



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 23-00063

Agenda Date: 6/13/2023

Agenda Item Name:

Contract w/ Florida Springs Council (FSC), #23-00063

Presenter:

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

Description:

A contract with the Florida Springs Council (FSC) for water quality and water conservation outreach services, to assist Alachua County with minimum flows and levels, consumptive use permitting, and Basin Management Action Plan research and outreach efforts.

Recommended Action:

Execute contract and amend purchase orders and authorize release of \$50,000 from fund number 001.04.0490.519.31.00.

Prior Board Motions:

During Commissioner Comments of the 4/11/23 Regular Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) meeting, a motion was passed to authorize up to \$50,000 to work with the Florida Springs Council for achieving water resources goals.

Fiscal Note:

Environmental Protection Department (EPD) will manage the contract; however this is being funded from Special Expense.

Fund: 001.04.0490.519.31.00

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

This contract will provide the County with assistance with several state-focused processes and programs, which staff do not have the capacity to fully address internally.

EPD has been engaged with the process to update the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Springs Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL) since 2018. Efforts have recently focused on the need for a strong Prevention and Recovery Plan that initiates meaningful regulatory strategies which address current and future consumptive use permits. Additional efforts by the FSC could help ensure adequate protections are included in the MFL. The FSC will create a short document outlining the proposed changes to the Prevention and Recovery Plans and Regulatory Strategies. The audience will be the

lay public and the report will minimize the use of acronyms and technical terminology. The goal is to educate the public on the proposed changes to the strategies with a focus on the impact to water resources. Documents may need to be updated as the Water Management and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) strategies shift. Changes in the proposed strategies should be highlighted along with any expected changes in outcomes. Infographics will be created for communicating with the public. Educational materials will be shared with the public through social media campaigns.

EPD strives to review consumptive use permits (CUPs) as the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) receives applications, even though we have no permitting authority. The Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) does not have a notification system, so it is difficult for staff to monitor permits on the western side of the County. Staff often provide comments asking for additional water conservation and monitoring efforts. However, under current CUP rules, the public interest and beneficial use is broadly defined, and water management district staff are unlikely to ask for additional measures. The FSC will create a document outlining concerns with the current CUP process with a focus on the staff review of permits and the public interest criteria. The audience will be the lay public and the report will minimize the use of acronyms and technical terminology. Additionally, the FSC will create a summary of current CUPs in Alachua County. As part of this task, the FSC will monitor any new applications, modifications, and renewals to CUPs in Alachua County for six months and provide a brief report summarizing the Water Management District's (WMD's) actions related to these permit reviews. The goal of this task is to educate the public on the CUP process and impact of water withdrawals on water resources. Infographics will be created for communicating with the general public. Educational materials will be shared with the public through social media campaigns.

Finally, the Basin Management Action Plan for the Santa Fe Basin has been under scrutiny since its inception. The FSC will create a document outlining the importance of the Outstanding Florida Springs Harm Rule and the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) for the Santa Fe Basin for the general public audience. Infographics and other educational materials will be created and shared with the public through social media campaigns.