

## **APPENDIX A. OVERVIEW OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) is an agency of the state of Florida whose daily work focuses on ensuring an adequate supply of water and protecting and restoring the health of northeast and east-central Florida's water bodies.

Florida is divided among five regional water management districts, established by the Legislature and recognized in Florida's Constitution, that are based on hydrologic boundaries. Each water management district is governed by a board whose members are appointed by Florida's governor and confirmed by the Florida Senate. The governor has approval authority over the districts' budgets, and there is general oversight by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Establishing a water management system in Florida came about after the state experienced devastating hurricanes and related floods in the 1940s and 1960s, with flood protection as the initial focus. The 1972 Florida Water Resources Act created the water management districts and established a comprehensive system for managing Florida's water resources.

Florida water law, embodied in Chapter 373 of the *Florida Statutes*, combines aspects of Western (prior appropriation) and Eastern (riparian) water laws. In Florida, water is a resource of the state, owned by no one individual, with the use of water overseen by water management districts acting in the public interest. While the districts were originally established as flood control agencies, their areas of responsibility now encompass water supply, water quality and natural systems management, and flood protection.

### **Water Supply**

SJRWMD's water supply efforts include regulating the consumptive use of water, regional water supply planning and assistance, minimum flows and levels, and water conservation.

In many areas of SJRWMD, groundwater supplies have reached their sustainable limits, or will reach these limits in the near future, and the traditional water source—fresh groundwater from the underground Floridan aquifer—will not be able to meet all future needs. These sustainable limits have been set by SJRWMD to provide environmental protection of the many lakes, rivers, streams, springs, and wetlands that depend on groundwater levels not being overly depleted.

SJRWMD focuses on developing solutions, by working with water supply utilities and other users, to implement water conservation, reuse, and alternative water source projects that meet future demand while protecting water resources. When considering alternative water supply sources that include natural systems, such as rivers and lakes, SJRWMD places equal priority on

protection of the environmental resources of potential sources as it does on utilizing the potential sources.

### **Water quality and natural systems management**

SJRWMD employs a combination of regulatory programs, resource monitoring and assessment, restoration projects, land management, land acquisition, and cooperative programs with private and public partners to protect and improve water quality and restore the water quality and natural resource values of Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Act waters and SJRWMD-owned lands.

The environmental resource permitting program is designed to ensure that new construction will not adversely affect water resources and that potential impact to water quality and wetlands as well as potential flooding are appropriately addressed. New development can change the quality and amount of water that flows off a project site, in addition to changing the water storage capabilities of a site. Unchecked, this can cause water quality and flooding issues.

SJRWMD has initiated numerous construction projects as part of its responsibilities to protect and restore water quality and natural systems. Many projects are complete and in operation. Additional projects are scheduled for completion in the next few years.

To ensure that water resource decisions are based on facts and sound science, SJRWMD collects data; performs quality assurance and quality control on the data; and analyzes, manages, and reports on a wide range of essential hydrologic, meteorologic, water quality, and environmental data. These data are critical to virtually every aspect of SJRWMD's work and a foundation on which to make informed decisions in managing Florida's water resources.

SJRWMD has a long history of conducting assessment and planning in surface water basins throughout its jurisdiction, to identify opportunities for preventing degradation of water quality and natural systems and for restoring water quality and natural systems that were degraded by historical practices. In 1987, the Florida Legislature passed the SWIM Act that formalized and organized such assessments and planning. The Upper St. Johns River Basin, Middle St. Johns River Basin, Upper Ocklawaha River Basin, Orange Creek Basin, and Northern Coastal Basin are designated as priority SWIM waters. Lower St. Johns, Lake Apopka and Indian River Lagoon are also SWIM basins.

### **Flood protection**

Florida typically experiences extremes in its weather, from very dry years to very wet years. During wet years, when hurricanes and other storms bring unusually high amounts of rain in a short amount of time, flooding can result. While periodic heavy rains are a natural condition for Florida, this condition can have serious implications for Florida's residents and its economy. Partnerships between individuals and government entities are necessary to minimize the impacts

caused by flooding, protect personal property, and assist flood victims during and after storm events. SJRWMD's major initiatives include regional flood control projects and acquisition of floodplain areas to protect floodplain storage and conveyance.

### **Organizational efficiency and effectiveness**

Accomplishing SJRWMD's core missions, goals, and major initiatives requires that the agency function effectively and efficiently. To achieve this, SJRWMD utilizes innovative information technology to manage information and implement outreach programs.

SJRWMD's information technology program provides for the management and support of SJRWMD's information systems and computing infrastructure. The information systems include applications that store, process, and analyze collected data; software development; and code maintenance and user support for SJRWMD's regulatory, business, and scientific applications.

Informing and educating target audiences about projects and initiatives is a key SJRWMD strategy used to create support for and active participation in protecting and restoring water resources. SJRWMD proactively and strategically communicates with the following four target audiences: local governments, including elected officials; youth; the media; and the public, including the general public, professional groups, community groups, and special interest groups.

The dissemination of information and education occurs through a variety of approaches and on numerous platforms. SJRWMD staff conduct one-on-one meetings and group presentations, maintain an informative website, use social networking, develop and implement education and stewardship programs, work with the media, develop and distribute educational materials to schools and communities. In addition, SJRWMD provides technical assistance to the 119 local governments within SJRWMD, with particular emphasis on enhancing the link between SJRWMD's water supply planning and local governments' land use planning through review of comprehensive land use plans and related amendments and Developments of Regional Impact.