

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Land  
Management  
Report

2013

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Executive Summary: This document summarizes implementation of the District Land Management Plan (DLMP) on fee simple lands owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District during FY 2013. District activities implemented to achieve the four goals of the DLMP, Resource Protection, Public Use, Communications, and Fiscal Responsibility are addressed.

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## Introduction

The Suwannee River Water Management District's (hereafter District or SRWMD) jurisdictional boundary covers approximately 7,640 square miles across all or part of 15 north-central Florida counties.

The District holds fee-simple title to approximately 158,283 acres in addition to approximately 125,810 acres of conservation easements (3.2% and 2.6% of the District's land area, respectively) as of September 30, 2013.

Proper management of these lands provides water resource benefits including:

- Preserving floodplain areas to maintain storage capacity, attenuate floodwaters, and prevent inappropriate development,
- Preventing groundwater contamination by maintaining low intensity land uses within the floodplain and high recharge areas,
- Preserving and/or restoring spring areas to improve surface and groundwater,
- Preserving and/or restoring natural communities throughout the area to support or enhance populations of wetland-dependent native species, and
- Providing buffer zones to more intense land uses to protect water quality.

The majority of these lands are located along rivers and streams, headwaters, and water recharge areas. Many of the historic natural communities on District fee lands are dominated by hardwood trees and shrubs, grasses, or marsh vegetation (Table 1).

Table 1. Historic natural communities of District fee lands (FNAI).

<b>Natural Community</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Hardwood Dominated*	94,808	60%
Pine Dominated**	60,949	39%
Grass/Grasslike Dominated***	2,392	1%
Streams, Lakes, Sinkholes	134	0%

\*includes communities dominated by hardwood tree or shrubs

\*\*includes flatwoods and upland pine communities

\*\*\*includes prairies and marshes

The District Land Management Plan (DLMP) establishes the goals of the Governing Board that will guide the management of all fee title lands held by the District. Lands titled to the Board are managed under a multiple-use policy that emphasizes water resource protection, maintenance and restoration of the land's natural state and condition, and provisions for public access and recreation opportunities on those lands.

To ensure that the District is meeting its land management goals, the Excellence in Land Management Program (ELM) was established. This program quantifies the input of the Land Management Review Team (LMRT) to determine whether land management is meeting the objectives of the DLMP. The following four goal areas are outlined in the DLMP: Resource Protection, Public Use, Communications, and Fiscal Responsibility.

The purpose of this land management report is to document activities during the previous fiscal year in managing District lands as prescribed within the DLMP.

## **Objectives of the District Land Management Plan**

### **Resource Objectives**

#### **1. Water Resource Objectives**

- Minimize structural floodplain management on District-managed lands.
- Maintain surface and groundwater quantity and quality during land management activities by using enhanced Silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Restore hydrologic regimes to the Desired Future Condition (DFC) where possible.
- Maintain water control structures so they achieve their intended function.

#### **2. Soils, Topography, and Natural Community Objectives**

- Minimize soil degradation (erosion, compaction).
- Manage and/or restore historic natural communities for a given site to DFC levels to the extent practicable.
- Update and maintain current reference data.

#### **3. Ground Cover Resource Objectives**

- Reduce degradation of the existing native groundcover.
- Monitor the grass, herbaceous and shrub layers to detect if the resource falls within the DFC parameter acceptable range.
- Reintroduce or supplement current native ground covers with local stock where needed to achieve ecosystem functions.

#### **4. Forest Resource Objectives**

- Manage for natural community heterogeneity to attain a multi-aged and vertically diverse forest, including retaining dominant and/or old growth trees and snags.
- Maintain the dominant and co-dominant tree species within the DFC acceptable parameter range.
- Reforest within DFC parameters using techniques that minimize damage to other natural resources.
- Maintain an accurate and current forest resource inventory.
- Ensure that commercial harvests provide the maximum financial returns that are possible with the consistent attainment of primary natural resource values.

#### **5. Rare Species Resource Objectives**

- Protect and manage biodiversity on District lands.
- Identify and monitor rare species on District lands.
- Provide staff with the most current rare species locations, status, and Rare Species Best Management Practices.
- Maintain and/or increase existing rare and imperiled species populations on District lands.

## **6. Cultural and Historic Resource Objectives**

- Protect and prevent negative impacts to cultural and historical resources during all activities.
- Document location of significant cultural and historical resources on District-managed lands and share information with the Division of Historic Resources within the Department of State.
- Monitor the condition of cultural and historical resources on District-managed lands.

## **7. Aesthetic and Visual Resource Objectives**

- Maintain or enhance overall visual quality of District lands.
- Minimize or mitigate short-term negative appearances of land management activities.

## **8. Public Use Objectives\***

- Provide opportunities for resource-based recreation compatible with water resource protection.
- Protect health and safety of visitors.
- Use cooperating agencies and volunteers whenever possible.

## **9. Communications Objectives**

- Maintain and update the District Land Management Plan as needed with a major plan update in 2021.
- Conduct the Land Management Review Team process and report to the Governing Board.

## **10. Fiscal Responsibility Objectives**

Protect and manage resources on District lands in an efficient manner within the limits of the annual operating budget.

- Revenues generated from land management will be from operations conducted to achieve resource objectives.
- The District will implement the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program for eligible counties.

\*Objectives from April 9, 2013 Governing Board Workshop.

## **SRWMD FY 2013 Report of Land Management Activities**

### **I. RESOURCE PROTECTION**

**Goal – to protect, enhance and/or restore natural, archaeological, and historical resources on lands owned by the District.**

#### **I.1 Water Resource Management**

District lands provide unique opportunities because of their proximity to major rivers and their tributaries. At the site level, many facilities such as river access points and roads require additional review and construction standards to withstand flood impacts. The objective of facilities design is to make them transparent to high- and low-flow conditions within the floodplain. At the tract level, there are opportunities to impact altered water flows and water retention capacities to allow more natural buffering characteristics of the floodplain, such as flood attenuation, to be enhanced and provide protection to the receiving water body.

Land management natural community projects are implemented using silviculture BMPs as a minimum standard for implementation. Silvicultural practices and road maintenance operations are planned to protect or enhance water resources. Road improvements and culvert maintenance activities occurred on four tracts in FY 2013. These consisted of installation of one new culvert in Jones Mill Creek tract, replacement of two culverts in RO Ranch and Lamont tracts, and clean out of three culverts in the Steinhatchee Springs tract and one culvert in the Santa Fe River Ranch tract.

##### **I.1.1 Water projects:**

Water Projects completed in FY 2013 include:

Lukens Tract Water Access. A plastic erosion control mat was permitted and constructed in an existing scar on a tidal creek. The area is under a management agreement with USFWS to be managed as part of Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge.

Steinhatchee Rise Dispersed Water Storage Project. This project placed rock barriers in an existing canal that flows into the Steinhatchee River. The intent is twofold: first, to slow down the water in the canal and allow it to percolate into the surficial aquifer; and second, to rehydrate wetlands to create conditions more similar to their natural hydroperiod.

Bell Springs Restoration Project. This project removed earthen berms and dewatered the associated ponds that were constructed in the spring run of Bell Springs. This is a cooperative project with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which provided funding for construction. The project was permitted and contracts were awarded. Construction activities are complete. Planting natural tree and herbaceous species will be completed by early summer 2014.

Water Projects in Planning and Design include:

Middle Suwannee River and Springs Restoration and Aquifer Recharge Project. This project is occurring on District and private lands near Mallory Swamp. The objectives are to rehydrate wetlands and ponds and encourage recharge to the aquifer.

Otter Springs Restoration. Work is being planned to remove some of the sediment in the spring and reduce erosion by installing access stairs and other public use improvements to protect the spring.

Pot Springs Restoration. Plans are focusing on stabilizing the public use facilities and preventing additional bank erosion.

Silviculture Water Yield Research Project. This project is part of a statewide effort to advance the understanding of the impact of forest management activities on water yield and whether this water is held in surficial systems or makes it way to the aquifer.

## **I.2 Land Resource Management**

The District plans and implements land management operations in order to protect and/or enhance natural resources. Plant and animal distribution and abundance are dictated by the availability of resources. A set of desired future conditions (DFC) detail plant community structure, representative plant species, average hydrological regime, and the frequency that fire is required to maintain the plant community.

The District uses the desired conditions to determine if management activities are needed to “restore or maintain the natural condition” as directed by statute. District lands that meet the DFC structural standards are maintained by activities that mimic natural processes (fire and natural flooding events) or “passive” management. Communities that do not meet standards, however, may receive more “active” management to move the community towards the community standards.

### **I.2.1 Reforestation**

#### Site Preparation

Site preparation activities were completed to facilitate tree planting in FY 2013. One thousand three hundred seventy-one acres were planted in FY 2013. Four hundred sixty-five acres were augmented with additional seedlings due to survival problems from past reforestation operations. A large portion of this planting failure was attributed to Tropical Storm Debbie flooding.

Table 2. Site preparation operations.

<b>Management Objective</b>	<b>Management Action</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Reforestation - Site Preparation	Chop	Lake City Wellfield	61
Reforestation - Site Preparation	Scalp	Branford Bend	100
<b>Total</b>			<b>161</b>

#### Tree Planting

Reforestation of cutover lands was conducted on 1,371 acres during FY 2013 (Table 3). Both slash and longleaf pine were planted by hand or using a Whitfield type planter pulled behind a V-blade mounted on a bulldozer or farm tractor. All the pine seedlings were planted in 12-foot rows. Planting was monitored to ensure that seedlings were planted to District standards and that the seedlings per acre were within 10% of the prescribed rate. Prescribed rates are 605 trees per acre for slash pine and 726 trees per acre for longleaf pine.

Table 3. Reforestation of pine seedlings (December 2012 – January 2013).

Tract	Dominant Natural Communities Planted	Pine Seedlings	Compliance Seedlings /acre	Acres
Shady Grove	Mesic flatwoods	Bare Root Slash	613	31
Steinhatchee Springs	Mesic & wet flatwoods		719	123
Steinhatchee Springs			667	39
Bay Creek	Wet flatwoods		692	20
Lake City Well Field	Wet flatwoods		710	61
				<b>TOTAL</b>
Cabbage Creek	Mesic flatwoods	Container & Bare Root Longleaf	691	185
Holton Creek	Sandhill & upland mixed forest		650	28
Mattair Springs	Sandhill		685	71
Shady Grove	Wet flatwoods		538	30
Mallory Swamp	Mesic & wet flatwoods		743	83
Mount Gilead	Mesic flatwoods		728	48
Mallory Swamp	Mesic flatwoods		728	81
Branford Bend	Upland pine forest & mesic flatwoods		719	101
Steinhatchee Springs	Mesic & wet flatwoods		720	118
				<b>TOTAL</b>

### **I.2.2 Timber Harvest**

The District harvests timber resources to promote forest health and alter the tree density (Table 4). Last year, the District indicated they had begun a formal process of tracking management decisions in the form of operational prescriptions. Currently, the prescriptions are not being used due to time constraints. Instead, management activities are being thoroughly reviewed through memorandums and meetings with the Executive Office and during Land Resources meetings. Tracking is being completed using GIS.

Timber sale objectives include the following:

- Reduce overstocked conditions;
- Remove undesirable species.

Table 4. Acres of timber sales and revenue as percent of reported sources.

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
# Acres Timber Sold for DFC	267	1,074	1,096	1,314	1,079
Total Value as a Percent of Published Regional Market Rate	117%	114%	98%	102%	104%

### **I.2.3 Natural Community Management using Herbicides**

Herbicides are applied to create conditions consistent with the natural community standards.

### Site Preparation

No herbicides were applied for site preparation.

### Pine Seedling Release

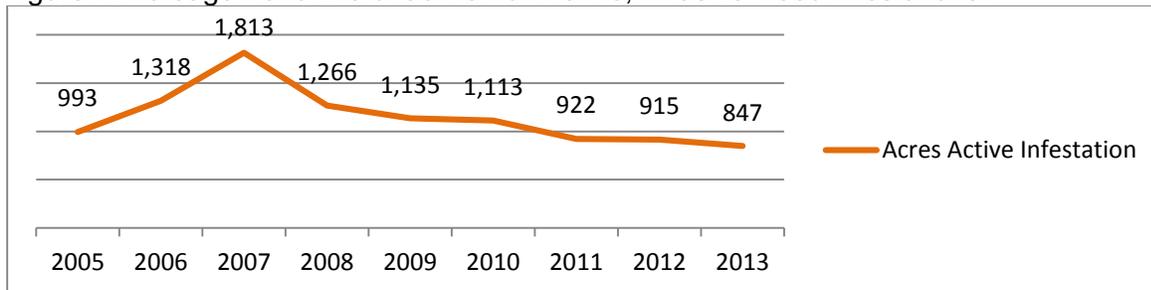
No herbicides were applied for pine seedling release.

### Non-native, Invasive Weed Control

A total of 440 weed infestations were monitored during FY 2013. Of those active infestations, 21 were treated with herbicides or pulled by hand; no living weed material was observed at 118 of the monitored infestations.

Efforts to control non-native, invasive weeds are showing a reduction of the total acreage of infestations (Figure 1). A total of 79 infestations were reclassified as “Inactive.” Active infestations are reclassified Inactive when no weed material is observed at or within close proximity of the infestation for 3 consecutive years.

Figure 1. Acreage trend line of active non-native, invasive weed infestations.



### **1.2.4 Natural Community Management using Prescribed Fire**

Many of Florida’s natural communities were historically influenced by lightning-ignited fires. Of those fire-adapted natural communities, the District’s prescribed fire program targets the following six community types for maintenance and restoration purposes: sandhills, upland pine, scrubby, mesic, wet flatwoods and shrub bogs. Combined, these targeted communities make up approximately 76% of the total acres that were historically influenced by fire. Within these targeted natural communities, the District focuses most of its efforts on designated core areas. Factors that distinguish many of these core areas include: 1) areas often contain acreage that has a consistent burn history, 2) vegetation within these areas can easily be burned without other inputs such as mechanical or chemical pre-treatments, and 3) areas may contain acreage that has undergone other management activities that requires the use of prescribed fire for continued maintenance or restoration (Table 5).

The remaining 24% of fire influenced communities on District land consists of wetland natural communities such as basin, depression, and tidal marshes and dome and basin swamps. These communities are not actively targeted for prescribed burning. Instead, fire is allowed to carry into these areas from adjacent communities that are prescribed burned. Fire is allowed to carry into these areas only when the risk is minimal for issues such as smoke management, mortality to wetland trees and prolonged organic soil consumption. Containment firelines are installed in such a way as to avoid impacts to wetlands and water resources.

Table 5. Acres of fire maintained natural communities by classification.

<b>SRWMD Fire Maintained Communities</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Targeted Communities	76,508
Targeted Community Core Areas	50,002
Non-Targeted Communities	23,989

The District uses information from the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) to establish the Natural Fire Return Interval (NFRI) for each natural community. The District's goal is to increase the acres of Targeted Community Core Areas within their NFRI (Table 6).

Table 6. Natural Fire Return Interval and Burn Acreages on District lands

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
% Targeted Community Core Areas within Natural Fire Return Interval	66%	47%	36%	26%	15%
Acres Prescribed Burned	12,136	7,670	11,742	15,765	7,659
Acres Burned That Met Objective	11,715	6,976	11,692	13,189	7,229
Wildfire Acres	11	457	5,535	2	1

### **I.3 Resource Monitoring**

#### **I.3.1 Groundcover Resource**

No groundcover data plots were collected in FY 2013.

#### **I.3.2 Timber Resource Monitoring**

The DFC specifies tree species stocking and species goals. Data were collected on 1,276 timber plots in FY 2013. The data from these plots quantify the acres that achieve the community goals and also provide for data for areas that may be improved using timber sales. Staff is developing an ongoing inventory plan to keep this data current.

#### **I.3.3 Rare Species Monitoring**

The District has procedures for identifying and avoiding detrimental impacts to imperiled species on its lands. Rare species are documented on District lands by surveys and opportunistic observations. Species locations and rare species BMP information are maintained within a geodatabase. To lower the potential for negative impacts on existing species occurrences, District staff consults the rare species GIS layer file and rare species BMPs before planning and conducting management activities. If potential impacts are identified, staff will delineate occurrence areas or adjust management activities to avoid potential conflicts.

In FY 2013, Staff conducted gopher tortoise surveys on approximately 670 acres of the Ellaville Tract in Madison County. Within the sample area, over 700 transects were surveyed yielding a density estimate of approximately 2.8 tortoises/acre.

### I.3.4 Cultural and Historical Resource Monitoring

District lands have been reviewed for historical resources and 169 known sites were found in the Florida Master Site Files; twenty six sites have been classified as significant cultural sites. In addition to these sites, the most likely areas, based on the known sites, are classified “High Probability Zones” (HPZ) and the District follows the “Protocol for Managing Cultural and Historical Resources on Suwannee River Water Management District Lands 2011” to avoid damaging these resources.

The District inspects the significant cultural resource sites, while working on other projects in the vicinity, in order to document if they are being impacted (Table 7).

Table 7. Status of significant Cultural Resources sites.

<b>Measures</b>	<b>2013</b>
# sites monitored for significant cultural resources	0
# / % known previously damaged cultural sites	2/8%

### I.4 Land Resource Projects:

#### Withlacoochee Quail Farm Tract

The District entered into cost-share agreement with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in July 2011 to restore the native upland pine community at the Withlacoochee Quail Farm Tract. Of the 620 acres of upland pine forest on this tract, only 57% contains groundcover resources and fine fuels sufficient to manage the community with prescribed fire. The site was previously an old field, thus explaining the lack of native groundcover.

This project is expected to benefit the natural community by reestablishing native groundcovers, which are vital components to biodiversity and natural community management, and reintroducing fire to the community. As part of that agreement, the District monitored groundcover restoration, paid for by the USFWS, on approximately 145 acres. In FY 2013, the cooperative sowed 12 lbs of native, upland groundcover seed per acre. This activity was funded by the USFWS. The next planned restoration actions for FY2014 include planting containerized longleaf pine at 726 trees per acre (completed). Planned in-kind services include continued monitoring and control of invasive weeds and the continued use of prescribed fire. The project will be completed in 2015.

#### Land Resource Projects in Planning and Design include:

The Little River Tract Upland Pine Restoration Project. This is a joint project with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the National Wild Turkey Federation. The District received multi-year grant funding to reduce mesic oak proliferation on about 470 acres of upland pine site. The first operation will be a timber sale to reduce the amount of oaks present on the property. This area will also be used for the silviculture water yield project. Soil moisture probes will be set to determine water use by various densities of trees and species.

## II. PUBLIC USE

**Goal – to provide opportunities for high quality, compatible resource-based recreation and education programs to meet the public’s needs.**

District lands provide an extensive set of resource-based recreational opportunities. Of the approximately 158,000 acres owned by the District, over 99% are open to the public for recreation. The District’s Public Use Guide lists allowable recreational uses approved by the Governing Board by tract, including uses that require a Special Use Authorization (SUA).

Planning for public uses takes into account the sensitivity of the site, the proximity of similar recreational opportunities, the time and financial requirements to provide the use, and public demand for the particular use.

### **II.1 Facility Management**

The DISTRICT facility standards detail recreational facility, road and trail, sign and kiosk, and fence construction and maintenance procedures. These standards ensure that facilities provide a safe, aesthetically pleasing, outdoor environment for the public that can be effectively maintained (Table 8). District staff inspects public use facilities and schedules any maintenance required to ensure the longevity and continued safe use.

District public use facilities data remained nearly constant in FY 2013 with one exception. The existing trails in Twin Rivers State Forest were updated (Table 8).

Table 8. Public use facilities.

<b>Facility</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
# Trailheads	30	26	26	22	18
# Docks & Boat Ramps	11	10	10	8	10
# Hand & Canoe Launch Sites*	19	27	27	26	70
# Picnic Areas	17	16	16	16	15
# Interpretive Sites	11	9	9	8	6
# Restrooms	18	18	18	14	14
# Miles Trails	242	203	190	183	183
# Miles Driving Trails	310	310	345	302	302

\*Large fluctuations in the number of hand and canoe launch sites are due to the reclassification of certain facilities. Prior to 2010, river access was classified as a launch site; river access points are now classified as river access, hand and canoe launch sites, or boat ramps.

#### **II.1.1 Facility Construction**

A plastic mat launch for kayaks and canoes was designed, permitted and constructed for the Lukens Tract near Cedar Key. The area was previously used to launch small boats but lacked any erosion control. This parcel is now managed by the USFWS as part of the Cedar Keys Refuge at no cost to the District.

## **II.2 Special Use Authorizations**

In order to protect sensitive resources, it is necessary to restrict some uses of District lands. Members of the public may apply for a Special Use Authorization (SUA) to engage in those recreational opportunities requiring special authorization as listed in the public use guide. Examples include ATV use and night-time access. An SUA may also be issued for opportunities not listed in the Public Use Guide; examples include research and data collection, placement of bee hives, and nuisance hog removal.

An SUA serves as an agreement between the District and a user; it details terms, conditions, liability protection and time frame of the proposed use. The District issues SUAs and reserves the right to refuse anyone an SUA if the proposed use threatens water resources, public safety or other natural resources on District lands. A total of 497 SUAs were issued in FY 2013 (Table 9).

Table 9. The number and types of Special Use Authorizations issued.

<b>Recreation</b>	<b>Temporary Ingress and Egress</b>	<b>Mallory Swamp ATV Trail</b>	<b>Commercial*</b>	<b>Goose Pasture Camping</b>	<b>Total</b>
349	54	NA	7	87	497

\*Commercial SUAs issued during the fiscal year include research and data collection, cemetery restoration, cattle lease and an apiary lease on 5 sites.

## **II.3 Hunting and Fishing**

The District's goal for public hunting is to provide high-quality hunting opportunities. Public hunting on District lands is offered through management agreements with the FWC and the USFWS. Fishing is allowed on District tracts subject to FWC fishing regulations (Table 10).

Table 10. SRWMD hunting acres and fishing access.

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
# acres open to public hunting	105,131	105,016	96,444*	97,160	97,160
# fishing access locations	101	130	102	99	94

\*The number of acres of land open to hunting decreased due to the District conveying a portion of the Sandlin Bay Tract to the U.S. Forest Service. These acres remain open to hunting as part of the Osceola National Forest WMA, but the District no longer holds title to the land.

## **II.4 Emergency Closings**

Tracts were closed due to partial flooding on the following dates: March 4, 2013, 6 tracts; March 7, 2013, 2 tracts; July 22, 2013, 1 tract; July 31, 2013, 2 tracts; August 21, 2013, 1 tract; and August 23, 2013, 1 tract. All tracts were reopened as soon as conditions warranted.

### **III. COMMUNICATIONS**

**Goal – to coordinate with public and private stakeholders in the management of District lands.**

The District must seek and include participation from outside agencies, organizations and private citizens when developing management plans for the lands under its stewardship. However, District lands and facilities and other communication opportunities likely provide greater visibility of land management activities to the general public. Public inquiries are addressed by visiting the District or contacting District staff by phone, mail, email, or the website. All boundary and informational signs include District phone numbers and email addresses for this purpose.

#### **III.1 District Land Management Plan**

The DLMP articulates the Governing Board goals and objectives that guide the management of all fee lands held by the District. The Board approved the DLMP in May 2011.

No revisions were made to the DLMP in 2013.

#### **III.2 Land Management Review Team**

The Land Management Review Team (LMRT) scores District land management and their report is provided to the Board for its review. Statutorily, the LMRT must evaluate

- 1) whether District lands are being managed for the purposes for which they were acquired and
- 2) if the management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the management plan.

On May 30, 2013, staff led a field tour of lands in the Alapaha River basin and a portion of the Upper Suwannee River basin around the Holton Creek Tract. This review area totals about 5,900 acres of fee and 1,800 acres of Conservation Easement lands. The main area of emphasis on the tour was protection of the extensive surfacewater/groundwater interface in this region and how District management activities protected these resources. Ten individuals representing private landowners, interests groups and agencies participated in the tour. The LMRT found the District to be in compliance or exceeding compliance with the DLMP and in managing lands for the purpose for which they were required.

Table 11. Questionnaire responses from the District's LMRT meeting held on May 30, 2013.

<b>Question 1</b>	<b>Are District lands being managed in a manner consistent with the purpose for which they were acquired, including public access?</b>
# of Responses	
<b>0</b>	The SRWMD is not in compliance.
<b>3</b>	SRWMD compliance is adequate and acceptable.
<b>5</b>	SRWMD exceeds compliance regularly.
<b>Question 2</b>	<b>Does SRWMD land management implement the goals identified in the District Land Management Plan?</b>
# of Responses	
<b>0</b>	The SRWMD is not in compliance.
<b>4</b>	SRWMD compliance is adequate and acceptable.
<b>4</b>	SRWMD exceeds compliance regularly.

### **III.3 Regional Resource Groups**

District staff participates in regional groups such as:

- North Florida Prescribed Fire Council
- San Pedro Bay Landowners Association
- 1<sup>st</sup> Coast Invasive Species Working Group
- North Central Florida Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area
- FWC, Invasive Plant Management Section's Weed Control Project
- Suwannee River Wilderness Trail
- Florida Trail Association
- Suwannee Bicycle Association
- Florida Greenways and Trails Council
- Conserved Forest Ecosystem: Outreach and Research Cooperative
- FWC Wildlife Management Areas – Annual meeting to review hunting opportunities

## IV. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Goal – to protect resources and manage District lands in an efficient manner within the District’s annual budget.**

District staff minimizes the costs associated with land management by contracting with the private sector, partnering with other land management agencies and organizations, and submitting proposals for additional land management grant funding.

### **IV.1 Revenues and Expenditures**

The District has opportunities to generate revenues while implementing its management activities. Timber sales generate the most revenue. In FY 2013, the District sold an estimated 16,507 tons of timber in 2 sales on 267 acres. These sales were thinnings of pine plantations. Total gross revenues are estimated to be \$222,910.

A cattle grazing authorization and apiary authorization generated an additional \$2,250.

Expenditures in the land management program are divided into categories for budgeting as follows:

- Prescribed Fire – includes FFS and private contractor costs for prescribed burning and fire line establishment and maintenance.
- Administration and Planning - includes expenses for planning, GIS, training, real estate activities, management plans and reviews, interagency coordination and Payment in Lieu of Taxes.
- Facility Management – includes costs for maintaining roads, boundaries and gates.
- Natural Resource Management – includes water resource projects, reforestation, timber sales, exotic plant control, and protected species management.
- Public Use – includes expenses for maintaining site-based and dispersed recreation activities, developing new sites, signs, maps, brochures, and sanitation.

Table 12. Land Resources Expenditures

<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>
Prescribed Fire	\$421,876
Administration and Planning*	\$644,448
Facility Mgt.	\$215,044
Natural Resource Mgt.	\$657,539
Public Use	\$190,258
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,129,165</b>

\*Payments in Lieu of Taxes in the amount of \$342,909 were paid to eligible counties.

## IV.2 Cooperative Agreements

The District enters into cooperative management agreements and/or leases with government agencies to reduce the cost of management to the District (Table 13).

Table 13 Agencies managing District lands.

<b>Managing Agency</b>	<b>Tracts</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Alachua County	1	120
Columbia County	2	139
Department of Environmental Protection	9	1,980
Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	2	869
Hamilton County	3	16
Jefferson County	1	22
University of Florida	2	738
US Fish and Wildlife Service	4	1,655
<b>Total Acres No Cost Agreements</b>		<b>5,539</b>
<b>Managing Agency</b>	<b>Tracts</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Florida Forest Service	13	12,963
Gilchrist County	1	634
<b>Total Acres Shared Revenue Agreements</b>		<b>13,597</b>
<b>Total All</b>		<b>19,136</b>

The Twin Rivers State Forest is managed by the Florida Forest Service (FFS). In FY 2013, there were state expenses of \$150,900 and there were no contracts.

Public use and recreational services at the Otter Springs Park and Campground are managed by Gilchrist County under a lease signed in 2008. Operational costs and public use revenues are shared by the County and the District equally. The expense to the District was \$13,977 in FY 2013.

The non-profit R.O. Ranch, Inc. is responsible for all recreational uses on the District's R.O Ranch Tract and all the facilities that support those activities; this includes an equestrian oriented park and campground. The Management Agreement was updated in FY 2012 and the endowment funds were transferred to RO Ranch Inc. Trustees to allow RO Ranch to function more as a separate financial and management entity.

The District also has a Cooperative Agreement with the Florida Forest Service for lands not under lease. This agreement is used primarily to allow the FFS to manage and conduct fire line installation and prescribe fires on District lands. This agreement should save money since the FFS rate is less than the private contractor burn rates. During FY 2013, no acres were burned under this agreement.

The District also has agreements with the USFS for the Florida National Scenic Trail, the Florida Trail Association and the Suwannee Bicycle Association to manage trails on District lands. These trails are maintained at no cost to the District and available for use by the general public.

### **IV.3 Surplus Lands**

The District completed its assessment of potentially surplus lands that began in FY 2009 in FY 2012. Lands sold in FY 2013 are summarized in (Table 14). Surplus lands that are not needed for water resource protection allows the District to redirect these funds to higher value water resource lands.

Table 14. Surplus lands sold or conveyed in FY 2013.

<b>Closing Date</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Transaction</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Price</b>
3/6/2013	Buck Bay	Alachua	Conveyed to Municipality	60	\$186,000
5/20/2013	Jasper Wellfield	Hamilton	Conveyed to Municipality	30	\$0
9/24/2013	Hunter Creek	Hamilton	Conveyed to Municipality	0.4	\$0
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>90.4</b>	<b>\$186,000</b>

## Appendix A

### SRWMD Statutory Summary - March 10, 2014

#### Land Acquisition and Management

##### Ch. 373.139(2) Acquisition of real property.

- “Flood control
- Water storage
- Water management
- Conservation and protection of water resources
- Aquifer recharge
- Water resource and water supply development
- Preservation of wetlands, streams and lakes.”

##### Ch. 373.1391 Management of real property.

(1a)

- “Managed and maintained, to the extent practicable, in such a way as to ensure a balance between public access, general public recreational purposes, and the restoration of their natural state and condition. Except when prohibited by a covenant or condition in s. 373.056(2), lands owned, managed, and controlled by the district may be used for multiple purposes including, but not limited to, agriculture, silviculture, and water supply, as well as boating and other recreational uses.”

(b)

- “Whenever practicable, such lands shall be open to the general public for recreational uses. General public recreational purposes shall include, but not be limited to, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, swimming, camping, hiking, canoeing, boating, diving, birding, sailing, jogging, and other related outdoor activities to the maximum extent possible considering the environmental sensitivity and suitability of those lands. These public lands shall be evaluated for their resource value for the purpose of establishing which parcels, in whole or in part, annually or seasonally, would be conducive to general public recreational purposes. Such findings shall be included in management plans which are developed for such public lands.”

(5)

- “The following additional uses of lands acquired pursuant to the Florida Forever program and other state-funded land purchase program shall be authorized, upon a finding by the governing board, if they meet the criteria specified in (a) – (e): Water resource development projects, water supply development projects, stormwater management projects, linear facilities, and sustainable agriculture and forestry. Such additional uses are authorized where:
  - (a) Not inconsistent with the management plan for such lands;
  - (b) Compatible with the ecosystem and resource values of such lands;”

- (c) The proposed use is appropriately located on such lands and where due consideration is given to the use of other available lands;
- (d) The using entity reasonably compensates the titleholder for such use based upon an appropriate measure of value;
- (e) The use is consistent with the public interest.”

373.591 Management review teams.—

(1) To determine whether conservation, preservation, and recreation lands titled in the names of the water management districts are being managed for the purposes for which they were acquired and in accordance with land management objectives, the water management districts shall establish land management review teams to conduct periodic management reviews. The land management review teams shall be composed of the following members:

- (a) One individual from the county or local community in which the parcel is located.
- (b) One employee of the water management district.
- (c) A private land manager mutually agreeable to the governmental agency representatives.
- (d) A member of the local soil and water conservation district board of supervisors.
- (e) One individual from the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- (f) One individual from the Department of Environmental Protection.
- (g) One individual representing a conservation organization.
- (h) One individual from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Florida Forest Service.

(2) The management review team shall use the criteria provided in s. 259.036 in conducting its reviews.

(3) In determining which lands shall be reviewed in any given year, the water management district may prioritize the properties to be reviewed.

(4) If the land management review team finds that the lands reviewed are not being managed in accordance with their management plan, prepared in a manner and form prescribed by the governing board of the district and otherwise meeting the timber resource management requirements of s. 253.036, the land managing agency shall provide a written explanation to the management review team.

(5) Each water management district shall, by October 1 of each year, provide its governing board with a report indicating which properties have been reviewed and the review team’s findings.

Ch. 259.036 Management review teams.

(3) “In conducting a review, the land management review team shall evaluate the extent to which the existing management plan provides sufficient protection to threatened or endangered species, unique or important natural or physical features, geologic or hydrologic functions or archaeological features. The review shall also evaluate the extent to which the land is being managed for the purposes for which it was acquired and the degree to which actual management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the adopted management plan.”

Ch. 253.036 Forest management.

“All land management plans described in s.253.034(5) which are prepared for parcels larger than 1,000 acres shall contain an analysis of the multiple-use potential of the parcel, which analysis shall include the potential of the parcel to generate revenues to enhance the management of the parcel. The lead agency shall prepare the analysis, which shall contain a component or section prepared by a qualified forester which assesses the feasibility of managing timber resources on the parcel for resource conservation and revenue generation purposes through a stewardship ethic that embraces sustainable forest management practices if the lead management agency determines that the timber resource management is not in conflict with the primary management objectives of the parcel.”...”All additional revenues generated through multiple-use management or compatible secondary use management shall be returned to the lead agency responsible for such management and shall be used to pay for management activities on all conservation, preservation and recreation lands under the agency’s jurisdiction. In addition, such revenue shall be segregated in an agency trust fund and shall remain available to the agency in subsequent fiscal years to support land management appropriations.”