

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board

FROM: Amy Brown, Deputy Executive Director, Water Resources

THRU: Hugh Thomas, Executive Director

DATE: October 30, 2025

RE: 2025 Implementation Strategy for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Priority Springs

RECOMMENDATION

District staff recommend the following Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers related actions:

- A. Approve the 2025 Implementation Strategy for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Priority Springs (LSFIR) Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) (hereafter the 2025 Implementation Strategy); and
- B. Approve an Addendum to the 2014 Recovery Strategy for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and Priority Springs Minimum Flows and Levels (hereafter the 2014 Recovery Strategy) to include the water supply development, water resource development, and water conservation projects identified in the 2025 Implementation Strategy; and
- C. Approve an Addendum to the 2023 North Florida Regional Water Supply Plan (hereafter the First Addendum to the 2023 NFRWSP), to include the water supply development, water resource development, and water conservation projects identified in the 2025 Implementation Strategy.

BACKGROUND

In 2014, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) published a Notice of Proposed Rule to establish minimum flows (MFLs) for the Lower Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers and associated priority springs (collectively the LSFIR MFLs). DEP proposed the LSFIR MFLs because impacts to those MFLs were expected to occur from more than one water management district. Since some of the MFLs were not being met, DEP developed a recovery strategy under section 373.0421, Florida Statutes (F.S.). The strategy for recovering and maintaining the LSFIR MFLs included two components: a project component and a regulatory component. DEP proposed a rule for the regulatory component of the LSFIR recovery strategy. Subsequently, the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) and the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) approved the project component of the LSFIR recovery strategy (hereafter the 2014 Recovery Strategy). In 2015, DEP's LSFIR MFLs and the regulatory component of the LSFIR recovery strategy became effective in Chapter 62-42, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

In 2016, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 552 (SB 552), which defined and established additional requirements to protect "Outstanding Florida Springs" (OFS). Several of the springs comprising the LSFIR MFLs are OFS under SB 552. See section 373.802(5), F.S. As amended by SB 552, section 373.709(2)(k), F.S. requires that a regional water supply plan assess how projects identified in the plan support the recovery strategy for implementation of adopted MFLs