

Board of Supervisors

Wakulla County Soil and Water Conservation District

Budget/Grant Request

Draft

“Creating Jobs through Sustainable Soil and Water Practices”

Cover Page (Wakulla SWCD – Dates of the Plan)

Title Page (names of Supervisors who assisted in the Plan)

Introduction/Background

In 1937, the Florida Legislature enacted Chapter 582, Florida Statutes (F.S.) modeled after the Soil Conservation District Act, which later expanded the scope to include water conservation. Chapter 582 has been amended several times since, with the most recent being 2016. The legislation established a state and local partnership with the federal government to protect and restore soil and water resources and to assist private landowner in using conservation practices. This partnership has worked for more than 80 years to address serious issues regarding soil erosion, flood damage, and water quality. The vehicles for this partnership are the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).

Florida's Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) have a long history in joining with partners to provide funding and technical support to help local landowners in conservation efforts. The main partners are the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Services, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Agriculture Water Policy, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences, and the counties that the SWCDs serve.

The Wakulla County SWCD consists of five elected supervisors who each serve four-year terms. The Supervisors receive no monetary compensation for their services and many of the funds expended by the SWCD are either through donations or through generous contributions from the Supervisors themselves. The Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners has, in the past, granted limited funding for such things as clerical and administrative support, equipment purchases, and other needs as they arise. The Wakulla County SWCD is in need of funds to support our long term goals and this proposal addresses these needs.

Duties of Supervisors

The Wakulla County SWCD Supervisors constitutes a government subdivision of the State of Florida and exercises public powers and therefore has, among others, the following duties:

- O To conduct surveys, studies, and research relating to soil and water resources and to publish and disseminate the results of such surveys, studies, research, and related information;
- O To conduct agriculture best management practices demonstration projects and projects for the conservation, protection, and restoration of soil and water resources;
- O To cooperate or enter into agreements with any special district, municipality, county, water management district, state or federal agency, or private owner of lands within the district to further the purpose of Chapter 582 F.S. and
- O To provide training and education programs that further the purpose and provision of Chapter 583 F.S.

Wakulla County

Wakulla County consists of 471,040 total acres of which 387,840 acres are land and 82,560 acres are rivers, lakes, ponds, or wetlands. Of this land, 70 percent (271,488 acres) is owned by the government and 30 percent (116,352 acres) is private (taxable). Of this private land, only a small portion consists of traditional row-crop agriculture and a larger portion is dedicated to tree farming. A large portion of the private lands available to be farmed have been converted to residential use to support Wakulla County's rapidly expanding population. Ensuring that these residential areas are developed with the very best intentions for the quality of soil and water is a major concern.

The Aquifer

(give details)

The Wakulla Springs

(give details)

Directive from Governor Ron DeSantis

“Governor Ron DeSantis’ Executive Order 19-12 directs strategic action with a focus on accountability, transparency and collaboration and includes a proposed \$2.5 billion investment over the next four years. Since the Executive Order was executed, Governor DeSantis has secured the dedicated funding to reach this goal. To execute these historic environmental investments, DEP is seeking project proposals that will bolster existing collaborative efforts between governmental agencies and our combined efforts to protect and restore Florida’s water resources.

For this fiscal year, the Department has additional Water Protection Funds to distribute as grants to governmental entities for the following programs:

- Targeted Water Quality Improvements
- Rivers and Springs Coast Protection and Restoration
- Coral Reef Protection and Restoration
- Innovative Technologies to Address Harmful Algal Blooms
- Non-point Source Pollution Reduction”

Budget/Grant Request

The Wakulla SWCD, through its monitoring program, has witnessed the dramatic water quality decline in the springs, sinks, creeks, rivers, and coastline over the last three decades. The majority of the causes of this decline are thought to be climate change, poor land management practices, residential development, uncontrolled issuance of building permits, and a rapidly increasing population.

Knowing that soil and water conservation is the key to maintaining Wakulla County’s pristine environment, the Wakulla SWCD hereby requests a grant in the amount of **\$250,000** to be used as follows:

- 1) The development of a comprehensive Water Flow Characteristic (digital) map which details how water travels into the aquifer and coastal shores over the entire county. It is anticipated that this map will clearly identify critical areas that need improvement, areas which are most sensitive to development, areas that route waters to the aquifer, and areas that drain directly into the ocean. This detailed map (digital) shall reside on the Wakulla County public website.
- 2) The development of a scholarship program that encourages Wakulla County’s youth to continue their education in the soil and water (environmental) fields.
- 3) The hiring and management of a paid Public Relations Representative to coordinate with all citizens and business/land owners so that activities and programs are publicized and funding sources are known to all those hoping to improve their conservation practices.
- 4) The creation of an expert panel of advisors to assist private developers and landowners in best management practices and to work with (and between) the Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners and the Wakulla Planning and Zoning Board to ensure that potential developments address the concerns of the environment using science as a base for granting permits.
- 5) To create, organize and conduct SWCD speech, land judging, water quality management, and other contests.
- 6) The creation of proposals for alternative methods of capturing Fresh Water from cisterns, evaporation, runoff, and alternative methods for obtaining clean and sustainable drinking water without drilling.
- 7) The creation of proposals (and eventual grants) for locally produced Sustainably Sourced Plant Based Bottles and Containers that will biodegrade in short periods of time to help support clean land and water, beaches, and waterways.
- 8) The creation of jobs in the areas of development of local farms, cultivators, and processors of plant fiber for the use in biodegradable containers.
- 9) The creation of jobs in the areas of alternative water capture and the establishment of local businesses to produce locally sourced biodegradable containers.

Adoption Page

(attach a statement of adoption of this plan and request – show motion)