

Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District Performance Review

Prepared for:
The Florida Legislature's
Office of Program Policy Analysis
and Government Accountability
(OPPAGA)

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Key Takeaways

- Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District’s Board of Supervisors met most months during the review period (October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024) – remaining active in providing oversight for the District.
- Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District monitors and provides trash removal for a conservation area through a contract with the St. Johns River Water Management District. This contract also requires educational outreach events focused on the natural resources of the area.
- Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District does not have any staff, inventory, or facilities. The District utilizes staff from Brevard County and UF/IFAS to assist in clerical work and debris cleaning aspects of the District’s contract.
- Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District developed a list of goals, however, operations are not currently guided by a strategic plan.
- The District has not, at the time of writing this report, provided M&J with any financial information aside from its publicly available Annual Financial Reports.

I. Background

Pursuant to [s. 189.0695\(3\)\(b\)](#), *Florida Statutes*, Mauldin & Jenkins (“M&J”) was engaged by the Florida Legislature’s Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to conduct performance reviews of the State’s 49 independent soil and water conservation districts. This report details the results of M&J’s performance review of Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District (“Brevard SWCD” or “District”).

I.A: District Description

Purpose

Chapter [582](#) of the *Florida Statutes* concerns soil and water conservation within the State of Florida. The chapter establishes the processes for creation, dissolution, and change of boundaries of districts; the qualifications, election, tenure, and mandatory meetings of District Supervisors; the oversight powers and duties of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (“FDACS”); and the powers and purpose of the districts. The District’s statutory purpose, per [s. 582.02](#), *Florida Statutes*, is “to provide assistance, guidance, and education to landowners, land occupiers, the agricultural industry, and the general public in implementing land and water resource protection practices. The Legislature intends for soil and water conservation districts to work in conjunction with federal, state, and local agencies in all matters that implement the provisions of [ch. [582](#), *Florida Statutes*].”

The District identifies a mission statement on its website, which states, “The mission of the Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide the administration of programs to conserve soil and improve water quality and quantity on private lands in Brevard County.”

Service Area

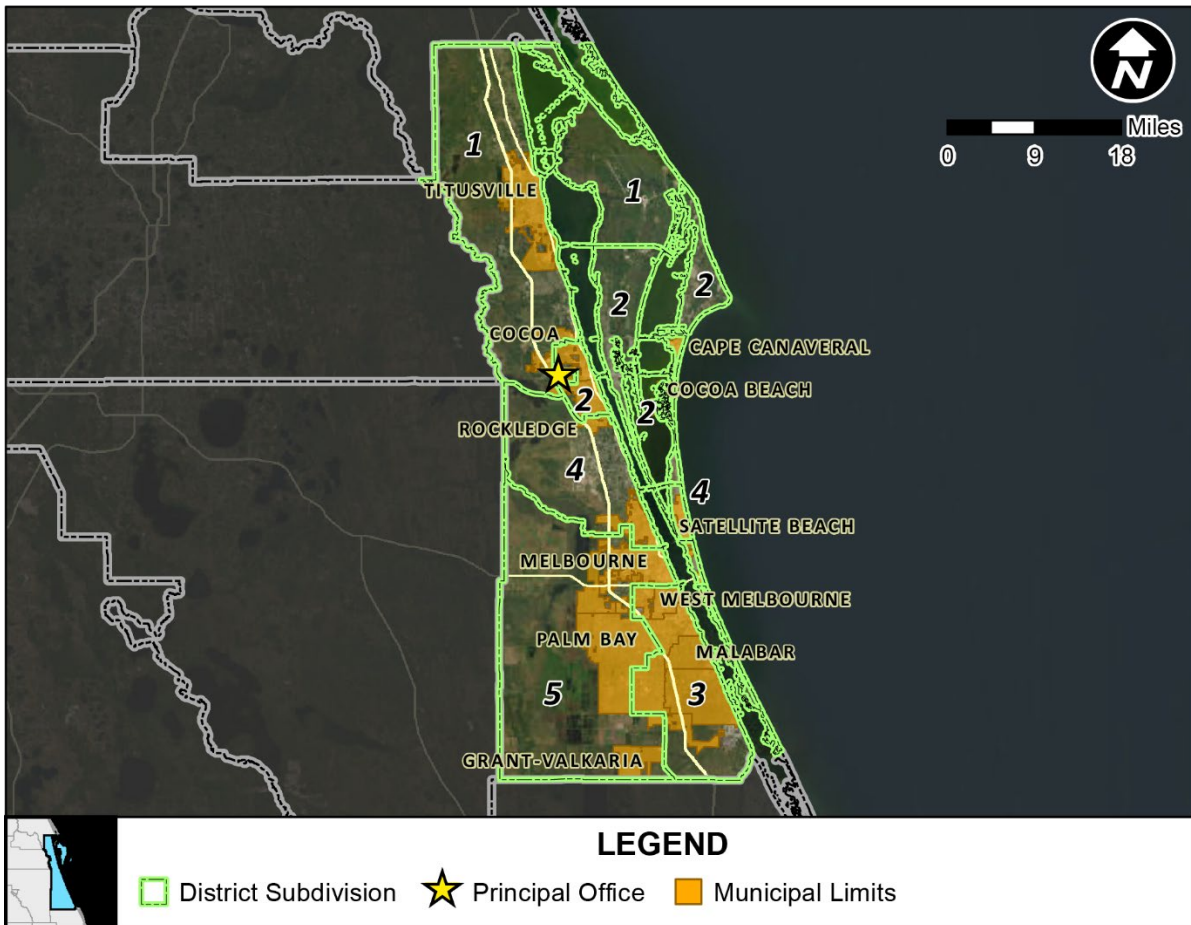
When the District was established in 1945, the service area included Brevard County. The current borders and territory are identical to those of Brevard County.

The District’s service area includes unincorporated Brevard County and the County’s 10 cities, 6 towns, and 15 census-designated places.¹ It also incorporates part of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Seminole Ranch Conservation, Jane Green Creek Less-than-Free Easement Additions, St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, Buck Lake Conservation, and Indian River – Malabar to Vero Beach Aquatic Preserve. It also incorporates all of Banana River Aquatic Preserve, Three Forks Conservation, River Lakes Conservation, Kempfer Property Conservation, Far Reach Ranch Conservation, Wolf Creek Ranch Conservation, T.M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management, Canaveral Marshes Conservation, Bird Lake Marsh, Willowbrook Conservation, Grissom Parkway, St. Johns Marsh Sanctuary, Wal-Mart Parcels, Salt Lake Wildlife, Farmton-Brevard Conservation, Cape Canaveral Air Station, Ten Mile Ridge, Micco Expansion, and Indian River Lagoon Preserve State Park.

¹ Cities: Cape Canaveral, Cocoa, Cocoa Beach, Indian Harbour Beach, Melbourne, Palm Bay, Rockledge, Satellite Beach, Titusville, and West Melbourne. Towns: Grant-Valkaria, Indialantic, Malabar, Melbourne Beach, Melbourne Village, and Palm Shores. Census-designated places: Cocoa West, June Park, Merritt Island, Micco, Mims, North Merritt Island, Patrick Space Force Base, Port St. John, Scottsmeer, Sharpes, South Patrick Shores, Tropical Park, Viera East, Viera West, and West Canaveral Groves.

The District is bounded on the north by Volusia County, east by the Atlantic Ocean, south by Indian River County, southwest by Osceola County, and west by Orange County.

Figure 1: Map of Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District



(Source: Brevard County GIS, Florida Commerce Special District Profile)

Population

Based on the Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research population estimates, the population within the District's service area was 1,541,531 as of April 1, 2023.

District Characteristics

The Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District is on the eastern coast of Florida.² The District is home to a diverse economy, supported by sectors such as aerospace, tourism, agriculture, and technology. Major economic drivers include the Kennedy Space Center, Port Canaveral, and a robust agricultural sector focused on citrus, vegetables, and livestock.³ Brevard SWCD has a mix of urban and rural areas. Urban centers include the cities of Melbourne, Palm Bay, and Cocoa, while rural areas are found in the western parts of the County, supporting agricultural activities. Some of the agricultural activities in the District include citrus groves, vegetable farms, and livestock operations. The agriculture is significant for both local consumption and export.⁴ The District is also home to the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Brevard SWCD experiences a humid subtropical climate with mild winters and hot summers. Environmental threats include hurricanes, flooding, and coastal erosion, which can impact agricultural productivity and necessitate effective conservation practices to help protect freshwater resources. The area is generally flat with some coastal areas and inland wetlands. The region includes the Indian River Lagoon and numerous smaller rivers and lakes, which are crucial for water management and biodiversity conservation.⁵ Portions of the District are also part of three Basin Management Action Plans (“BMAP”s): the North Indian River Lagoon (within the District, this covers the majority of the mainland coastline from the County’s northern border to the Melbourne Causeway), the Central Indian River Lagoon (covering the mainland coastline from the Melbourne Causeway to the county’s southern border), and Banana River (covering the barrier island communities of Cape Canaveral, Indian Harbour Beach and Merritt Island).⁶

The diverse urban and rural landscape, coupled with agricultural activities and environmental challenges, create distinct community needs. Urban areas require robust stormwater management and pollution control, while rural areas need support for sustainable agricultural practices and water resource management. The District also faces challenges with harmful algae blooms (“HABs”) which create shade that may distress seagrass. Research conducted by the St. Johns River Water Management District found that nutrient load reductions are important for limiting the severity and impacts of HABs.⁷ The District’s coastal areas also require careful monitoring for coastal erosion issues.

² (Brevard SWCD Official Website n.d.) Brevard SWCD Official Website. Accessed May 22, 2024. <https://brevardsoilandwater.specialdistrict.org>.

³ (Brevard County Economic Development [LandCAN] n.d.) Brevard County Economic Development [LandCAN]. Accessed May 23, 2024. <https://www.landcan.org/local-resources/Brevard-Soil-and-Water-Conservation-District/3679>

⁴ (UF IFAS Extension Brevard County n.d.) University of Florida IFAS Extension. Accessed May 23, 2024. <http://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/brevard/>.

⁵ (NRCS Soil Survey Brevard n.d.) NRCS Soil Survey Brevard. Accessed May 23, 2024. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/fl/soils/?cid=nrcs141p2_017417.

⁶ (Florida BMAP 2011) Florida BMAP. June 29. Accessed May 23, 2024. <https://geodata.dep.state.fl.us/datasets/FDEP::statewide-basin-management-action-plan-bmap-general-areas/explore?location=28.223863%2C-79.958609%2C8.63>.

⁷ Florida Department of Environmental Protection, n.d. “*Indian River Lagoon Basin: North Indian River Lagoon Basin Management Action Plan*” February 2021

I.B: Creation and Governance

Brevard SWCD was chartered on February 5, 1945, as the Brevard Soil Conservation District, following a successful referendum of local landowners and subsequent petition to the Florida State Soil Conservation Board. The District was created under the authority of the State Soil Conservation Districts Act (herein referred to as “ch. 582, *Florida Statutes*”).⁸ The Florida Legislature amended ch. 582, *Florida Statutes*, in 1965 to expand the scope of all soil conservation districts to include water conservation, which renamed the District to the Brevard Soil and Water Conservation District.⁹

The District is governed by a Board of Supervisors. Supervisors are unpaid, nonpartisan public officials elected by the voters within the service district. M&J analyzed the Supervisors’ elections, appointments, and qualifications within the in-scope period pursuant to applicable *Florida Statutes*.¹⁰

As of this report, the District has five Supervisors, three were elected and two were appointed to their seats. The three elected Supervisors filed the statutorily required Affirmation of Qualification when they ran for their respective seats. Copies of these Affirmations were provided to M&J by the Brevard Supervisor of Elections. M&J also was provided the affirmations and appointment letters for the two appointed Supervisors. M&J concluded that the current Supervisors meet the requirements established in [s. 582.19\(1\)\(b\), Florida Statutes](#).

During the review period (October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024), there have been three vacancies on the Board, as illustrated in Figure 2. The District experienced vacancies from June 2022 to October 2022, from October 2022 to March 2023, and from November 2022 to March 2023. Additional assessment of the District’s electoral patterns is detailed in section II.D (Organization and Governance) of this report.

Figure 2: Supervisor Terms

Seat	FY21				FY22				FY23				FY24		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
1	HM	Adam Tritt							Brian Fleming						
2	James Sloan							Bud Crisafulli							
3	ALP	Chelsea Partridge							Jim Fletcher						
4	Jonathan Schuman							Chris McMasters							
5	Bud Crisafulli							Billy Kempfer							

Legend for FY21

Henry Minaboo (HM)
Adam Lane Perez (ALP)

⁸ s. 582, *Florida Statutes* available online as ch. 19473, *Laws of Florida*

⁹ ch. 65-334, *Laws of Florida*

¹⁰ Including s. 582.15, *Florida Statutes*, s. 582.18, *Florida Statutes*, s. 582.19, *Florida Statutes*, Rule 5M-20.002, *Florida Administrative Code*, and ch. 2022-191, *Laws of Florida*

During the review period, the District met 32 times¹¹ and met the mandatory meeting requirement of [s. 582.195, Florida Statutes](#), to meet at least once per calendar year with all five Supervisors for both 2022 (January, February) and 2023 (March, May, June). The District additionally met four times without a quorum. The District has not provided M&J evidence of meeting notices being posted, and M&J did not find evidence of such meeting posts in local Brevard newspaper archives, so M&J could not confirm that the meeting notices were properly posted. Additional assessment of the District’s pattern of providing meeting notices and adherence to relevant statutes is detailed in section II.D (Organization and Governance) of this report.

Neither Brevard County nor the in-district municipalities have adopted any local regulations for the District.

I.C: Programs and Activities

The following is a list of programs and activities conducted by the District within the review period (October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024), along with a brief description of each program or activity. The District’s programs and activities will be described in detail in section II.A (Service Delivery) of this report.

- Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area Maintenance
 - St. Johns River Water Management District contracts with the District to monitor agricultural activities on the property and provide routine trash and debris removal in the Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area
- Educational Outreach Events
 - As part of its contract with St. Johns River Water Management District, the District hosts educational outreach events in the Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area. This was added to the contract in October 2023, and stipulated the District must host at least one event each quarter.

I.D: Intergovernmental Interactions

The following is a summary of federal agencies, state agencies, and/or public entities with which the District interacts, including the means, methods, frequency, and purpose of coordination and communication.

St. Johns River Water Management District

The District maintains a contract with St. Johns River Water Management District to monitor and maintain a conservation area owned by the Water Management District. The District is paid an annual fee for this work.

¹¹ Meetings occurred in October and December 2020; February, March, April, May, July, August, September, October, November, and December 2021; January, February, April, May, June, July, September, and October 2022; January, February, March, April, May, June, August, September, October, November, and December 2023.

University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Brevard Extension

The District holds its monthly Board Supervisor meetings in the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (“UF/IFAS”) Brevard Extension building. The District is also loaned UF/IFAS staff to assist in creating District meeting minutes, posting agendas and meeting minutes online, and cleaning the Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area.

Brevard County Board of County Commissioners

Brevard County has, according to District Supervisors, loaned staff in the past to assist the District in the clean up and debris clearing aspects of the District’s contract with St. Johns River Water Management District.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

A Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”) District Conservationist regularly attends Board meetings to relay information to the Board on topics such as the NRCS cost-share program deadlines.

I.E: Resources for Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023

The following figures quantify and describe the District’s resources for Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023 (October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023, herein referred to as “FY23”). Figure 3 shows the total amount of revenues, expenditures, and long-term debt maintained by the District in FY23. Figure 4 shows the number of paid full-time and part-time staff, contracted staff, and volunteers by employer. Figure 5 shows the number and type of vehicles, number and type of major equipment, and number and type of facilities owned, leased, and used by the District.

Figure 3: FY23 Finances

	Revenues	Expenditures	Long-term Debt
Total for Year	\$3,900	Not Provided	\$0

(Source: Interviews with District Supervisors)

Figure 4: FY23 Program Staffing

	Full-time Staff	Part-time Staff	Contracted Staff	Volunteers
District-employed Staff	0	0	0	0
Board of County Commissioners-employed staff	0	0	0	1
UF/IFAS-employed Staff	0	0	0	1
Total	0	0	0	2

(Source: Interviews with District Supervisors)

Figure 5: FY23 Equipment and Facilities

	Number	Ownership Status	Type(s)
Vehicles	0	N/A	N/A
Major Equipment	0	N/A	N/A
Facilities	1	1 meeting space owned by UF/IFAS and used by the District at no cost	1 meeting space

(Source: Interviews with District Supervisors)

II. Findings

The Findings sections summarize the analyses performed, and the associated conclusions derived from M&J's analysis. The analysis and findings are divided into the following four subject categories:

- Service Delivery
- Resource Management
- Performance Management
- Organization and Governance

II.A: Service Delivery

Overview of Services

Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area Maintenance

The District's services and activities primarily stem from a contract the District has entered into with St. Johns River Water Management District. St. Johns River Water Management District owns 4,700 acres of land referred to as the Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area North and has contracted Brevard SWCD to monitor agricultural activities and collect trash/clear debris (at least once a quarter). This property is within the boundaries of Brevard County. In exchange for this work, the District has been paid an annual fee by St. Johns River Water Management District through the review period. For FY21 through FY23, St. Johns River Water Management District paid the District an annual fee of \$3,900. The annual fee increased to \$4,000 in FY24.

Educational Outreach Events

As part of the District's contract renewal with St. Johns River Water Management District in 2023, an educational component was added to the District's existing maintenance responsibilities. The District agreed to host, at least once a quarter, an educational outreach event in the Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area.

Analysis of Service Delivery

M&J evaluated each of the District's programs or activities, assessed whether the program or activity aligns with the District's statutory purpose and authority, and referenced the statute most relevant to each program or activity.

All of the programs and activities identified by M&J are within the scope of the District's statutory purpose and authority. Programs and activities meant to provide or assist in providing training and education (Educational Outreach Events), activities related to conducting trainings, attendance at meetings, and the provision of financial support align with the District's purpose to conduct conservation education programs. Maintenance of the Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area aligns to the District's authority to demonstrate best management practices and conservation projects.

The District did not provide M&J with any financial documents related to District revenues or expenditures by the time that fieldwork for this review concluded. Information in this report was based on the District's publicly available Annual Financial Reports. M&J did not identify any alternate methods for the District to provide services that would reduce costs or improve performance.

Comparison to Similar Services/Potential Consolidations

The following soil and water conservation programs are provided by other public and nonprofit entities within the District's service area:

- The Brevard University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension partners with the local 4-H chapter to provide agriculture and conservation educational programming for youth within the District's service area, and serves as a resource between agriculture scientists and the local community.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service ("NRCS") provides technical advice and data collection assistance to landowners implementing conservation practices.
- The Brevard County Utility Services Department promotes some conservation initiatives and publishes annual reports on water quality.

II.B: Resource Management

Program Staffing

The District does not independently employ or pay into the salary of any full-time, part-time, or contract employees. The Brevard County Board of County Commissioner ("BoCC") and the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences ("UF/IFAS") provide staff to the District for the purposes of contract-related obligations between Brevard SWCD and St. Johns River Water Management District. These non-District staff assist in preparing meeting minutes and agendas as well as helping with the physical clean-up/debris-clearing components of the District's contract. The District does not pay for this assistance and there is no formal agreement regarding the assistance, according to District Supervisors. Additional information on the number of borrowed staffers and the amount of time they donate to the District has been requested from the District but, as of April 30, 2024, has not been provided to M&J.

Equipment and Facilities

Brevard SWCD does not own or rent any equipment or facilities. The District holds its monthly Board meetings in the UF/IFAS Brevard Extension Building, used at no cost to the District through a verbal agreement with UF/IFAS.

Current and Historic Revenues and Expenditures

The District has not, as of April, 30, 2024, provided M&J with the requested financial documentation related to District budgeting, revenues, or expenditures to M&J. Cash balances were identified in District meeting minutes in 2022, that provides insight into the District's finances. In February 2022, the District's cash balance was reported as \$52,175. At FY22 fiscal year end, September 2022, the District's cash balance was reported as \$49,000. Meeting minutes indicate the primary reason for reduction in the cash balance was related to a \$2,500 donation the District made to UF/IFAS for 4-H programs. The District's FY23 ending cash balance was reported as \$49,679, with expenditures that year including Association of Florida Conservation Districts ("AFCD") annual dues and event promotional materials. The District's primary source of revenues is its fee received through the contract with St. Johns River Water Management District. The meeting minutes also indicate the District has periodically received private donations.

The only financial data was gathered by M&J and is from the District's publicly available Annual Financial Reports for FY21 and FY22. The FY21 and FY22 Annual Financial Reports state that the District's revenues in both FY21 and FY22 were \$3,900, which is the amount the District is paid for its contract work by St. Johns River Water Management District. These reports show the District's FY21 expenditures as \$1,321 and FY22 expenditures as \$3,632. Despite these expenditure amounts being less than revenues for both years, the District's cash balance reduced from \$52,176 in FY21 to \$49,000 in FY22. As M&J was not provided with detailed financial information from the District, we are unable to provide additional insights or context to the District's financial position.

Recommendation: The District should consider developing and adopting a balanced budget for each fiscal year. The budget should include expected revenues, including the source of each revenue or category of each revenue (*e.g.*, administrative fees, donations, government grants, fees for equipment rentals, etc.). The budget should also include expected expenditures, including both regular expenses and categorization of other expenditures (*e.g.*, sponsorship of programs and activities, BMP Cost-Share Program-related expenses, property improvements, reimbursements for conference or regional meeting attendance, etc.). The budgeted expenditures should not exceed budgeted appropriations or total expected revenues, per the requirements of [s. 189.016\(3\)](#), *Florida Statutes*.

Trends and Sustainability

Based on the information provided to M&J, the District does appear to be operating sustainably. The District's cash balance, since February 2022, has remained above \$45,000 for the remainder of the review period. The District's expenditures appear to be primarily related to general District operations (paying AFCD dues) or outreach-related (donation to 4-H). The District signed an updated agreement with St. Johns River Water Management District in October 2023, with an initial term of five years. Since M&J was not provided with detailed financial information from the District, we are unable to provide additional information regarding trends or sustainability.

II.C: Performance Management

Strategic and Other Future Plans

Brevard SWCD does not maintain an adopted strategic plan. The District has produced a set of goals and objectives that serve as its framework for District strategic planning. The Board will need to develop these goals into actionable steps in the process of developing this strategic plan.

Recommendation: The District should consider developing and then adopting a strategic plan that builds on the District's purpose and vision. The strategic plan should not simply describe the District's current programs, but rather reflect the District's long-term and short-term priorities based on the needs of the community and in response to changing land use patterns within the District's service area.

Goals and Objectives

The District has produced a list of goals with objectives and key strategies for each goal. The District's four main goals are promoting agriculture education, finding additional sources of revenue, developing program partnerships with local public entities, and improving District processes and documentation. Each goal has between two and four objectives and a set of key strategies intended to serve as a broad list of ideas to achieve the objectives. These objectives will need to be revised with quantifiable and specific steps toward reaching the desired outcome.

Recommendation: The District should consider refining its existing set of goals and objectives to better align with the District’s statutory purpose, as defined in [s. 582.02\(4\), Florida Statutes](#), and the Board’s vision and priorities as established in the District’s strategic plan. The goals and objectives should contemplate measurable progress, capturing the results of the District’s efforts and ensuring a consistent direction forward for the District’s future prioritization of programs and activities.

Performance Measures and Standards

As a part of the contract between the District and St. Johns River Water Management District and Brevard SWCD, the District completes a quarterly monitoring report pertaining to its work on the Canaveral Marshes Conservation Area. The District’s monitoring report includes listing the activities performed, number of participants, number of bags of trash/debris collected, observations or concerns, and photos of the events or work performed. The tracking of information previously listed satisfies the monitoring requirements laid out in the contract and provides the District benchmarks to track performance. The District would benefit from establishing more documented output measures for its other programs. Collecting and regularly evaluating performance measures will help the District’s Supervisors to better understand the District’s service delivery performance.

Recommendation: The District should consider expanding its tracking of performance measures as part of the development of a strategic plan, such as tracking the number of interactions at outreach events. The District should then track the identified performance measures against established standards and use the collected data to monitor the District’s performance, evaluate progress toward the goals and objectives the District adopts, and support future improvements to the District’s service delivery methods.

Analysis of Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures and Standards

Brevard SWCD does not have a strategic plan or a system in place to track performance measures and standards. While District Supervisors have a list of objectives and goals, the list lacks the detail for the District to communicate progress in a meaningful way. The District will need to define its current objectives into action steps tied to a strategic plan with measurable progress in order to expand its ability to serve the community.

As stated earlier in this section of the report, M&J recommends that the District consider developing and adopting a strategic plan, and subsequently goals, objectives, performance measures, and performance standards to provide the District direction and ensure that current and future programs and activities align with its intended statutory purpose, as defined in [s. 582.02\(4\), Florida Statutes](#).

Annual Financial Reports and Audits

Pursuant to Section [218.32, Florida Statutes](#), the District is required to submit an Annual Financial Report every fiscal year by the compliance deadline 9 months after the end of the fiscal year (June 30 of the following year). The District’s FY21 and FY22 Annual Financial Reports were filed after the compliance deadline. The District’s FY23 Annual Financial Report was submitted before the compliance deadline of June 30, 2024.

Brevard SWCD did not meet the criteria in [s. 218.39, Florida Statutes](#), to require the District to submit an annual financial audit report for FY21, FY22, and FY23 as the District’s annual revenues and combined expenditures and expenses are below the \$50,000 threshold, the lowest requirement threshold for special districts.

Recommendation: The District should consider refining its timeline for preparing and submitting the Annual Financial Report to the Florida Department of Financial Services to ensure that the District is meeting the requirements of [s. 218.32\(1\)\(a\)](#), *Florida Statutes*.

Performance Reviews and District Performance Feedback

During the review period, Brevard SWCD did not receive any performance reviews for District operations. The District has not engaged in any documented collection of feedback from members of the public or other stakeholders regarding its programs and activities.

Recommendation: The District should consider implementing a system for collecting feedback from partners, agricultural producers that the District serves, and other conservation stakeholders. As the District develops and implements programming, the District should consider creating a process to systematically review feedback. The District should consider using the findings from the review of feedback to refine the District’s future service delivery methods.

II. D: Organization and Governance

Election and Appointment of Supervisors

Supervisors are required by [s. 582.19\(1\)\(b\)](#), *Florida Statutes*, to sign an affirmation that they meet certain residency and agricultural experience requirements. These signed affirmations are required of both elected and appointed Supervisors. As of this report, the District has five Supervisors, three were elected and two were appointed to their seats. In response to the performance review, the District provided M&J with a written list of the qualifications that meet the agricultural experience requirements of [s. 582.19\(1\)](#), *Florida Statutes*, for all five current Supervisors. In addition, M&J was provided the qualified Supervisors’ affirmations and appointment letters. M&J reviewed affidavits and appointment letters filed with the Brevard County Supervisor of Elections by the five Supervisors currently in office, affirming that the Supervisors meet the qualifications established in [s. 582.19\(1\)](#), *Florida Statutes*.

Three of the five Supervisor seats are up for election in November 2024.

Notices of Public Meetings

Section [189.015](#), *Florida Statutes*, requires that all Board meetings be publicly noticed in accordance with the procedures listed in ch. [50](#), *Florida Statutes*. This chapter has been amended twice during the review period, and M&J reviewed for compliance with the governing statute in effect at the time of each meeting date and applicable notice period.

Starting in November 2023, the District has posted meeting notices on its website. M&J searched [floridapublicnotices.com](#), the State of Florida’s designated repository of public notice publications, and did not identify notices posted for any Board of Supervisors (“Board”) meetings held during the review period. M&J also searched the Florida Administrative Register and identified inconsistent notices posted for Board meetings held during the review period. Notices were posted for all meetings held in 2021 and 2024, but notices for only two meetings were posted in 2022 and none were posted in 2023. No other requested information about meeting notices has been provided by the District.

M&J's review concluded that the District notices did not meet the requirements of the version of ch. [50, Florida Statutes](#), in effect at the time of each meeting date and applicable notice period. Prior to January 2023, ch. [50, Florida Statutes](#), required any board located in a county with a county-wide newspaper to publish meeting notices in that newspaper. The District did not meet this requirement for meetings held in 2021 and 2022. Since January 2023, ch. [50, Florida Statutes](#), has permitted publication of meeting notices on a publicly accessible website (such as the Florida Administrative Register) as long as the board publishes a notice once a year in the local newspaper identifying the location of meeting notices and stating that any resident who wishes to receive notices by mail or e-mail may contact the board with that request. The District did not meet this requirement for meetings held in 2023 and 2024.

Failure to provide appropriate notice may deny the public an opportunity to attend meetings and participate in District business. Violation of ch. [50, Florida Statutes](#), may subject District Supervisors and staff to penalties, including fees, fines, and misdemeanor charges, as outlined in [s. 286.011, Florida Statutes](#). Additionally, business conducted at such meetings may be invalidated.

Recommendation: The District should consider improving its meeting notice procedures to ensure compliance with [s. 189.015](#) and ch. [50, Florida Statutes](#), that governed notice requirements at the time of each meeting date's applicable notice period. The District should retain records that document compliance with the applicable statutes.

Retention of Records and Public Access to Documents

The District maintains a record of meeting agendas and minutes from October 2022 throughout the review period, and M&J was able to retrieve these meeting minutes from the District's public website. The District includes the appropriate link to the District's Annual Financial Reports on its website. The District was not able to provide the documentation requested by M&J, including detailed financial information for any fiscal year in the review period. M&J concludes that the District does not meet the records retention and public access requirements established in [s. 119.021, Florida Statutes](#).

Recommendation: The District should consider improving record retention procedures and access to public records in accordance with ch. [119, Florida Statutes](#), to enhance transparency and avoid loss of institutional knowledge. The District could consider duplicating records to be stored in separate locations to mitigate loss of records due to technology failures, accidental disposition of records, or natural disasters and other acts of God. The District could further consider designing or acquiring an electronic recordkeeping system, either independently or through partnership with a local government, another soil and water conservation district, or other public entity.

III. Recommendations

The following table presents M&J’s recommendations based on the analyses and conclusions in the Findings sections, along with considerations for each recommendation.

Recommendation Text	Associated Considerations
<p>The District should consider developing and adopting a balanced budget for each fiscal year. The budget should include expected revenues, including the source of each revenue or category of each revenue (e.g., administrative fees, donations, government grants, fees for equipment rentals, etc.). The budget should also include expected expenditures, including both regular expenses and categorization of other expenditures (e.g., sponsorship of programs and activities, BMP Cost-Share Program-related expenses, property improvements, reimbursements for conference or regional meeting attendance, etc.). The budgeted expenditures should not exceed budgeted appropriations or total expected revenues, per the requirements of s. 189.016(3), Florida Statutes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Benefit: Improve the accuracy of the budget process and enable District Supervisors to make more informed planning decisions. • Potential Adverse Consequences: M&J does not anticipate any adverse consequences as a result of implementation of the recommendation. • Costs: M&J does not anticipate any additional funding needed. • Statutory Considerations: M&J does not anticipate any legal, operational, or other issues that may arise from the proposed change.
<p>The District should consider developing and then adopting a strategic plan that builds on the District’s purpose and vision. The strategic plan should not simply describe the District’s current programs, but rather reflect the District’s long-term and short-term priorities based on the needs of the community and in response to changing land use patterns within the District’s service area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Benefit: An actionable roadmap to address the community’s needs and a more effective method of planning and goal setting. • Potential Adverse Consequences: M&J does not anticipate any adverse consequences as a result of implementation of the recommendation. • Costs: M&J does not anticipate any additional funding needed. • Statutory Considerations: M&J does not anticipate any legal, operational, or other issues that may arise from the proposed change.

Recommendation Text	Associated Considerations
<p>The District should consider refining its existing set of goals and objectives to better align with the District’s statutory purpose, as defined in s. 582.02(4), Florida Statutes, and the Board’s vision and priorities as established in the District’s strategic plan. The goals and objectives should contemplate measurable progress, capturing the results of the District’s efforts and ensuring a consistent direction forward for the District’s future prioritization of programs and activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Benefit: Help focus District resources on objectives that align with the District’s purpose and better serve the community. • Potential Adverse Consequences: M&J does not anticipate any adverse consequences as a result of implementation of the recommendation. • Costs: M&J does not anticipate any additional funding needed. • Statutory Considerations: M&J does not anticipate any legal, operational, or other issues that may arise from the proposed change.
<p>The District should consider identifying performance measures and standards as part of the development of a strategic plan, such as number of interactions at outreach events. The District should then track the identified performance measures against established standards and use the collected data to monitor the District’s performance, evaluate progress toward the goals and objectives the District adopts, and support future improvements to the District’s service delivery methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Benefit: A more effective assessment of the District’s performance towards goals and objectives. • Potential Adverse Consequences: M&J does not anticipate any adverse consequences as a result of implementation of the recommendation. • Costs: M&J does not anticipate any additional funding needed. • Statutory Considerations: M&J does not anticipate any legal, operational, or other issues that may arise from the proposed change.
<p>The District should consider refining its timeline for preparing and submitting the Annual Financial Report to the Florida Department of Financial Services to ensure that the District is meeting the requirements of s. 218.32(1)(a), Florida Statutes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Benefit: Avoiding penalties from Department of Financial Services for late submission. • Potential Adverse Consequences: M&J does not anticipate any adverse consequences as a result of implementation of the recommendation. • Costs: M&J does not anticipate any additional funding needed. • Statutory Considerations: M&J does not anticipate any legal, operational, or other issues that may arise from the proposed change.

Recommendation Text	Associated Considerations
<p>The District should consider implementing a system for collecting feedback from partners, agricultural producers that the District serves, and other conservation stakeholders. As the District develops and implements programming, the District should consider creating a process to systematically review feedback. The District should consider to use the findings from the review of feedback to refine the District’s future service delivery methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Benefit: An effective way to collect constituent feedback to better refine District operations to meet their needs. • Potential Adverse Consequences: M&J does not anticipate any adverse consequences as a result of implementation of the recommendation. • Costs: M&J does not anticipate any additional funding needed. • Statutory Considerations: M&J does not anticipate any legal, operational, or other issues that may arise from the proposed change.
<p>The District should consider improving its meeting notice procedures to ensure compliance with s. 189.015 and ch. 50, Florida Statutes, that governed notice requirements at the time of each meeting date’s applicable notice period. The District should retain records that document is compliance with the applicable statutes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Benefit: Avoiding potential compliance issues and the resulting penalties. • Potential Adverse Consequences: M&J does not anticipate any adverse consequences as a result of implementation of the recommendation. • Costs: M&J does not anticipate any additional funding needed. • Statutory Considerations: M&J does not anticipate any legal, operational, or other issues that may arise from the proposed change.
<p>The District should consider improving record retention procedures and access to public records in accordance with ch. 119, Florida Statutes, to enhance transparency and avoid loss of institutional knowledge. The District could consider duplicating records to be stored in separate locations to mitigate loss of records due to technology failures, accidental disposition of records, or natural disasters and other acts of God. The District could further consider designing or acquiring an electronic recordkeeping system, either independently or through partnership with a local government, another soil and water conservation district, or other public entity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Benefit: Improving transparency and avoiding potential loss of important records. • Potential Adverse Consequences: M&J does not anticipate any adverse consequences as a result of implementation of the recommendation. • Costs: M&J does not anticipate any additional funding needed. • Statutory Considerations: M&J does not anticipate any legal, operational, or other issues that may arise from the proposed change.

IV. District Response

Each soil and water conservation district under review by M&J was provided the opportunity to submit a response letter for inclusion in the final published report. Brevard SWCD did not provide M&J with a response letter for inclusion in the final report.