionally, during budget development in FY 2018, District staff pursued project funding for needed improvements and updates to the forest resource inventory database. The Governing Board approved the implementation of this project at its December 2018 meeting. During FY 2019, the implementation of the new forest inventory system and database was completed. The process of collecting forest inventory data with the new system is underway, with minor findings leading to custom modifications to meet the land management team’s needs for field data collection and interpretation. Contactor cruising with the new system is expected to begin in FY 2021, to update operational timber stands which were last cruised in FY 2011.

**4. Rare Species Resources**

The District has procedures for identifying and avoiding detrimental impacts on imperiled species on its lands. Rare species are documented on District lands by surveys and opportunistic observations. Species locations and rare species BMP information are maintained within a designated geodatabase and made available to District staff.

To lower the potential for negative impacts on existing species occurrences, District staff can consult the rare species GIS layer file and rare species BMPs before planning and conducting management activities. If potential impacts from management activities are identified, staff will locate and delineate occurrence areas to prevent potential conflicts. Management activities will also be adjusted if needed.

The District also conducts rare species survey and monitoring work on a periodic basis. This work is done to document the location of new species and to monitor the status of existing occurrences. In FY 2019, District staff conducted a rare species survey and monitoring work on the tracts listed below. All new occurrences have been uploaded into the District’s rare species GIS layer file.

*Rare Species Survey/Monitoring*

- In FY 2019, District staff conducted rare species survey work on portions of the Rock Bluff Tract in Gilchrist County and the Steinhatchee Springs Tract in Lafayette County. The survey work yielded a total of 21 new rare plant occurrences. These new



occurrences included species listed as state endangered, state threatened, or commercially exploited.

- The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) conducted Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus Polyphemus*) line-transect surveys on the Little River Tract in Suwannee County in FY 2018. At that time, data was not available to include in the FY 2018 report. Since then, the data from FWC has been received and includes the following: 169 burrows were examined, and 92 gopher tortoises were found; the total population on the Little River Tract is estimated to be 606 tortoises with 1.2 tortoises/hectare. The estimated viability of this population, based on habitat quality and population size, is ranked as “good” by FWC.

In addition to the rare species, survey and monitoring work conducted in FY 2019, Special Use Authorizations were obtained from the District to conduct several types of biological research listed below in Table 7.

Table 7. FY 2019 Biological Research Special Use Authorizations

<i>Research Location</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Research Subject</i>	<i>Research Affiliation</i>
47 Runs Tract	Levy	<i>Siren spp.</i> (siren) Taxonomy	Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
Cabbage Grove and Jones Mill Creek tracts	Jefferson Taylor	<i>Erynnis brizo</i> (butterfly) Taxonomy	University of Florida

**5. Cultural and Historical Resources**

District lands have been mostly reviewed for cultural and historical resources by a professional archaeologist. One hundred sixty-nine (169) known sites were found in the Florida Master Site Files of the Florida Department of State. An archaeological review determined that 26 sites should be classified as significant cultural sites due to the reported description of the site in the master site files. An additional 12 sites are monitored because of historical looting. Five of these sites are monitored by cooperating agencies and are generally not inspected by District staff.

Table 8 reports the cultural sites inspected by District staff and how many sites were recently damaged. District staff attempts to monitor all 33 cultural resource sites annually (i.e. 23 significant sites and 10 historically looted sites) while working on other projects in the vicinity. Inspectors document any damaging impacts by recent looting or other activities. All documented impacts are provided to FWC law enforcement.

Table 8. FY 2019 Status of Significant Cultural Resources Sites.

<b>Measures</b>	2019***	2018	2017	2016
Number of 23 known significant cultural resource sites inspected	2	24**	12	7
Number of 12 known historically looted sites inspected	1	12	12	0*
Number recently damaged sites	0	2	6	1

\*District staff did not document the inspection of these sites in FY 2016.

\*\*District staff monitored 1 additional site located on lands managed by another agency.

*\*\*\*The technology used to collect and process information during tract inspections was not available almost for the entire year.*

The District follows the “Protocol for Managing Cultural and Historical Resources on Suwannee River Water Management District Lands” to avoid damaging these resources. The most likely areas for cultural resources, based on the known sites, are classified “High Probability Zones” and are included as a GIS layer for planning purposes.

## **6. Aesthetic and Visual Resources**

The consideration of the visual or aesthetic resources while managing property is a key component of the land management program. Every aspect of these resources, from facility planning to managing contractors or the public, has visual impacts.

There is a vast array of opportunities to improve or maintain aesthetic values during land management activities. Some of these include timing of operations, minimizing debris or litter along internal roads, minimizing clearcuts during timber harvests, consistency in facility designs, placement of signage, or maintaining the District’s unwritten rule of not posting boundaries or installing signs along riverbanks. District staff has found one of the greatest impacts to visual quality is education. When appropriate the District attempts to post interpretive information about activities (either on District lands or online) however our one-on-one conversations with the public about short-term and long-term objectives have and continue to be very effective. Overall, District staff desires to maintain our lands in such a way that the public perceives wilderness or natural beauty when visiting.

## **II. PUBLIC USE**

**Goal: Provide opportunities for high quality, compatible resource-based recreation, and educational programs to meet the public’s needs while protecting water resources.**

District lands provide many resource-based recreational opportunities. Of the 160,207 acres owned by the District, over 97% are open to the public for recreation. Planning for public uses and facilities takes into account the sensitivity of the site, the proximity of similar recreational opportunities, time, financial requirements to provide the use, and public demand for the use. Within the DLMP the District provides the public with a Public Use Standard which lists allowable recreational uses approved by the Governing Board by tract, including uses that require a Special Use Authorization (SUA).

Conservation lands not open to the public are tracts located in gated communities or where access is otherwise restricted, rendering them closed to the public. Lands classified in the public use guide as “project lands” are also closed to the public. These fee-title lands were purchased to develop infrastructure for water resource development projects, and these tracts may not be open to the public for recreational activities due to the purpose for which the properties were purchased. Public use may be allowed once the project is completed albeit only after a plan is made on the suitability and safety for public use.

### **Recreation Resources**

The District has developed facility standards that detail recreational facility, roads, trails, signs, kiosks, fence design and construction, and maintenance procedures. These standards ensure that facilities provide a safe, aesthetically pleasing, outdoor environment for the public that can be effectively maintained and minimizes potential impacts to water resources. District staff

inspects public-use facilities, and schedules maintenance required to ensure longevity and continued safe use. Table 9 displays the number of facilities for each type.

**Table 9. FY 2018 Public-Use Facilities\***

<b>Facility Type</b>	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Trailheads	31	31	31	31	30	29	30	26	26
Docks & Boat Ramps	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	10	10
Hand & Canoe Launch Sites	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	27	27
Picnic Areas	23	22	22	22	21	14	17	16	16
Interpretive Sites	11	9	9	9	10	10	11	9	9
Restrooms	18	15	15	15	15	15	18	18	18
Miles Trails	228	228	232	232	237	226	242	203	190
Miles Driving Trails**	381	334	332	332	325	313	310	310	345

\*Recreation facilities in GIS were reviewed and updated during the recreation guide upgrades on the web site. The review process allows staff to evaluate the facilities for changes or upgrades of use.

\*\*Driving trails are drivable surfaces owned by the District or other entities that may or may not be maintained by the District. In 2019 administrative roads in Mallory Swamp changed to secondary roads to allow access to hunters. In the DLMP only public and secondary roads are open for the public to drive, administrative and abandoned roads are closed.

### *Recreation Maintenance*

- Land management staff continues to work with IT staff to upgrade and improve operational inspections and data collecting. With new technological advances leading to the use of iPads, cell phones, and ESRI online applications for field data collection, land management staff use a quicker and more integrated approach to database management. The District's field staff have found these innovations to be more efficient and effective than previous methods. In addition, an application has been developed to document damages to District assets during a disaster such as hurricanes or tornados.
- Suwannee Bicycle Association continues to make minor improvements to the bicycle trails in the White Springs area to keep them sustainable.
- The Florida Trail Association continues to make re-routes and trail improvements to enhance the user experience and keep trails sustainable.
- The District continues to re-issue an SUA to a private individual for equestrian trail maintenance on one District tract. These trails are opened to the general public.
- Road access was publicly opened to the Dead River on the Jennings Bluff Tract.

### **Special Use Authorizations**

To protect sensitive resources and reduce management costs, it is necessary to limit some recreational opportunities and the use of certain roads or other access on District lands. Some uses, such as camping and other night uses, require a SUA. The Public Use Standard (Appendix B of the DLMP) provides recreational users with a list of recreational activities that require an SUA. Examples of these activities include all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use, night-time access, or persons with disabilities.

SUAs may also be issued for opportunities not listed in the Public Use Standard. By virtue of the Governing Board approved DLMP, District staff has the responsibility of issuing SUAs associated with activities referenced in the Public Use Standard. Examples include research and data collection, adventure races, trail maintenance, placement of beehives, and nuisance hog removal.

SUAs serves as an agreement between the District and user; it details terms, conditions, liability protection and time frame of the proposed use (Table 10). The District issues SUAs and reserves the right to refuse anyone an SUA if the proposed use threatens water resources, public safety or other natural resources on District lands.

**Table 10. 505 Special Use Authorizations (SUA) were issued in FY 2019**

Recreation	Temporary Ingress and Egress <sup>1</sup>	Mallory Swamp ATV Trail	Non-Recreational <sup>2</sup>	Goose Pasture Camping	Total
379	46	11	15	54	505

<sup>1</sup>Temporary Ingress and Egress SUAs may include recreational use on the Lukens Tract in Cedar Key.

<sup>2</sup>Non-Recreational SUAs issued during the fiscal year include research and data collection, recreation competitions, hog removal, and apiary leases.

Requests for uses that are clearly or potentially exclusive, require Governing Board consideration before any agreement, license or authorization are approved. Such uses may include legal conveyance of property rights, such as rights-of-way or access easements; tract closures for research or media projects; or exclusive use of resources as in resource harvesting. Governing Board Directives 90-2 and 92-1 set guidelines for District staff involved with land acquisition or surplus to respond to public requests for certain exclusive uses.

**Hunting and Fishing**

The District’s goal for public hunting is to provide high-quality hunting opportunities. The District meets annually with the FWC to review opportunities for public hunting on District lands. Public hunting on District lands is offered through management agreements with FWC and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Fishing is allowed on District tracts subject to FWC fishing regulations (Table 11).

**Table 11. FY 2019 Hunting and Fishing Access.**

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Number of acres open to public hunting	106,146	108,298	108,292	104,945	104,945	105,019
Number of fishing access locations	111	111	109	109	107	103

- The District removed the 2,157-acre Bay Creek Tract from public hunting that was added in 2017.
- In FY 2018, the District partnered with the Suwannee River Strutters (NWTF), Gator Gobblers (NWTF), Lake City Longbeards (NWTF), Swamp Strutters (NWTF) and Jefferson County - Kings of Spring (NWTF) to conduct special opportunity hunts with youth and women in the outdoors on the Peacock Slough (1,159 acres), Mud Swamp

(837 acres), Santa Fe River Ranch (469 acres), Lake City Wellfield (1077 acres), Little Creek (681 acres) and Cuba Bay (1,946 acres) tracts.

- Camp Blanding manages the District's Double Run Creek Tract and leases it to hunting (2,030 acres). The Double Run Creek Tract was purchased as part of the Blanding Buffers project and may be used for a future water resource project. The total hunting acreage is 114,345 acres,

### **Law Enforcement**

The District relies on FWC and county sheriffs' offices to enforce Florida Statutes and administrative rules on District-managed lands. FWC and sheriffs perform regular patrols on District lands as part of their normal operations. The District also manages interagency contracts with FWC and various counties to utilize enhanced law enforcement services. The contracts allow the District to pay off-duty officers for enhanced patrols in areas with chronic violations or during periods of intensive use such as holiday weekends at high-use areas.

In FY 2019, the FWC officers who participated in the enhanced law enforcement program spent 615 hours patrolling District lands, the Suwannee County Sheriff's Office spent 40 hours patrolling Suwannee and Falmouth Springs, and Jefferson County Sheriff's Office spent 45 hours patrolling Goose Pasture Campground. Officers patrol on Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day. FWC made several significant cases involving vandalism and archeological looting to District lands. In the Northwest Region, persons charged with littering are paying restitution to the District for trash removal expenses.

### **Emergencies**

Staff encourages the public to dial 911 when emergencies arise on District lands. During emergencies involving facilities, natural disturbances, or hazard materials, the District's land management staff play an integral role. The District maintains a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) required by the Florida Department of Emergency Management and has an active District Staff Safety Team that is organized internally.

The COOP addresses coordinated post-disaster response and recovery, rapid deployment, and pre-deployment of resources, communications, and warning systems, and presents annual exercises to determine the District's ability to respond to an emergency. The essential role for land management staff during emergencies is associated with facilities and field operations and the safety of District lands for public access.

The District has established Tract Closing Procedures, which are followed during events that require COOP activation (e.g. hurricanes) or when conditions become unsafe for public access (e.g. flooding). Table 12 identifies all District tracts, facilities or roads that were closed in FY 2019 due to emergencies, extreme weather events, or vandalism.

Table 12. FY 2019 District Land Closures

Tract, Facilities or Roads	County	Closure Date	Event
All District lands		10/9/2018	Hurricane Michael
Suwannee River tracts		12/8/2018	River Flooding
Steinhatchee River tracts		12/21/2018	River Flooding
Goose Pasture Campground Park	Jefferson	2/15/19	Vandalism/Repairs
Withlacoochee (Pot Springs)	Hamilton	6/4/2019	Renovation
Jennings Bluff Tract	Hamilton	6/12/2019	Renovation
Christian Tract	Suwannee	3/20/2019	Timber Harvest
Roline Tract	Hamilton	7/19/2019	Timber Harvest
Devil's Hammock Tract	Levy County	8/16/2019	River Flooding
Steinhatchee River tracts	Lafayette County	8/16/19	River Flooding
All District lands west of the Suwannee River		10/18/2019	Hurricane Dorian

### III. COMMUNICATIONS

#### Goal – Coordinate with Public and Private Stakeholders in the Management of District Lands.

The District encourages public and private stakeholder input for the management of District lands. Communication opportunities and public inquiries into management activities and recreation are facilitated through a variety of applications including but not limited to, phone calls, mail, print materials, press releases, outreach activities, social media, website, and other electronic applications. Discussions during the Land Management Review Team (LMRT) and comments received during the Excellence in Land Management (ELM) process are important communication opportunities that staff utilizes to determine management effectiveness each year.

#### FY 2019 Land Management Review Team

District staff conducted an LMRT meeting and tour in the Santa Fe River basin in Alachua and Gilchrist counties on March 27, 2019. The reviews focused on activities conducted during FY 2018. The areas of the review included water resources, natural resource management, public use, and facilities in representative areas. The area encompasses 15,687 acres of fee land. The LMRT participants were asked to score whether the District was achieving its objectives using the following scores:

- 0 – not meeting objectives;
- 1 – meeting objectives; and
- 2 – exceeding objectives.

Nine strategies from the DLMP were scored on the review ranging from a low of 1.31 for soils, topography, natural community and groundcover management to a high score of 1.94 for Forest resource management. Water resource objectives were scored 1.50. The overall average score of the nine objectives was 1.58 signifying that the activities were both meeting and exceeding the Governing Board's objectives. The overall average score of 1.58 was slightly higher than last year's LMRT (1.58 compared to 1.54). The average score for "managed for purposes acquired" was higher than last year (1.63 compared to 1.61). The average score for "in

accordance with Management Plan” was higher than last year (1.75 compared to 1.56). The participants’ scores indicated substantial acceptance with the programmatic achievement of the management strategies set by the Governing Board and Florida Statutes. Overall, the participants approve the planning and methods used by District staff in managing the District’s fee owned lands in FY 2018. Questions and responses to the statutory component of this review are summarized in Table 13.

Table 13. Questionnaire Responses from the District’s LMRT Meeting.

<b>Question 1</b> Number of Responses	<b>Are District lands being managed in a manner consistent with the purpose for which they were acquired, including public access?</b>
0	SRWMD is not in compliance.
4	SRWMD compliance is adequate and acceptable.
12	SRWMD exceeds compliance regularly.
<b>Question 2</b> Number of Responses	<b>Does SRWMD land management implement the goals identified in the District Land Management Plan?</b>
0	SRWMD is not in compliance.
6	SRWMD compliance is adequate and acceptable.
10	SRWMD exceeds compliance regularly.

*Note: Total scores may differ due to non-response on questionnaire.*

### **District Land Management Plan**

On March 13, 2018, the Governing Board adopted an updated DLMP which retains the goals and guidance of the 2011 DLMP. A new section was added called Land Management Operations and Facilities. The section outlines the minimum requirements for operational activities such as the District’s DFC and silviculture best management practices. The new section also provided direction in five core programs: timber management, invasive exotic management, vegetation management, and fuel loading, road and hydrologic facility Management, and public use management.

The DLMP requires that staff create and maintain documents detailing standards or guidelines for each program. These standards are approved by the District’s Executive Office and are meant to communicate how each program functions, what is required, explain management activities, provide reliable information to users, and improve land management continuity while achieving ELM goals. As of December 18, 2019, four of the five program standards are being reviewed by District leadership. All are to be adopted by the Executive Office in FY 2020.

### **Land Management Communication Initiatives**

- Land management staff aided District communications staff with current status and information about District lands during Hurricane Dorian.
- All Annual Land Management Reports and the District Land Management plan are on the District’s website.
- Staff continues to provide images and text for District’s social media outreach efforts including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

- Staff continues to use the “Important Notices” feature on the District web page to provide information to the public regarding flooding, tract closures and management activities which may affect public use.
- Staff completed six presentations about public use of District lands in FY 2019.
- Staff completed six new kiosk panels in FY 2019.

### **Regional Resource Group Participation**

District staff participates in regional groups in order to provide input, understand issues, or gain more knowledge about managing publicly owned conservation lands.

- North Florida Prescribed Fire Council
- San Pedro Bay Landowners Association
- FWC - Invasive Plant Management Section’s Weed Control Project
- USFS/Florida Trail Association (Florida National Scenic Trail)
- Suwannee Bicycle Association
- Sheriff Posse Adventure Racing
- Natural Resources Leadership Institute
- FWC Wildlife Management Areas and Management Plan
- National Wild Turkey Federation and five local chapters
- Florida Master Loggers
- Society of American Foresters
- Florida Forestry Association
- North Central Florida Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area
- Florida Forest Stewardship Program

## **IV. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Goal: Protect resources and efficiently manage District lands within the District’s annual budget.**

District staff minimizes the costs associated with land management by contracting with the private sector, partnering with other land management agencies and organizations, and submitting proposals for land management grant funding.

### **Facility Construction and Maintenance**

- In FY 2014, the District reduced road coverage, revised management practices, and added a progressive review and approval process for general road maintenance. The culmination of this effort was a new road maintenance plan that centers on a three-year rotation for all roads deemed necessary for public access. In recent years, the District has had renewed interest in increasing timber harvests which have required additional road maintenance. There has also been renewed public and stakeholder interest in road maintenance on the Mallory Swamp Tract. The increased attention has challenged staff with adhering to the District-wide three-year rotation due to the amount of time and resources necessary to accomplish these activities.



- In FY 2019, the District completed approximately 44 miles of road maintenance on Mallory Swamp, Scanlon, Roline, Goose Pasture Campground, 47 Bridge, Santa Fe River Ranch, Holton Creek, and Seven Bridges tracts. Of the 44 total miles of roadwork completed in FY 2019, approximately five miles were associated with timber harvests.
- Jennings Bluff River Access Project was built using a local contractor to design-build the project. District staff collaborated with the contractor using his experience in building concrete facilities and other structures while taking into consideration the environmental conditions and keeping the area as natural as possible. The project cost was divided into construction and materials. The District purchased all materials for the project saving approximately seven percent.
- The District has a five-year rotation plan to mark and paint District land boundaries. The District has approximately 1,000 miles of property boundary line with twenty-five (25) miles being marked or painted in FY 2019. The number of miles completed in FY 2019 was not planned and is considerably less than normal years. This was due to unforeseen contract issues. However, the District remains ahead of schedule regarding boundary line maintenance. Some boundaries were painted in year four instead of year five.

**Cooperative Management Agreements**

The District enters into cooperative management agreements and/or leases with government agencies to reduce the cost of management to the District (Table 14) while providing similar management and protection and public access.

Table 14. Agencies Managing District lands.

<b>Managing Agency</b>	<b>Tracts</b>	<b>Acres</b>
<i>No Cost Management Agreements</i>		
Alachua County	2	222
City of Lake City	1	27
City of Newberry	1	61
City of White Springs	1	7
Columbia County	2	96
Florida Department of Environmental Protection	9	1,980
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	2	862
Florida National Guard	2	2,678
Gilchrist County	1	513
Hamilton County	3	17
Jefferson County	1	22
Levy County	1	4,274
University of Florida	2	738
US Fish and Wildlife Service	5	1,635
<b>No Cost Management Total Acres:</b>		<b>13,132</b>

<i>Shared Revenue Agreements</i>		
Alachua Conservation Trust	1	170
Florida Forest Service	13	12,444
<b>Shared Revenue Total Acres</b>		<b>12,614</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>25,746</b>

Under a lease agreement, the Florida Forest Service (FFS) manages approximately 12,444 acres of District lands as part of the Twin Rivers State Forest. As part of the lease, the District has agreed to reimburse the state for expenses each year. In FY 2019, there were a total of \$140,435 state expenses, which the District reimbursed.

Additionally, the District has a cooperative management agreement with FFS for lands not under lease at Twin Rivers State Forest. This agreement is used primarily to allow FFS to install firelines and conduct prescribed fires on District lands. This agreement reduces District costs since the FFS rate for prescribed burning is typically less than the District’s private contractor’s rates. In FY 2019 the District reimbursed the FFS a total of \$7,743 for prescribed fire activities.

RO Ranch Equestrian Park is located on the District-owned R. O. Ranch Tract which contains various structures and facilities that must be maintained. The R .O. Park was managed by R. O. Ranch, Inc., a Florida not-for-profit corporation, from 2006 to 2016. The R. O. Park area where the majority of the buildings and structures are located is currently closed to the public. However, many of the equestrian trails are still open for public use. In FY 2019 the District spent \$23,723 on building and property maintenance, utilities, and trails.

In January 2019, the District entered into a cooperative management agreement with Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT), a Florida not-for-profit corporation, to manage the District-owned J.H. Anderson, Jr., Memorial Park – Rock Bluff Springs Tract. At the time of the agreement, a management plan was approved that detailed the responsibilities of each party. As part of this management plan, the District agreed to provide quarterly funding until October 1, 2021 (\$14,843 per quarter) and allowing ACT to charge an entrance fee provided that revenues generated by ACT through fees would be used to fund ACT’s budget and any remaining funds should be returned to the District. In FY 2019, the District paid ACT \$46,125 for operational expenses. An additional \$4,200 was spent by the District on supplies needed for the opening of the property to the public.

Public hunting is provided on 106,146 acres (66%) of District-owned lands in cooperation with FWC and USFWS. These agencies manage hunting dates and limits and provide law enforcement at no cost to the District. No fees for hunting are charged by the District.

The District has agreements with private and public entities to provide trail maintenance for 162 miles (70%) of the bike, horse, and multi-use trails on District lands. These trails are maintained at no cost to the District and available for use by the general public.

**Grant Applications and Awards**

In FY 2019, the District received grant funding from the following sources to help reduce the cost of natural community management.

Florida Forest Service Prescribed Fire Enhancement Program:

- The District was reimbursed \$94,719.50 for completing approximately 370 acres of woods mowing and roller chopping work on the Little Creek, Steinhatchee Springs, Steinhatchee Falls, Mattair Springs, and Adams tracts in Suwannee, Columbia, and Lafayette counties. This work was done to help reduce fuel loads, facilitate the use of prescribed fire, and help meet natural community DFC objectives.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partner's for Fish and Wildlife Program:

- The District received \$23,100.00 to apply herbicide on approximately 207 acres of the Christian and Mattair Springs tracts in Suwannee County. The District hopes to expend these funds during spring or early summer of FY 2020. Objectives are to control woody vegetation, help reduce fuel loads, facilitate the use of prescribed fire, and advance ongoing upland restoration efforts on these sites to meet natural community DFC objectives.

### **Revenues and Expenditures**

The District has opportunities to generate revenues while implementing its natural resource management activities (Table 15). Timber sales generate the vast majority of revenue from land management activities.

Table 15. FY 2019 Land Resources Revenues.

<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 2019</b>
Timber	\$1,128,241
Land Use (Apiary Leases)	\$50
Access Easements	\$915
Grants*	\$94,719
State Appropriation (Operations)	\$1,777,210
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,001,135</b>

\*Does not include awarded grants (funds have not yet been received).

In FY 2019, the District sold an estimated 81,500 tons of pine timber in 11 sales on 1,615 acres. The sales were a stand conversion clear-cuts, pine thinnings, bark beetle infestation salvage, and a sandhill restoration hardwood removal. Total gross revenues are estimated (since all sales have not been completed as of October 1, 2019) to be \$ 1,777,704.

Expenditures in the land management program are divided into categories for budgeting as follows (Table 16):

- Natural Resource Management – includes water resource projects, reforestation, timber sales, protected species, and vegetative management outside of prescribed fire.
- Invasive Plant Management – includes the costs associated with invasive plant treatments including hiring private contractors and staff time/field supplies needed to conduct in-house treatments.

- Prescribed Fire – private contractor costs and supplies for prescribed burning and fire-line establishment and maintenance.
- Public Use – includes expenses for maintaining site-based and dispersed recreation activities, developing new sites, signs, maps, brochures, and sanitation.
- Facility and Road Management – includes costs for maintaining roads, hydrologic structures, boundaries, rental equipment, gates, debris removal, and other facility improvement projects.
- Administration and Planning – includes expenses for planning, GIS, real-estate activities, fees, permits, training, management plans and reviews, interagency law enforcement coordination, and other operational expenses.

Table 16. FY 2019 Land Resources Expenditures.

<b>Category*</b>	<b>FY 2019</b>
Natural Resource Management	\$516,506
Exotic Invasive Management	\$996
Prescribed Fire	\$435,205
Public Use	\$198,087
Facility & Road Management.	\$351,152
Administration and Planning	\$38,249
Salaries and Benefits	\$502,771
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,042,966</b>

*\*Does not include Payments in Lieu of Taxes, Florida Forest Service Agreement Expenditures, RO Ranch Equestrian Park Expenditures, and Rock Bluff Springs Expenditures.*

**Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT)**

When the District purchases land in fee simple (all ownership rights), the lands are taken off the county ad valorem tax roll. The Legislature established a payment in lieu of taxes program in 1992 to reimburse local governments for the loss of revenue. To qualify for this program, the county must have a population of less than 150,000. Payments were made to counties in the amount of \$338,482. The state appropriated the District’s \$352,909 for PILT in FY 2019.

**Land Acquisitions**

District lands are acquired following Section 373.139 F.S. and 40B-9 Florida Administrative Code. District staff who are involved in processing acquisition related activities are guided by Governing Board Directive 19-0005. Table 17 is a list of acquisitions completed in FY 2019.

Table 17: FY 2019 Land Acquisitions.

<b>Tract</b>	<b>Seller</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Closing Date</b>	<b>Transaction</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Steinhatchee Falls Donation	Citizen’s Bank	5.41	Taylor	6/24/19	Fee	Florida Forever*

*\*Florida Forever funds were used for closing costs*

### **Surplus Lands**

Disposing of lands that are not needed for water-resource protection allows the District to redirect funds to higher value, water-resource lands and/or reduce land management costs. Land Management staff participate in the review process of any potential surplus parcels and provides feedback to the Executive Office and Governing Board. No lands were conveyed in FY 2019.

**APPENDIX A****SRWMD STATUTORY SUMMARY***Verified November 2019***Land Acquisition and Management****Section 373.139(2) F.S. Acquisition of Real Property.**

- Flood control
- Water storage
- Water management
- Conservation and protection of water resources
- Aquifer recharge
- Water resource and water supply development
- Preservation of wetlands, streams, and lakes.

**Section 373.1391 F.S. Management of Real Property.**

- (1a) “Managed and maintained, to the extent practicable, in such a way as to ensure a balance between public access, general public recreational purposes, and the restoration of their natural state and condition. Except when prohibited by a covenant or condition in section. 373.056(2) F.S., lands owned, managed, and controlled by the district may be used for multiple purposes including, but not limited to, agriculture, silviculture, and water supply, as well as boating and other recreational uses.”
- (b) “Whenever practical, such lands shall be open to the general public for recreational uses. General public recreational purposes shall include, but not limited to, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, swimming, camping, hiking, canoeing, boating, diving, birding, sailing, jogging, and other related outdoor activities to the maximum extent possible considering the environmental sensitivity and suitability of those lands. These public lands shall be evaluated for their resource value for the purpose of establishing which parcels, in whole or in part, annually or seasonally, would be conducive to general public recreational purposes. Such findings shall be included in management plans which are developed for such public lands.”
- (5) “The following additional uses of lands acquired pursuant to the Florida Forever program and other state-funded land purchase program shall be authorized, upon a finding by the governing board, if they meet the criteria specified in (a) – (e): water resource development projects, water supply development projects, storm-water management projects, linear facilities, and sustainable agriculture and forestry. Such additional uses are authorized where:
- (a) Not inconsistent with the management plan for such lands;
  - (b) Compatible with the ecosystem and resource values of such lands;
  - (c) The proposed use is appropriately located on such lands and where due consideration is given to the use of other available lands;
  - (d) The using entity reasonably compensates the titleholder for such use based upon an appropriate measure of value; and
  - (e) The use is consistent with the public interest.”

Section 373.591 F.S., Management Review Teams.

- (1) To determine whether conservation, preservation, and recreation lands titled in the names of the water management districts are being managed for the purposes for which they were acquired and in accordance with land management objectives, the water management districts shall establish a land management review team to conduct periodic management reviews. The land management review team shall be composed of the following members:
  - (a) One individual from the county or local community in which the parcel is located.
  - (b) One employee of the water management district.
  - (c) A private land manager mutually agreeable to the governmental agency representatives.
  - (d) A member of the local soil and water conservation district board of supervisors.
  - (e) One individual from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
  - (f) One individual from the Department of Environmental Protection.
  - (g) One individual representing a conservation organization.
  - (h) One individual from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Florida Forest Service.
- (2) The management review team shall use the criteria provided in section 259.036 F.S., in conducting its reviews.
- (3) In determining which lands shall be reviewed in any given year, the water management district may prioritize the properties to be reviewed.
- (4) If the land management review team finds that the lands reviewed are not being managed in accordance with their management plan, prepared in a manner and form prescribed by the governing board of the district and otherwise meeting the timber resource management requirements of s. 253.036 F.S., the land managing agency shall provide a written explanation to the management review team.
- (5) Each water management district shall, by October 1 of each year, provide its Governing Board with a report indicating which properties have been reviewed and the review team's findings.

Section 259.036 F.S., Management Review Teams.

- (3) "In conducting a review, the land management review team shall evaluate the extent to which the existing management plan provides sufficient protection to threatened or endangered species, unique or important natural or physical features, geologic or hydrologic functions or archaeological features. The review shall also evaluate the extent to which the land is being managed for the purposes for which it was acquired and the degree to which actual management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the adopted management plan."

Section 253.036 F.S., Forest Management.

"All land management plans described in section 253.034(5) F.S. which are prepared for parcels larger than 1,000 acres shall contain an analysis of the multiple-use potential of the parcel, which analysis shall include the potential of the parcel to generate revenues to enhance the management of the parcel. The lead agency shall prepare the analysis, which shall contain a

component or section prepared by a qualified forester which assesses the feasibility of managing timber resources on the parcel for resource conservation and revenue generation purposes through a stewardship ethic that embraces sustainable forest management practices if the lead management agency determines that the timber resource management is not in conflict with the primary management objectives of the parcel.” ”All additional revenues generated through multiple-use management or compatible secondary use management shall be returned to the lead agency responsible for such management and shall be used to pay for management activities on all conservation, preservation and recreation lands under the agency’s jurisdiction. In addition, such revenue shall be segregated in an agency trust fund and shall remain available to the agency in subsequent fiscal years to support land management appropriations.”





January 2019

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