



September 24, 2012

(Sent via email)

Clay Albright
Saundra Grey
Pat Hardin
Reid Hughes
Susan Hughes
William Kerr

Ann Moore
Bill Segal
Jim Swann

St. Johns River Water Management District

David Flagg

John Finlayson

*Suwannee River Water Management
District*

Eric Buermann

John Flanigan

Allan Milledge

Nathaniel Reed

South Florida Water Management District

Pamela Fentress

Jim Martin

Heidi McCree

Pamela Stinnette Vergara

*Southwest Florida Water Management
District*

George Wilson

*Northwest Florida Water Management
District*

Subject: Funding for Florida's Water Management Districts

Dear Former Water Management District Board Members:

On behalf of the Governing Boards at Florida's five water management districts, we would like to respond to the budgetary concerns you expressed to Governor Scott. First and foremost, we appreciate and share your goals for wise management of the state's water resources. During your own years of service, you tackled similar water resource challenges: sustaining water supplies, protecting natural systems, improving water quality and providing flood protection. These mission elements were – and remain today – the driving force behind our agencies' work.

During the past decade, intensive growth in Florida added significant resources to the annual budgets of the water management districts, allowing the districts to expand beyond their core mission. While district funding for initiatives such as land acquisitions, building expansions and local partnership projects bought goodwill,

the additional financial resources also led to unrealistic growth in administrative functions and overhead, including staff size, salaries and benefits. Features such as dual retirement benefits, excessive compensation, annual leave purchases, unsustainable retirement health subsidies and similar benefits exceeded those of state employees.

Today, in a different fiscal climate, the Governor and Legislature are focused on prudent use of taxpayer dollars and not increasing the burden of more government and higher taxes on Florida's citizens. Similarly, the water management districts' Governing Boards have recognized the need for more efficient operations that are clearly and directly focused on our core mission.

In addition to improving our administrative efficiency, the water management districts continue to direct substantial resources toward water resource management. This year we are collectively devoting almost \$1 billion to this goal. Our projects are as diverse and vital as the restoration projects in the Econfina Springs basin (NFWWMD), the replacement of inefficient irrigation measures and fertilizer applications in the Santa Fe River basin (SRWMD), pilot testing projects to recharge the Floridan aquifer (SJRWMD), expanding dispersed water storage contracts (SFWMD), and expanding the use of reclaimed water to offset and reduce groundwater impacts (SWFWMD).

In South Florida, SFWMD is moving aggressively ahead with the Governor's historic \$880 million plan for restoring water quality in the Everglades, supported by \$87.6 million in this year's budget. SFWMD's budget also includes millions to support its continued commitment to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan by moving major projects ahead to restore this national treasure.

With these and other water management projects on the planning horizon throughout the state, we were pleased that the Legislature lifted our revenue caps, and we appreciated Governor Scott's leadership in making the change. This will allow our budgets to grow as Florida's economy grows – rather than increasing the burden on current taxpayers. Further, each of the districts has available cash fund balances, accumulated during the height of Florida's growth, that are being directed toward these priority projects.

Each of our Governing Boards has worked closely with staff and executive managers to develop annual budgets that fulfill our mission responsibilities while, at the same time, streamline the size of government. Together we are firmly committed to ensuring a high level of service and meeting taxpayer expectations.

Former WMD Board Members

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We welcome your ongoing interest in operations at the five districts and would be pleased to meet with you or invite you for a visit. You will find five agencies committed to meeting our core mission more efficiently and focused than ever.

Sincerely,

(Signatures waived to expedite delivery)

George Roberts
Northwest Florida Water Management District

Donald J. Quincey, Jr.
Suwannee River Water Management District

Lad Daniels
St. Johns River Water Management District

H. Paul Senft, Jr.
Southwest Florida Water Management District

Joe Collins
South Florida Water Management District