



SUWANNEE RIVER

WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

January 2021

FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020

LAND MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT



Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Land Management Annual Report
Suwannee River Water Management District

Governing Board

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Americans with Disabilities Act: The District does not discriminate upon the basis of any individual’s disability status. This nondiscrimination policy involves every aspect of the District’s functions including one’s access to, participation, employment, or treatment in its programs or activities. Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation as provided for in the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the District at 386.362.1001 or 800.226.1066 (Florida only). The District’s fax number is 386.362.1056.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fiscal Year 2019-2020 (FY 2020) 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. 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 Fiscal Year 2017-2018 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 established land management objectives.

The report illustrates 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 also 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's jurisdictional boundary includes approximately 7,640 square miles across all or part of 15 north-central Florida counties.

The District holds fee-simple title to approximately 159,897 acres in addition to approximately 127,145 acres of conservation easements (3.2% and 2.6% of the District's land area, respectively) as of December 23, 2020. 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, prevent flood-related injury and damage, 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 District lands are considered conservation lands, and most are located along river corridors, streams, headwaters, and recharge areas. The District has 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 provides 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 were 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 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 2020 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 silvicultural 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

- *Blue Sink River Access Project*

In Fiscal Year 2009-2010 (FY 2010), the District completed a restoration and improvement project at an old and very large erosion scar on the bank of the Suwannee River in the Blue Sink Tract. The site was fully developed into a canoe/kayak launch and included paved parking, ADA improvements, and mending of the erosion scar. Shortly after construction was complete the river flooded and the new construction within the erosion scar catastrophically failed. The site was closed and was unmaintained for approximately 10 years. The District contracted with a firm to make improvements to the launch area for public access and to further reduce erosion potential without removing any large portions of the reoccupied vegetation. In FY 2020, the contractor for the project had to start and stop work often because of high river levels. A small wildfire adjacent to the site further damaged existing facilities which required a contract amendment to be employed. On September 11, 2020, the District re-opened the Blue Sink Canoe and Kayak Launch.

- *Bell Springs Erosion Repairs*

Land management staff completed erosion control measures at Bell Springs following damage which was caused by a person fleeing from law enforcement and crashing into the spring run.

- *Underwater Cave System Research*

Many District lands contain springs, karst windows, and other geologically significant systems for North Florida. The District issues temporary ingress and egress special use agreements (SUAs) 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 undertaken 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 a hydrological facilities geodatabase where 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) began improvements to the geodatabase to make it viable for annual tract inspections. The improvements were tested in FY 2019 and rolled out just before FY 2020. In FY 2020, land management staff began an ambitious project to update the geodatabase with current hydrological facility conditions and information about previously undocumented facilities. The goal of this project is to create a robust geodatabase and make hydrological facility maintenance more proactive.

As an example, by the end of FY 2020, the geodatabase indicates there are 1,273 hydrological facilities located on District lands. Of those, approximately 871 of those facilities are considered culverts, and of which 384 are in the Mallory Swamp Tract. In FY 2016, staff completed a maintenance/inspection project on 220 of the Mallory Swamp Tract culverts. In FY 2019 and 2020, land management staff collected information on another 465 existing or new culvert systems (400 inspected in FY 2020 and 65 inspected in FY 2019). Between earlier work completed in FY 2016 and work recently done in FY 2019 and 2020, land management staff have inspected and collected information on 849 of the known 871 culverts on District lands.

- *Hydrological Facility Restoration Projects*

Three hydrological improvement projects were completed in the Cabbage Grove Tract. These projects were conducted at various water access locations for the purpose of reducing erosion and sediment loading into the water bodies while maintaining or improving public access.

Six hydrological facilities (two culverts and four low-water crossings) were replaced or repaired in the Jones Mill Creek Tract. One culvert was replaced in the Mt. Gilead Tract.

- *West Ridge Water Resource Development Area*

The West Ridge Water Resource Development Area project includes approximately 640 acres of District-owned land adjacent to the Florida National Guard's (Guard) Camp Blanding in Bradford County. 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 Guard manages the property for the District at no cost.

The original Florida Environmental Protection Department (FDEP) mine reclamation permit required restoration of pre-development flows within the mined areas of Chemours Corporation and District lands however due to current concerns about westward stormwater flow the District and Chemours Corporation have collaborated on a permit modification. The modification will control the discharge rates by detaining the flows and releasing them slowly in a controlled manner. The modification also has the future potential for water conservation through water re-use and aquifer recharge to the Upper Floridan Aquifer to augment flows to the upper Santa Fe River basin. During the

last fiscal year, Chemours Corporation received the modified FDEP permit to reclaim the mine which includes the work on the West Ridge Tract.

- *Pot Springs Environmental Restoration and Enhancement Project*

In 2017, Springs funding was approved to restore the site. Improvements consisted of bank stabilization, access to the spring, and improvements to limit erosion from uplands. Funding for this project was from the Florida Department of Environment Protection (FDEP) through the Pot Springs Restoration contract and the District. FDEP award the District \$255,765 in grant funding (RIVERS and Spring grants) to complete the project. District staff and TRSF re-opened Pot Springs on December 30, 2019, after the restoration work was complete.

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 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 currently meet DFC objectives including floodplain swamps and other wetland areas. These areas are often easily maintained through passive management or natural processes such as periodic flooding. However, many upland natural communities or transitional communities 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 facilities, 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 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 to 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 two to three-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 to 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)

Natural Community	Acres (approximate)	FRI
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.) requiring 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 of size, location, and/or vegetative characteristics that 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 DI (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 3 provides additional information on Land Management Core Areas and the status of their disturbance intervals.

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

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
% Core Areas within Disturbance Interval (DI) - ALL DISTURBANCE TYPES	64%	63%			
% Core Areas within Disturbance Interval (DI) - PRESCRIBED FIRE	56%	57%	57%	51%	54%
Total Acres Planned (all disturbance types)	15,002	10,500	15,000	13,000	12,000
Total Acres Treated (all disturbance types)	14,545	6,308	18,065	6,398	12,528
Acres burned that met objective	10,768	6,040	18,001	5,901	12,289
Wildfire Acres	11	0.20	0	29	54

Table 3. Acres of Managed Natural Communities by Classification (FY 2020)

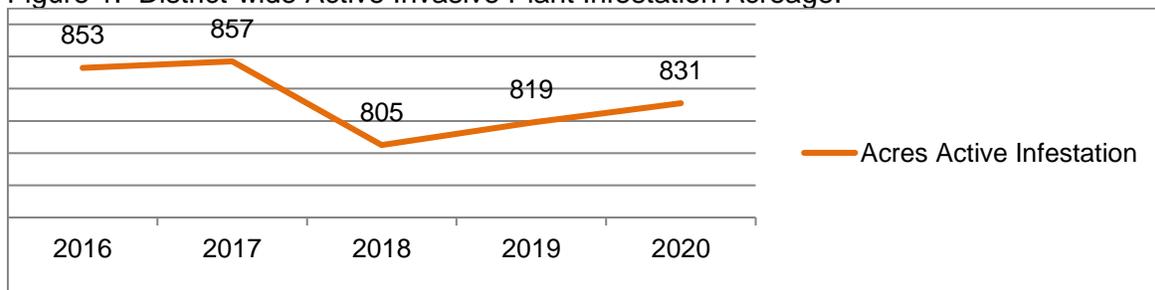
	Acres	% of total
Fire Maintained Natural Communities - TOTAL	83,658	
<i>Targeted Communities</i>	59,594	71
<i>Non-Targeted Communities</i>	24,064	29
Land Management Core Areas - TOTAL	49,682	
Total Acres Within Disturbance Interval (end of 2020)	31,787	64
<i>Last Disturbance Type Applied - Prescribed Fire</i>	27,881	56
<i>Last Disturbance Type Applied - Mechanical/Chemical</i>	3,906	8
Total Acres Out of Disturbance Interval (end of 2020)	17,895	36
Acres, where pine density is too thick or stand age, is too young to safely burn*	8,823	18
Acres within Mallory Swamp Wildlife Management Area	4,589	9
Remaining Acreage	4,483	9

*Stand age only applies to slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*)

- *Invasive Plant Control (District staff):*

In FY 2020, District staff monitored 171 invasive plant infestations; 97 of those infestations were treated with herbicides. Total infestation acreage increased during FY 2020 (Figure 1). This increase was the result of infestation areas increasing in size and new infestation areas being identified.

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 2020 is listed in Table 4:

Table 4. FY 2020 Completed Invasive Plant Treatment Projects (Contractors)

Work Location	County	Extent	Targeted Species	Contract Amount	Funding Source
Lake Rowell/ Lake Alto	Bradford	75.3 acres	Japanese Climbing Fern, Chinese Tallow, Camphor tree	\$19,000.00	SRWMD
Edwards Bottomlands	Bradford	32 acres	Japanese Climbing Fern, Chinese Tallow, Camphor tree	\$6,000.00	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 2020 included:

- Approximately 1,043 acres were roller-chopped, and 1,888 acres were mowed to help facilitate the use of prescribed fire and to help meet natural community management objectives.
- Approximately 152 miles of ditch edges were mechanically treated on the Mallory Swamp and Steinhatchee Springs tracts in FY 2020. 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.

- *Vegetation Management (Chemical)*

The application of chemical herbicides on District lands is periodically used to help control hardwood competition on sites that are being prepared for pine reforestation or to facilitate the use of prescribed fire and help meet natural community DFC objectives. Work completed in FY 2020 included:

- Approximately 201 acres were treated for reforestation site-prep purposes and 425 were treated to facilitate the use of prescribed fire and help meet natural community management objectives.

3. Forest Resources

- *Timber Harvest*

The District harvests timber resources to promote conditions that more closely resemble natural forests. Ten sales were implemented (Table 6): one final harvest (conditions met

to achieve DFCs), eight stand improvement pine thinning's, and one restoration pine thinning with hardwood removal.

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 components of the timber sale process.

Table 6. FY 2020 Timber Sale Acres by Harvest Type and Species.

Species	Harvest Type	FY 20 Acres (10 sales)	FY 19 Acres (11 sales)	FY 18 Acres (8 sales)
Loblolly Pine	First Thin	72		42
	Second Thin	126	345	129
	Final Harvest		280	181
	SPB Salvage		55	70
	ALL LOBLOLLY	198	680	424
Slash Pine	First Thin	1,698	719	
	Second Thin	137		
	Final Harvest	62	73	138
	ALL SLASH	1,897	792	138
Longleaf Pine	First Thin		143	61
Hardwood	Removal			121
	TOTALS	2,095	1,615	742

- *Forest Resource Inventory*

In FY 2020, the District received its final forest inventory products from F4-Tech. This inventory will improve data collecting, reporting, and planning for silvicultural operations. The FY 2020 improvements were custom modifications specifically for the District which will improve data collection and interpretation. Inventory data was collected on 812 plots by staff in FY 2020. The data from these plots are used to quantify the acres that have achieved their natural community goals and provide data for areas that could be improved by silvicultural activities. As part of this planned project, the District has contracted with a firm to complete 3,080 plots using the new inventory system in FY 2021, which will update data in operational timber stands that were last cruised in FY 2011 and identify volumes and other species data in areas where a restoration project has been potentially identified.

4. Rare Species Resources

The District conducts rare species monitoring and survey work on a regular basis to help document the location of new species and to monitor the status of existing occurrences. This information is documented and recorded in a rare species geodatabase that is made available to District staff. To help lower the potential for negative impacts on existing species occurrences, District staff can consult the rare species geodatabase before planning and conducting management activities. If potential impacts from management activities are

identified, staff locate and delineate areas to prevent potential conflicts. Management activities are also adjusted if needed to prevent impacts to these resources.

In FY 2020, District staff conducted rare species monitoring/survey work on the tracts listed below. All information was uploaded into the District's rare species geodatabase.

Table 7. FY 2020 Rare Plant Species Monitoring Survey Work

Location	County	Known Occurrences Monitored	Known Occurrences Observed	New Occurrences Added
Adams	Lafayette	3	3	0
Big Shoals	Hamilton	7	5	0
Cabbage Creek	Taylor	7	6	0
Cabbage Grove	Taylor	7	4	0
Devil's Hammock	Levy	14	13	0
47 Runs	Levy	31	17	0
McAlpin Landing	Hamilton	1	1	0
Natural Well Branch	Taylor	8	6	0
Osteen	Hamilton	3	2	0
Santa Fe Swamp	Lafayette	4	1	1
Scanlon	Taylor	6	4	0

5. Cultural and Historical Resources

The majority of District lands have been studied for cultural and historical resources by a professional archaeologist. One hundred sixty-nine (169) known sites are located on District lands and can be found in the Florida Department of State Master Site Files. The Master Site Files indicate that approximately twenty-six (26) of these sites are considered significant cultural or historical sites and should be monitored by the District. Another twenty-three (23) sites have been discovered by District staff over the years and are also monitored. Additionally, five (5) of these sites are monitored by cooperating agencies and are generally not inspected by District staff.

Prior to the FY 2020 monitoring staff determined there were 49 cultural and historical resource sites needing to be monitored (i.e., 21 significant sites plus the 23 discovered sites minus the 5 sites managed by other agencies). Staff attempt to inspect these sites annually while working on other projects in the vicinity. In FY 2020 District staff inspected all 49 sites plus the 5 sites managed by other agencies. Additionally, staff documented 24 additional sites this past year which will require future monitoring.

During the inspections staff document damaged sites (i.e., looting) and other illegal activities. Staff provides FWC law enforcement with that information. In FY 2020 staff identified 7 recently looted sites. Table 8 summarizes staff monitoring activities.

Table 8. Status of Cultural and Historical Resource Sites.

Measures	2020	2019**	2018	2017	2016
Significant sites inspected (26)	26	2	23	12	7
Staff documented or looted sites (23)	23	1	12	12	0*
Sites managed by other agencies (5)	5		1		
Number recently damaged sites	7	0	2	6	1

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

**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 area’s most likely for cultural resources, based on the known sites, are classified “High Probability Zones”, and are included as a geodatabase for planning purposes. Before District staff initiates any major ground disturbance activities staff reviews the Protocol and the geodatabases, including the Master Site Files, to determine if the activity could negatively impact a cultural or historical resource. If there are concerns a planned activity could be impactful, District staff may contract with a professional archaeologist to delineate a site or help plan the activity.

Cultural or Historical Projects

- The District completed a Cultural Resource Assessment Survey on 33 acres of the J. H. Anderson, Jr. Memorial Park – Rock Bluff Tract and defined the high and low archaeological probability zones for the tract. This work was completed in anticipation of future construction projects related to tract management and public use.

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 159,897 acres owned by the District, approximately 97% are open to the public for recreation. Planning for public uses and facilities considers 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 opened to the public are tracts located in gated communities or where access is otherwise restricted. Lands classified in the Public Use Standard 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 primary purpose for which the properties were purchased. Public use may be allowed once a project is completed but only after a suitability study has been undertaken.

Recreation Resources

The District has developed facility standards that detail recreational facilities, roads, trails, signs, kiosks, fence design and construction, and maintenance procedures. These standards ensure 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 to help ensure longevity and safety. Table 9 indicates the facility type, number of facilities, and fiscal year of review.

Table 9. Public-Use Facilities*

Facility Type	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Trailheads	32	31	31	31	31	30	29
Docks & Boat Ramps	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Hand & Canoe Launch Sites	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Picnic Areas	23	23	22	22	22	21	14
Interpretive Sites	11	11	9	9	9	10	10
Restrooms	16	18	15	15	15	15	15
Miles Trails	228	228	228	232	232	237	226
Miles Driving Trails**	383	381	334	332	332	325	313

*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.

Public Use and Facility Maintenance and Construction

- Land management staff continue to work with GIS staff to improve geodatabases for use on smart devices that enable staff and contractors to collect and use real-time data. In FY 2020, staff inspected all major tracts and existing facilities located on them (1,463 individual facility and culture resource inspection locations inspected). Staff also visited many small parcels owned by the District. During the inspections, staff could note in the geodatabase (referred to as observations) if additional staff or contractor attention were required at specific sites or if other important land management actions were required on District lands. A small subset of the items reported in FY 2020 included removing trees or trash, repairing, or replacing facilities, improvements to GIS data, recreation sites maintenance needs, signage or other new facility needs, restrict, or report unauthorized use, cultural resource damage or looting, and discovery of exotic vegetation, rare species, or other natural resources management needs. Some items could be taken care of this fiscal year while others will require a greater degree of planning and budgeting before they can be resolved. Of the 803 observations found in FY 2020 staff completed 195 of those observations before October 1, 2020. It should also be recognized that staff and contractors completed many repairs and other improvements on District lands during those field days which were never recorded.
- A new all-terrain vehicle (ATV) parking area was constructed along the McCall's Chapel Grade to provide better access for ATV users who access Mallory Swamp Tract from the southern entrance. The original ATV parking area on Sandy Grade will be abandoned and moved to the old hunter check station parking area near the north entrance when the trail re-opens following hunting season.
- A road sign project was completed within the Mallory Swamp Tract to improve visitor service and to identify which roads can be legally traveled by the public. All the named roads in Mallory Swamp had new road signs installed; visitors should only travel on named roads. Additionally, closed roads were marked with signage. A road hierarchy sign was added at each entrance describing road types and explaining the user expectation.
- In 2015, the District conveyed approximately 46 acres of the Jennings Bluff Tract to Hamilton County, including a portion of an access easement into the property. In that transaction, an easement was reserved to the District to ensure continued access to the remaining portion of Jennings Bluff Tract. In 2019, staff discovered discrepancies in the survey and, subsequently discovered that the easement language limited access to District staff and contractors only, and the legal description of the entire easement did not appear consistent with the survey. District staff worked with legal counsel to revise the language so that the public had legal access and hired a surveyor to resurvey the easement so that the survey had a correct legal description.
- District staff has been diligently completed small facility and tract improvement projects while conducting tract inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic. As an example, during this time staff replaced antiquated cable gates with farm gates and installed new farm gates to restrict illegal access at 12 locations around the District. Staff also removed several trailer loads of litter, tires, metal, camping items, appliances, and other items which likely existed on the properties before the District purchased them.

- The District installed 6,725 feet of perimeter fencing around the J. H. Anderson, Jr. Memorial Park – Rock Bluff Tract.
- Following a storm event this summer, three large trees fell across and crushed 20 feet of the boardwalk at the Falmouth Springs Park. The boardwalk had to be closed until repairs could be achieved. The boardwalk was reopened on July 2, 2020.
- In June 2020, Suwannee Springs Park was affected by a flooding event resulting from Tropical Storm Cristobal. The flood deposited a large amount of debris in the spring house and damaged the pool access walkway. Due to higher-than-normal water levels and the difficulty in removing the debris the spring pool debris cleanout will take place in FY 2021. The access walkway was repaired in FY 2020.
- 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 a 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.

Approximately 85 miles of road maintenance was completed on the following tracts: Goose Pasture, Mt. Gilead, Cabbage Grove, Cuba Bay, Lamont, Wolf Creek, Roline, Cabbage Creek, Jones Mill Creek, and Mallory Swamp tracts. Of the 85 total miles of road work completed in FY 2020, approximately 7 miles were associated with timber harvest operations.

- 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 one hundred sixty-three (163) miles being marked or painted in FY 2020.

Special Use Authorizations

To protect sensitive resources and reduce management costs sometimes it is necessary to limit some recreational opportunities and the use of certain roads or other accesses on District lands. Some uses, such as camping and other night uses, require an SUA. The Public Use Standard 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 access for 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 have 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.

An SUA 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. FY 2020 Special Use Authorizations

Recreation	Temporary Ingress and Egress ¹	Mallory Swamp ATV Trail	Non-Recreational ²	Goose Pasture Camping	Total
356	37	17	18	168	596

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

²Non-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 on District lands 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. Hunting and Fishing Access.

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Number of acres open to public hunting	106,146	106,146	108,298*	108,292*	104,945	104,945	105,019
Number of fishing access locations	111	111	111	109	109	107	103

*In FY 2017 the 2,157-acre Bay Creek Tract was added to the FWC public hunting program and was subsequently removed in FY 2018 due to legal issues.

- Starting in FY 2018, the District continues to partner with Suwannee River Strutters, Lake City Longbeards, Swamp Strutters, Jefferson County King of Springs, and Gator Gobblers Chapters of the National Wildlife Turkey Federation to sponsor women in the outdoors and youth special opportunity hunts. These special opportunity hunts allow additional hunting opportunities on 6,169 acres.
- 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 future water resource projects.

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 2020, the FWC officers who participated in the enhanced law enforcement program spent 655 hours patrolling District lands, the Suwannee County Sheriff's Office spent 24 hours patrolling Suwannee and Falmouth Springs, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office spent 55 hours patrolling Goose Pasture Campground, and Hamilton County Sheriff's Office spent 42 hours patrolling Pot Springs recreation area. The District also paid for additional patrols on Independence Day and Labor Day.

FWC made several significant cases involving the destruction of District lands. In one case in our Southwest Region, the perpetrators who were caught damaging District lands were fined, required to pay restitution, and were served no-trespass warnings. Six of those perpetrators received a five-year no-trespass warning and one, who was charged with felony destruction, received a lifetime no-trespass order. In another case in our Northwest Region, individuals were charged with littering and must pay 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 of land management staff during emergencies is associated with facilities, field operations, District headquarters, and public safety.

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 2020 due to emergencies, extreme weather events, vandalism, or pandemic.

Table 12. FY 2020 District Land Closures

Tract, Facilities or Roads	County	Closure Date	Event
Gar Pond	Columbia	7/9/2020	Timber Harvest
Mt. Gilead Tract	Taylor/Madison	8/13/2020	Downed Trees on Road
Goose Pasture Campground Park	Jefferson	3/15/2020	COVID-19
Withlacoochee Tract (Pot Springs)	Hamilton	8/2020	Timber Harvest
Falmouth Springs Park	Suwannee	6/15/2020	Tree on Boardwalk
Suwannee Springs Park (Spring Pool)	Suwannee	6/23/2020	Flooding and Flood Damage
McAlpin Landing Tract	Suwannee	6/25/2020	Flood Damage to Road
J. H. Anderson, Jr. Memorial Park – Rock Bluff Springs	Gilchrist	3/19/2020	COVID-19
Devil's Hammock Tract	Levy County	7/23/2020	River Flooding

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 2020 Land Management Review Team

As indicated in the Executive Summary on page one, the District is required by Florida Statutes to complete a review of District lands with a review team by October 1 of each year. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted that process last year and no review or ELM report was completed. Although the District staff had planned, invited participants, and advertised for an April 1, 2020 review in the Aucilla and Econfina River basins, the review had to be canceled due to travel and meeting restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The District intends to reinstate the review of lands in those basins in FY 2021. District staff complete their internal FY 2019 Land Management Annual Report, which is used by the review team each year and is posted on the District's website.

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, prescribed fire/vegetation management, public use management, and road/hydrologic facility management.

The revised DLMP requires staff to create and maintain documents detailing standards that provide guidance for each program. These standards should be approved by the District's Executive Office and are meant to communicate how each program functions, what is required, outline management activities, provide reliable information to users and improve land management continuity while achieving ELM goals. As of December 1, 2020; District's Executive Office have approved two of the five program standards, two are undergoing review by District leadership, and one is being reviewed by staff. The expectation is that all will be adopted by the Executive Office in FY 2021.

Land Management Communication Initiatives

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, lands owned and managed by the District remained opened to the public with a prohibition of groups larger than 10 people. Additionally, camping at Goose Pasture Campground was prohibited from March 23 until May 28, 2020. Land management staff aided in public communication by placing signage at popular recreation sites indicating the Florida Department of Health restrictions.
- All District Land Management Annual Reports and the District's Land Management Plan are posted on the District's website.
- Staff continues to provide images and text for the District's social media outreach efforts via 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 that may affect public use.
- Staff completed five presentations about public use of District lands in FY 2020.
- Staff completed six new kiosk panels in FY 2020.

Regional Resource Group Participation

District staff participates in regional groups 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
- 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
- Santa Fe River Basin Conservation Partnership (Alachua Conservation Trust)
- Aucilla River Watershed Coalition (Tall Timbers)
- Groundcover Restoration Workshop (Longleaf Alliance)
- Florida Feral Hog Working Group (FWC)
- Public Lands Acquisition and Management (FDEP)
- Levy County Coon Hunters Association

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 or collaborating with other agencies and private sector firms, entering into agreements with other land management agencies and organizations, and submitting proposals for land management grant funding. The District also tracks revenues, expenditures, land purchases, and the surplus of lands each year to ensure the District stays fiscally responsible and compliant with Florida Statutes.

Management Agreements

The District enters into management agreements and/or leases with organizations that reduce District management costs and still provide similar management, protection, and public access (Table 14).

Table 14. Agencies Managing District lands.

Managing Agency	Tracts	Acres
<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
No Cost Management Total Acres:		13,132
<i>Shared Revenue Agreements</i>		
Alachua Conservation Trust	1	170
Florida Forest Service	13	12,444
Shared Revenue Total Acres		12,614
Total		25,746

Under an existing lease agreement, the Florida Forest Service (FFS) manages approximately 12,444 acres of District lands as part of the Twin Rivers State Forest (TRSF). As part of the lease, the District has agreed to reimburse FFS for management expenses each year and FFS provides the District the revenue from timber sales on District lands associated with TRSF. In FY 2020, the District reimbursed FFS \$140,435 for management expenses and the District received \$652,721 in revenue from timber sales.

R.O. 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 most of the buildings and structures are located is closed to the public. However, many of the equestrian trails are still open for public use. In FY 2020 the District spent \$22,479 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 \$59,374 for operational expenses. An additional \$31,746 was spent by the District on supplies and contractors for the two projects that were completed on the property. No remaining funds were available or provided to the District in FY 2020.

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

The District has agreements with private and public entities to provide trail maintenance for 134 miles (59%) of the bike, horse, and multi-use trails on District lands. These trails are maintained at no cost to the District and are available for use by the public.

Collaborations

- District staff met with Four Rivers Land and Timber Company to discuss and plan ongoing law enforcement and mutual road maintenance needs in the Northwest Region.
- District staff continues to work with FWC on road maintenance in the Mallory Swamp Tract. In FY 2020, FWC contributed \$30,000 to the District for the procurement of rock aggregate for road maintenance. This collaboration led to the repair of approximately 43 miles of roads.

Grant Applications and Awards

In FY 2020, the District received grant funding from the following source to help reduce the cost of natural community management.

FFS Prescribed Fire Enhancement Program:

- The District was reimbursed \$98,838 for completing approximately 278 acres of woods mowing and 279 acres of roller chopping work on various tracts throughout the District. This work was done to help reduce fuel loads, facilitate the use of prescribed fire, and help meet natural community DFC objectives.

Revenues

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

Table 15. FY 2020 Land Resources Revenues.

Category	FY 2020
Timber	\$1,768,631
Land Use (Apiary Leases)	\$250
Grants*	\$98,838
State Appropriation (Operations)	\$1,777,210
Total	\$3,644,929

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

In FY 2020, the District sold an estimated 103,328 tons of timber in 10 sales on 2,095 acres. The sale types were clear-cut, pine thinning, and a restoration pine thinning with hardwood removal. Total gross revenues are estimated (since all sales have not been completed as of October 1, 2020) to be \$ 1,798,223.

Expenditures

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 2020 Land Resources Expenditures.

Category*	FY 2020
Natural Resource Management	\$817,190
Exotic Invasive Management	\$19,350
Prescribed Fire	\$382,284
Public Use	\$211,755
Facility & Road Management.	\$393,351
Administration and Planning	\$55,808
Salaries and Benefits	\$529,650
Total	\$2,409,387

**Does not include Payments in Lieu of Taxes, FFS Agreement Expenditures, RO Ranch Equestrian Park Expenditures, Rock Bluff Springs Expenditures, and Country Club Road Project.*

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 \$357,144.97. The state appropriated the District’s \$352,909 for PILT in FY 2020.

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 2020.

Table 17: FY 2020 Land Acquisitions

Tract	Seller	Acres	County	Closing Date	Transaction	Funding Source
White Springs Tract	Jim Moses	9.8	Hamilton	10/31/2019	Fee Exchange - Moses	Florida Forever and Save our Rivers Surplus Fund Balance

Surplus Lands

Disposing of lands that are not needed for water-resource protection allows the District to redirect funds to a 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. Table 18 is a list of surplus lands completed in FY 2020.

Table 18: FY 2020 Surplus of Lands

Surplus Parcels	Acres	County	Closing Date	Transaction	Proceeds
Town of Fort White Wellfield	101	Columbia	7/14/2020	Conveyed to Municipality	\$0.00
Blue Sink Tract	20	Suwannee	10/24/2019	Conservation Easement Exchanged - Moses	\$0.00

APPENDIX A**SRWMD STATUTORY SUMMARY***Verified December 2020***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.”
- (1b) “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 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.”



For additional information please contact
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