

ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

In Re:

Declaration of a Phase I Moderate
Water Shortage Within
Alachua, Baker, Bradford,
Duval and Marion Counties

F.O.R. NO. 2026-0005

**ORDER DECLARING A PHASE I MODERATE WATER SHORTAGE
WITHIN ALACHUA, BAKER, BRADFORD, DUVAL, AND MARION COUNTIES**

The Governing Board of the St. Johns River Water Management District (District), after receiving testimony, evidence, and recommendations from District staff at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 10, 2026, and being otherwise fully apprised of the matter, issues this Order containing the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The District's Water Shortage Plan, adopted as Chapter 40C-21 of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), provides that the District will periodically evaluate water conditions within the District and use that information to determine whether and to what extent a water shortage should be declared.
2. As of January 28, 2026, the current county average rainfall over the past year for Alachua, Baker, Bradford, and Marion counties was at or below 40 inches, and some groundwater monitoring locations within Marion and Duval counties show groundwater levels at or below the 15th percentile. Additionally, the average flow rate of the Santa Fe River, located within the adjacent Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD), is below the 10th percentile.

3. As of January 28, 2026, the U.S. Drought Monitor for Florida designates Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Duval, and Marion counties as either Severe Drought (D2) or Extreme Drought (D3), and the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center's three-month precipitation probability outlook (February – April 2026) shows below-normal chances of precipitation in these counties.

4. An additional consideration for declaring a water shortage in these counties concerns the interagency agreements the District has entered into with neighboring water management districts. These agreements were created because jurisdiction over certain counties is split between the District and a neighboring water management district. As a result of this split, the agreements clarify which water management district is responsible for declaring a water shortage in these counties.

5. In May 2009, the District entered into an interagency agreement with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) concerning jurisdiction over Marion County. Additionally, in July 2012, the District entered into an interagency agreement with the SRWMD concerning jurisdiction over Alachua County.

6. In November 2025, the SWFWMD issued a Phase I Water Shortage Order for the entire area within its jurisdiction, which remains in effect. However, in January 2026, the SWFWMD amended the order and issued a Phase II "Severe Water Shortage" Order for certain counties within its jurisdiction. Likewise, the SRWMD issued a Water Shortage Advisory for the entire area within its jurisdiction in January 2026.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

7. Pursuant to section 373.246(1), Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Governing Board of the District shall formulate a plan for implementation during periods of water shortage to

regulate the withdrawal and use of water to protect the water resources of the District. The District's Water Shortage Plan (Chapter 40C-21, F.A.C.) was adopted to accomplish this purpose.

8. Section 373.175(1), F.S., and subsection 40C-21.231(2), F.A.C., authorizes the Governing Board to declare a water shortage to protect water resources.

9. The District has monitored and evaluated water conditions within the District as required by rule 40C-21.221, F.A.C., and the conditions in Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Duval, and Marion counties are such that the Governing Board may declare a water shortage in these areas.

10. For a declared water shortage, the District will assign a specific water shortage phase based on Tables 21-1 and 21-2 in Chapter 40C-21, F.A.C., and the factors listed in subsection 40C-21.251(4), F.A.C. An analysis of the tables and factors indicates that a Phase I Moderate Water Shortage should be assigned to the declared water shortage.

11. Rule 40C-21.621, F.A.C., contains water use restrictions and measures that will be in effect when a Phase I Moderate Water Shortage is declared, unless otherwise provided in this Order. The District has determined that the water use restrictions and measures set forth below are warranted, given conditions in Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Duval, and Marion counties.

12. Pursuant to sections 373.609 and 373.613, F.S., every state and county attorney, sheriff, police officer, and other appropriate city and county official has the authority to enforce this order.

13. Section 373.083(5), F.S., authorizes the governing board to execute any of the powers, duties, and functions vested in the governing board through a member, the executive director, or other district staff as designated by the governing board. As stated above, Section 373.175(1), F.S., authorizes the Governing Board to declare a water shortage to protect water

resources. The District requests that the Executive Director be delegated the authority to declare a water shortage in additional areas, as necessary, to address changing circumstances.

ORDER

Based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the Governing Board orders that:

1. A Phase I Moderate Water Shortage is declared for all sources of water within the following areas:
 - a. Those portions of Baker, Bradford, and Duval counties located within the District.
 - b. Those portions of Alachua County located within the District, except for the unincorporated areas, for which water shortage-related orders have been delegated to the Suwannee River Water Management District.
 - c. Those portions of Marion County located within the District, the City of Ocala, and all unincorporated areas of Marion County, except the unincorporated area lying within The Villages of Marion, FQD, for which water shortage-related orders have been delegated to the Southwest Florida Water Management District.
2. All classes of water users are encouraged to reduce their water use and conserve water to the maximum extent possible.
3. All classes of water users are encouraged to proactively plan for extended severe drought conditions, and additional mandatory water use restrictions should this Phase I Moderate Water Shortage Order advance to a Phase II Severe Water Shortage Order.
4. Wasteful and unnecessary water use is prohibited. Such wasteful and unnecessary water use includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Allowing water to be dispersed without any practical purpose to the water user, regardless of the type of use.
 - b. Allowing water to be dispersed in a grossly inefficient manner, regardless of the type of water use.
 - c. Allowing water to be dispersed to accomplish a purpose for which water use is unnecessary or which can be readily accomplished through alternative methods of significantly less water use.
- 5. The following Phase I Moderate Water Shortage restrictions and measures, as detailed in rules 40C-21.601 and 40C-21.621, F.A.C., are imposed for all sources and uses of water, including those exempt from permitting pursuant to Chapter 40C-2, F.A.C., except for the domestic use of water as defined in section 373.019(6), F.S., and users whose sole source of water is reclaimed water or seawater.
- 6. Indoor Uses
 - a. Indoor use in commercial, industrial, or institutional establishments should be voluntarily reduced.
- 7. Public Supply Uses
 - a. All Public Supply water use should be voluntarily reduced, and each Public Supply consumptive use permittee shall review its current water conservation plan to ensure that the plan elements have been fully implemented in accordance with the permit conditions and to determine what additional demand management measures could be reasonably employed should resource conditions further deteriorate.

b. Each Public Supply water utility should institute or accelerate other water conservation efforts that can help manage demand during the Water Shortage declaration. These efforts include:

- i. Customer messaging for all customers that informs customers about the current Water Shortage declaration, describes how the water utility's primary and back-up water supplies are affected by the declaration and the resource or supply conditions that led to the declaration, and promotes any ongoing water conservation projects offered by the water utility that would assist customers in their efforts to immediately reduce water consumption.
- ii. Review and refinement, as necessary, of water utility operational practices regarding water pressure and line flushing to identify and implement any opportunities that would reduce water demand without causing adverse impacts to public health, welfare, and safety.

8. Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Uses

- a. All commercial/industrial/institutional water use should be voluntarily reduced, and each Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional consumptive use permittee shall review its current water conservation plan to ensure that the plan elements have been fully implemented in accordance with the permit conditions and to determine what additional demand management measures could be reasonably employed, should resource conditions further deteriorate.

9. Agricultural Uses

- a. All Agricultural water use should be voluntarily reduced, and each consumptive use permittee shall review its current water conservation plan to ensure that the plan elements have been fully implemented in accordance with the permit conditions and to determine what additional demand management measures could be reasonably employed should resource conditions further deteriorate.

10. Landscape/Recreation/Aesthetic Uses

- a. All Landscape/Recreation/Aesthetic water use should be voluntarily reduced, and each consumptive use permittee shall review its current water conservation plan to ensure that the plan elements have been fully implemented in accordance with the permit conditions and to determine what additional demand management measures could be reasonably employed should resource conditions further deteriorate.
- b. All Landscape Irrigation should be voluntarily reduced, and each property owner or manager should prepare for possible worsening conditions.
- c. All cemetery, golf course, athletic field, water-based recreational area, and aesthetic water use should be voluntarily reduced, and each property owner or manager should prepare for possible worsening conditions.

11. The Executive Director is delegated the authority to declare a water shortage in additional areas, as necessary, to address changing circumstances.

12. This Order shall become effective at 12:01 a.m. on February 11, 2026.

Done and Ordered this 10th day of February, 2026, by the Governing Board of the St.
Johns River Water Management District at Palatka, Florida.

**ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**, a public body
existing under Chapter 373, F.S.

BY: 

Robert M. Bradley, Governing Board Chair

RENDERED this 10th day of February, 2026.

BY: 

Courtney Waldron, District Clerk