



**AGENDA REQUEST FOR
GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
November 12, 2025**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board

THROUGH: Michael A. Register, P.E.
Executive Director

FROM: Clay Coarsey, Director
Division of Water Supply Planning and Assessment

SUBJECT: Water First North Florida: Treatment Wetland and Recharge Facility Site Investigation, Selection and Conceptual Design

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the ranking of the consultants responding to the Request for Qualifications 41325 for the Water First North Florida Treatment Wetland and Recharge Facility Site Investigation, Selection and Conceptual Design and authorize the Executive Director to take the following actions: (1) negotiate and execute a contract not-to-exceed \$2,170,000 with the Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., the top ranked respondent; (2) negotiate and execute a revenue agreement for project funding with the Department of Environmental Protection and any amendment thereto; and (3) execute all related budget transfers necessary to complete the project.

If the District fails to reach an agreement with the highest ranked firm, negotiations will proceed with the next highest ranked respondent.

Amount: \$2,170,000

Account Name: Water First North Florida

Funding Source: State Sources – DEP

Budget Authority: FY 2025–28 (anticipated)

Budget: \$2,170,000 (anticipated)

Fiscal Year	Estimated Amount*
FY 2025-26	\$800,000
FY 2026-27	\$900,000
FY 2027-28	\$470,000

EOG Program/Activity Code: 2.2.1 – Water Resource Development Projects

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:

- (1) Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., with the following subconsultants: Wetlands Solutions, Inc; Phillips Heavy Civil; Ecosystem Investment Partners; and Family Lands Remembered, LLC.
- (2) CDM Smith Inc., with the following subconsultants: Black & Veatch Corporation; ASRus, LLC; Environmental Science Associates; INTERA; The Balmoral Group; and the University of Florida Howard T. Odum Center for Wetlands; and

Both firms met the minimum qualifications stated in the RFQ. The Evaluation Committee, comprised of three District staff and five non-voting stakeholder representatives from SRWMD, CCUA, GRU, JEA, and SJCUD, reviewed the submittals and met on August 11, 2025, to evaluate the qualifications. The total scores for the written proposals were finalized during the meeting and are shown in the table below.

Rank	Engineering Firm	Total Score
1	Jacobs Engineering Group	28.21
2	CDM Smith	27.20