

**Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority
Legislative Priorities 2017**

Issue	Legislative/ Regulatory	Activity
STATE		
Support regional funding for the Authority's 'Vision for 2035'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Integrated Transmission System Extension (Phases 3B, 3D and 4); and • Partially Treated Aquifer Storage & Recovery Concept. 	Legislative	Submit water projects for State funding
Support funding of trust funds established in existing statutes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Protection and Sustainability Program (403.890 and 403.891, F.S.); and • West-Central Florida Water Restoration Action Plan (373.0363(4), F.S.). 	Legislative	Monitor and participate in legislative process
Monitor implementation of 2016 legislation and rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2016-1 'Florida Springs Act'; and • Chapter 2016-201 'Implementation of the Water and Land Conservation Constitutional Amendment'; and • Chapter 62-302 'Classification of Surface Waters, Usage, Reclassification, Classified Waters'. 	Legislative and Regulatory	Monitor and participate in implementation process
Support funding for acquisition of Orange Hammock Ranch to enhance water management and supply.	Multiple agencies	Monitor and participate in funding process
Support Senate confirmation of Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board Member appointments Executive Director Brian Armstrong.	Legislative	Support Senate confirmation
FEDERAL		
Support the Continuation of Tax-Exempt Financing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve the ability of water systems to use tax-exempt bonds. 	Legislative	Monitor legislation
Support the continuation of U.S. EPA as the lead agency for Security at drinking water facilities and the explicit prohibition on the disclosure of security program information under federal, state and local information laws.	Legislative and U.S. EPA	Monitor legislation
Engage in Climate Change research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support federal action to research and respond to impacts of climate change on the viability and sustainability of drinking water supplies. 	Legislative and U.S. EPA	Monitor legislation
Monitor implementation of the Clean Water Rule: Definition of 'Waters of the United State'	U.S. EPA	Monitor rule

STATE ISSUES

Vision Statement: *'Through Cooperation and collaboration the Authority and its members shall create and maintain a sustainable, interconnected regional water supply system.'*

State Water Project Funding

The state legislature has provided Water Project Funding in recent state budgets. The Authority has successfully received \$6M in state Water Project Funds over the past three budget cycles. Authority will submit funding request to the legislature reflecting projects submitted to the SWFWMD including expansion of the regional transmission system and raw water ASR.

Funding of Trust Funds

State statute currently establishes trust funds through the Water Protection and Sustainability Program (403.890 and 403.891, F.S.) and West-Central Florida Water Restoration Action Plan (373.0363, F.S.) that provides allocation of state funding through the water management districts. The Authority received funding through these trust funds in the past and supports providing funds be included in the state budget for these trust funds.

Implementation of 2016 Legislation and Rules

The 2016 Legislature enacted comprehensive water policy reform. Authority staff will monitor the implementation of major water legislation and rules enacted in 2016.

Chapter 2016-1 'Florida Springs Act': SB 552 creates the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act to provide for the protection and restoration of outstanding Florida Springs (OFS), codifies the Central Florida Initiative (CFWI), updates and restructures the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program in addition to other issues.

Chapter 2016-201 'Implementation of the Water and Land Conservation Constitutional Amendment': HB 989 was approved by the Governor on April 7, 2016 and became effective on July 1, 2016. The bill provides for the distribution of funds deposited into the Land Acquisition Trust Fund.

Chapter 62-302 'Classification of Surface Waters, Usage, Reclassification, Classified Waters': The DEP has adopted Chapter 62-302 'Surface Water Quality Standards' in 2016 amending the existing rule and establishing revised water quality criteria.

Acquisition of Orange Hammock Ranch

The Orange Hammock Ranch (OHR) property is 5,774± acres located within southeast Sarasota County and the City of North Port, Florida, east of I-75. The OHR property is on the Florida Forever Priority List and the SWFWMD has considered purchase of the property several times over the past two decades. Among considerations for the purchase of the OHR (e.g. natural system benefits), SWFWMD has previously cited benefits in relation to water supply, water quality, and flood protection.

Public ownership of the Orange Hammock Ranch offers benefits to both regional and local drinking water supply, protecting existing water supply infrastructure and operations, and facilitating opportunities for development of future regional water supply projects on the adjacent RV Griffin Reserve to meet future public water supply needs of the region as well as protection and enhancement of the City of North Port's drinking water supply from Myakkahatchee Creek. Acquisition of Orange Hammock Ranch would also offer other significant public and environmental benefits in the region, including wildlife habitat connectivity, recreational opportunities and enhanced flood protection.

Senate confirmation of Southwest Florida Water Management District Governing Board Members & Executive Director

Water Management District governing board members are appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate at the next regular session of the Legislature. Governing Board members up for confirmation in 2017 include Mark Taylor, Michelle Williamson and Bryan Beswick [representing DeSoto, Hardee and Highlands Counties]. Senate confirmation of SWFWMD Executive Director Brian Armstrong will also be in 2017.

FEDERAL ISSUES

Tax-Exempt Financing

The Authority urges Congress to preserve the ability of water systems to use tax-exempt bonds to finance water infrastructure projects. This authority to finance essential governmental services on a tax-exempt basis is vital to the efforts of water utilities to continue to provide high quality, safe and reliable supplies of drinking water at a price that is affordable to ratepayers.

As Congress considers comprehensive tax reform, it must keep in mind that any new tax revenue collected from investors by limiting or eliminating tax-exempt municipal bonds would be offset by increased interest costs that would be borne by local water system ratepayers. Limiting or eliminating the exemption would therefore represent a de-facto tax hike on local communities while encumbering public agencies' effort to raise needed capital to address water supply needs.

Drinking Water Security and Treatment Mandates

The Authority recognizes that water utilities protect their critical facilities from acts of terrorism and other hazards. Drinking water utilities' first responsibility is to protect public health by providing potable.

The Authority supports that EPA should continue to be the lead federal agency for security at drinking water and wastewater facilities. Having more than one federal agency with oversight of water security could not only be inefficient, but could also impair the ability of drinking water systems to properly and efficiently treat their water supplies, making simultaneous compliance with multiple standards or guidelines difficult or even impossible. If contradictory or duplicative security measures were recommended by different federal agencies, water systems would face difficulties in assuring compliance and could incur substantial costs with no real improvement in security.

Some water security programs include the collection of data from water providers. Given the sensitive nature of water security information, the Authority believes that Congress should continue the explicit prohibition on the disclosure of such information under federal, state, and local public information laws. Likewise, federal, state and local agencies must take all internal precautions to prevent the inappropriate disclosure of water system information.

Any new federal security requirements should be accompanied by federal funding assistance. Such assistance could be targeted to help utilities update existing vulnerability assessments or implement other physical security without compromising public health. Otherwise, new security requirements will amount to unfunded federal mandates on local governments at a time when water treatment facilities are facing hundreds of billions of dollars in other priority infrastructure projects.

Climate Change

The Authority supports federal action to research and respond to the impacts of global climate change upon the nation's drinking water supplies. The long-term viability and sustainability of the nation's water supply is integral to a viable regional, state and national economy and therefore a comprehensive, unified, and coordinated federal research program is essential for developing decision support tools, adaptation and mitigation strategies, and for helping local utility managers access better information on the regional impacts of climate change on drinking water quality and quantity. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and other federal departments and agencies currently conducting climate change research must increase their efforts to develop reliable modeling systems and regional projections of freshwater quality and quantity changes and offer clear guidance on how water utilities may prepare for changing climate conditions over the next several decades.

Climate change legislation must recognize that water resources and infrastructure in much of the United States are significantly threatened by changing hydrological conditions. Therefore, increased assistance and investment are necessary to help water systems adapt to changing climate conditions and deliver uninterrupted water service to rapidly growing service populations.

Water of the United States

The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers published final rule defining the scope of waters protected under the Clean Water Act in 2015. Authority staff will monitor the implementation of the rule and potential impact to the Authority.