



DUVAL SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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PLAN OF OPERATIONS 2016

The Duval Soil and Water Conservation District is dedicated to the conservation and wise use of Duval County's natural resources.

Soil and Water Conservation District Purpose: To promote the appropriate and efficient use of soil and water resources, protect water quality, prevent floodwater and sediment damage, preserve wildlife, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state. § 582.02(1), Fla. Stat. (2016)

District Mission: To deliver natural resources conservation technology and education to local landowners and students and to promote the wise use of land and best management practices that will conserve, improve and sustain the natural resources of Duval County.

The Plan of Operations is an outline of the District programs for 2016 that will help to guide District activities, pursuits and partnerships throughout the year. The following agencies contribute to the District program: City of Jacksonville (COJ), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Duval County Agricultural Extension Service (IFAS), Duval County Health Department (DOH) and the Florida Forest Service (FFS).

DISTRICT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The Duval Soil and Water Conservation District will:

1. Hold regular District Board meetings on the third Wednesday of each month at 9:00 A.M. at the Duval County Extension Office at 1010 N McDuff Ave, Jacksonville, FL. Any committee meetings or special meetings called for by the Chairperson will be scheduled and noticed at least 7 days prior. All meetings are publicized on www.duvalsoilandwater.com, on Facebook @jaxsoilandwater, through email via a listserv that includes District supervisors, agencies, local leaders and the media, and all are open to the public.
2. Act in accordance with criteria and standards set forth in the Florida Soil & Water Conservation Districts Supervisor Handbook published by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation.

3. Secure funding for District programs through grant proposals, sponsorships, city and state budgetary funding.
4. Develop and distribute quarterly newsletters highlighting projects and programs in progress or available.
5. Update the District website, as needed, to keep the public informed of activities and programs. www.duvalsoilandwater.com
6. Partner with Soil & Water Conservation Districts in surrounding counties to conduct meetings and workshops to address natural resource conservation concerns with regional implications.
7. Attend and support county, area, and state, regional and national meetings.

MAJOR FOCUS AREAS

The major focus areas of the Duval Soil and Water Conservation District are:

- A. Soils
- B. Conservation Education
- C. Partnerships
- D. Conservation Technical Assistance to Landowners
- E. Water Quality
- F. Flooding Concerns
- G. Water Conservation
- H. Wildfire Suppression

A. Soils

The District recognizes that soils are a critical component of the District's mission and focus. Soil education through both adult and youth programs are vital to keeping our mission and focus strong. For this reason, the District will:

Program/Project/Activity	District Contact
Support the annual Land Judging competition with local high schools	Dan Evans, Jr. Allen Moore

In addition, agency partners will:

- Hold a soils education workshop that includes field training for adults (NRCS, Allen Moore)
- Provide training to participating high schools in Soils as a part of the Envirothon (NRCS, Allen Moore)

B. Conservation Education

The District recognizes that educating the public on natural resource conservation practices is one of the most important aspects of its overall program and therefore makes individual program information available to persons of all ages and backgrounds. Conservation awareness is made known through the District's educational programs, public relations, and general administration activities. The District will:

Program/Project/Activity	District Contact
Select and recognize an Annual "Conservation Teacher of the Year"	Dan Evans, Jr., Shannon Blankinship
Host the annual Envirothon in Duval County and encourage regional participation from counties that do not host their own Envirothon	Dan Evans, Jr.
Host the Annual Speech Contest	Dan Evans, Jr.

In addition, agency partners will:

- Hold a Pond Workshop (NRCS, Allen Moore)
- Hold a Forestry Information Workshop (NRCS, FFS)
- Provide Conservation Education Workshops for teachers and students (NRCS, IFAS)

C. Partnerships

The District cannot achieve its mission without partners. Strong partnerships and the establishment of Local Working Groups will allow the District to achieve much more of its goals and programs. The District will continue to:

Program/Project/Activity	District Contact
Establish and define partnership relationships with conservation organizations	Shannon Blankinship
Participate in the Association of Florida Conservation District regional and statewide events including the annual Area II meetings and the annual meeting of Florida conservation districts	DSWCD
Explore ways to create and grow funding for the District through programs, grants, budgets and statewide assistance, etc.	Patrick Bennett
Invite conservation partners to our meetings to learn more about their work	Shannon Blankinship
Become active with the Invasive Species Working Group	DSWCD

D. Conservation Technical Assistance to Land Owners

Providing technical assistance for conservation programs, plans and techniques is a fundamental function of conservation districts. However, Supervisors no longer have the technical expertise to provide these services themselves. With the help of agency partners and knowledge of the different agency functions and services, the District will:

Program/Project/Activity	District Contact
Work to inform Duval County producers about the technical and financial services available to them	Shannon Blankinship, Ed Wright
Promote Farm Bill technical and financial assistance programs	Shannon Blankinship, Ed Wright

In addition, agency partners will:

- Provide conservation planning technical assistance to producers (NRCS, IFAS)

E. Water Quality

Impaired water quality standards in Duval County are among the worst in the state. With data and expertise from FDEP and the City of Jacksonville Water Quality Division, the District has to remain an additional force to advocate for improvements to our local waterways. Water quality is a top concern among the general public, and it is important to help lead and assist on any and all efforts to protect water quality.

Program/Project/Activity	District Contact
Research stormwater management programs, projects and funding resources available and being undertaken by other agencies	Shannon Blankinship
Focus attention on the impaired tributaries to the St. Johns River in Duval County; highlight the restoration work being done on these tributaries; create a Local Working Group focused on restoration	Shannon Blankinship
Work as the liaison between the District and other city entities working on septic tank issues, including workshops.	Patrick Bennett

In addition, agency partners will:

- Provide information workshops on septic tank replacement (Duval County Health Dep't)
- Sponsor a workshop on erosion and sediment control on disturbed areas (NRCS)

F. Flooding Concerns

The District has several specific flooding concerns in areas where the public has reached out for assistance, or where viable partnerships exist that we hope can grow. These individual areas are places where the District feels it can have an impact and can be a part of a team or spearhead an endeavor to alleviate flooding. The District will:

Program/Project/Activity	District Contact
Contact Nassau County SWCD and begin discussions about working together to address flooding problems in Callahan along Thomas Creek	Brian Allen
Investigate the flooding concerns in Sherwood Forest	Dan Evans, Jr.
Promote the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program	Shannon Blankinship, Dan Evans, Jr.

G. Water Conservation

While water quality is a top concern in Duval County because of the health status of our waterways, water conservation is a closely connected part of the issues affecting our waterways. The more water that can be conserved and can help recharge groundwater or infiltrate naturally into the ground will allow our waterways to be improved. Any and all efforts that partner agencies are undertaking to reduce the use of indoor and outdoor water will help the District's overall mission.

Program/Project/Activity	District Contact
Promote the water conservation efforts, marketing and programs of JEA, SJRWMD and IFAS	Shannon Blankinship
Actively become a part of the North Florida Water Supply Planning process through meeting attendance as a representative for the District	Shannon Blankinship

H. Wildfire Suppression

The District recognizes that the rural community, in the past, has benefitted from conservation programs specific to wildfire suppression and these conservation initiatives should continue in the future.

Program/Project/Activity	District Contact
Research the need to establish a Dry Hydrant Program in rural areas	Patrick Bennett

Some of the cost-share programs available:

1. **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length. Maximum funding per contract per participant is \$450,000.00. Funds are also available for conservation-minded landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on agricultural land, non-industrial private forest land, and Indian land.
 - Duval County has 11 Applications being developed in to EQIP Contracts for the 2016 funding cycle equaling \$110,000.00
 - Six of these funded projects are Seasonal High Tunnels.
 - One project provides funding and assistance for a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan for a Dairy property.
 - Three projects will provide assistance for Long Leaf Pine farms.
 - One project works to attract Monarch Butterflies for pollination benefits.

2. **Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)** is designed to help people and conserve natural resources by relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, drought, windstorms, and other natural occurrences.

Example: The USDA NRCS, in cooperation with the City of Jacksonville and the Duval SWCD completed an **EWP project (3/14) near the intersection of Muncie Avenue and McMullen Street. The project involved the rehabilitation of an existing drainage ditch. The project consisted of the construction of a 5.0 foot high and 184 feet long “Concrete Gravity Wall” to control erosion and facilitate drainage, in that area. The total cost of that project was \$ 144,346.22.**

3. **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land.
 - There is currently one outstanding application for this program in Duval County.