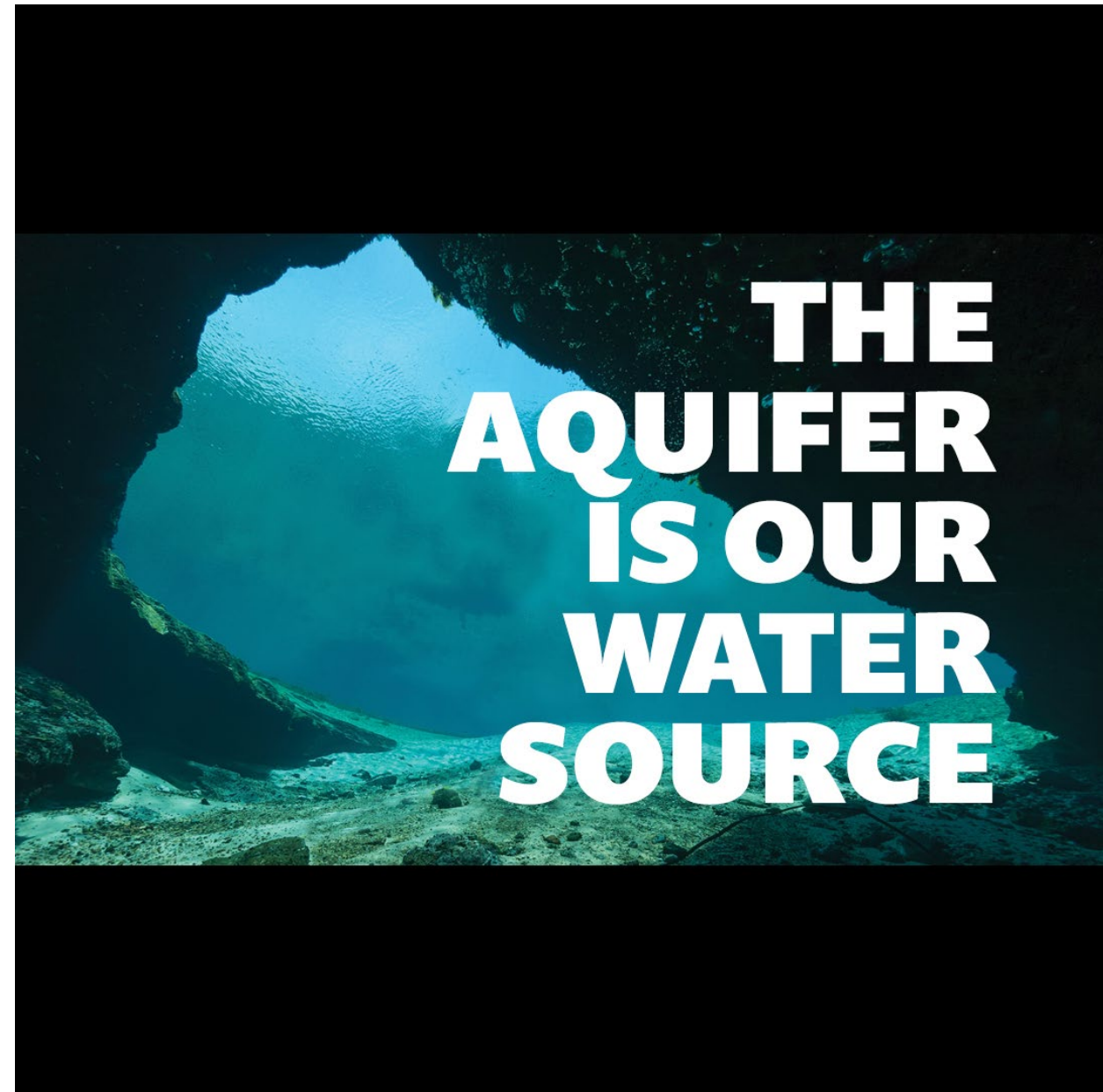




Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Associated Springs Minimum Flows and Levels Update

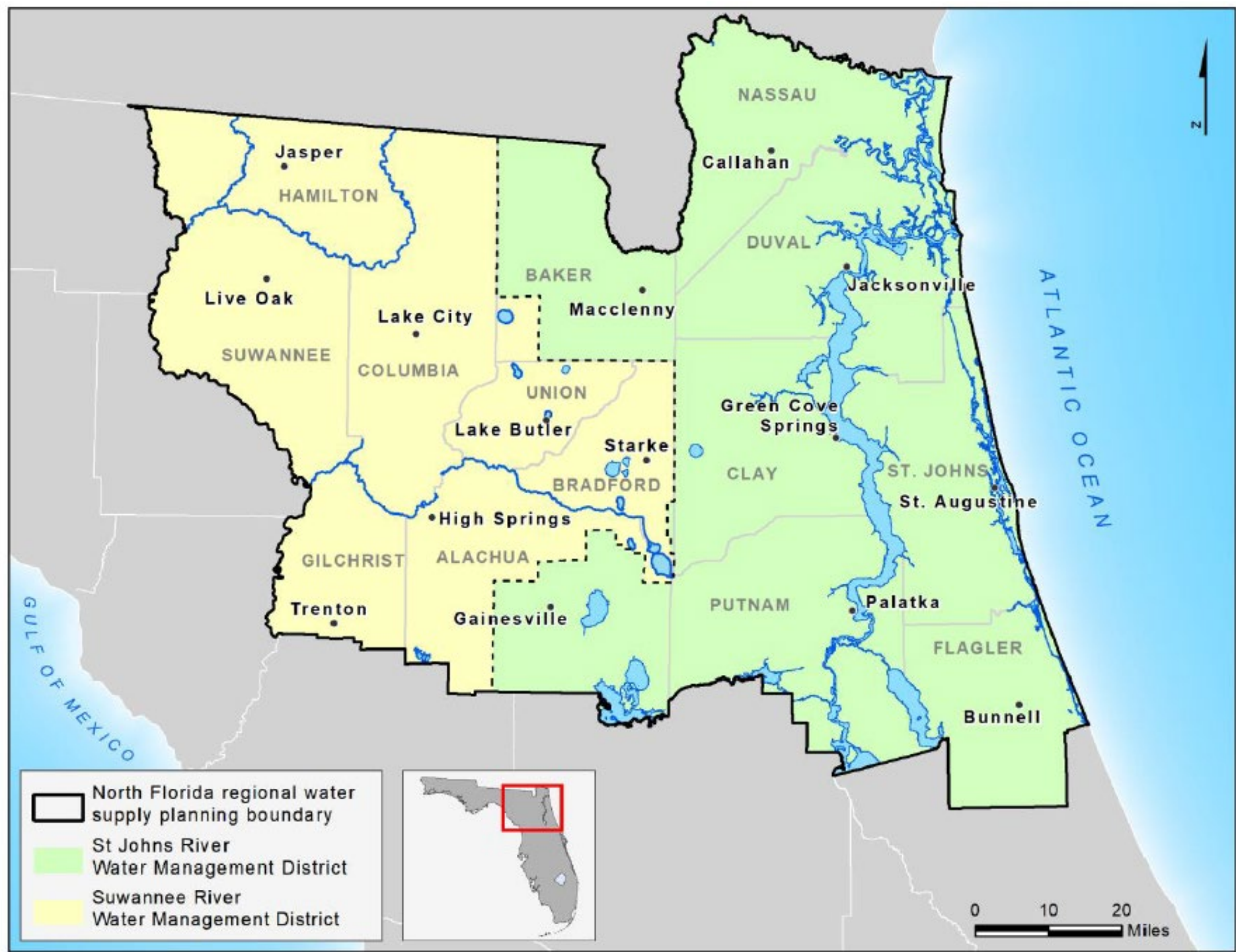
Stacie Greco, Water Resources Manager
Environmental Protection Department

December 2025



Minimum Flows and Levels (MFL)


- MFLs are developed by the Water Management Districts (WMD) 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 navigation and recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and for other natural resources (wetlands, etc.).




Current Components of the MFL

- FDEP Regulatory Component
 - Notice of rule making 11/13/25
 - Anticipate going through ratification process during 2026 legislative session
 - There may be an opportunity to add language through lobbying efforts
- Implementation Plan
 - Adopted by the St. Johns and Suwannee River Water Management Districts 11/12/25


Implementation Plan

- Projects to achieve MFL
 - **Water First North Florida**
 - Black Creek Water Resource Development Project
 - 10 MGD from Black Creek to upper Floridan Aquifer to restore flows in the St Johns portion of the area.
 - Currently funded at 119 million.
 - Agricultural Water Conservation
 - Cost Share projects (soil moisture sensors, weather stations, soil health, etc.)
 - **Florida Water Star Silver Plus**
 - Existing projects
- 


Water First North Florida

- 1.1 billion dollar (not including land acquisition) project in planning phase
 - 40 million gallons per day (MGD) of treated wastewater from JEA will be routed through wetland treatment systems and into the aquifer in the Santa Fe basin
 - Project is anticipated to provide sufficient benefit to offset impacts of current and projected 2045 water use
 - Target completion by 2040
- 


Florida Water Star Silver Plus

- Florida Water Star is a voluntary program for new construction which Alachua County provided rebates for prior to codifying many of the elements in our Landscape Irrigation Design Code
 - Projected reduction of demand by 13.6 MGD by 2045 by requiring the program through utility service agreements or local ordinances
 - Alachua County's irrigation standards are currently more protective, so utilities in our boundaries would likely already meet this requirement
- 

Proposed Regulatory Component

- Requires new landscape irrigation wells to get a no-fee permit
 - 2024 draft prohibited irrigation wells within utility service areas
 - Additional water conservation requirements for public water supply/utilities and agriculture
 - Permits that impact MFL compliance points have to offset impact or participate in a regional project (ie- Water First)
- 

GRU Consumptive Use Permit

- GRU is requesting an increase of 2.0 MGD (from 30 to 32) for their Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) through 2045
 - Current permit set to expire 2034
 - Will have to meet water conservation plan and offset requirements of MFL once it is adopted
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Next Steps

- Engage with lobbyist, partners, water management districts (WMD), and/or utilities to limit irrigation wells
 - Work with WMD as they develop Florida Water Star Silver Plus
 - Invite WMD staff to present the Water First North Florida project at a future BoCC and/or Joint Water and Climate Policy Board
 - Provide comments to the WMD on GRU's CUP
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