

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD ORDER

Order Number: 26-001
Date Approved: January 13, 2026
Subject: Water Shortage Advisory
Approval:





Virginia Johns, C
Larry K. Thompson, Chair Pro-Tem



Charles Keith, Secretary/Treasurer

WATER SHORTAGE ADVISORY ORDER NUMBER 26-001

The Governing Board of the Suwannee River Water Management District (District), during a scheduled workshop held on December 9, 2025, in Live Oak, Florida, received information from District staff regarding hydrologic conditions and the District's water shortage declaration process. The Governing Board being fully apprised of the matter, issues this document containing the following findings of fact and recommendations:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The District's Water Shortage Plan (Plan), adopted as Chapter 40B-21 of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) provides that the District will evaluate and monitor water conditions within the District and compare current data to historical data to determine whether estimated present and available water supplies are sufficient.
2. The purposes of the plan are to protect the water resources of the District from serious harm; to assure equitable distribution of available water resources among all water users during times of shortage; to provide advanced knowledge; and promote greater security for water use permittees.
3. The District currently maintains year-round lawn and landscape irrigation measures based on a twice-yearly updated irrigation schedule.
4. The District has entered into Interagency Agreements with St. Johns River Water Management District and Southwest Florida Water Management District to coordinate year-round water conservation and water shortage measures to ensure consistent implementation in Alachua and Levy counties.
5. All counties and cities throughout the District have adopted year-round water conservation measures and water shortage ordinances.
6. As of December 21, 2025, surface water conditions in much of the District are below-normal to much-below normal, Upper Floridan Aquifer levels are near 25th percentile, and rainfall in

each District county is deficient. Hydrologic conditions indicate that enhanced monitoring of drought conditions and outreach efforts to maximize the efficiency of water use within the District should be employed to protect the water resource from serious harm in all counties within the District, as well as in unincorporated areas of Alachua and Levy counties within other water management District boundaries, in accordance with interagency agreements in place.

7. Drought indicators are summarized as follows:

Rainfall

- For the period December 22, 2024, through December 21, 2025, there was a Districtwide average rainfall deficit of approximately 11.5 inches based on records beginning in 1932.
- The 12-month rainfall average, ending December 21, 2025, is in the lowest 10 percent of all 12-month periods, with 5 counties showing below 5 percent of all 12-month periods.

Groundwater Conditions

- Of the 90 Upper Floridan Aquifer monitor wells queried on December 20, 2025, six wells had levels in the lowest 10 percent of all records and are considered extremely low. Forty-one wells (46 percent) had levels in the lowest 25 percent of all records.

Surface water Conditions

- The Suwannee River at Branford gage monitors flow contributed by 79 percent of the 9,973-square mile Suwannee River drainage area and has continuous records since 1931. The average flow rate on December 21, 2025, was in the lowest 20 percent of all 7-day and 8-week average flows.
- The Santa Fe River near Fort White gage monitors flow contributed by 74 percent of the 1,374-square mile Santa Fe River drainage area and has continuous records since 1927. The average flow rate on December 21, 2025, was in the lowest 10 percent of all 7-day and 8-week average flows.
- The average flow rate on December 21, 2025, for the Econfinia River near Perry and the Steinhatchee River near Cross City was in the lowest 20 percent for all 7-day average flows and the lowest 10 percent of all 8-week average flows.
- The average flow rate on December 21, 2025, for the Withlacoochee near Pinetta was in the lowest five percent for all 7-day and 8-week average flows.
- The daily flow rate on December 21, 2025, in the upper Santa Fe River basin at Worthington Springs, near Graham, and on the New River was below the 10th percentile.

Drought Indices

- As of December 18, 2025, the U.S. Drought Monitor for Florida designates the District within either Moderate Drought (D1), Severe Drought (D2), or Extreme Drought (D3). Neighboring water management districts are also monitoring drought conditions. Southwest Florida Water Management District issued a Phase I Water Shortage Order for the entire area of their district as of November 2025. The U.S. Drought Monitor monthly outlook for December 2025 shows drought persisting within our District.
- The Long-Term Composite Drought Indicator map published by the National Drought Mitigation Center shows parts of North Florida in the abnormally dry category with an area of moderate drought for the week of December 22.

Forecast and Climatology

- The three-month precipitation probability outlook, published by the Climate Prediction Center on December 18, 2025, shows North Florida having warmer than normal temperatures across the District, and below normal precipitation for the District through March 31, 2026.

8. Upon careful consideration of these hydrologic conditions, District data, qualitative factors, and staff recommendations, the Executive Director has determined that a Water Shortage Advisory for the District is necessary and should be so resolved.

ORDER

THEREFORE, based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, it is hereby ORDERED as follows:

1. A Water Shortage Advisory is declared for all ground and surface water sources within the District boundary and including those unincorporated areas of Alachua and Levy counties within the St Johns River Water Management District and the Southwest Florida Water Management District, respectively, in accordance with interagency agreements in place.
2. All classes of water users are encouraged to reduce their water use and to conserve water to the maximum extent possible.
3. All classes of water users are encouraged to plan proactively for extended severe drought conditions and additional mandatory water use restrictions should this Water Shortage Advisory Order advance to a Phase 2 Water Shortage Order. This should include having a low-pressure irrigation alternative to high-pressure irrigation systems where possible.
4. All landscape irrigation users are urged to reduce their irrigation to the maximum extent practical and ensure compliance with the existing one day per week irrigation restrictions as set forth in Rule 40B-2.041, F.A.C.
5. The District encourages the public to defer planting of shrubs, trees, or landscape, which will require watering for establishment, while the advisory is effect.
6. All golf course irrigation users are encouraged to use water in accordance with the provisions of subsection 40B-21(6)(b), F.A.C., and to defer overseeding while the advisory is in effect.
7. The District encourages the public to contact their respective county or city to determine the specific year-round water conservation measures and water shortage ordinance requirements.
8. This advisory shall remain in effect from January 13, 2026, until July 31, 2026, unless otherwise modified, revoked, or rescinded by the Governing Board.