



**AGRICULTURAL AND GREEN INDUSTRY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, September 12, 2023 – 10:00 AM**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Eric Muecke, City of Tampa Parks & Recreation Dept.
Michael Matteson., FL Citrus Mutual
Curt Williams, FL Farm Bureau
Jay Vogel, FL Forestry Association
Alan Jones, FL Fruit & Vegetable Association
Kerry Kates, FL Fruit & Vegetable Association (alt)
Larry Lentz, FL Irrigation Society (alt)
Kenneth Parker, FL Strawberry Growers Assoc. (alt)
David Boozer, FL Tropical Fish Farms Association
Simon Bollin, Hillsborough Co. Extension Service
Shawn Steed, Hillsborough Co. Extension Service (alt)
Andy Jorgensen, On Top of the World Utilities
Emma Keller, Peace River Valley Citrus Growers
Betsy McGill, Turfgrass Producers of FL (alt)
Don Rainey, UF Institute of Food & Agricultural Science (alt)

Governing Board Liaison

Dusty Rowland

Staff Members

Robyn Felix
Robin Grantham
Steve Desmith
Jay Hoecker
Carole Estes
Melissa Gulvin
Andrew Thornquest
Bob Thompson
April Breton
Ken Griner
Josh Campbell
Jeremy McKay
Adrienne Vining

Board Administrative Support

Virginia Singer
Barbara Matrone

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The Agricultural and Green Industry Advisory Committee (AGIAC) of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) met for its regular meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 12, 2023.

Chair Curt Williams called the meeting to order, and attendance was called.

Governing Board Liaison Dusty Rowland welcomed the committee.

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Approval of the June 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the June 13, 2023 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comments

None.

5. Elections of Chair and Vice Chair

Alan Jones was nominated for committee Chair and Simon Bollin was nominated for Vice Chair. A motion was made and passed by the committee.

6. Florida Water Star

Ms. Robin Grantham, Lead Communications Coordinator, gave a brief overview of the Florida Water Star (FWS) program. FWS is a certification program for residential homes, commercial development, and institutions focusing on irrigation, landscape, and indoor use to make certain efficiency measures are met. Inside the home the program looks for Water Sense labeled fixtures such as toilets, showerheads, and faucets, and Energy Star rated appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers. In the landscape design the program limits high-volume irrigation areas to 60% of the landscape area. The remaining 40% of the landscape area can either have expanded plant beds or unirrigated turfgrass. This portion has the greatest impact on the turf growing industry. Many builders are installing unirrigated Bahia turf grass. While Bahia is the most inexpensive option, there are other options for drought tolerant turf grasses that do not require inground irrigation such as Citra Blue. Within the irrigation system some of the criteria that need to be met include pressure regulation to ensure that the irrigation components meet these manufacturers' specifications: check valves to keep spray heads from leaking; and micro-irrigation which uses less gallons of water per minute on plant beds and provides water to the root of the plant. They also look at landscape design which includes plant selection and will ensure that there are no invasive exotic species, that the plants are selected based on site conditions and ensure that the right plants are selected for hydrozones. A University of Florida study analyzed FWS homes that were constructed at On Top of the World in Marion County and within the Toho Water Authority. The study found that FWS-certified homes use about 48,000 gallons less water per year compared to traditionally designed homes. Ms. Grantham then named several cities requiring a FWS certificate and discussed the differences between FWS certification versus the affidavit. She also discussed the typical ordinance process for obtaining FWS certification and showed an example of an ordinance flier with options outlined before issuance of a certificate of occupancy can be given. The Tampa Bay Water Wise Rebate program offers \$1,000 per FWS-certified home in Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas counties and the cities of St. Pete, Clearwater, and Tampa. To date there are 11,650 rebates available through Tampa Bay Water totaling \$11,941,250. Ms. Grantham announced that UF/IFAS is having a turf grass research field day on October 4. They are also hosting a focus group at District headquarters in Brooksville with turf growers throughout the state in early October, and the FWS is having a technical advisory meeting on October 24.

Mr. Alan Jones asked if the homes being built were using city water or well water. Ms. Grantham responded that 90-95% is using city water because the ordinances are written within the city providing the water.

Mr. Simon Bollin asked if the committee could be updated on the meeting with the turf growers and asked where the turf grass research field day was going to be located. Ms. Grantham responded that she would have Ms. Singer send the flier to the committee, and the location for the research field day is at UF in Citra near Gainesville.

7. Hydrologic Conditions Update

Mr. Steve Desmith, Senior Professional Geologist, gave a hydrologic conditions update. The District's wet season includes the months of June, July, August, and September. In June, the District typically receives about 7.5 inches of rainfall, but this past June only 7.2 inches were recorded, which was a 0.3-inch rainfall deficit. The highest amount of rainfall was in Levy County at 21.1 inches and the lowest was at 1.9 inches in southern Hillsborough County. July was a significantly dry month. Typically, the District receives about 8.2 inches of rainfall, but this past July only received 6.2 inches which was a 2.0-inch deficit. The highest amount of rainfall in July was in the northern region with the central and southern regions being somewhat lower. August was a below average rainfall month. Typically, the District receives about 8.1 inches of rainfall, but this past August only received 7.8 inches of rainfall which was a 0.3-inch rainfall deficit. Mr. Desmith showed a graph of the 12-month rainfall distribution from September 2022 through August 2023. The District received 52.4 inches, which was about 0.3 inches below the historical 12-month average of 52.7 inches. It was a bit drier in the northern region and a bit wetter in the southern region.

Mr. Desmith showed a graph of the 12-month departure from mean and discussed the rainfall surplus and deficits for August. This year in August we had a 0.3-inch rainfall deficit and last year during this time we had a 4.4-inch rainfall deficit. He then discussed the groundwater levels in the northern, central, and southern counties from January 2004 through August 2023, as well as the surface water levels in the Northern Lakes region, Tampa Bay Lakes region, Polk Upland Lakes region, and Lake Wales Ridge Lakes region. He then showed graphs and discussed surface water discharge and the eight-week mean discharge of the Withlacoochee, Hillsborough, Alafia, and Peace rivers.

Mr. Desmith then discussed the public supply levels for the City of Tampa's "Hillsborough" reservoir and public supply volumes for the Bill Young reservoir in the Hillsborough and Alafia rivers, and the water quantities in the Peace River reservoir. He discussed the Climate Prediction Center Near-Term Climate Forecast showing seasonal outlooks for temperature and precipitation. The Center is predicting above normal rainfall as well as above normal temperatures for the next three months within the District. Looking at the extended climate forecast, above normal rainfall is predicted now through April 2024. He stated that we are in tropical storm season which began on June 1 and runs through November 30. Hurricane Idalia delivered 3.2 inches of rainfall districtwide. Tropical storms are active and will continue to be monitored.

Mr. Jones asked about the citrus industry and if it was affecting lake levels within our region. Mr. Desmith responded that if groundwater is not being pumped out of the surficial or lower aquifer it could have a beneficial effect by not drawing down the lakes. The Lake Wales Ridge region of our District is one area with normal lake levels due to good rainfall.

8. Development of agenda topics for the next Agricultural and Green Advisory Committee meeting tentatively at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 5, 2023

None.

9. Announcements and Other Business

None.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.