

**ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

In Re:

Declaration of a Phase III Extreme Water Shortage  
 Within Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Flagler,  
 Lake, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties

F.O.R. NO. 2026-0005

**WATER SHORTAGE ORDER DECLARING A PHASE III EXTREME WATER  
 SHORTAGE WITHIN ALACHUA, BAKER, BRADFORD, CLAY, DUVAL, FLAGLER,  
 LAKE, MARION, NASSAU, PUTNAM, AND ST. JOHNS COUNTIES**

This matter came before the Executive Director of the St. Johns River Water Management District (“District”) on May 11, 2026, at District Headquarters in Palatka, Florida. After consideration and being fully apprised of the matter, the Executive Director issues this Order containing the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Governing Board issued an Order declaring a Phase I Moderate Water Shortage within Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Duval, and Marion counties on February 10, 2026.
2. On February 23, 2026, the Executive Director issued an Amended and Restated Order (“Amended Order”) adding Clay, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties (together with Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Duval, and Marion counties collectively referred to as “Counties of Concern”) to the Phase I Moderate Water Shortage declaration.
3. On March 2, 2026, the Executive Director issued a Water Shortage Order Declaring a Modified Phase II Severe Water Shortage within Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties (“Modified Phase II Water Shortage Order”), which was concurred to by the Governing Board on March 10, 2026, in its Order Concurring With Water Shortage Order Declaring a Modified Phase II Severe Water

Shortage Within Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties (“Order Concurring With Water Shortage Order”).

4. 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.

5. As of May 6, 2026, the current county average rainfall over the past year is at or below 40 inches for Duval, Marion, Nassau, and Putnam counties, and is at or below 35 inches for Alachua, Baker, Bradford, and Clay counties. Additionally, the current county-average rainfall for Alachua, Baker, Bradford, and Clay counties has been at or below 35 inches for more than 4 weeks.

6. Furthermore, as of May 6, 2026, multiple groundwater monitoring locations in Alachua, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Lake, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties show groundwater levels at or below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile. Moreover, the groundwater levels in Duval, Marion, Putnam, and St. Johns counties have been at the 10th percentile for more than four weeks.

7. As of May 6, 2026, the U.S. Drought Monitor for Florida designates all of the Counties of Concern, along with Lake County, with a drought intensity of Extreme Drought (D3). This marks the highest area of Extreme Drought (D3) coverage in Florida since the drought monitor began in 2000. Additionally, portions of Alachua, Baker, Bradford, and Nassau counties have a drought intensity of Exceptional Drought (D4), making the current drought the most intense on record for this area.

8. The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center (“NWSCPC”) notes that the seasonal (May 1 – July 31, 2026) temperature outlook favors above-normal temperatures and above-normal rainfall; however, significant rainfall is needed to improve the drought. Therefore, the NWSCPC predicts that drought conditions will persist throughout this time period.

9. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Drought Information Statement for Southeast Georgia and Northeast Florida, issued on April 23, 2026 (“NOAA Report”), notes that streamflows on all mainstem rivers in Southeast Georgia and Northeast Florida are especially low, having dropped to near record-low flows. In particular, stretches of the Santa Fe River remain near record-low flows, while flows in most other rivers are well below normal for this time of year. Accordingly, stretches of the Suwannee, Santa Fe, and Satilla rivers are becoming increasingly difficult, and in some cases impossible, to access for recreational boating. Additionally, springs along the Suwannee River are discharging rapidly into the Suwannee due to the Suwannee's low level.

10. Regarding fire hazard impacts due to the severe drought, the NOAA Report also notes that the Keetch-Byram Drought Index continues to rise, with much of the region in the 450 – 700 range. In particular, much of interior Northeast Florida is at or above 600, with destructive fires already occurring in multiple counties in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia. Accordingly, burn bans are now in effect for most counties in this region. The NOAA Report notes that fire danger remains high, with the Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook for May calling for above normal wildfire activity across the area.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

11. 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.

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

13. 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 the Counties of Concern, along with Lake County, are such that the Governing Board may declare a water shortage in these areas.

14. 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 III Extreme Water Shortage should be assigned to the declared water shortage.

15. Rule 40C-21.641, F.A.C., contains water use restrictions and measures that will be in effect when a Phase III Extreme 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 the Counties of Concern and Lake County.

16. 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.

17. The Modified Phase II Water Shortage Order is currently in effect.

18. Pursuant to the Order Concurring With Water Shortage Order, the Executive Director has been delegated the authority to declare a water shortage in additional areas, change the phase of water shortage severity, (based on drought condition level), except for a Phase IV Critical Water Shortage, and rescind a water shortage declaration as necessary, to address changing circumstances that may occur between regularly scheduled Governing Board meetings, as conditions continue to develop.

### **ORDER**

Based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the District orders as follows:

1. A Phase III Extreme Water Shortage is declared for all sources of water within the following areas:
  - a. All of Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties.
  - b. Those portions of Baker, Bradford, and Lake counties located within the District.
  - c. 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.
  - d. 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 III Extreme Water Shortage Order be modified or advanced to a Phase IV Critical Water Shortage Order.

4. Wasteful and unnecessary water use is prohibited regardless of the phase of water shortage. 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 water 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 restrictions and measures, as detailed in rules 40C-21.601, 40C-21.631, and 40C-21.641, 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. Public Supply Uses. All public supply water utilities shall:

- a. Notify the District within 24 hours if the public supply water system experiences a sudden loss of its primary water supply or other significant change in system status.

- b. Institute or accelerate any other operational practices identified by the water utility that can be modified during the water shortage declaration to reduce water demand without causing adverse impacts to public health, welfare, and safety.
7. Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Uses.
- a. Whether or not a Consumptive Use Permit authorizes a commercial/industrial/institutional water use activity with associated landscape irrigation, the landscape irrigation component is separately regulated for purposes of this Order and is subject to the Landscape Irrigation and Uses restrictions outlined below.
  - b. All commercial/industrial/institutional water use should be voluntarily reduced.
  - c. For all commercial/industrial/institutional water use, the following demand management measures should be implemented as applicable:
    - i. Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
    - ii. Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.
  - d. All commercial/Industrial/Institutional consumptive use permittees shall:
    - i. Inform the District about any drought-related challenges with their water supplies. At a minimum, each permittee should, within 14 days of receipt of the District's water shortage declaration notice and when any major change in water supply status occurs, notify

the District regarding any water well failures, quantity or quality concerns about primary water supplies, any anticipated need for supply supplementation, and planned strategies for supply supplementation if the drought continues or worsens.

- ii. Suspend clean-up requiring water use, except for the minimum required to protect efficiency of the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
- iii. Suspend the washing of vehicles and other mobile equipment, except for the minimum required to meet health and safety needs or as otherwise required by published industry standards.

8. Agriculture Uses.

- a. Whether or not a Consumptive Use Permit authorizes an agricultural water use activity with associated landscape irrigation, the landscape irrigation component is separately regulated for purposes of this Order and is subject to the Landscape Irrigation and Uses restrictions outlined below.
- b. The following demand management measures should be implemented, as applicable:
  - i. Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
  - ii. Maximize the use of the lesser or least restricted Source Class to which there is access.

- c. All agriculture users of water shall:
  - i. Inform the District about any drought-related challenges with their water supplies. At a minimum, each permittee should, within 14 days of receipt of the District's declaration notice and when any major change in water supply status occurs, notify the District regarding: any water well failures, quantity or quality concerns about primary water supplies, any anticipated need for supply supplementation, and any planned strategies for supply supplementation if the water shortage continues or worsens.
  - ii. Suspend clean-up requiring water use, except for the minimum required to protect efficiency for the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
  - iii. Suspend the washing of vehicles and other mobile equipment, except for the minimum required to protect animal or human health or safety needs, such as to prevent the spread of plant or animal diseases.

9. Landscape/Recreation/Aesthetic Uses.

- a. Landscape Irrigation and Uses
  - i. All residential landscape irrigation is limited to one day a week (Eastern Standard Time one day a week irrigation schedule), regardless of time of year.
  - ii. The following restrictions and measures shall apply to all landscape uses, as applicable:

- 1) Landscape use irrigation is limited to one day a week in accordance with the schedule outlined in subparagraph 40C-2.042(2)(a)2., F.A.C. (Eastern Standard Time one day a week irrigation schedule), regardless of time of year.

Odd numbered addresses: Saturday.

Even Numbered Addresses: Sunday.

Non-residential: Tuesday

- 2) Landscape Irrigation is prohibited between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00p.m.
- 3) Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
- 4) Recycle water to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
- 5) Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.
- 6) Suspend clean-up requiring water use, except for the minimum required to protect efficiency of the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
- 7) Suspend washing of lawn mowers and other mobile equipment, except for the minimum necessary to meet health or safety needs, such as the spread of turfgrass disease.

- 8) The establishment period for new plant materials shall be reduced to “15/30/15.” This means that the material can be watered on any day for a 15-day period starting the day it is installed, then up to 3 days a week during the next 30-day period, and only 2 days a week during the final 15-day period.
- b. Golf Courses. All golf course water users shall:
    - i. Inform the District about any drought-related challenges with their water supplies. At a minimum, each golf course water user shall, within 14 days of receipt of the District’s water shortage declaration notice, and when any major change in water supply status occurs, notify the District regarding any water well failures, quantity or quality concerns about primary water supplies, any anticipated need for supply supplementation, and any planned strategies for supply supplementation if the water shortage continues or worsens.
    - ii. Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
    - iii. Recycle water to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
    - iv. Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.

- v. Suspend clean-up requiring water use, except for the minimum required to protect efficiency of the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
- vi. Suspend washing of golf carts, lawn mowers, and other mobile equipment, except for the minimum necessary to meet health or safety needs, such as to prevent the spread of turfgrass disease.
- vii. Take appropriate actions to avoid water use increases. Examples of such actions include, but are not limited to:
  - 1) Reducing wear on fairways by restricting cart traffic to designated paths only.
  - 2) Modifying nutritional, soil amendment, and mowing practices to minimize heat stress.
  - 3) Providing information to golfers and guests about the current water shortage declaration, the steps the facility is taking to reduce water use, and how golfers and guests can conserve water while visiting the facility.
  - 4) Reduce irrigation of fairways and driving range greens to no more than once per week.
  - 5) Reduce irrigation of tees, golf course greens, and practice greens to no more than three times per week.
  - 6) Eliminate irrigation of roughs to the extent practicable.
  - 7) The establishment period for new plant materials shall be reduced to “15/30/15.” This means that the material can be

watered on any day for a 15-day period starting the day it is installed, then up to 3 days a week during the next 30-day period, and only 2 days a week during the final 15-day period.

- c. Recreational Areas. The following water-use measures shall apply to all recreational areas, including playgrounds and fields for football, baseball, and soccer. All recreation water users shall:
  - i. Recreational area landscape irrigation is prohibited between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00p.m.
  - ii. Inform the District about any drought-related challenges with their water supplies. At a minimum, each water user shall, within 14 days of receipt of the District's water shortage declaration notice and when any major change in water supply status occurs, notify the District regarding any water well failures, quantity or quality concerns about the primary water supplies, any anticipated need for supply supplementation, and any planned strategies for supply supplementation if the water shortage continues or worsens.
  - iii. Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
  - iv. Recycle water to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
  - v. Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.

- vi. Suspend clean-up requiring water use, except for the minimum required to protect efficiency of the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
- vii. Suspend the washing of lawn mowers and other mobile equipment, except for the minimum necessary to meet health or safety needs, such as to prevent the spread of turfgrass disease.
- viii. Apply fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides in coordination with irrigation schedules.
- ix. Take appropriate actions to avoid water use increases. Examples of such actions include, but are not limited to:
  - 1) Reducing wear on athletic fields as practicable.
  - 2) Modifying nutritional, soil amendment, and mowing practices to minimize heat stress.
  - 3) Providing information to players and guests about the current water shortage declaration, the steps that the facility is taking to reduce water use, and how players and guests can conserve water while visiting the facility.

- d. Water-Based Recreation
    - i. All pools shall be maintained in a manner that minimizes the need for make-up water, such as promptly repairing leaks.
  - e. Aesthetic Uses
    - i. Aesthetic uses of water are prohibited.
10. Mining/Dewatering Uses.
- a. Discharge of fresh water off-site or to tide from dewatering shall be reduced to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
11. Other Uses
- a. Except as provided in this section, all other uses of water should be voluntarily reduced, and the following demand management measures shall be implemented, as applicable:
    - i. Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
    - ii. Recycle water to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
    - iii. Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.

- b. Washing or cleaning of buildings, structures, and outdoor impervious surfaces:
  - i. Washing or cleaning streets is only allowed in preparation for, or immediately after, a parade or other public event. Mechanical street cleaning is allowed at any time.
  - ii. Pressure or soft washing of buildings or other structures in preparation for painting, sealing, or as a construction practice is allowed.
  - iii. Pressure or soft washing driveways, sidewalks, and other impervious surfaces is allowed for necessary maintenance, such as to either maintain a warranty or remove mold, mildew, and other potentially hazardous materials that cannot be removed by mechanical means (such as by broom or leaf blower), and as a construction practice (such as cleaning a concrete surface before painting or sealing). Compliance with homeowner association or other aesthetic standards does not constitute necessary maintenance.
- c. Mobile equipment washing:
  - i. Commercial car washes, hand-detailing operations, and similar establishments shall comply with the requirements outlined in the Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Uses section above.

- ii. Rinsing of boats and flushing of boat engines is allowed after each use when needed to remove salt water or to prevent the transportation of exotic plant or animal material.
- d. Water Body Augmentation. All water body augmentation shall be limited to the following circumstances:
  - i. As authorized by an Individual Consumptive Use Permit or Environmental Resource Permit.
  - ii. The minimum necessary to maintain and preserve the structural integrity of a newly constructed or recently altered stormwater pond.
  - iii. The minimum necessary to maintain and preserve habitat for native fish and wildlife.
  - iv. Where lake levels are below the lowest minimum level established for that lake by the District.
- e. No person or entity, like a homeowners association or property manager, shall enforce any deed restrictions or other community standards that would cause a violation of this Order.

12. The Executive Director requests that every city and county commission, state and county attorney, sheriff, police officer, and other appropriate local governmental official assist in implementing and enforcing this Order.

13. This Order shall supersede the Modified Phase II Water Shortage Order and become immediately effective once executed by the Executive Director and rendered by the District Clerk.

Done and Ordered this 11<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2026, at Palatka, Florida.

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

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

**RENDERED** this 11<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2026.

BY:   
Courtney Waldron, District Clerk