



**ALACHUA COUNTY, FL**  
**Special Meeting - Policy Discussion**  
**Meeting Agenda**

**May 7, 2024**  
**1:30 PM**

In-person **Public Comment** is taken after each non-ministerial motion. At the conclusion of the meeting, **individuals** can also speak for up to 3 minutes about any matter during the **General Comment** period.

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All persons are advised that, if they decide to contest any decision made at any of these meetings, they will need a record of the proceedings and, for such purpose they may need to ensure that verbatim record of the proceedings is made which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. (Section 286.0105 Florida Statutes)

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If you have a disability and need an accommodation to participate in this meeting, please contact the Alachua County Equal Opportunity Office at (352) 374-5275 at least 2 business days prior to the meeting. TTY users please call 711 (Florida Relay Service).

**A. Approval of Agenda**

**Recommended Action:**

To approve the Agenda.

**B. Items for Discussion**

1. **Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers Min Flows and Levels – North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan Update - 24-00270**

**Fiscal Note:**

N/A

**Strategic Guide:**

Environment

**Recommended Action:**

Listen to Staff presentation

2. **Resilient Economic Development - 24-00305**

**Fiscal Note:**

Fiscal impacts to be presented in the County Manager's FY25 Budget

**Strategic Guide:**

Social and Economic Opportunity

**Recommended Action:**

Hear Presentation

**C. Closing Comments**

1. **Public Comment**
2. **Commission Comment**

**D. Adjourn**

**Recommended Action:**

To adjourn the meeting.



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File #:** 24-00270

**Agenda Date:** [Publish Date]

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**Agenda Item Name:**

**Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers Min Flows and Levels – North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan Update**

**Presenter:**

Stacie Greco, Environmental Program Manager, Environmental Protection Department, 352-264-6829

**Description:**

The Water Management Districts and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection have been working on updating the Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) and Prevention and Recovery Plan for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers since 2019. The North Florida Regional Water Supply plan was updated in December 2023. Staff will provide a high-level summary of these processes and how they relate to Alachua County programs.

**Recommended Action:**

Listen to Staff presentation

**Prior Board Motions:**

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) adopted a motion to send a chair letter about the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan at the 12/12/23 BOCC meeting.

**Fiscal Note:**

N/A

**Strategic Guide:**

Environment

**Background:**

Florida's Water Management Districts are required to create Regional Water Supply Plans to assess current and future water demand, determine the potential impacts of groundwater withdrawals on natural resources, and identify projects to meet future water needs while protecting the environment. According to the 2023 plan, population in this region is expected to increase by nearly one million people (49% increase), irrigated agricultural land is expected to increase by 30,000 acres (24% increase), and total water use is expected to increase by 168 million gallons per day (32% increase) - of which 135 million gallons per day (MGD) is fresh groundwater (29% increase). The plan lists projects to offset 143.6 MGD as water supply/resource development at an estimated cost of \$2.17 billion and only 16.8 MGD as water conservation projects at an estimated cost of \$57.5 million, highlighting the concerning trend of relying on expensive projects rather than adopting policies and

regulatory measures to reduce demand.

The establishment of Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) is required by state law under Subsection 373.042(2), Florida Statutes (F.S.). The MFLs are developed by the Water Management Districts and adopted by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). MFLs set water levels and flows to prevent significant harm to the water resources or ecology from water withdrawals. MFLs protect non-consumptive uses of water that include water necessary for navigation and recreation, for fish and wildlife habitat, and for other natural resources in accordance with Chapter 62-40, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) established the first MFL for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Springs in 2015. Through this process the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers were determined to be in recovery, meaning water levels were below the established MFL threshold and that consumptive water use would need to be reduced to protect the resource. The Recovery Strategy for the Lower Santa Fe River Basin was published in April 2014 and it outlines projects and policies to meet the MFL.

Water Management and FDEP Staff are currently updating the MFL rule for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Springs, and it is anticipated that it will be submitted in 2025 for ratification. There are two components of this proposed new minimum flow rule. The first is a scientific assessment of the two rivers at three designated compliance points. The Lower Santa Fe River Ft. White gage was reported as meeting the MFL, while the Lower Santa Fe HWY 441 and Ichetucknee HWY 27 gages were reported as in recovery and not meeting the MFL. These designations trigger the need for the second component, which is a Recovery Plan, for the two gages that are not meeting the MFL.

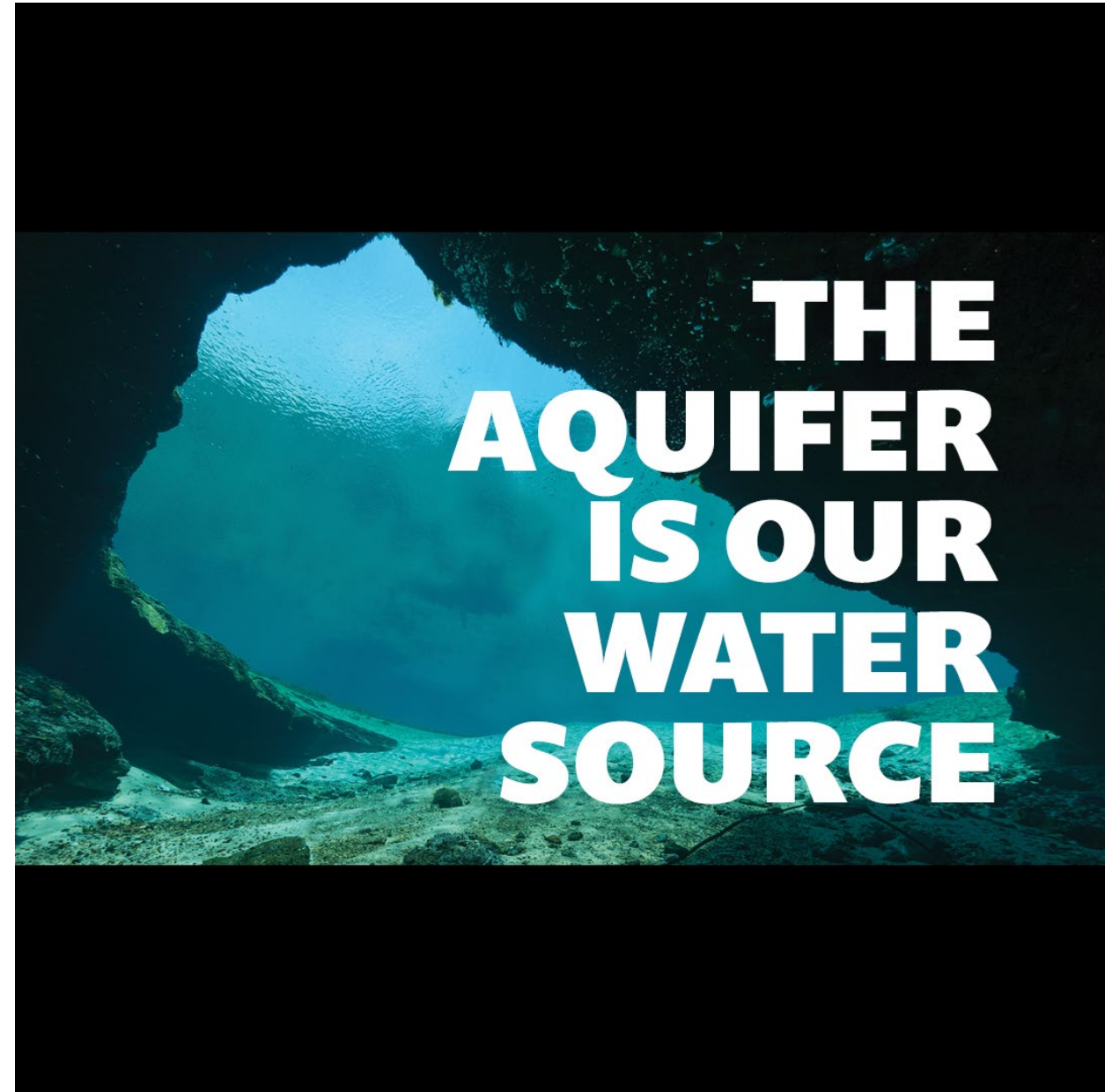
The draft regulatory strategies that have been presented to the public by FDEP contains three parts: a water-use permitting strategy released in December 2021, public-supply (water utilities) strategy released in April 2022, and an agricultural conservation strategy also released in April 2022. If these regulatory strategies are adopted as currently drafted, they would authorize the use of far better tools for restoring river flows than currently exist under the 2015 plan.



# Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Associated Springs Minimum Flows and Levels Update

Stacie Greco, Water Resources Manager  
Environmental Protection Department

May 2024



# The Big Picture

## 2023 North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan

- Population projected to increase by 1 million people (49%) by 2045
- 32% increase in water demand - 135 Million Gallons a Day (MGD)

### Projects

\$2.17 BILLION

143.6 MGD

**\$15 million/MGD**



### Conservation

\$57.7 Million (2%)

16.8 MGD

**\$3.4 million/MGD**

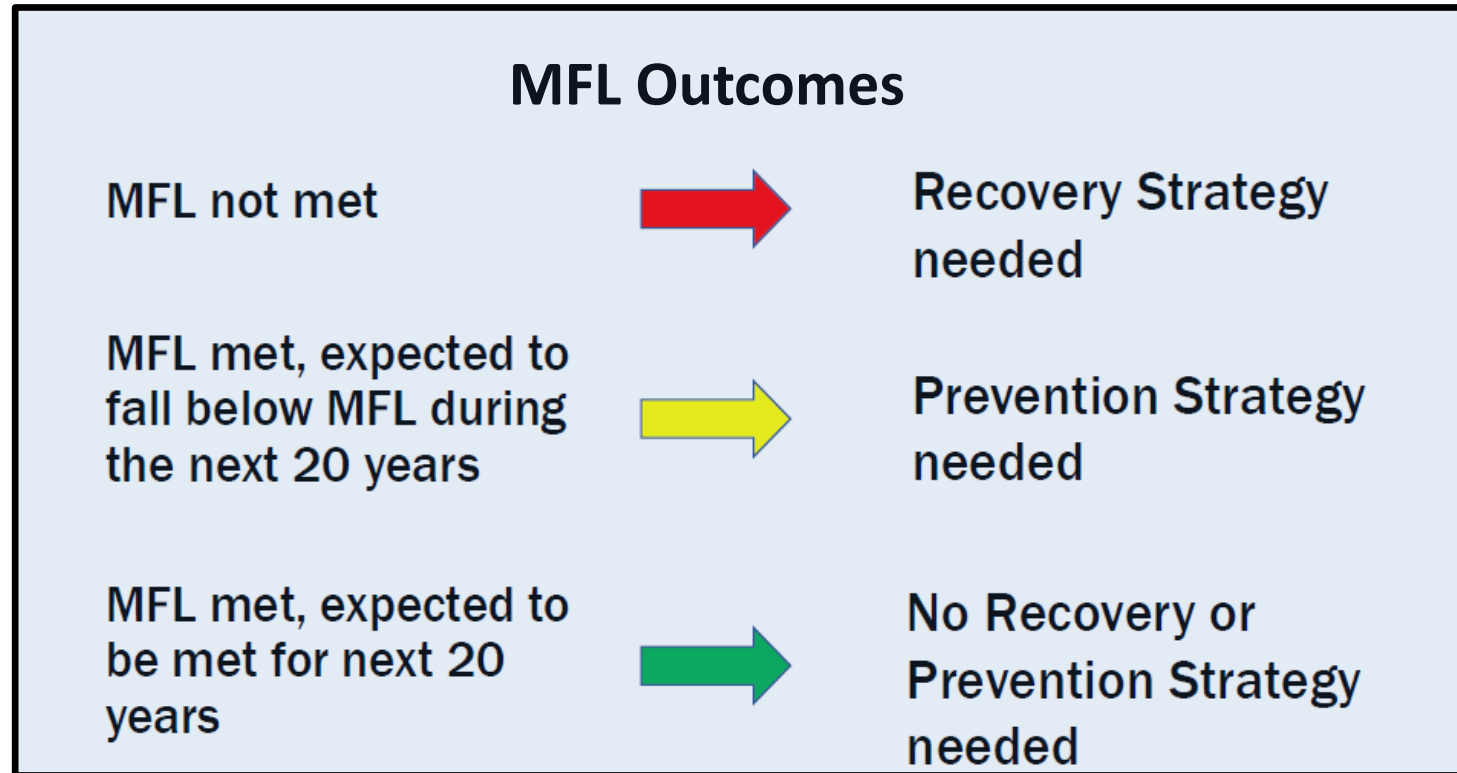


Not meeting Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs)  
with **CURRENT** pumping/permits!

# Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL)

- MFLs are developed by the Water Management Districts and adopted by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.
- MFLs set water levels and flows to prevent significant harm to the water resources or ecology from water withdrawals.
- MFLs protect non-consumptive uses of water that include navigation and recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and for other natural resources (wetlands, etc.).

# Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL)





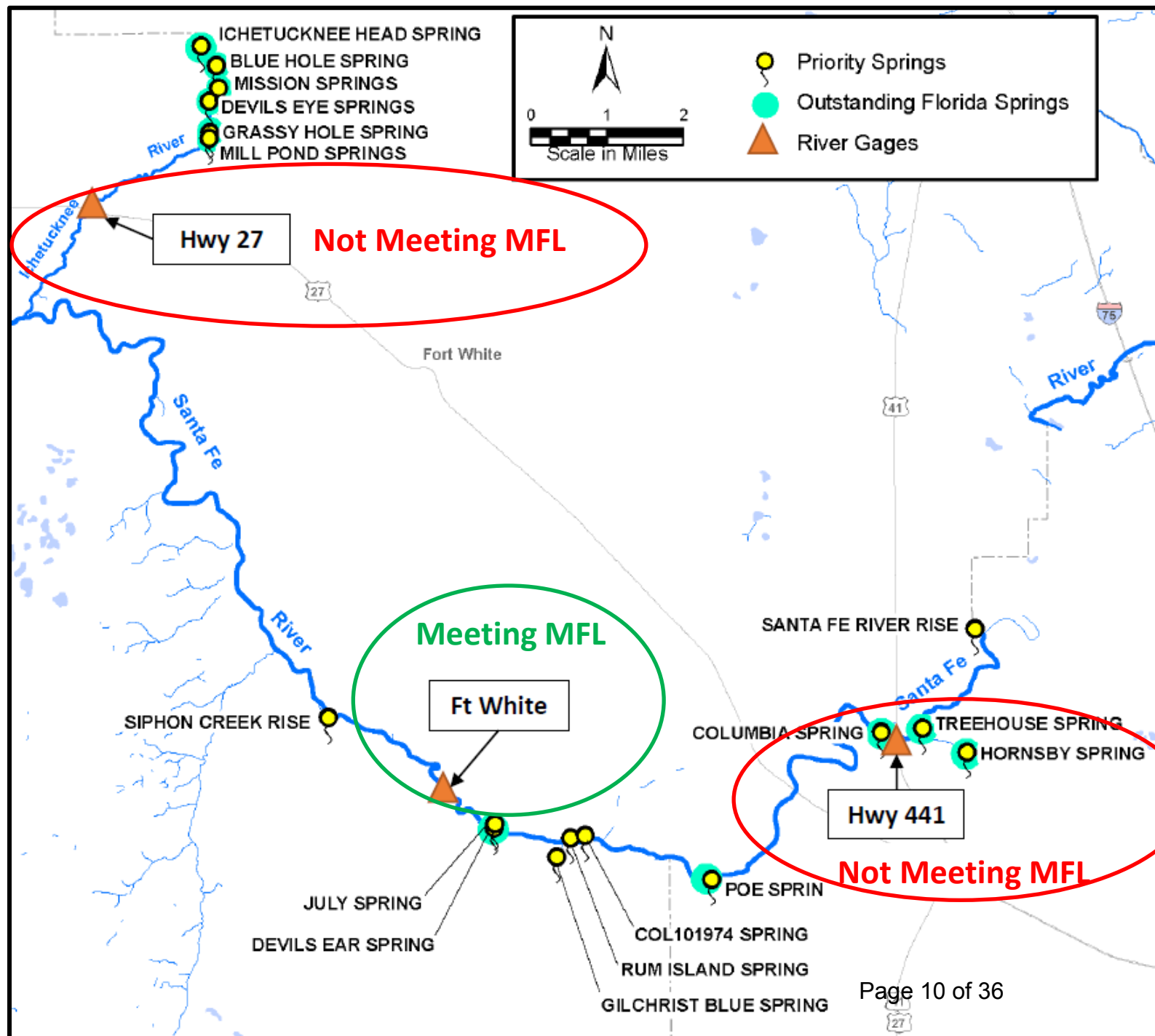
# Current Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Associated Springs (LSFIR) MFL

- The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) established the first MFL for the LSFIR in 2014.
- The Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers were determined to be in **Recovery**.
- The 2014 Recovery Strategy for the Lower Santa Fe River Basin outlined projects and policies to meet the MFL.
  - Requires new permits provide reasonable assurance of offsetting impacts & Limits permit renewals to five-years.

# Re-evaluation of Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Associated Springs (LSFIR) MFL

2022 Status Assessment:

- The Lower Santa Fe Ft. White gage was determined to **Meet the MFL.**
- The Santa Fe HWY 441 and Ichetucknee SR27 gages were determined to be in **Recovery.**



# Re-evaluation of Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Associated Springs (LSFIR) MFL

- EPD conducted a peer review of the revised MFL and re-evaluation and provided feedback.
- Staff recommends at this point to focus on the resulting projects and policies, rather than the science of the MFL and re-evaluation.
  - The current **draft** regulatory strategies are an improvement on the current Prevention and Recovery Plan.
  - We should push to make sure these stronger strategies are adopted

# FDEP Rule Making and Regulatory Strategies: February 2024 DRAFT

- Existing permits must offset portion of use that impacts the Lower Santa Fe and/or Ichetucknee Rivers
  - Some questions about how impact will be determined
  - Latest draft allows for a 20 year time frame, which staff thinks is too long
- New permits, or a renewal with an increased allocation, must offset their entire impact
  - Again allows for a 20 year time frame

# FDEP Rule Making and Regulatory Strategies: February 2024 Draft

- Allowances for temporary allocations prior to offsets
  - Staff does not support, as it would allow further impact
- Methods for offsetting impacts
  - Implement water resource or water supply development projects
  - Retire existing water use permits
  - Other means to reduce impact

# FDEP Rule Making and Regulatory Strategies: February 2024 Draft

- Highlights of utility water conservation plan requirements
  - Demonstrate meeting requirements by achieving a 75 gallons/day/person for residential customers
    - Staff thinks this is too high (2.4 persons per house = 180 gallons/day or 5.4 kgal/month)
  - For permits greater than 1.0 MGD- Plan must include landscape irrigation audit/evaluation for highest quartile of water use customers
    - Staff supports this and suggests requiring annually



# FDEP Rule Making and Regulatory Strategies: February 2024 Draft

- New private residential irrigation wells are prohibited in the Floridan aquifer
  - Staff strongly supports this element



# FDEP Rule Making and Regulatory Strategies: February 2024 Draft

- Highlights of Agricultural water conservation
  - Maximize best available water efficient practices
  - Mobile Irrigation Lab evaluations during permitting and every 5 years
  - Irrigation system management requirements



# Updated Prevention and Recovery Plan

- It is unclear when the draft Recovery and Prevention Strategy will be published.
  - Should outline projects and policies for reducing consumptive uses and/or increasing water levels at the two gages that triggered such.
- WMD and FDEP staff are soliciting projects and regulatory suggestions for inclusion in the plan.

# Conclusion

- There is over consumption and water use needs to be reduced or recharge needs to be increased to reverse impacts and prevent new ones.
- The 2023 updates to the North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan illustrate the fiscal advantage of conservation.
- Staff has concerns with the MFL and Status report, but believes the best path is to continue to engage with the state and push for aggressive Regulatory Strategies and Prevention and Recovery Plan.

# Next Steps

- EPD will continue to monitor the Regulatory Strategy and Prevention and Recovery Plan and will provide comments as needed.
- EPD and Growth Management will work with GRU and Gainesville to create an updated Facilities Work Plan to identify conservation opportunities and projects as required by the 2023 North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan.
- Florida Springs Council is working on an analysis of consumptive use permits (CUP) within Alachua County.
  - Summary of current permits
  - Analysis of WMD review process for six month period
  - Infographics to help inform the public

# The Santa Fe River RECOVERY STRATEGY

Should **REDUCE** water use to restore the river  
to basic healthy levels. So why has water use **INCREASED**?

Because  
in the 8 years since  
the Recovery was adopted:

**0** permits  
denied

**28** NEW  
permits  
approved

**6 MILLION**

MORE gallons per day are being withdrawn  
by NEW water permits

Water Permitting data since 2015 within Alachua County

## Next Steps

- County Attorney's Office researching:
  - What could be done within the Recovery Strategy rule to give local governments more power to reduce water use and mandate conservation?
  - Under what circumstances could WMDs deny a Consumptive Use Permit?



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File #: 24-00305**

**Agenda Date: 5/7/2024**

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**Agenda Item Name:**

**Resilient Economic Development**

**Presenter:**

Jessica Hurov and Sean McLendon

**Description:**

Presentation of Economic Development and Tourism Development Efforts and Restructuring

**Recommended Action:**

Hear Presentation

**Prior Board Motions:**

November 12, 2023 County Manager Lieberman advised the Board that Economic Development Manager McLendon and Tourist Development Director Hurov will be working together to develop a plan to present to the Board for part of the FY25 budget development process to restructure. At the January 9 BOCC Meeting the County Commission meeting discussed suggestions for the expansion of economic development services during the budget process this year along with grant opportunities.

**Fiscal Note:**

Fiscal impacts to be presented in the County Manager's FY25 Budget

**Strategic Guide:**

Social and Economic Opportunity

**Background:**

Staff have been working to develop strategies for the consolidation of Tourism and Economic Development.



# Economic Development and Tourism

**Jessica Hurov, CPM**

**Tourism Development Director**

**Sean McLendon, CPM**

**Economic Development & Food Systems Manager**







## Brief Background

### **From the November 14, 2023 BOCC Meeting:**

#### **Economic Development**

County Manager Lieberman advised the Board that there are some larger projects that will be coming to the Board that view Tourist Development as Economic Development. As such Economic Development Director McLendon and Tourist Development Director Hurov will be working together to develop a plan to present to the Board for part of the budget development process to restructure things to push Tourist Development as an economic development factor.

### **From the January 9, 2024 BOCC Meeting:**

The 9:30 AM January 9 County Commission meeting had a related conversation with a focus on creating “needs assessment” of the 301 Corridor. The conversation included discussion of the suggestions for the expansion of economic development services during the budget process this year along with grant opportunities. The Board emphasized that need to think about the County’s motto: “Where Nature & Culture Meet” in thinking about opportunities.



## **Tourism and Economic Development have worked collaboratively over the past 5-6 years.**

- Sharing ESF-18 (Business and Industry) duties with Emergency Management and the State of Florida emergency management
- Hosting the U.S. Army Reserve equipment concentration site evaluation team
- Liaising with private business for incoming business opportunities
- Gathering and distributing research and data
- Meeting with the Greater Gainesville Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development staff in municipalities, and community stakeholders
- Presenting at the EDAC and TDC advisory boards





# Tourism: A Few Key Functions

Marketing expertise, content creation, and data gathering to execute promotional strategies with compelling narratives distributed to targeted audiences in alignment with our community's unique arts, nature, culture and sports tourism assets.

## Deploy Targeted Marketing and Communications

- Manage delivery of over 24 million advertising impressions annually
- Determine advertising outlets and tactics, create content and messaging

## Create Beneficial Community Partnerships

- Oversee \$2.7 million annually in grants and outside funding, supporting events, venues and activities that promote tourism.
- Coordinate efforts with over 70 organizations.
- Review and advise on new grant programs and refinement of funding criteria.

## Analyze Data and Consumer Research

- Data-driven marketing includes utilization of data for marketing efforts
- Track and report on visitor movement and spending



# **Economic Development : A Few Key Functions**

**Building on a track record in sustainability, equity, economic development, grant acquisition, and community engagement, we'll ensure responsible and inclusive growth.**

## **Accessing Grant Opportunities**

- Awarded \$4.8 million and Applied for \$13 million in Florida Commerce Grants
- Quality green jobs – Jobs for the Future Foundation

## **Providing Leads and Information to Partner Agencies**

- Oversight and Collaboration on \$4.6 million annually on CRA and GCRA urban redevelopment
- Point of contact for site selectors, businesses, industrial parks, and municipal partners

## **Focus on Agriculture and Sustainable Development**

- Management of \$1.4 million in funds for economic development of local agriculture
- Project management of small farmer assistance with product development and capital grants
- Coordinates agriculture infrastructure modeling and deployment
- Oversight of culinary arts workforce development and certification



## **Shared Key Functions: Marketing the Community**

**Economic Development and Tourism both market the community.**

**The merged department can further align staff resources and marketing efforts for positive benefits of our residents, businesses, and community.**



# Projects funded through visitor spending (TDT) are both Tourism and Economic Development projects.

The investment of \$30 million into the Alachua County Sports and Event Center generates both tourism and economic development.

## Tourism Focus

- Visitors and Attendance at the facility
  - Visitor spending on lodging, dining, shopping
  - Hotel occupancy and rates
  - Visitors going to other area attractions
  - Visitor familiarization of the area for return visits/word of mouth
- 
- 233,520 overnight visitors
  - 117,000 room nights
  - \$12,218,950 direct hotel sales

## Economic Development Focus

- Employment / Jobs
  - Wages and salaries
  - Public/private partnerships
  - Additional public support at the State level
  - New development opportunities near and around the facility
  - Infrastructure – expansion of roads and utilities
- 
- \$77 million per year in net total output
  - 1,150 incremental annual jobs
  - \$25.9 million in net annual wages

– *Victus Advisors*



## **Economic Development and Tourism are integrally connected**

**Businesses can't thrive on revenue from locals alone.**

**Visitor spending is vital to Alachua County's economy and represents 24.7% of total spending in the County.**

**Businesses benefit tourism and tourism benefits businesses.**



# Tourism and Economic Development Creating Opportunities

## TOURISM

### Business Focus: Hospitality Sector

Primarily focuses on businesses in the hospitality sector: lodging, restaurants, retail, attractions, state & local parks, venues, agritourism operators, farmer's markets, etc.

### Audience: Visitors

Primarily focuses on targeting messaging and marketing to attract visitors to Alachua County and to create local ambassadors of our assets.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Business Focus: All Sectors

Focuses on all business sectors, including biomedical, tech, manufacturing, agriculture, start-ups, etc.

### Audience: Existing and Emerging Businesses

Business prospects that have potential for relocation and development. Existing businesses for growth and retention.





# COMMUNITY ALIGNMENT FOR GROWTH

**Businesses create the reasons and the opportunities for visitation.**

**Attracting employers and investment**

Example: US Army Reserve Equipment Concentration Site:

**\$36 million capital investment  
+ \$13.4 M/year 110 jobs =**

**Army "Visitor" Spending with a Workforce Opportunity with Santa Fe College, Heavy Diesel Mechanic Certification**





# Advancement of the Community

Whether we're speaking to workers, businesses, visitors, or residents, the foundation of our efforts is marketing Alachua County.

In part, this speaks to our community's Quality of Life (in part, defined as “livability of the environment” and the broader leisure opportunities outside of the working environment) that includes parks, trails, and cultural enrichment which are major elements in retaining and attracting workforce, new businesses, visitors and new residents to our community.

*Quality of Life Examples: Music, Nature, Arts, Biking, Hiking, Paddling, Breweries, Cultural Events, Festivals, Restaurants, Family-friendly activities, Dining and more.*





# Year 1: Data, Research, and Marketing Development

- **Analysis: Market Data; economic impact research**
- **Creation of content and marketing collateral**
- **Researching: Applying for grant funding**
- **Representing the County at trade shows and outreach**
- **Convening and engaging with our partners in municipalities, chambers, advisory boards, workforce development, community stakeholders**
- **Initiate quarterly reporting to Leadership and Commission on key performance indicators and department updates.**



# Counties with Combined Tourism and Economic Development Functions

## Seminole County



## Citrus County

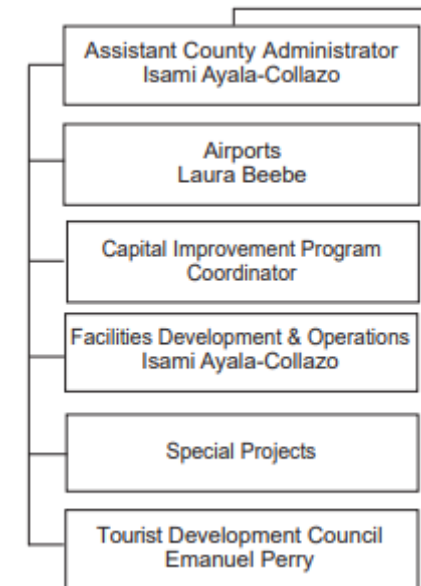
### Economic Development

- Frank Calascione - [Economic Development](#)
- Auvis Cole, Tourism Director - [Visitors & Convention Bureau](#)

## Leon County



## Palm Beach County





# Year 1: Research, Development and Data

## Activate Marketing / Advancement Plan

- (1) **Define assets and opportunities:** What is our unique selling proposition?
- (2) **Market Segmentation:** Who are our audiences?
- (3) **Location:** Where are they?
- (4) **Delivery:** How do we reach them?
- (5) **Messaging:** What is their decision-making matrix and how do we address their unique interests?
- (6) **Deploying** messaging in alignment with their goals.
- (7) **Measuring** efforts against KPIs

## Top of the Marketing Funnel: Awareness

The top of the funnel starts with creating general, high-level branding awareness :

- Multiple messaging channels
- Website landing pages
- Printed collateral
- Local road show
- Create trade show booth; attend trade shows and business development conferences
- Explore digital and social campaigns to disseminate key messaging

