



# Who We Are & What We Do

## Who We Are

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) manages the water resources for west-central Florida as directed by state law.

The District encompasses roughly 10,000 square miles in all or part of 16 counties and serves a population of nearly 6 million people. The goal of the District is to meet the water needs of current and future water users while protecting and preserving the water resources within its boundaries.

A 13-member Governing Board oversees District activities. Members are unpaid volunteers appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the state Senate to set policy and administer the budget.

District funding comes from ad valorem property taxes, along with other intergovernmental sources. While the Legislature allows a tax levy up to 1 mill (\$1 for each \$1,000 of assessed land value), the actual tax levy has been less than the maximum.

## What We Do

The District was established in 1961 as a flood protection agency. Since then, its responsibilities have grown to include managing the water supply, protecting water quality and preserving natural systems that serve important water-related functions.

## Water Supply

Ensuring adequate water supplies for people, animals and the environment is central to the District's mission. The District issues water use permits to ensure withdrawals from water bodies will not harm existing users, the water resources or the environment. The District also contributes funding and technical expertise to local governments for programs that conserve water and develop alternative water supplies.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to protect water resources, minimize flood risks, and ensure the public's water needs are met.

The Governing Board of the District assumes its responsibilities as authorized in Chapter 373 and other chapters of the Florida Statutes by directing a wide range of programs, initiatives and actions.

These include, but are not limited to, flood protection, water use, well construction and environmental resource permitting, water conservation, education, land acquisition, water resource and supply development, and supportive data collection and analysis efforts.

## Flood Protection

The District accomplishes flood protection through structural and nonstructural methods. Structural methods include the operation of 18 flood protection structures. Nonstructural methods include purchasing lands that store floodwaters, issuing permits to ensure new development does not cause flooding and contributing funds and technical expertise to local governments for flood protection programs.

## Water Quality

The District is actively involved in maintaining and improving the water quality within its boundaries. District permits require new developments to capture and treat polluted stormwater before it is released. Other water quality activities include various stormwater improvement projects, plugging abandoned wells and restoration of springs and other habitats that naturally filter water.

## Natural Systems

Protecting water-related natural systems increases the District's ability to carry out all of its responsibilities. To protect natural systems, the District purchases lands that store floodwaters, secure future water supply or serve other water-related functions. Additional protection methods include habitat restoration and the establishment of minimum flows and levels for water bodies.

