

I. Meeting Packet



State of Florida
Public Service Commission
INTERNAL AFFAIRS AGENDA

Tuesday – August 18, 2026

9:30 AM

Room 105 – Gerald L. Gunter Building

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1. Florida Rural Water Association: Overview of Organization and Current Challenges Facing Water and Wastewater Utilities – Alicia Keeter, Executive Director. (Attachment 1)
 2. Northwest Florida Water Management District: Overview of the Consumptive Use Permitting Process – Starsky Harrell, Regulatory Services Director; Caitlin Brongel, Chief of Staff, Northwest Florida Water Management District. (Attachment 2)
 3. General Counsel's Report
 4. Executive Director's report
 5. Other Matters

BB/aml

OUTSIDE PERSONS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON
ANY OF THE AGENDAED ITEMS SHOULD CONTACT THE
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT (850) 413-6463.

Florida Rural Water Association



Who We Are

The Florida Rural Water Association (FRWA) was formed for the benefit of small water and wastewater systems throughout Florida. We are a nonprofit, non-regulatory professional association. Our primary purpose is to assist water and wastewater systems with every phase of the water and wastewater operations.

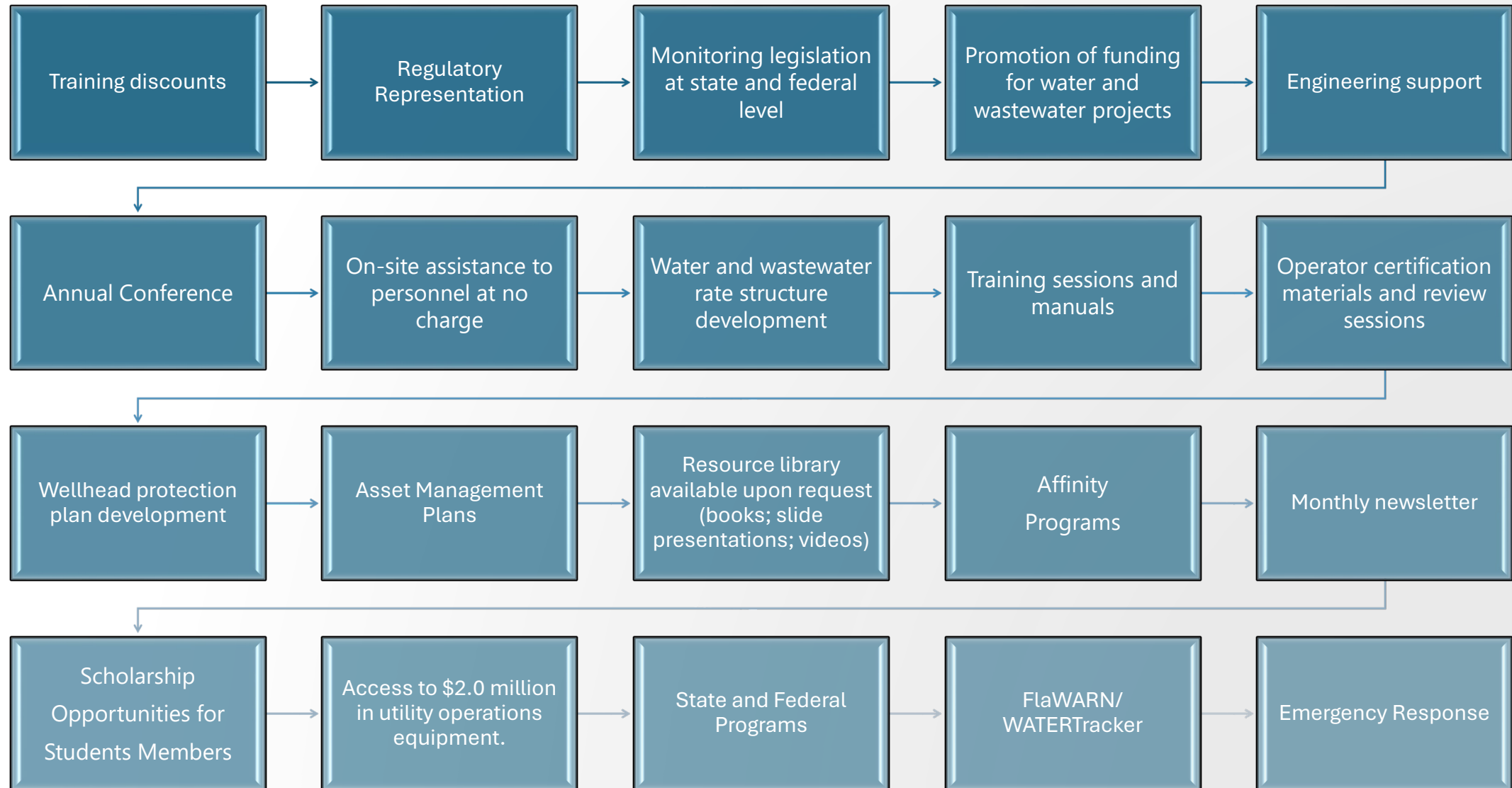
Our Mission Statement

"To help water and wastewater systems provide Floridians with an ample supply of high-quality water, while protecting natural systems!"

We work in partnership with
FDEP and the National Rural
Water Association for our
program funding



FRWA Member Benefits





Utilities are not the same in size and make up for services provided, i.e. city, not-for-profit, municipality



Implications for the differences in our infrastructure; one size does not fit all



Not all systems are connected to State/County or Public Works in Rural America

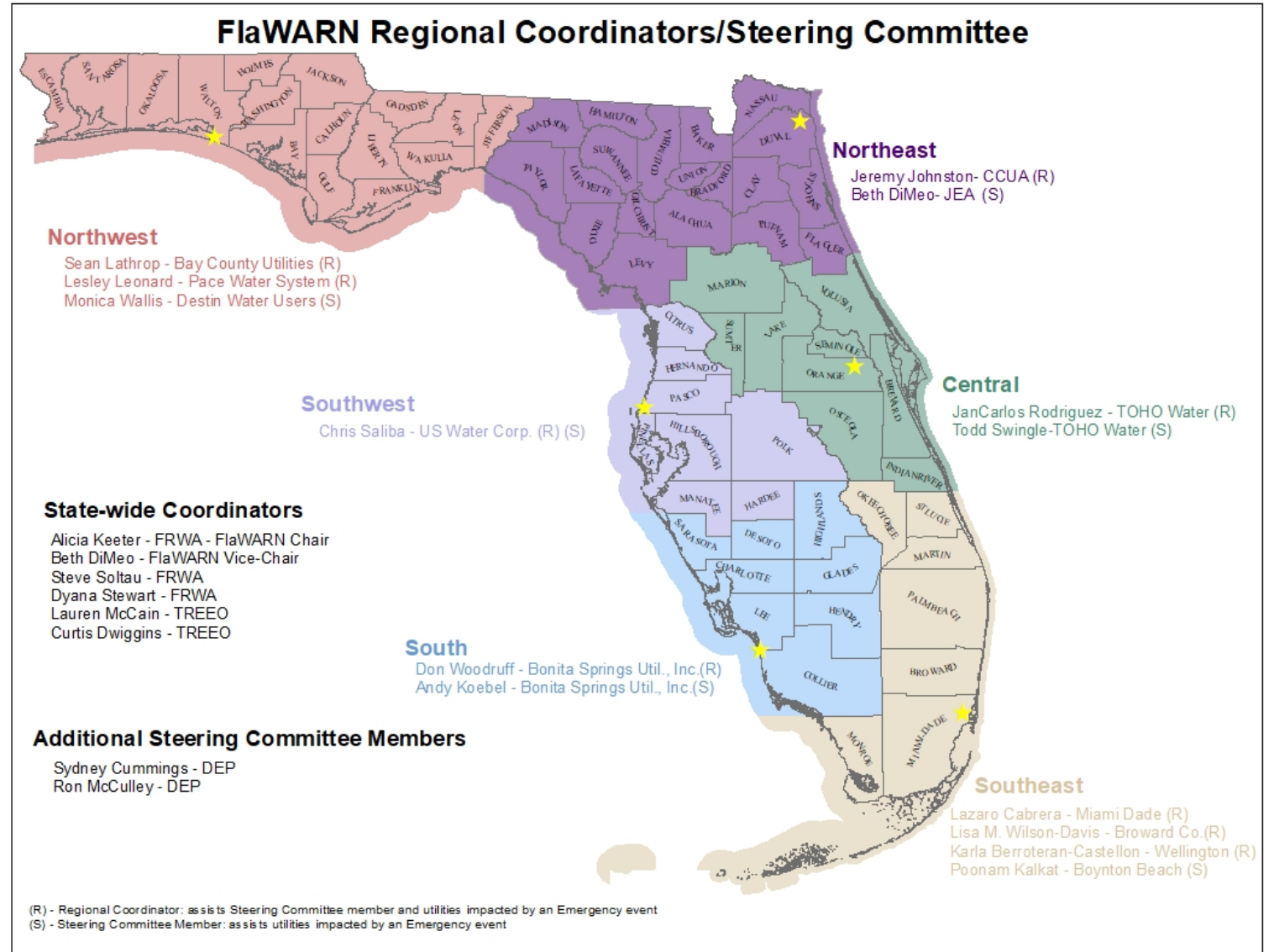


Every utility is not staffed to handle all forms of operations



FRWA provides technical assistance to our rural communities to fill the gaps in operations, maintenance and compliance

Emergency Response through FlaWARN



Emergency Response Equipment & Training Warehouse



Questions ???

Thank You !

Alicia Keeter

Executive Director

850-520-1405

Alicia@frwa.net

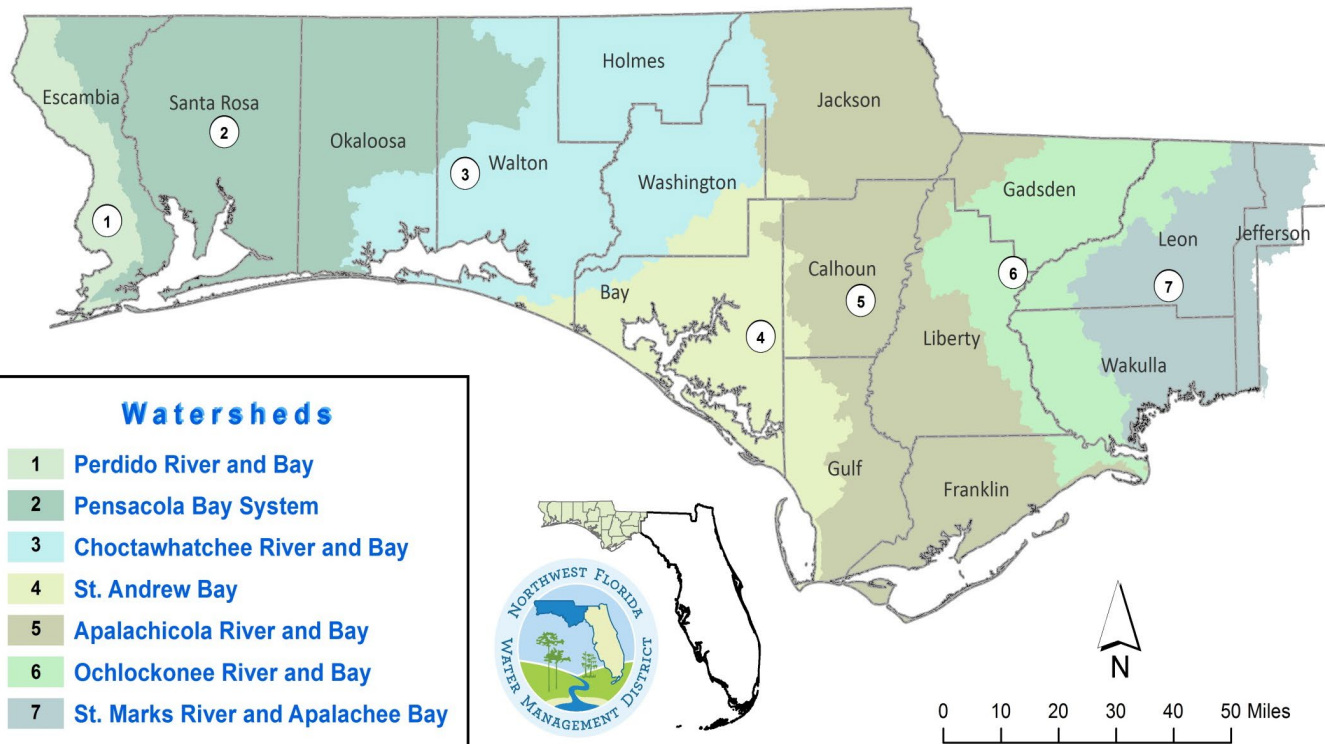


Northwest Florida Water Management District

Florida Public Service Commission Internal Affairs



Northwest Florida Water Management District



Nearly 1.6 million residents across 16 counties



2020 water use of 342 million gallons per day



225,811 acres (353 square miles) of public land



Some of Florida's largest rivers and most diverse and productive estuaries



Rich in surface and groundwater resources

Areas of Responsibility



Water Supply

Ensure sufficient water for all existing and future reasonable-beneficial uses and natural systems.



Flood Protection and Floodplain Management

Maintain natural floodplain functions and minimize harm from flooding.



Water Quality

Protect and improve the quality of the District's water resources.



Natural Systems

Protect and enhance natural systems.



Division of Regulatory Services



SURFACE WATER



Stormwater

*(Environmental Resource Permitting
Chapter 62-330, F.A.C.)*



Agricultural Farm Ponds & Forestry Crossings

(Chapter 40A-44, F.A.C.)



Works of the District

(Chapter 40A-6, F.A.C.)



GROUNDWATER



Well Construction

(Chapter 40A-3, F.A.C.)



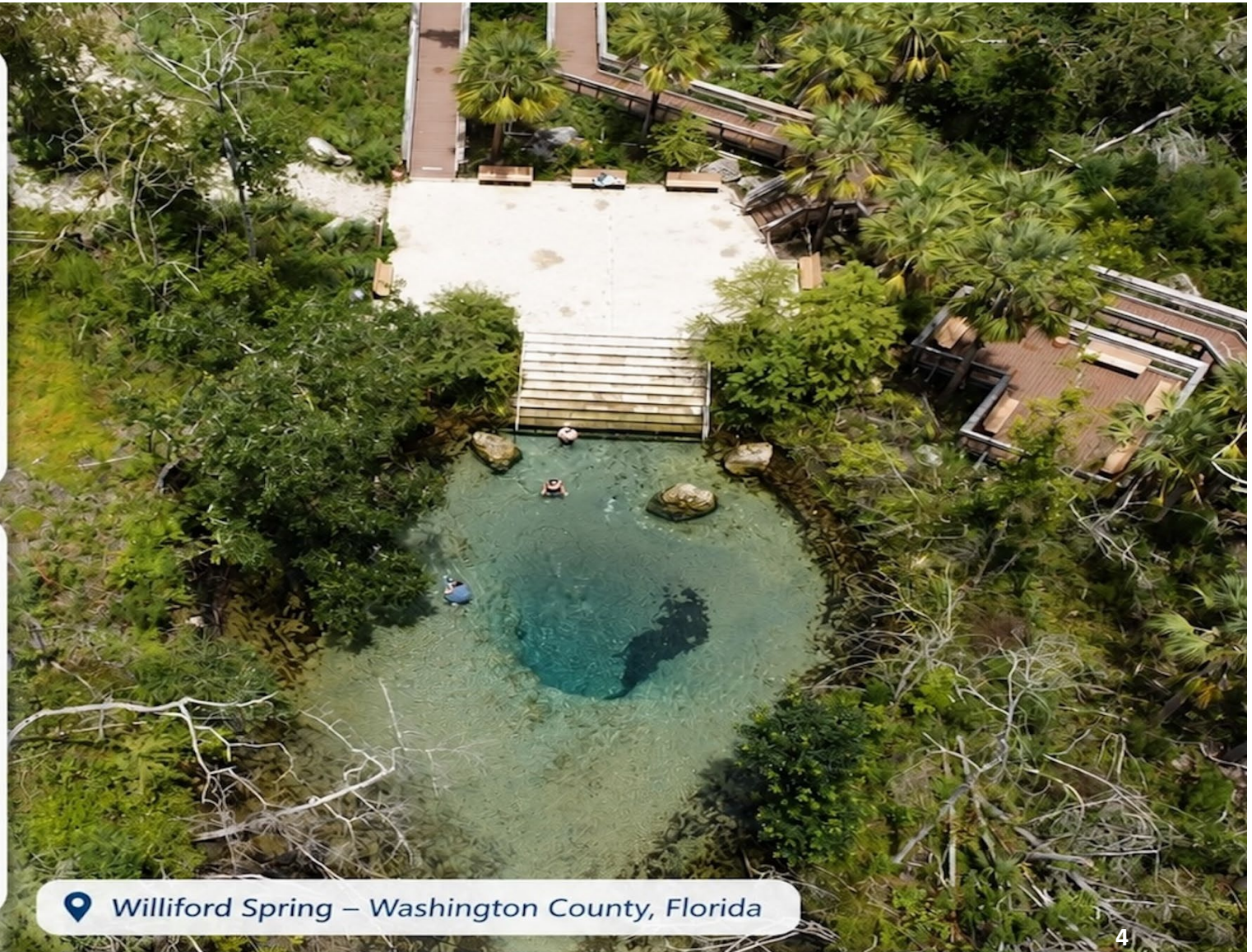
Consumptive Use (also known as Water Use)

(Chapter 40A-2, F.A.C.)



Water Shortage Plan

(Chapter 40A-21, F.A.C.)



Williford Spring – Washington County, Florida

Water Use Permitting



Water management districts have **exclusive authority**.



Domestic consumption of water by individual users are **exempt**.



Two types of permits: general water use permits by rule and individual permits.

To obtain a water use permit, the applicant must **establish** that the proposed use of water:



Is a reasonable-beneficial use;



Will not interfere with any presently existing legal use of water; and



Is **consistent** with the public interest.



Gainer Spring
Washington County, Florida

What does this mean?



In order to provide reasonable assurances the water use is reasonable-beneficial, the applicant shall demonstrate the water use:



1. Will utilize a water source that is suitable for the consumptive use



2. Will utilize a water source capable of producing the requested amount



3. Will utilize the lowest quality water source that is suitable for the purpose



4. Will not cause harm to water resources in the area



5. Will not cause harm to Outstanding Florida Springs or their spring runs



6. Will not cause harm to existing offsite land uses resulting from hydrologic alterations



7. Is a quantity that is necessary for economic and efficient use



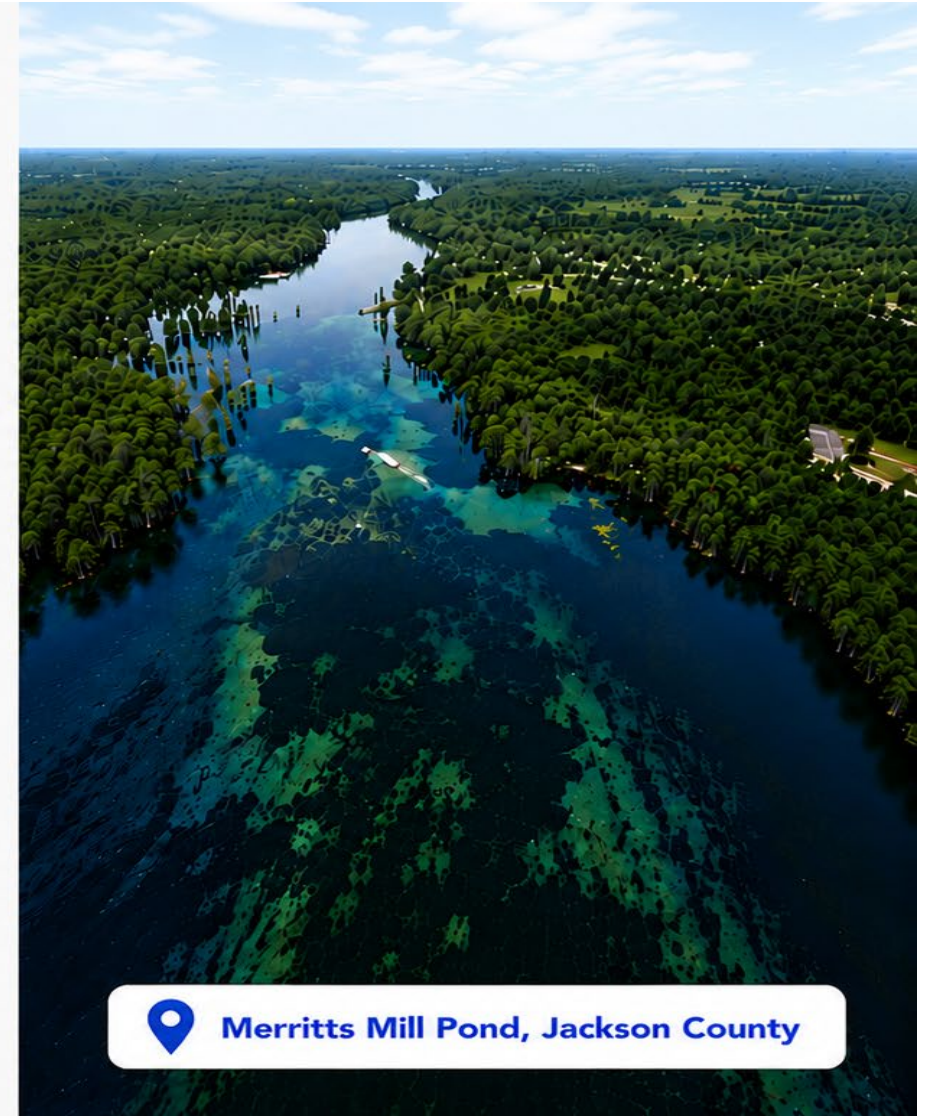
8. Is in accordance with any established minimum flow or level and implementation strategy



9. Will not use water reserved for use as established in rule



10. Is for a purpose and occurs in a manner that is both reasonable and consistent with the public interest



Merritts Mill Pond, Jackson County

Permit Application Procedure



1. DISTRICT SUBMITTAL

- Agricultural
- Industrial/Commercial
- Landscape/Recreation
- Mining/Dewatering
- Public Supply
- Institutional
- Diversion and Impoundment
- Other use – aquifer remediation, cleaning and maintenance, etc.

Or



2. DEP SITING COORDINATION OFFICE

DEP coordinates the interagency review and certification for building, operating and maintaining power plants, transmission lines, and natural gas pipelines.



CERTIFICATION REVIEW

Certification is a comprehensive state license which includes any regulatory activity applicable under state, regional, and local regulations for the facility.



GOVERNOR AND CABINET

Governor and Cabinet issue the certifications.



Jackson Blue Spring, Jackson County

Water Use Permits



PERMIT DURATION



PERMIT CONDITIONS



Pumpage reports



Flow meters and calibration



Groundwater levels



Groundwater quality



Mitigation requirements
if unforeseen impacts do occur



📍 Cypress Spring, Washington County

Thank You



Starsky Harrell 

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www.nwfwater.com 

II. Outside Persons Who Wish to Address the Commission at Internal Affairs

Note: The records reflect that no outside persons addressed the Commission at this Internal Affairs meeting.

III. Supplemental Materials for Internal Affairs

Note: The records reflect that there were no supplemental materials provided to the Commission during this Internal Affairs meeting.

IV. Transcript

1 BEFORE THE
2 FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

3
4
5
6 PROCEEDINGS: INTERNAL AFFAIRS

7 COMMISSIONERS
8 PARTICIPATING: CHAIRMAN GABRIELLA PASSIDOMO SMITH
9 COMMISSIONER GARY F. CLARK
10 COMMISSIONER MIKE LA ROSA
11 COMMISSIONER BOBBY PAYNE
12 COMMISSIONER ANA ORTEGA

13
14 DATE: Tuesday, August 18, 2026

15 TIME: Commenced: 9:30 a.m.
16 Concluded: 10:35 a.m.

17 PLACE: Betty Easley Conference Center
18 Room 105
19 2524 Shumard Oak Boulevard
20 Gerald L. Gunter Building
21 Tallahassee, Florida

22 REPORTED BY: DEBRA R. KRICK
23 Court Reporter and
24 Notary Public in and for
25 the State of Florida at Large

26
27 PREMIER REPORTING
28 TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
29 (850) 894-0828

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Okay. Good morning. I think
3 you guys -- hopefully you heard the instrumentals
4 when you came in. I went over it last time, but we
5 are changing up the IA Song of the Month process,
6 so now you hear the instrumentals of the song and
7 then you submit your guesses to Angelina, and she
8 will let you know if you got it right, so good
9 luck, because I --

10 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Did anybody win?

11 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yeah. Yeah.

12 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: That's why I
13 volunteered.

14 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yeah, exactly, yeah. You get
15 a handshake from me.

16 But more importantly, I would like to go over
17 the Employee of the Month. Carlos Caro-Rora, a
18 Regulatory Analyst in the OCA's process review
19 team.

20 Carlos was promoted to his new position due to
21 his commitment and earnest consideration of
22 Florida's customers when handling consumer
23 complaints. Last year, he even visited with a
24 customer in person when she appeared unannounced in
25 our lobby, which is pretty awesome.

1 Carlos always works tirelessly with both
2 English and Spanish speaking consumers to find an
3 equitable resolution to the complaint, and now uses
4 the artful skills to help customers who remain
5 unsatisfied. Carlos has a pleasant attitude, never
6 degrees weary responding to and assisting
7 customers. He is an extremely conscientious
8 employee and a valuable member of the OCA consumer
9 assistance team. We can all congratulate Carlos.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHAIRMAN SMITH: We know how important that
12 job is. You are really like the front lines
13 between us and the customers, and so, you know,
14 treating them with the respect that they deserve
15 and getting to a resolution for their issues is
16 really one of the most important things we do here
17 at the Commission, so your job is extremely valued,
18 so thank you again, Carlos, for all of your work.

19 MR. CARO-RORA: Thank you. Thank you so much.

20 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Okay. We have a couple of
21 presentations today. Our first one from Florida
22 Rural Water Association overview of the
23 organization and current challenges facing water
24 and wastewater utilities. I will turn it over to
25 you.

1 MS. KEETER: Thank you all. Good morning. My
2 name Alicia Keeter, and I am the Executive Director
3 at Florida Rural Water Association. I have been at
4 the helm for about two years now. So my
5 predecessor, Harry Williams, was a long-term 35
6 years the organization, and just appreciate his
7 leadership over at Florida Rural Water, so big
8 shoes to roll in and fill and work through and just
9 hit the ground running and things, so I appreciate
10 the opportunity to come today and to present.

11 If you don't know who Florida Rural Water is,
12 you will find out today. If you do, then this will
13 just be a recap, kind of a refresher of sorts, and
14 then some new activities and things that we have
15 going on around the state of Florida. So we will
16 work on that.

17 So just so -- who we are. We work more for
18 the benefit of small systems. Water was our
19 primary focus, so we worked through water and
20 wastewater. We work with the agencies around the
21 state. We have staff that support the entire
22 state, not just up here in Tallahassee. That's our
23 main hub, because it's close here to the operations
24 of the Capitol and activities.

25 Our primary purpose is just to offer

1 assistance to our systems, to help them just a hand
2 up, not handout, so to speak, to come along side
3 them and teach and work with and provide technical
4 assistance.

5 Mission, to help water and wastewater systems
6 provide Floridians with an ample supply of high
7 quality water while protecting natural systems.
8 It's not just about the water anymore, it's about
9 the wastewater and the reuse as well. So we will
10 be talking about all of those components.

11 We are part of a national partnership. We
12 work with associations around the entire United
13 States. We are one of the 50 associations, and we
14 partner up with National Rural Water Association.
15 That's our hub. It's in Duncan, Oklahoma. We work
16 closely with the EPA and the USDA for funding, and
17 providing a lot of our services. About 25 percent
18 of our funding comes from National Rural Water
19 programs, so we are thankful for that partnership,
20 and about 50 percent comes from our partnership
21 with Florida Department of Environmental Protection
22 as well.

23 Some of our benefits that we talk through, and
24 I will just kind of highlight some of these here.
25 I won't go through all of the blocks and the

1 details, but some of our main claims to fame, so to
2 speak, is we are one of the state's CEU providers.
3 So we provide the training discounts to our members
4 if they are a member of the association. We still
5 help non-members. We don't turn away anyone if
6 they call, we ask -- they ask, and we say, how can
7 we help you. Those are our responses in that.

8 We have regulatory representation, so we come
9 and we fight on behalf of the utility. We are the
10 liaison in that. If there is an issue that they
11 have, because a lot of times they don't have the
12 staff that can perform a lot of those duties, so we
13 fill that gap for them. We are kind of that
14 stopgap in that response. So we meet with DEP. We
15 meet with USDA. We meet with water management
16 district. We meet with whatever agency we meet
17 with legislators, however we need to help those
18 utilities.

19 Monitoring legislation at state and federal.
20 We are active in educating coming over and trying
21 to communicate what bills, what rules, what laws,
22 seeking education response, adjustments,
23 amendments, any of those things that impact our
24 smaller communities that don't necessarily have a
25 voice, or don't have a lobbyist on staff, we work

1 closely in that component.

2 At the federal level, we have the partnership
3 of Natural Rural Water. We have the water pact
4 that we work through. We go to DC once a year and
5 visit with them, but we definitely multitask on
6 that level. If there is big bills, big laws that
7 are impacting the federal funding, we are a voice
8 of education and we provide commentation to those
9 and appear.

10 Our staff, we just do a lot of promotion of
11 our funding. Anything that the staff need at
12 utilities, if they need a way to buy a generator,
13 if they need a way to replace a pump, or if they
14 need a new water well, we work to try to find that
15 funding. We help them with the rates. We help
16 them with their asset management plans, all forms
17 that lead back to the financial component of that.

18 We have several engineers on staff so that we
19 can do smaller projects. If they could refocus
20 that money to something else, we can offset those
21 costs in that manner as well. So we have several
22 of those on the team that can help do small plans,
23 and then be a liaison to the consultants if they do
24 have a consultant through a grant program, we offer
25 that as well to try to bridge the gap on that

1 component.

2 So we have a lot of different training we have
3 around the state. We have an annual. We have
4 multiple -- focus on change trainings that we
5 travel around the state to all the DEP districts so
6 that we can meet the utilities where they are,
7 because travel sometimes is a big deal for them and
8 the cost. So we bring the training to them.

9 Not only do we our focus on change, which is
10 generally in the February-March timeframe, we also
11 have custom training classes to work with the
12 operators. If they are at a C level for water and
13 wastewater, B, get them up to an A, we go through
14 the distribution training. We have one-on-one
15 classes with them. If there is a training that a
16 utility needs and they call us and, say, hey, we
17 would really like training for that, we get
18 creative, we put it together and we go and we coach
19 them on ways that they can operate better.

20 Board operations. We work with our board
21 training. We go and we meet with their
22 commissioners, their council to try to educate them
23 on the needs from the high level down to the
24 operations, because we see there is a big gap a lot
25 with our industry that the council, you know, there

1 are a lot of them that are elected, they are not
2 certain of all the details, they are new faces
3 coming in. What they hear, everything is fine,
4 it's great, it's fine, and the operators are down
5 here at the bottom going, it's not fine, it's not
6 great. So we've got to bridge the gap. So we work
7 to try to train and educate them both on this is
8 what it takes to operate a utility as a whole, but
9 this is what it takes to operate boots on the
10 ground day-to-day operations. So it's a lot of the
11 mechanisms that we try to provide those trainings
12 to educate the members, the utility, their
13 customers, all of those components.

14 We work on on-site. We have operators that
15 travel around the state, circuit riders, the old
16 term of the circuit rider that used to travel and
17 deliver the mail and that years ago, they kind of
18 took that and they branded that for our water and
19 wastewater circuit riders. So we have physical
20 people that go to that system if they have a
21 problem, if they can't operate their plant, if they
22 having a problem with technical challenges, I just
23 can't get into compliance, I am having problems, I
24 am having these details, our circuit riders go,
25 physically assess, work with them and provide a

1 hand to them, coach them and teach them. We don't
2 operate for them. We coach them. This is what
3 needs to be corrected. Here's some suggestions,
4 ideas, and then they take it and then they go with
5 it from there.

6 That's where we try, again, the hand up, not
7 the handout. We don't want to operate for them.
8 We want to teach them so that we can move on to the
9 next system, because there is over 6,000 PWSs
10 around the state of Florida, there is a lot of
11 people that need some help, so we try to coach them
12 up through that.

13 Water and wastewater rate structure, as you
14 are all intimately familiar on the rate structure
15 components, we work with that as well. We have a
16 rate structure component where we just work
17 financial team goes to meet with them,
18 communicates. As part of their funding
19 requirements, they need to have rate structure that
20 shows that they can handle the loans, that they can
21 handle the rate payment, whether it's USDA or SRF
22 type loans, or any other Peacock private, you know,
23 any other type of grants that are out there.

24 But we also have a unique piece to what we do
25 with that as well, is we have an asset management

1 plan. So we have a rate study analysis part of
2 that plan, and then we physically go out and
3 evaluate their system, their infrastructure. We
4 give it a scoring mechanism. Is it, you know,
5 good, great, excellent, poor, failing,
6 catastrophic? We give it those grades. And all of
7 that software talks together to be able to give
8 them a capital improvement plan, to give them a
9 path forward.

10 So it assesses the value of their current
11 infrastructure, works with the current dollars that
12 are coming in from their revenue stream, matches
13 that and it provides them a roadmap of where to go
14 next, and they can take that.

15 So we encourage them to accept the asset
16 management plans, and then there is also an
17 implementation component that's extremely important
18 to that as well that they not only see what their
19 critical needs are, they see what their long-term
20 and short-term, but the point of if it's a critical
21 scenario that needs to be fixed, then the
22 implementation component is what we strongly
23 recommend for that utility to do next.

24 So we walk alongside them. If there is a fire
25 hydrant that's failing, if there is a manhole

1 that's, you know, opened up, or if you have got a
2 pump that literally on its last leg, and if that
3 pump fails, you are going to have customers out of
4 water, we encourage them to do the implementation.
5 And our staff go and present that to their counsel,
6 explain that to them, the details of the plan, and
7 educate them, and then work with the operators to
8 try and go forward with the implementation
9 component.

10 You can see some of our other different
11 avenues that are up there. The wellhead
12 protection, the asset, you know, we talk about
13 asset management. We have a variety of resource
14 libraries we call it that's on-line on our network.
15 So all of these new rules and regulations that are
16 being passed require the systems to have templates,
17 to have spreadsheets, to have forms to fill out.
18 It's overwhelming for a lot of our smaller systems,
19 so we have these templates on our website, or just
20 a click or a phone call away, and then we can send
21 them what they need for our collection system
22 action plans, our consumer confidence reports, our
23 rate study pieces. Pretty much anything that they
24 need, we can find a way to provide for them a
25 template or a resource that they can work to better

1 their system that they have.

2 Our affinity programs, we have a lot of our
3 vendors that offer discounts to our members, if
4 they are a member of the association, so that's
5 just another perk with membership. So if they are
6 a member, they can get a software that is Diamond
7 Map software that's part of our asset management
8 that helps them to collect, keep up with their
9 infrastructure. It's also a work order management
10 program. So that's just an example of some of our
11 affinity partners that they offer discounts to our
12 members for -- it's a win-win thing type thing for
13 them and for us and for the utility that we can
14 educate them. We use the software. We can show
15 them firsthand how it works. It works in all types
16 of mechanisms and that.

17 We have the opportunity to be able to
18 communicate with all of our members. We also have
19 the opportunity to work with our WATERTracker
20 software that's through DEP, that we can educate
21 through a newsletter, E-news, social media, any
22 type of marketing. If there is an important piece
23 of information that needs to go out to our
24 operators or to our utilities around the state, we
25 can send that message to every utility, every

1 person who has an email or a phone number or an
2 address in that WATERTracker database, which is
3 DEP's database, so it tracks all of that. So we
4 have a way to get a big blast out to all utilities
5 all persons that are registered through that
6 software.

7 We have a lot of scholarship opportunities.
8 We like to grow our younger generation. We have an
9 awesome apprenticeship program that we have going
10 on for workforce development. As you all know,
11 everybody likes to just be on social media, or they
12 want to be influencers or TikTokers, or things of
13 that, and we need those boots on the ground
14 technical assistance component, so we encourage the
15 scientific, we encourage the engineering, we
16 encourage the technical college. We have
17 scholarships that we offer through high school
18 students up to our college students.

19 We just partnered with SediVision this year
20 for Women of Water scholarship to encourage our
21 women that are juniors and seniors in college and
22 in technical college programs to advance their
23 learning new techniques. So we are advocates for
24 educating our younger generations, because, you
25 know, we are not getting any younger. So that's

1 the problems. We got the big gap between the
2 retirement and the upcoming generation that we've
3 got to transfer that book knowledge, tech
4 knowledge, all of that into real world experience
5 to those kids, so that's very important.

6 We have a very robust apprenticeship program
7 that we have between water and wastewater around
8 the state. We currently have 33 operator trainees
9 that are in the program, and we are trying to grow
10 that more, because that's important, that we need
11 to educate them, not about I can get it from the
12 book, but I can't solve it from the book. The book
13 doesn't teach you how to critical think and how to
14 troubleshoot all types of scenarios. So we give
15 them that physical opportunity to go to a plant, to
16 a water facility, to see operators in action, to
17 see them problem solve, because it doesn't matter.
18 On any given day, you are going to have challenges
19 that it's going to be a fire drill, and when they
20 can see that and how they work through that
21 critical thinking, that's learning you can't get
22 from a book. So we think that's very important,
23 and we have a hybrid approach on that. So that's
24 one of our partnerships that we have with the
25 National Rural Water on the apprenticeship program.

1 So we work through a lot of that.

2 I will highlight the FlaWARN just a minute
3 because we will move to that, but the FlaWARN and
4 the WATERTracker, the WATERTracker platform is a
5 software platform that we developed with DEP. We
6 used to be StormTracker, and then we used to have
7 FlaWARN and then we merged the two together because
8 we saw the importance of that.

9 That is a great platform, and we will touch on
10 that a little bit, but I just want to highlight
11 because it is the month of August on that, and we
12 see the emergency response on that piece, so one of
13 our big things that we are very active with.

14 I want to tell you a little bit more about how
15 we are facing a lot of challenges, things and
16 issues that are happening. We are not the same and
17 size and makeup. One utility is not the same as
18 another utility. Just because it says wastewater
19 does not mean that we all operate the same under
20 wastewater. Just because it's water does not
21 operate the same. We have surface water. We have
22 water wells. We have a conglomeration of reduce
23 coming into that. The BMAPs that are around
24 certain parts of the state. One set of the area
25 has great clean drinking water, the other area has

1 to deal with tannins and, you know, batological,
2 and you have to deal with saltwater intrusion
3 around the south. You have to deal with water
4 supply. Some of it is more abundant than the
5 other. So these are a lot of our implementations
6 implications that make us different. We still
7 provide the same service of water and wastewater.
8 You got to treat it, but how it's getting there.
9 Where are we physically located? What is the
10 makeup of the utility? There is a variety of ways
11 that you deliver water.

12 So just because somebody has water at their
13 tap does not mean that the same type of pipe, same
14 type of service, the same type of personnel were
15 there. Like our members in Bay County, they have a
16 surface water treatment plant. Those operators
17 have to be skilled in a different set of manner to
18 be able to operate that.

19 In my home community in Freeport, we are from
20 the Floridan aquifer. It's drill the well. Run
21 the pipe. Real basic. Different type of
22 operations, different type of operator licensing
23 that are required to operate those facilities.

24 Same thing with a wastewater plant, different
25 components. You can have a small package plant,

1 you can have a larger wastewater facility,
2 different license, different levels, different
3 level of pay that requires to pay those skilled
4 workers.

5 When you have got a small community, like down
6 in East Point or Apalachicola, those components,
7 you have a draw, you have tourism and traffic, but
8 you don't have the day-to-day-to-day, where you
9 have got the City of Tallahassee day-do-day
10 operations, a lot more money, they have to compete
11 for that workforce and pay those rates for those
12 workers to be there. It's a big deal of how that
13 operates in our systems.

14 They are not all state and county. They could
15 be private. You all know the for-profit have to
16 come to the PSC for rates. Our nonprofits, our
17 mobile home parks that are private, they don't get
18 funding the same way. They operate a little bit
19 different. They are independent, and they have to
20 rely on their own to be able to handle all sorts of
21 circumstances, keep the supplies on the shelf.
22 They don't have excess funding that comes in to
23 keep them supported, so they rely on us to help
24 provide those opportunities that they can't afford
25 to pay for otherwise.

1 We talked about the staffing a little bit on
2 the operations. We provide that technical
3 assistance to fill that gap. That is what Florida
4 Rural Water does. We are that component.

5 We talked earlier about the emergency
6 response. This is something that's very important
7 to the entire state. We host a facility in Cairo,
8 Georgia, that has a very large robust line of
9 equipment to provide emergency operations. We are
10 FlaWARN. It's the Florida water and wastewater
11 agency response network. You can see all the
12 different stars and different components of people
13 around.

14 We have a statewide network of committee
15 people that we work together. We have an email
16 chain. If someone goes on to that WATERTracker
17 website and they say they have a need, whether it's
18 blue sky or gray sky, that populates onto that
19 website, and that website sends a message to the
20 steering committee. We engage. We start response.
21 We see where the impact is, and we start working
22 towards a resolution of how we are going to
23 respond, how we are going to assist, and who can
24 help next.

25 Utilities helping utilities. That is what

1 that agency does, that group of individuals. It's
2 not just about reaching out to the state EOC. We
3 work closely with DEP, Army Corps and the State
4 EOC, but we work closely with the local EOCs as
5 well, but when an incident happens, we can be
6 immediate response.

7 When Michael hit, when Ian hit, Irma hit,
8 Helene, Milton, we literally are on the ground the
9 next morning, the next afternoon, whatever the
10 first available time, going in to start doing
11 assessment, condition. We broadcast to our group.
12 Our group says, we have this, we can match the
13 need. We have the resource. We partner it, and we
14 move it to get water back running ASAP.

15 We work closely with the State in the mutual
16 aid process that we are very proud of, we
17 fine-tuned. EPA likes our platform so much that
18 they are broadcasting it out to the rest of the
19 United States so that they can mimic what we do in
20 Florida, because we have become -- we don't like to
21 be good at it but we are good at it now.

22 So this is a great organization. We are very
23 proud of this. I have been part of WATERTracker
24 and FlaWARN for long before I came to Florida Rural
25 Water. So it was definitely -- I was one of those

1 regional coordinators in the northwest. I was on
2 the scene for Hurricane Michael, so I am intimately
3 familiar with the details. I worked with Irma. I
4 went down to Hurricane Ian in Lee County, spent a
5 lot of hours down there out on the barrier island
6 Fort Myers Beach in that Ft. Myers zone. Great
7 group of people, passionate about what we do
8 because we want to help get the utilities up and
9 running.

10 Here is a picture of our emergency response
11 equipment, our warehouse. So this is just one side
12 of our warehouse. What you see on the picture on
13 the right, we duplicate that on the other. We have
14 a lot of equipment that's there for bypass pumps,
15 emergency generators. The smaller -- we retrofit
16 the smaller generators with variable frequency
17 drives so that we can help if there is not
18 three-phase power available, we can get them over
19 that hump, get them moving and get things flowing
20 again and protect our resources and make sure that
21 we have no sewer spills and things out there for
22 our systems.

23 So this is just some high level operations. A
24 little bit about the WATERTracker and their
25 emergency response, some of you -- we've talked

1 about it just a little bit. We don't just operate
2 on gray sky events. It's not just about a
3 hurricane that rolls through or a tornadic event or
4 a flooding. We work in the blue sky components as
5 well. We work with the cybersecurity attacks. We
6 work with supply chain issue.

7 If somebody has had a major break and they
8 need a loan of equipment, we engage, we respond
9 depending upon where we are locally and we start
10 reaching out for resources.

11 Deerfield Beach was one that they had a panel
12 that they had some catastrophic damage. They
13 needed a part. We started -- they posted it. We
14 started networking, and within a matter of about
15 three days we had resolution for them to solve that
16 problem that otherwise would have caused a
17 catastrophe for that city. We operate in that
18 level.

19 I got a call about a week-and-a-half ago from
20 a system in the Panhandle and said, hey, I have had
21 a cybersecurity attack. They infiltrated in. We
22 have got a situation, what do I do next? We work
23 with Florida Department of Law Enforcement, a
24 trusted private partner association, The Florida
25 Fusion Center, we are a trusted partner. We've

1 gone through the training, myself and another staff
2 participates with that. So if there is any
3 physical attack, any critical infrastructure
4 attack, we have inside comments and conversations
5 with them, and then we can help respond faster in
6 that.

7 So we worked through that cybersecurity
8 component, and now they are doing investigations on
9 that physical to try to see where it originated
10 from and how to respond and how to help that system
11 recover from that.

12 So fortunately, the system, their firewall
13 detected it, shut it down, and they were able to
14 isolate that incident from impacting the utility
15 any further. So it was a good component, a good
16 exercise for them. Although, it was a -- you know,
17 it wasn't a fire drill for them. It was a real
18 live attack that happened. So that's some of the
19 things that we partner with and we are able to
20 respond in those blue sky events as well. So
21 that's a little insight on that part.

22 This is our Steinhatchee area. This is what
23 it looks like now after Hurricane Helene ravaged
24 them a few years ago. So I took a picture on the
25 anniversary date physically down there, because I

1 spent a lot of hours down there helping them.

2 And that concludes my component. I would be
3 happy to take any questions or comments.

4 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yeah, I definitely assume we
5 have some questions. I saw you jump.

6 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Thank you, Madam Chair.
7 Alicia, thank you for coming to present to us.
8 Certainly informative for us.

9 So you mentioned cybersecurity. How -- I
10 guess, are those threats increasing, and what type
11 of threats, you know, are you getting? Obviously,
12 hold back what you can't say.

13 MS. KEETER: Those threats, I would say they
14 would not -- they are increasing on the component.
15 It leads to ways that they can find weaknesses in
16 the system and how they can impact smaller
17 communities.

18 Larger communities, it just depends on the
19 area that they are looking at. Sometimes it's just
20 people playing. And then there are some, you know,
21 some of these bigger ones that are in the news,
22 those are definitely our outside organizations that
23 are trying to hurt the United States and hurt us
24 maliciously. So I know that those have been found.

25 The one in the Panhandle, they are still

1 working on that. It's still under investigation.
2 We are actually having a webinar on that on the
3 25th of August to hopefully have a resolution of
4 that. So FDLE is working to provide that one-hour
5 webinar with that utility to show lessons learned,
6 and how to work through what pieces they need to
7 improve, hopefully to educate the rest of the
8 utilities, you need to be paying attention to this,
9 because this is serious, and it's not just lip
10 service that we have been talking about
11 cybersecurity.

12 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: I'm assuming no system
13 is immune.

14 MS. KEETER: Correct, no system is immune,
15 unless they operate manual and have no connection
16 to the internet.

17 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Which doesn't happen
18 necessarily.

19 MS. KEETER: Very rare, yes.

20 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Can you talk to us a
21 little about PFAS and other forever chemicals and
22 other regulations from the EPA and how some of the
23 Washingtons are dealing with it.

24 MS. KEETER: That is very hot topic for all of
25 us right now. Emerging contaminants is a big

1 issue. Our biggest issue that we face is that the
2 PFAS is not coming from us, the water suppliers.
3 The PFAS is coming from everything else, and they
4 like to pick on the water and wastewater industry.

5 And with this recent bill that just was passed
6 about the PFAS testing, you know, that DEP will now
7 have to regulate, I promise you, promise you, there
8 will be PFAS in the wastewater, because PFAS is in
9 every one of us, because of everything that you
10 touch, taste, eat, smell, cook with, wear, rub on
11 your skin, pump at the gas station, all of that has
12 PFAS in it in some way form or fashion. It's how
13 are we going to treat it, and how are we going to
14 pay for that, because it is a forever chemical.

15 There is a lot of technology that's out there
16 that they are testing through how you break it
17 down, how do you separate it. There is a lot of
18 smart people that are in think tanks that are
19 trying to figure out how to handle the PFAS
20 breakdown. It's going to be a matter of just
21 changing the chemical makeup and reallocating the
22 hydrogens and oxygens and those different makeups.

23 It's a very expensive process to treat it
24 after-the-fact, and that's going to hit a lot of
25 our utilities, because it's going to take more

1 square footage, more dollars, more infrastructure
2 in that piece.

3 So PFAS is a big deal for all of us and how we
4 are going to approach it. I think we not react --
5 gut react to it, that we look at it as a broader
6 level, that just like what we did with 3M and
7 DuPont, that they are having to pay for certain
8 components where they were -- we are going to have
9 to look at the bigger picture of all of these
10 industries, not just three PM and DuPont, that all
11 have that impact and that we share the load of
12 responsibility and don't just place it on the water
13 and wastewater, that we have to clean up everybody
14 else's mess, so we are the bad guys.

15 So we are trying to find ways that we can
16 communicate that out that we are not the bad. We
17 are just handling what you give us. That's the
18 bottom line on PFAS.

19 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: What type of resources
20 are needed? It sounds like capital, it sounds like
21 equipment.

22 MS. KEETER: Capital, equipment. We are going
23 to need those think tanks, they are going to find
24 the solutions, different solutions, because, again,
25 every utility is not the same, so it's going to

1 take different types of cleanup, a different type
2 of process that's going to clean that up for each
3 of those utilities depending upon their level.

4 We worked already with DEP for those people
5 that do have PFAS in their drinking water. We have
6 a program that we can help get those utilities --
7 we can help pay for their connections to the
8 utility service or we can provide filters for them.
9 We can provide different opportunities out there.
10 So we have grant programs that are there from EPA
11 through DEP and Florida Rural Water, but it's only
12 a small percentage. So it's just looking at the
13 allocations of dollars and figuring out how we can
14 help, because a lot of those underserved systems
15 that are 10,000 or less population handle those
16 pieces.

17 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Excellent. Thank you.

18 MS. KEETER: Uh-huh.

19 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: It's good to see you
20 again.

21 MS. KEETER: You too.

22 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: It's been a while. I
23 guess the last time we saw each other was the
24 rural -- or the annual water conference.

25 MS. KEETER: That's right.

1 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Yeah.

2 A couple of questions. I will tag on to
3 Commissioner La Rosa's. What are you doing in
4 preparation for cybersecurity? Are you -- is there
5 rules, regulations? Is there certain software
6 that's in place for a lot of these utilities?

7 MS. KEETER: It's coaching our utilities on
8 the cybersecurity part of making sure that you are
9 protected with your firewalls. We have got a lot
10 of tools that we are trying to get out to the
11 utilities. When we poll the utilities, it's not
12 high on their priority list --

13 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Right.

14 MS. KEETER: -- so it's trying to -- now that
15 these attacks are happening, now it's become a
16 forefront conversation. So it's putting together
17 the webinars that we have -- you know, we have got
18 one that actually is happening yet tomorrow we have
19 one, and we have another one on the 25th.

20 So it's putting together those training,
21 partnering with those people like The Florida
22 Fusion Center, with FDLE and the trusted private
23 partners program, trying to get that -- those
24 pieces out. The AWWA group, FWA, I know that they
25 have got some training that they are trying to put

1 out.

2 But it's coaching our systems into being
3 proactive with your IT, making sure that you have
4 those penetration tests activities happening so
5 that you know where your vulnerabilities are, and
6 providing a way that you can disconnect from the
7 internet and operate in the manual. And those are
8 things that we are working to try to educate our
9 members on.

10 So we've got -- we have got some awareness
11 coming and building going forward now that, because
12 we -- I can put it out there all day long, but they
13 are not going to accept it. They are not going to
14 get actively involved until it impacts them or it's
15 at their front door, and it's at their front door
16 now. So I see movement that's going to happen for
17 the cybersecurity opportunity.

18 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Good. So with the
19 conferences that you attend and some of the
20 promotion that you actually advocate, there are so
21 many small utilities in the state water utilities
22 that don't know maybe where to seek help. Your
23 membership is -- how large is your membership now?

24 MS. KEETER: We have about 2,100.

25 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: So promoting these

1 opportunities is going to be big, especially when
2 you are talking about cybersecurity and continue to
3 promote.

4 We see a lot of smaller rural utilities, and
5 maybe this is more of a legislative question than a
6 Commissioner question. How do we promote within
7 our communities to seek out to find help -- to get
8 help?

9 MS. KEETER: Well, we direct them to Florida
10 Rural Water, and then we can provide that training,
11 go to them one-on-one, coach them through Step 1,
12 Step 2, let's do an evaluation first of where you
13 are, what you have, and then let's see what next
14 steps that we can do to get you the details that
15 you need and the personnel and the resources there;
16 because a lot of the cybersecurity, The Florida
17 Fusion Center is there free to our members, and
18 we -- again, last year, we tried to do penetration
19 testing ideas to them, and nobody was really
20 wanting to take on that. That's something that we
21 are bringing back up to push back out to them.

22 One of the things that we are going to be
23 doing this year that we have not ever done before
24 is Florida Rural Water is going to have an advocacy
25 day at the Capitol, where our goal is to set that

1 up during committee weeks, working with our
2 lobbyist to be able to get that presentation out so
3 that we can educate our members and our
4 legislators. Let's don't make quick judgment.
5 Let's don't make quick laws. Let's think it
6 through and see what works best. And, again, one
7 size does not fit all. So let's make sure that we
8 have mechanisms in place and levels of adjustment
9 to allow for those different types of systems.

10 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Okay. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Commissioner Ortega.

12 COMMISSIONER ORTEGA: Sure. Thanks.

13 I love going last, because some of my
14 questions are already asked, so it's great. The
15 smart guys get to take some of them, but I wanted
16 to take a little bit of a step back to the asset
17 management plans that you guys help with the
18 developing for the systems.

19 Can you talk a little bit about what struggles
20 you are seeing most from the smaller systems when
21 it comes to planning and managing their assets? Is
22 it knowing the infrastructure, where it is? Is it
23 the costs, the software? It seems like they get a
24 discount if they are a member to some of the
25 software, or is it really just the staff?

1 MS. KEETER: I would say it's all of the
2 above.

3 COMMISSIONER ORTEGA: Okay.

4 MS. KEETER: When we -- a lot of our systems
5 don't focus on the asset management. They are more
6 reactive than they are proactive because, one,
7 there is not enough staffing to go around. They
8 are struggling with operation. You know, a lot of
9 these systems rely on contract operators because
10 they can't find the skill set to operate the
11 system. They rely on these contract operation
12 services. And that's great that those people can
13 come in and operate the system, but those people
14 aren't there on a day-to-day basis. If these
15 utilities look at it that that's an easy way to
16 operate and do the day-to-day, and that's
17 absolutely essential and necessary, but they also
18 need somebody who physically lives and breaths and
19 see that every day to be able to give an
20 assessment, a condition assessment.

21 That pipe might have been put in, you know, 25
22 years ago and it's starting to fail. I need a plan
23 in 10 years, I need that critical infrastructure to
24 be replaced. Well, we all know that things don't
25 get any cheaper, so it's planning now, preventative

1 maintenance now. And a lot of our staff that we
2 have, they are just limited in their capabilities
3 to be able to do that. You know, like our little
4 town of Jacob, they needed 200 meters to be able to
5 obtain the revenue to pay their bills. Well, they
6 couldn't afford to get the 200 meters. Fortunately
7 we were able to find a system that was donating
8 meters that they were changing out, it was a larger
9 utility that we don't want these meters, we are
10 changing to a new piece, so we went and picked up
11 the meters, we have them at the warehouse and now
12 we are able to provide this to those -- to that
13 system.

14 It's the dollars. It's we don't want to
15 regionalize. We want to still stay small. We want
16 to stay in our community. We still want to provide
17 a service, but the cost of doing service is not
18 cheaper, and they all live on limited income. So
19 when you raise their rates, where are they getting
20 that money from, because their Social Security is
21 not getting any higher. So there is those
22 challenges that we see in that piece.

23 On the asset management it's the condition
24 assessment, and truly understanding are the
25 manholes going to fail, or when a water well is

1 going to fail, and being able to do that
2 replacement. So it's a condition assessment. It's
3 putting it on the map. You know, how do I
4 physically collect that point? Do I have the
5 knowledge to be able to go out there and put it on
6 GIS? Call us to help assist that, but coaching
7 them and teaching them how to do that, just all the
8 parts that play into that, so all the above for
9 definite.

10 COMMISSIONER ORTEGA: That's very helpful.

11 And just a real quick follow-up. Do you guys
12 have a predictive maintenance piece of your asset
13 management software? And we can talk about this
14 another time when I come visit your office if you
15 what to.

16 MS. KEETER: Yes, please do.

17 COMMISSIONER ORTEGA: I would love to
18 understand a little bit more about how you are
19 helping them with preventive maintenance and --

20 MS. KEETER: Absolutely.

21 COMMISSIONER ORTEGA: -- looking at the
22 analytics.

23 MS. KEETER: We have a great asset management
24 team, our -- Ron Nalley is our asset management
25 manager, and he has a staff of seven that work with

1 him around the state, actually town of Jay just
2 implemented their asset management plan last night.
3 We are thankful for that. So a step ahead for
4 those system for improvements, so I would love to
5 connect you up with Ron and his team to give you
6 more details.

7 COMMISSIONER ORTEGA: Great. Thank you for
8 being here. And thank you, Chair, for allowing
9 them to come and present this. Super informative.

10 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yeah. Yeah. And we talk
11 about, I mean, these issues, especially small rural
12 systems, it sounds like you are an incredible
13 resource. And I wonder, like, it's had me
14 thinking, you clearly brought so many of these
15 systems and showing them how to be in compliance
16 and how to effectively manage and things like that.
17 We have seen -- we see smaller systems a lot that,
18 you know, need that help. And I am wondering for
19 those ones that you have really worked with, and
20 that have turned the corner, do you have some sort
21 of, like, alumni network or something, that way
22 that they could -- because there is going to be
23 some really detailed lesson learned that they might
24 have that they could impart that sort of wisdom on
25 to these other smaller systems. I mean, I know you

1 all have the resources too, but it could be
2 interesting to have them connect with one another,
3 because we are seeing, yeah, that that -- that
4 there is a lot of lessons learned.

5 MS. KEETER: And mentor/mentee program.

6 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yeah, something like that.

7 The only other thing, too, I was thinking, I
8 was -- do you ever have customers of a utility
9 reach out to you guys to say, I would like you to
10 work with our utility? Because sometimes I think
11 -- I mean, I am just thinking from a business
12 perspective. Some of these utilities are just so
13 under water that they don't even have the time to
14 think about reaching out to you, and it's hard for
15 y'all to be proactive about it because that's not
16 really a job. You are responding with the utility,
17 like, do you have customers that know about you and
18 know the resource that you are?

19 MS. KEETER: Uh-huh. We have a lot of
20 different people that will reach out and, hey, I
21 heard about you, or I saw a flier, or I was at
22 this, I am part of this network, somebody mentioned
23 you, we do have those. We don't have a lot of that
24 but we do have that that happens from time to time,
25 and then that takes us to the next step. I work

1 with electric, I heard about you over here. I was
2 in a different place and y'all kind of highlighted
3 that, and then it just -- it trickles down to the
4 utility for help.

5 I think Ben, our Deputy Director, he is
6 actually going down to a community today after we
7 leave to go help them with some GIS mapping that
8 they needed that somebody reached out and had some
9 conversation on that part. So it's a lot of
10 word-of-mouth, because we have 42 staff to try to
11 reach the entire state --

12 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Right.

13 MS. KEETER: -- and reach 2,100 members, it's
14 a hard thing to do. We want to stay with our
15 small, we want to stay intimate in that level, so
16 trying to find different ways that we can approach
17 that, that's what we do.

18 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Well, I am sure we will be
19 happy to, you know, be sending some utilities as
20 far as trainings that you provide and things like
21 that if they are interested, knowing that this
22 resource is available for them, because you said,
23 both members and non-members.

24 MS. KEETER: If you need help, we help.

25 CHAIRMAN SMITH: That's amazing. Well, thank

1 you so much --

2 MS. KEETER: We even help Miami-Dade. We
3 don't judge on size.

4 CHAIRMAN SMITH: We appreciate that.

5 MS. KEETER: I'm going to leave a few of these
6 for anybody that would like to have any. So I will
7 leave the folder. So if anybody wants to take and
8 share to utilities, do that.

9 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yeah, that sounds great.
10 Yeah.

11 MS. KEETER: It's all up to you. Thank you
12 all very much.

13 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you very much.

14 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN SMITH: All right. Now we are
16 hearing from Northwest Florida Water Management
17 District, Starsky, thank you for being here.

18 MR. HARRELL: Yes. Good morning. I am
19 Starsky Harrell. I am with the Northwest Florida
20 Water Management District. I serve at the pleasure
21 of their Regulatory Services Director.

22 Just today to do a brief highlight of the
23 district, who we are, what we do, our regulatory
24 services division, and then talk a little bit about
25 our water use permitting.

1 So as you can see from the map, we cover from
2 Pensacola to almost Monticello in Jefferson County.
3 As we say, we are from the Gulf to the state
4 borders with Alabama and Georgia.

5 We have seven major watersheds that we cover,
6 and we have nearly 1.6 million residents that we
7 are using 200 -- I mean 342 million gallons a year
8 -- I mean, million gallons a day. Sorry. That
9 would be a lot for a -- not a lot for a year.

10 Our district manages over 225,000 acres of
11 land that's open to the public. We have some of
12 the largest rivers and diverse productive estuaries
13 in the state, and we are reaching surface water and
14 groundwater resources for the area.

15 So our areas of responsibility are water
16 supply, ensuring adequate water supply for the
17 people and the natural resources of the area. We
18 do this in a variety of activities, you know,
19 through our water use permitting, through planning
20 and through working with the local governments, as
21 well as with conservation efforts.

22 We have the flood protection and floodplain
23 management, you know, methods like acquiring and
24 maintaining floodplains, regulatory activities and
25 providing those expertise to governments, local,

1 state, federal, for flood protection programs. We
2 are to work to protect and maintain the quality of
3 water resources across the panhandle, and then
4 protection of the natural systems for our future
5 populations.

6 So the Division of Regulatory Services, we are
7 broken into two bureaus, as we call them. We have
8 surface water and groundwater. And when I took
9 over this role, I was explained to it that we
10 permit three things. We have surface water that we
11 permit through stormwater, the environmental
12 resource permitting. So it's commercial
13 developments and subdivisions, for example, that we
14 have a memorandum of agreement with DEP on. That's
15 the part of the stormwater that we handle. And
16 then we also have the ag ponds and the forestry
17 crossings and then any works of the districts,
18 whether it's putting in wells or anything on our
19 properties.

20 So that's the one, and then we go move into
21 the groundwater. And I was taught we have two
22 terms. Every straw that goes into the ground has
23 to have a permit. Depending on sizes and amounts,
24 has to have a permit to bring the water out of the
25 ground. So we have the well construction

1 permitting, the consumptive use, which we use
2 interchangeably with the water use permitting. We
3 say well and we say CUP, and it means the same
4 thing to us. Don't know, just the terminology.

5 And then we also have our water shortage plan
6 where, for example, the drought recently, and, you
7 know, moving into a critical water shortage plan
8 and looking at the future of what we need to be in
9 and, you know, our Phase I and our Phase II, what
10 are we doing and looking at. And thankfully, it's
11 all kind of clearing up now and we are getting
12 rain, and the drought numbers are lessening.

13 So when we move into water use permitting, you
14 know, it was part -- Chapter 373 of the Florida
15 Statutes. It was the Florida Water Resource Act of
16 1972. And that's when they were given the
17 exclusive authority for permitting for consumptive
18 use water. The caveat to that, domestic use,
19 personal home wells that we see are exempt from
20 this.

21 In 1983, the Legislature directed the water
22 management districts to implement a program for
23 regulating consumptive use. We have two types of
24 permits. There is the general water use permit,
25 which is by rule, and then an individual permit.

1 Across the state, most water management
2 districts are the same, it differs in where we are
3 looking at our water resource caution areas and our
4 areas of concern. That's where the rules change.

5 As far as the water use permit, you know, it
6 establishes thresholds for individual permits based
7 on allocation they need, the cumulative water
8 withdrawal capacity of the resource, the size of
9 the well, the size of the surface water intakes,
10 and so it's all permitted through that way.

11 You look at these three things, you know, to
12 establish the proposed use of the water. You note
13 that it's reasonable and beneficial for use, that
14 it will not interfere with any preexisting legal
15 uses as in your well was permitted and put in, and
16 we have it on file and documented, and we know who
17 it is, you are an existing use. And then also it's
18 consistent with public interest.

19 So the public interest part, you know, that's
20 kind of what everybody thinks about too, and that's
21 the reasonable and beneficial use of it all. So,
22 you know, it looks at the water source, if it's
23 suitable for what you are looking to use it for,
24 and that the water source is capable of producing
25 the amount of water you need. And then we look at

1 the lowest quality of water source for what we are
2 wanting to use it for, as in reclaimed water for
3 landscaping. If we are doing drinking water, we
4 want to go down into the Floridan aquifer, the best
5 quality of water. So depending on the level of
6 what you are doing, which source it is.

7 They have to demonstrate that the harm will
8 not occur to the existing resources, as in the
9 outstanding Florida springs and outstanding inner
10 spring runs. And then, like I mentioned, the
11 existing legal users that are already there before
12 their well was put in.

13 The use of water has to be efficient, that it
14 will be in accordance with established minimum
15 floods that we set, and that it's consistent with
16 the public interest.

17 Public interest, that's where we look at the
18 population and look at the number of people and
19 look at the predicted growth, and when they are
20 in-house trying to permit with us, we are
21 allocating the right amounts of water for the use
22 that they are requesting. We have utilities that
23 will come in and ask for far more sometimes, and
24 it's like you can't bank those numbers. We have to
25 be able to justify what we are allowing to be

1 permitted.

2 So there is two parts -- processes for
3 application for water use permits. There is one
4 that comes through the district, and then there is
5 one that is a DEP staff coordination office that
6 handles it.

7 So for the district, it's the agricultural,
8 industrial and commercial uses. You have
9 landscaping and recreation, golf courses, and those
10 type of things. Public supply, and then
11 institutional, like prisons, universities, all
12 those things that we permit through our office.
13 And majority of them are done that way.

14 You do have some that come through the DEP
15 staff coordination office. DEP works with us. If
16 there is a water use part of that, you know, we
17 have say in what's going on there with them. They
18 coordinate with all the other agencies and make
19 sure it's all according to the rules and
20 everything. There is a certification process that
21 it's actually issued by the Governor and the
22 Cabinet when it's issued.

23 One of the local ones that -- for Tallahassee
24 is the Sam O. Purdom Generation Station, where they
25 have the site coordination, because they drew in

1 water from the St. Marks to use for their cooling
2 system, and it was 100 percent return, but it was
3 all coordinated through the DEP siting coordination
4 office. So that's the type of projects that looks
5 at it.

6 So when utilities come in, farmers come in for
7 these water use permits, they are all issued with a
8 duration and conditions. We have most permits up
9 to 20 years for a permit, and then they can come in
10 renewals. If they are in areas where there is
11 water resource caution area or areas of concern,
12 you know, five years. And we have up to 50 years
13 with municipalities, where they have bonds on their
14 water system that you have to tie it together for
15 their permit.

16 And then they all have conditions, you know,
17 they come in monthly, quarterly, yearly pumping
18 reports. They have their flow meters and they are
19 calibrated. They report ground level --
20 groundwater levels to us, and then also when they
21 do quality, we are looking more at salt, you know,
22 what saltwater intrusion may be coming, what's the
23 quantity of that. And then also that if they
24 impact other users, that they have to mitigate for
25 it.

1 I know that's very high level. If you have
2 got questions, as I have told earlier, I said I may
3 not be the best one to answer those detailed
4 questions. I have a lady that works with me that
5 can get into the weeds with you, but I will do my
6 best.

7 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you.
8 Questions?

9 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Just a couple questions,
10 and then we can pass this off to the next person if
11 you need to.

12 MR. HARRELL: Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Reuse water, you are
14 seeing more and more reuse, which only makes sense
15 in Florida, especially at the surface level, et
16 cetera. Is there any movement towards potable
17 water reinjection now towards the aquifer?

18 MR. HARRELL: We do have some, yes.

19 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: So you put it back at the
20 federal drinking standard into the aquifer and
21 you --

22 MR. HARRELL: And a lot of that goes through
23 DEP, I believe.

24 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Okay. So I knew there
25 was -- I knew there was an effort there, I worked

1 on the effort years in the Legislature for that.
2 It only made sense. A couple of funny cartoons
3 were written on that issue at one point in time
4 that were untrue, but I am just curious how that's
5 going, especially in your area.

6 MR. HARRELL: We don't have a lot of it that I
7 am aware of. There is a few in our western part
8 that have that.

9 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Okay. Good. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Commissioner Ortega.

11 COMMISSIONER ORTEGA: Just quickly. And to
12 your credit, we did -- you did answer my
13 questions --

14 MR. HARRELL: Okay.

15 COMMISSIONER ORTEGA: -- about the public
16 interest and how you guys are looking at public
17 interest data when you are issuing those permits,
18 so I appreciate your detail of your presentation.

19 Just a quick comment, you know, as someone
20 that kayaks often, I love what you guys are doing.
21 It's super important. I did notice Cypress
22 Springs, which is beautiful. It's in Gary's
23 hometown, however, next time, if you could put a
24 picture of Wacissa, that's my favorite spring, that
25 would be awesome. But thank you. On a serious

1 note, it's very important work to protect the
2 sources that we have, and I really appreciate you
3 coming to present for us today.

4 MR. HARRELL: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yeah, I was just going to
6 say, I think I need to get myself to Washington
7 County soon, because --

8 COMMISSIONER CLARK: We are closed.

9 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Yeah, not taking any
10 Tallahassee folks any more, yeah. This is amazing.
11 You guys have any other questions?

12 COMMISSIONER PAYNE: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Thank you so much for being
14 here. I appreciate it.

15 MR. HARRELL: Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER LA ROSA: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Okay. We are going to move
18 to Commission business. General Counsel's report.

19 MS. HARPER: Good morning, Chair. Good
20 morning, Commissioners. Just a few updates.

21 GCL has, as part of our internal education
22 efforts, we are also continuing to review and
23 update all of our GCL forms and templates with a
24 focus on consistency, efficiency and making sure
25 everyone is working from the most current version,

1 so hopefully you will reap the benefits of that and
2 appreciate it.

3 Also, Susie in our office has been helping
4 organize another EBA event, careers in energy law
5 panel at FSU with the law school. So that will be
6 occurring in January. And it's going to be a great
7 opportunity to introduce more law students to
8 energy and utility law, so we are excited about
9 that.

10 Also, I am planning to participate in the FSU
11 law -- environmental law luncheon in September
12 again, which is another good opportunity for
13 outreach engagement with the students, so I am
14 excited about that.

15 In addition to preparing for all of our
16 upcoming hearings, as you guys know, we have had a
17 very important thing occur, which is the official
18 conclusion of our inaugural GCL competition at the
19 oak table. So we had a competition to see which
20 section throws the best party at the oak table.
21 And if y'all are not familiar with the oak table,
22 it's a big old oak table that's old and we always
23 have food on it. So come visit it.

24 But all three sections competed in GCL for
25 bragging rights and a prize, and the results are

1 going to be held strictly confidential until the
2 winner is announced at GCL's infamous White
3 Elephant Christmas Party. So that's been fun. And
4 I really appreciate the supervisors for taking that
5 on. They are good sports, and everybody that
6 participated.

7 And then lastly, we have another appellate
8 update where Jennifer Augspurger did an excellent
9 job oral argument at the First DCA in the Sunshine
10 Water rates case appeal, and we were affirmed the
11 following week, so we are happy about that.

12 And I have -- I am available if you have any
13 questions.

14 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Just say we were -- for the
15 recruitment, this oak table competition, you also
16 learn a lot of really important things, but you
17 also eat great food.

18 MS. HARPER: We feature well.

19 CHAIRMAN SMITH: You will never go hungry in
20 GCL. Important for law students, I remember that
21 time.

22 MS. HARPER: Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Mr. Baez.

24 MR. BAEZ: Good morning, Chairman and
25 Commissioners. Yes, I would agree, the oak table

1 personally is responsible for much of my battle
2 with the calorie monsters over the years. If you
3 haven't walked over there, check it out. I assure
4 you, there will be food on it of some form or
5 another.

6 Chairman, first I want to thank our guests.
7 You -- we -- you have been around long enough to
8 have heard all the, you know, CUP and WUP, which I
9 maintain it depends on their mood which one you
10 use, right, but these are the little pieces that
11 take place, and the agency interactions and also
12 industry partner interactions that take place way
13 before we ever see a docket that we are dealing
14 with, and I want to thank them for the work that
15 they do, because believe it or not, they do make as
16 hard as certainly water cases and small utility
17 water cases in particular are around hear, the
18 typical decisions that you all are presented with,
19 it could be so much worse, and that truth is thanks
20 to them, our agency partners and our energy
21 partners. So to have them out and kind of fill in
22 pieces of the story leading up is always -- I
23 always find it useful and educational as well.

24 Our next Agenda -- well, items of note, we
25 are -- PSC is signed up to be in attendance at the

1 next two career fairs. They have already been set.
2 The FSU Career Fair, at which we will be attending,
3 is scheduled for -- let me read my notes here --
4 for September 24th. And the FAMU Career Fair will
5 be -- is scheduled for September 30th. So we are
6 currently putting together our representative teams
7 to be available. And hopefully, for all of you
8 listening out there, trying -- wet your appetite
9 and we will be putting our best foot forward, and
10 we are looking for rising seniors, obviously, and,
11 you know, it's become a very good source of future
12 recruits and staff members, many examples on staff
13 as we speak.

14 Following up on the calendar, we have the need
15 determination, one of the few recent ones that I
16 can recall, coming up right after Internal Affairs.
17 And then next week, you all have probably the most
18 interesting case -- docket on the calendar in the
19 large load docket, so everyone be prepared for
20 that.

21 Nothing else to report. If there is any
22 questions, anything y'all want to discuss, I would
23 be happy to do so.

24 CHAIRMAN SMITH: Commissioners, any questions?
25 Any other matters here?

1 Well, I guess I will just say, yeah, JEA need
2 determination, let's say it will be in the hearing
3 room in 10 minutes. So, like, 10:43-ish. Just try
4 to make yourself over there as soon as you can,
5 yeah.

6 Thank you very much.

7 (Proceedings concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF LEON)

I, DEBRA KRICK, Court Reporter, do hereby
certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the
time and place herein stated.

IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I
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I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative,
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DATED this 31st day of August, 2026.


DEBRA R. KRICK
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