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just the FACTs

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in South Florida.



sfwmd.gov
 South Florida Water Management District
 3301 Gun Club Road
 West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
 561-686-8800 or 1-800-432-2045 in Florida
www.sfwmd.gov

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 24680
 West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

The Business of Water Management

Effectively managing and investing tax dollars to protect water resources

The South Florida Water Management District constantly looks for and aggressively implements ways to improve and streamline operations. The District strives to be as efficient and effective as possible and has instituted a number of enhanced business practices over the years. Sustaining the region's water resources depends equally on making the best use of available fiscal, technological and human resources and on creating business opportunities that benefit communities throughout South Florida. To accomplish that goal, many steps are taken to underscore transparency and public accountability.

Streamline permitting, procurement and economy-driven processes

- Expanded permit application accessibility: The District continues to successfully implement all provisions as outlined in the 2009 legislative action delegating the authority to approve permit applications related to water resources and the environment to the executive director. An expanded monthly noticing and meeting process provides enhanced opportunities for public comment on pending Water Use and Environmental Resource Permit applications. Meetings are video-conferenced and webcast to promote wider accessibility and special workshops are conducted for permits of heightened public concern.
- Multi-year contracts: Negotiating multi-year contracts for science, monitoring, engineering and information technology services provides uninterrupted, ready access to the best of the state's contracting community with pre-negotiated rates and terms.
- Timely payments to vendors and contractors: Most Florida business invoices are paid by the District within 9 days. More than 40,000 invoices were processed in FY 2010, with a 56% increase in productivity of staff processing transactions, due to software and procedural improvements.
- Simpler, faster access to regulatory permitting resources: Through ePermitting, a comprehensive online application and permit information database is readily available, with up-to-date permitting data and options to complete and manage applications electronically.

Actively foster business and community partnerships

- Building the economy: During Fiscal Year 2010, each month an average \$63.5 million made its way from the District into the state and local economy through deliverables provided by 2,102 individual engineering, environmental, construction and other vendors.
- Innovative financing for construction: The District issued \$500 million in the first-ever use of Certificates of Participation for environmental restoration. The proceeds from this funding mechanism helped speed up critically important major water resource construction projects. Those projects have begun and will continue to expand private sector jobs and contribute to the local economy.
- Complex projects and research are peer-reviewed: Peer-reviewed work ensures constructive, expert scrutiny and stakeholder involvement in the development of large-scale initiatives.

Measure and report on progress in meeting established budget and strategic goals

- Fully integrated Strategic Plans, Annual Work Plans and Budget: Agency goals are clearly outlined, prioritized, monitored and measured thoroughly and consistently. The District's annual budget development process emphasizes fixed overhead costs, baseline operations and funding ongoing cost with recurring revenues.
- Fiscally responsible budgeting: The District's ad valorem tax rate has not increased for more than 10 years – despite new federal and state mandates expanding agency responsibilities.
- "Green" initiatives: A multi-year decline in kilowatt and water usage has reduced the headquarters annual electric bill by more than \$200,000 and 1.5 million fewer gallons of water (30.6% reduction).
- Internal auditing of business processes: The Inspector General routinely audits business functions throughout the agency, spotlighting areas for improvement where appropriate.
- Independent external financial audits and awards: For 19 consecutive years, the District has received an award for excellence in financial reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association. Additionally, external auditors have consistently provided an unqualified, or "clean" audit opinion on District financial statements.

Encourage involvement and open dialogue with the public

- Enhanced regulatory and stakeholder partnerships: To encourage collaboration, task forces and stakeholder meetings are routinely held for environmental resource and water use permit holders, utilities, local governments, agricultural businesses and other groups. The information shared helps stakeholders understand the reasons why certain things are required from them by District processes, and helps staff to understand how the District can improve to meet stakeholder needs.

Collaborate with other agencies and governments to share resources and reduce costs

- Broader outreach: At no cost to the District, implemented a water conservation electronic billboard campaign at four of South Florida's major airports (Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando and Southwest Florida) in coordination with county governments. These airports had combined traffic of more than 68 million domestic and international passengers in one year alone.
- Data sharing: Acquired LiDAR (a remote sensing system used to collect topographic data) information for the Herbert Hoover Dike, Everglades Agricultural Area and South Florida coastal regions from the Florida Division of Emergency Management, representing millions of dollars in savings to the District.

Embrace technologies that improve efficiency

- Vendor payment database available: This online tool provides transparent, regularly updated access to information about payments of District funds to vendors. Visitors can search this database to find out what vendors the District has done business with (from June 2006 to the present), and see totals of disbursements to each vendor.
- Putting technology to work: The District has adopted and is fully utilizing "state of the art" business- and financial-management software and has implemented detailed project management techniques agency-wide.

For more information, visit www.sfwmd.gov.