SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION (WRAC) ISSUES WORKSHOP
2014 LOWER KISSIMMEE BASIN WATER SUPPLY PLAN

July 9, 2014, 1:30 p.m.
SFWMD Okeechobee District Service Center

MEETING SUMMARY

Item 1. Welcome, Introductions, and Today's Topics- Mark Elsner, Section Administrator, Water Supply, SFWMD

Mr. Elsner opened the workshop and welcomed participants. He explained that one of the goals of the water supply plan is to ensure that public input is considered. He noted that comments on the draft water supply plan could be given in today's meeting but are encouraged to be submitted in writing. He introduced the workshop's presenters and noted that this is our second and likely final meeting.

Item 2. Overview of Florida Agriculture- Bonnie Wolff-Pelaez standing in for Rich Budell, Director, Office of Agricultural Water Policy, FDACS

Bonnie Wolff-Pelaez presented an overview of agriculture within the Lower Kissimmee Basin Planning Area. She referenced a map showing land in agricultural use, discussed the locations of various types of agricultural operations, and explained local conditions such as temperature or soil type that facilitated certain crops. She also explained trends such as macro-economic factors, crop disease, and land use changes that are driving changes in agriculture in the planning area. Sugarcane was expected to remain stable unless new transportation options were developed for the region. Ms. Wolff-Pelaez also discussed changes seen in the past when regulatory changes were made in the C-139 Basin, recent enrollment levels in the BMP program and how cow/calf enrollment was expected to remain high. She also foresaw that many current sod acres were going towards entering the wetlands reserve program.

Questions/comments included:

- ***Are blueberries being grown in the area?*** Ms. Wolf-Pelaez commented that there are some blueberry farms north of the planning area (e.g. in Polk County). There were a few farms growing blueberries in the Lake Istokpoga Improvement District decades ago, but most of the development is now to the north of the LKB Planning Area.

- ***What about medical marijuana as a potential crop in the area? With the recently passed law is there a sense of how and where it might be grown?*** It will be grown strictly in indoor nurseries with an initial lottery to select five nurseries state-wide. The nurseries had to meet strict requirements including having been in business for 30 years and having sufficient space for a specified number of plants. It won't be grown openly in fields.

Item 3. **The Process of Developing the Statewide Agricultural Projections - Tim Desmarais, P.E., Water Resources Manager, The Balmoral Group**

Mr. Desmarais gave an overview of the FSAID (Florida Statewide Agricultural Irrigation Demand) project. The project was designed to produce crop-specific, spatially defined, projections of agricultural water demand over a 20 year planning horizon (2010 – 2030). The projections cover the entire state of Florida including all of the Lower Kissimmee Basin planning area. He explained the methodology and data sources used to develop the projections.

Questions/comments included:

- ***What is your timeline on the project?*** The Balmoral Group had a one-year contract that was just renewed for another year.
- ***When will your deliverables be available?*** We just submitted our deliverables to FDACS and they should be distributed to the public soon.
- ***Regarding Task 3 of the contract, where it says "water requirements in inches per year"; does that mean the supplemental amount required above rainfall?*** Yes.
- ***Will the data set deliverable be broken down by water management district?*** Yes and by water supply planning area too.
- ***Are pine plantations considered farms?*** Yes, although there is no AFSIRS code for pine trees.
- ***Will this project ultimately be handed over to FDACS?*** Yes, Balmoral is working on user's manual now.

Item 4. **Dispersed Water Management Overview- Jeff Sumner, Director of Agricultural Policy, SFWMD**

Mr. Sumner described the Dispersed Water Management program and its benefits. He showed examples of projects in the LKB planning area (e.g. Rafter T Ranch). There has been interest in "water farming" among some regional stakeholder and this could be a new evolution of dispersed water management. Currently there are more proposed management projects than can be constructed with the available funds.

Questions/comments included:

- ***Is there consideration that you may be creating a rapid infiltration basin where much of the water in storage seeps into the subsurface? How would a landowner be compensated for that?*** We only operate the one pilot site where the geology seems to allow the rapid infiltration of water. The water is pumped to the site is when there is an excess of water available and the water would have gone to tide. Other sites seem to have underlying geology that allows storage without large infiltration loss and the water can be reused. Compensation to the landowner is based on the original dispersed water management agreement.

- ***Are there any water quality concerns when establishing these storage areas on former citrus sites and the sediments are not confined?*** We conducted Phase 1 and Phase 2 environmental investigations on all of the pilot sites before initiating each storage project. When copper was found on one site, the ground was tilled to 18-inches to eliminate the potential concern of it being carried offsite.
- ***We would like to work with the District to create regional models to simulate what this would do if the program is scaled up and to better understand what happens when the water table is held higher (because of the dispersed water management) in both wet and dry years.***
- ***Has anyone proposed a water supply component for a distributed water management project?*** No, not yet. If this were considered a water supply source, it might affect the permit holder's allocation. There have been some benefits regarding decreasing the need during dry season for irrigation because the water table was held higher longer during the wet season. One limitation in their use for water supply purposes in whether they can reliably supply water through dry season.
- ***Is there any more word on project funding for this year?*** Six more projects may be funded this year for a total of eight projects.

Item 5. Overview of the Draft Lower Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Plan - Chris Sweazy, Lead Hydrogeologist, SFWMD

Chris Sweazy gave an overview of the Draft LKB Plan. He described the stakeholder process including coordination with local stakeholder groups in the LKB planning area. He outlined the remaining steps of the plan and the associated timeline. The schedule includes an informational presentation to the SFWMD Governing Board on July 10th with a proposed Governing Board approval of the Plan anticipated in September 2014.

He described the Draft LKB Plan documents available for public review which include: 1.) Plan with Appendices and 2.) Support Document. He indicated that the Support Document was revised as of July 8th to address recent changes to water use permitting regulations. He presented a summary of the historic and projected future water demands for each use category.

Questions/comments included:

- ***Considering LOSA, and that drainage from LKB recharges Lake Okeechobee, why are we allowing additional water use in the LKB area that may cause additional limitations on users of Lake Okeechobee water (in LOSA)?*** The Indiantown Cogeneration plant is the only surface water user with expected increases and the water for this plant is not from Lake Okeechobee. All other increased demands are expected to be groundwater.

Item 6. **Next Steps- Chris Sweazy**

Mr. Sweazy gave an overview of the next steps of the LKB Plan. Comments are due by July 24th, but earlier submissions are appreciated. The current schedule is to present the final Plan document to WRAC and the SFWMD Governing Board for approval in September.

Item 7. **Public Comment**

There were no further public comments.

Item 8. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 PM.