

Questions and Answers SFWMD Surplus Lands

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) acquires land for the purpose of helping the agency meet its mission of environmental restoration, flood control and water resource development and protection. A comprehensive land assessment determined that about three percent of District-owned properties are no longer needed for mission-related projects. Lands that are designated for surplus may be (a) offered for public bid; (b) conveyed by the District to another governmental entity; or (c) used in potential real estate exchange transactions.

How did the District determine which lands to surplus?

The SFWMD conducted a comprehensive [land assessment](#) to ensure that each parcel is being put to its most effective use for South Florida's taxpayers. In September 2013, the District completed the first phase of the open and transparent assessment process with the review of nearly 750,000 acres of fee-owned lands. While current land uses were determined to remain in place for 97 percent of the public properties, [some](#) were recommended for potential exchange or surplus. The Governing Board directed staff to conduct further analysis and due diligence regarding those parcels.

Does the public have an opportunity to comment on the proposed surplusing of lands?

Yes. Online posting opportunities, region-specific public meetings and monthly Governing Board meetings were held throughout the assessment and recommendation process. Additionally, as specific parcels are considered by the Governing Board to offer for sale, public meetings will be held to allow opportunities for comment.

What other actions must take place before a property can be placed for public bid?

A number of other actions must take place prior to the solicitation of any public bids. These include the completion of detailed ecological assessments, current appraisals, communications with local governments, notifications to adjacent landowners, a public noticed meeting and Governing Board approval.

How does the District notify the public of available surplus lands?

A legal notice of intention to sell any SFWMD land through public bids will be published for three consecutive weeks in local newspapers and online at www.sfwmd.gov/surplusland. An online database enables users to find a variety of information about each surplus property, including the complete bid package information and solicitation deadlines (when bids are formally open).

Will the bid process follow state statutes for real estate sales?

Yes. The time period for the open bid process from the initial published notice through acceptance of bids, bid award, and closing on the property will vary with respect to each surplus property, but will be less than 360 days as required by state statute.

Are property appraisals conducted by SFWMD staff or a third-party vendor?

A market value appraisal is prepared by an external professional with extensive real estate knowledge and experience.

Is there a minimum bid required?

Yes, though it will vary from parcel to parcel. Surplus lands placed for public bid will be sold for the highest price obtainable but not less than the appraised value.

Is any kind of deposit or “up front” money required as part of the bid submittal?

Yes. A deposit will be required as part of the bid submission, and the District will retain the deposit from the winning bidder. Deposits from other bidders will be returned.

What happens if no complete bids are received? Are there any opportunities for surplus land to be auctioned?

The District would decide whether or not to offer the property for bid with different requirements. The District does not currently anticipate offering properties for sale through an auction process.

How will the money received from the sale of surplus lands be used? Must it go toward managing or buying other land?

It depends on the source of the public money used to initially buy the parcel being sold. For example, if it was purchased with *ad valorem* taxes, the money can go into the District’s general revenue fund and be used for any purpose. If, however, the property was initially purchased with funds specifically restricted to land acquisition or restoration purposes, the money would be directed back to that particular account with very targeted use of the funds.

Where to find more information

If you are interested in purchasing a District property, please visit www.sfwmd.gov/surplusland for a list of current real estate opportunities. If you have additional questions on the available lands or the solicitation process, please contact the District’s real estate team via email at surplusland@sfwmd.gov.