

Scheduled Completion: June 30, 2028

Non-Mandatory Pre-Submittal Conference: June 26, 2025: **Attendees:** 5

Renewable: No

RFQ Response Due Date: July 28, 2025 **Responses Received:** 2

***Notes:** The estimated amounts represent the projected spend plan per fiscal year for the proposed funding and may be reallocated between years. The amounts for succeeding fiscal years are contingent upon Governing Board approval of each fiscal year's budget.

BACKGROUND

The Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and priority springs (LSFIR), located in North Florida, are in recovery based on Minimum Flows and Level (MFLs) rules adopted in 2015. The MFLs have since been re-evaluated and re-assessed. Based on the best available information, two of the three compliance points on the rivers are not being achieved. Therefore, an updated recovery strategy to restore the systems is required. As such, the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), in collaboration with the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and stakeholders, are developing projects to achieve the MFLs.

As part of this effort, in 2024, CDM Smith Inc. conducted a jointly funded cooperative study to evaluate potential projects for inclusion in the recovery strategy, with participation by SJRWMD, SRWMD, DEP, JEA, Clay County Utility Authority (CCUA), Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU), and St. Johns County Utilities Department (SJCUD). The study identified a conceptual regional project of sufficient scale to mitigate the impacts to the LSFIR MFLs. The proposed project, known as Water First North Florida, is a 40-million gallons of water per day project utilizing treated reclaimed water from the JEA Buckman and Southwest Water Reclamation Facilities (WRFs) that will receive additional natural filtration via a treatment wetland for aquifer recharge in the North Florida region. The proposed project would also provide additional regional benefits for flow at other springs and surface waters, replenishment of the Floridan aquifer, and renewal of water supply resources.

Additional study of the proposed project is necessary. An engineering study is needed to identify and evaluate potential treatment wetland site(s) for additional treatment of the WRF's reclaimed water. The study would also identify potential aquifer recharge sites. These efforts directly support the LSFIR MFLs prevention and recovery efforts and would provide crucial information for the planning of the Water First North Florida project.

DISCUSSION

On June 12, 2025, the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) 41325 for Water First North Florida: Treatment Wetland and Recharge Facility Site Investigation, Selection and Conceptual Design was advertised on the District's solicitation portals including DemandStar, Central Bidding, My Florida Market Place and Vendor Registry. Over 1,927 potential vendors were notified of this solicitation, and 47 vendors downloaded the solicitation documents.

A non-mandatory pre-submittal conference was held at District Headquarters on June 26, 2025. The solicitation was advertised for over six weeks. Two engineering firms submitted a response by the July 28, 2025 deadline. The two firms along with their subconsultants were: