1.0 Reference to Prior Directive

There are no prior versions of this Directive.

2.0 Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this Directive is to establish a policy and procedure for the Regional Initiative Valuing Environmental Resources (RIVER) Cooperative Funding Program. The intent of this Directive is to offer District funding assistance to public entities and other interested entities, through an application and ranking process, to implement projects that help protect Florida's water supply, improve water quality, restore natural systems and provide flood protection.

3.0 Statement of Policy

In accordance with Chapter 373, Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Governing Board (Board) may participate and cooperate with county governments, municipalities, water supply authorities, and other interested entities in water management projects of mutual benefit, provided such projects are consistent with the District's statutory authority and will ensure proper development, utilization, and conservation of the water resources and ecology within the jurisdictional boundaries of the District.

4.0 Policy Guidelines

1. The Board will give priority consideration to those projects designed to further the implementation of the District's core mission.
2. The Board will consider the applicant's efforts in developing and implementing best management practices.
3. Funding may be provided to assist with the cost of conservation, ecosystem restoration, alternative water supply, water resource development, and construction of associated capital projects.

4. Funding assistance will be contingent upon concurrent project action and commitment by the county, municipality, water supply authority, or other interested entity to ensure the project goals will be implemented.

5. The Board will consider funding based on the applicant's ability to demonstrate that such funding is necessary to make the project economically feasible.

6. The cooperating entity must demonstrate any matching funds have been appropriated, are contained within a Capital Improvement Plan, or otherwise committed to the project.

7. Any state or federal appropriations or grant monies received by a county government, a municipality, or a water supply authority for a specific project shall be first applied toward the total cost of the cooperators' proposed project. The District will typically fund up to 50 percent of the remaining project costs with a similar match from the cooperators.

8. Pursuant to the provisions of Section 288.06561, F.S., the Board may reduce or waive requirements for matching funds when requested by rural counties or municipalities, as defined by Subsection 288.0656(1)(b), F.S.

9. All applications submitted for funding consideration by the Board must be signed by a single Senior Administrator acting as a coordinator for the RIVER Cooperative Funding Program for the county, municipality, water supply authority, or interested entity. If an entity submits multiple applications, an overall ranking of the projects is required. Final decisions regarding the funding of the project proposals are the exclusive responsibility of the Board.

5.0 Procedure

1. In coordination with the District's annual planning and budgeting process, the District will make available cooperative funding applications and information packets to all interested parties.

2. Deadline for Submittal – Proposed applications received by the District after the deadline, identified in the information package, will not be evaluated by staff, and will not be recommended for funding. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposal applications online; paper applications are also available by request.

3. Information Requirements – Each project proposal, at a minimum, shall include a completed application form, taking into consideration the criteria noted on the application form. At a minimum, this information should include: project name; applicant's project manager; address; phone number; email address; project type; strategic initiatives; counties and watershed/basin to benefit from the project; project objectives and goals; project description; location map; conceptual plans; project costs/benefits; best management practices or technologies to be implemented; and available funding sources. Counties and municipalities meeting the rural community definition established by Section 288.0655(2)(b), F.S., may request a reduction or waiver of financial match, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 2001-201, Section 10, Laws of Florida. As a part of such requests, the county or municipality must demonstrate how they meet the requirements of Section 288.0655(2)(b), F.S. A county government, municipality, water supply authority, or other interested entity submitting more than one project proposal must rank the proposal in order of priority. If the applicant's matching funds are included in an approved capital improvement plan or budget at the time of application, the appropriate documentation from the
plan or budget indicating the applicant's matching funds are available must be included as part of the application. Otherwise, the applicant's Senior Administrator shall attest the applicant's matching funds will be included in the applicant's proposed budget no later than for the year the project is submitted.

4. Evaluation Criteria – District staff will consider: The quality of the application as measured by thoroughness and clarity including the location map; the applicant's performance in the RIVER Cooperative Funding Program; the effectiveness of the project to protect, conserve, restore, or augment the areas of water resource and ecology; the use of best management practices; the cost effectiveness of the project; how regional the project is in nature; the potential of the project to start and proceed in a timely manner, and if the application is for multi-year or phased project, the project benefits to be realized if future phases are not funded.

5. Initial Screening – District staff shall decide if the project proposal application is complete. If the application is deemed complete, it will be forwarded for further review and evaluation by the RIVER Cooperative Funding Program Review Team (Team).

6. Project Prioritization – Once the Team has completed an initial evaluation, including discussions with the applicant, the Team shall meet to prioritize all project proposals. Based on prioritization and available funding, projects that have been approved for the appropriate adopted budget will be recommended by the Team to the Governing Board to enter into a contractual agreement with the approved project applicant(s).

7. Once a proposed project has been approved and included in the adopted budget, a contractual agreement will be prepared for execution by those involved parties which at a minimum shall set forth: the specific commitments and obligations of each party; financial and other considerations to be exchanged; indemnification and damages to be paid upon injury, default or termination; the term of completion of the project; and performance measures.