

# Escambia 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

- Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District has struggled to maintain a full Board of Supervisors. The Board has remained active, meeting almost every month, with a semi-monthly schedule introduced in September 2023.
- Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District offers limited programming. The District’s primary activity is participation in or attendance at outreach and community events.
- Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District operates with limited funds, without a current revenue source. The Escambia County Board of County Commissioners assigns a County employee to support the District part time.
- Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District’s operations are not currently guided by a strategic plan, written goals and objectives, or performance measures and standards.

# 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 Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District (“Escambia SWCD” or “District”), conducted with a review period of October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024.

## 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 Florida 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 provides a definition of its purpose on the website. The District’s website states that “The District was formed by residents for the purpose of promoting and encouraging the wise use, management and general conservation of the County’s soil, water and related natural resources.”

### Service Area

When the District was established in 1940,<sup>1</sup> the service area included the entirety of Escambia County, and the current borders and territory remain the same. The District’s service area includes unincorporated Escambia County, the County’s one city and one town,<sup>2</sup> and part or all of the following federal and State conservation lands:

- Big Lagoon State Park
- Fort Pickens Aquatic Reserve
- Gulf Islands National Seashore
- Lake Stone Fish Management Area
- Lower Escambia River Wildlife Management Area
- Naval Air Station Pensacola (including conservation lands)
- Perdido Key State Park
- Perdido River Wildlife Management Area
- Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park

The District is bounded on the north and west by the State of Alabama, east by Santa Rosa County, and south by the Gulf of Mexico. The total area within the District is 875 square miles, with 656 square miles of land and 218 square miles of water.

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<sup>1</sup> McMullen, K. S., and A. P. Spencer. 1945. *Biennial Report of the State Soil Conservation Board: January 1, 1943 - December 31, 1944*. Biennial Report, Tallahassee: Florida State Soil Conservation Board.

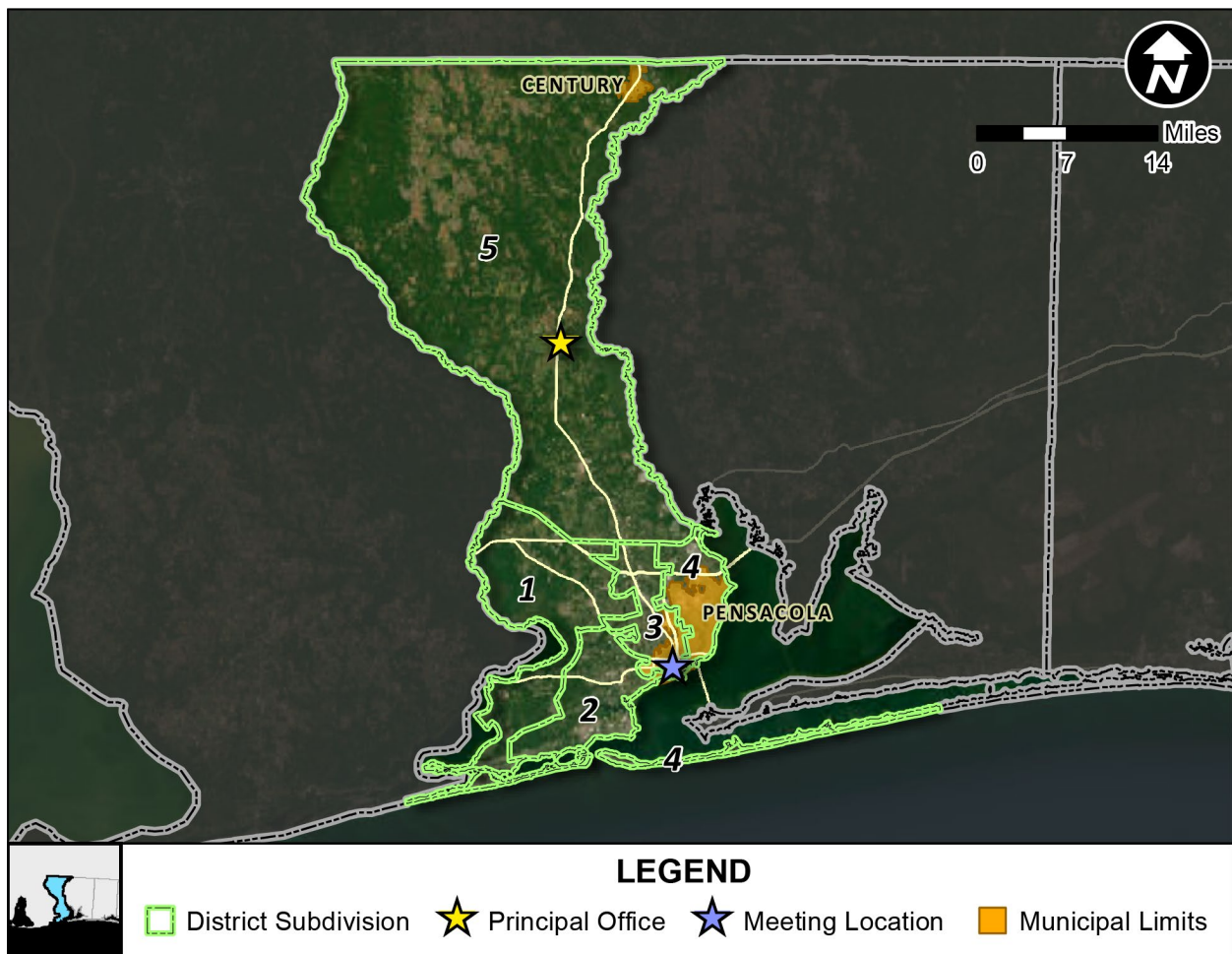
<sup>2</sup> Cities: Pensacola. Towns: Century.



The District’s primary office is located at 151 Highway 97, Molino, Florida 23577 – the United States Department of Agriculture’s Molino service center. The District holds meetings at two separate locations for regular meetings and workshops. For regular meetings, the District meets at 153 Highway 97, Molino, Florida 32577 – the Escambia County Farm Bureau office. For workshops, the District meets at 239 North Spring Street, Pensacola, Florida 32502 – the Pensacola Public Library.

Figure 1 is a map of the District’s service area, based on the map incorporated by reference in Rule [5M-20.002\(3\)\(a\)10](#), *Florida Administrative Code*, showing the District’s boundaries, electoral subdivisions, major municipalities within the service area, the District’s principal office, and a secondary meeting location used by Supervisors for monthly workshop meetings, which are open to the public but do not usually include the conduct of regular business.

**Figure 1: Map of Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District**



*(Source: Escambia County GIS, Florida Commerce District Profile, District meeting minutes)*

### Population

Based on the Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research’s population estimates, the population within the District’s service area was 333,452, as of April 1, 2023.

## District Characteristics

Escambia SWCD is located in the western part of the Florida Panhandle. The economy of the service area is diversified. It is supported primarily by military, industry, shipping, tourism and recreation, agriculture, and retail sales trade.<sup>3</sup> The southern part of the district is urban, while the northern part of the district includes more than 30,000 acres dedicated to production agriculture. Much of the District's rural area is covered by timberland, while the rest is dedicated to row crops (including cotton, peanuts, soybean, corn, and other small grains) as well as forage and hay for livestock.<sup>4</sup> Tropical disturbances can generate destructive winds that can damage crops, with hurricanes generating winds of up to 200 miles per hour occurring approximately once every eight years. The District's topography is defined by its two geomorphic zones: the Western Highlands, which make up the northern three-quarters of the District and are characterized by clayey-sand hills with few large bodies of surface water, and the Gulf Coastal Lowlands, which make up the southern quarter of the District, as well as the Escambia River Valley, and are characterized by flat and sandy terrain and swampy deltas that can be prone to flooding.<sup>5</sup>

The mixture of urban and rural lands results in a bifurcated set of needs for the service area's landowners. The urban parts of the District require responses to the impact of industrial discharges and urban sprawl on soil and water, as well as the provision of resources for urban agriculture. The agricultural and forestry lands in the northern part (Western Highlands) require support for the implementation of leading practices in reducing soil erosion, limiting agricultural production's impact on water quality, and helping connect landowners to federal and state cost-share programs to help cover the costs of innovative equipment, projects, and practices. Along the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf Coastal Lowlands), tropical disturbances and the impact of tourism can both result in erosion of coastline, which adds a third set of needs that the soil and water conservation district could address.

## I.B: Creation and Governance

Escambia SWCD was chartered on March 20, 1940, as the Perdido River Soil Conservation District, following a successful referendum of local landowners and subsequent petition to the Florida State Soil Conservation Board.<sup>6</sup> The District was created under the authority of the State Soil Conservation Districts Act (herein referred to as "ch. [582](#), *Florida Statutes*").<sup>7</sup> The Florida Legislature amended ch. [582](#), *Florida Statutes*, in 1965 to expand the scope of all soil conservation districts to include water conservation and rename the District the Perdido River Soil and Water Conservation District.<sup>8</sup> On May 16, 1995, the Florida Secretary of State certified the District's change in name to the Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District.

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<sup>3</sup> Escambia County. 2023. "The Escambia County Budget Fiscal Year 2023 / 2024." Budget, Pensacola. <https://stories.opengov.com/escambiacyfl/published/YYQR8IJiazY>.

<sup>4</sup> UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County. 2018. *Agriculture*. February 2. Accessed April 25, 2024. <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/escambia/agriculture/>.

<sup>5</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. 2004. "Soil Survey of Escambia County, Florida." Report, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Washington.

<sup>6</sup> McMullen, K. S., and A. P. Spencer. 1945. *Biennial Report of the State Soil Conservation Board: January 1, 1943 - December 31, 1944*. Biennial Report, Tallahassee: Florida State Soil Conservation Board.

<sup>7</sup> ch. 582 (1939), *Florida Statutes*, available online as ch. [19473](#), *Laws of Florida*

<sup>8</sup> ch. [65-334](#), *Laws of Florida*

The District is governed by a Board of Supervisors, who 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*.<sup>9</sup>

As of April 30, 2024, the District has three Supervisors. Section [582.19\(1\)](#), Florida Statutes, requires Supervisors to sign an affirmation that they met the residency and qualification requirements. M&J requested the affirmations as part of a public records request to the Escambia County Supervisor of Elections, but did not receive any documentation in response to this request. However, the District Chairperson provided a written statement detailing the current Supervisors’ qualifications, which are consistent with the residency and agricultural experience qualifications in s. [582.19\(1\)](#), *Florida Statutes*. During the review period (October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024), there have been nine vacancies on the Board, as illustrated in Figure 2. The District has only had five Supervisors twice during the review period: from March to October 2022, and from November 2023 to February 2024. While Figure 2 indicates a Supervisor was elected to seat 3 in January 2021, the Supervisor never took the oath of office or communicated with the District, so was impeached by a decision of the District Supervisors and Escambia County Supervisor of Elections in April 2021, vacating seat 3. 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	Betty Wilson										Carollyn Taylor					
2	Anne Bennett								Johnnie Odom							
3	A.B.	C.M-D.				Travis Tharp								B.F.		
4	Zackery Gossett								Travis Tharp							
5	Louis Toth											B.F.	W.P.			

**Legend for FY21**

Anne Bennett (A.B.)
Catherine Monroe-Dismukes (C.M-D.)

**Legend for FY23 and FY24**

Brian Foreman (B.F.)
Whitney Panzik (W.P.)

(Source: Escambia County Supervisor of Elections’ posted election results, District Board meeting minutes)

During the review period (October 2020 through the date of this report), the District Board met 29 times<sup>10</sup> 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 (April) and 2023 (December). The Board met an additional 11 times during the review period – five times without a quorum, five times in a workshop, and once in a workshop without quorum – no votes were taken during these meetings. M&J has determined that the District properly noticed each regular and special meeting, per the requirements of s. [189.15](#), *Florida Statutes*, but not workshops.

<sup>9</sup> Including ss. [582.15](#), [582.18](#), and [582.19](#), *Florida Statutes*; Rule [5M-20.002](#), *Florida Administrative Code*; and ch. [2022-191](#), *Laws of Florida*

<sup>10</sup> Meetings occurred in October 2020; January, March, April, May, June, August, October, and November 2021; January, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and December 2022; July (twice), August, September, October, November, and December 2023; and January, February, and March 2024.

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 Escambia 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 during 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).

- Outreach Events
  - The District uses community events as an opportunity to provide outreach to local landowners and agricultural stakeholders by explaining the programs and activities offered by the District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture.
  - The District has participated in the Northview FFA Alumni and Friends annual Blue Jacket Jamboree, Pensacola Earth Day Festival, and Labor Day Classic Cow Show, and gave a presentation about the District to the Florida Native Plant Society.
- United States Department of Agriculture Programs
  - Conservation Reserve Program
    - The District provides approval for conservation plans developed for the Conservation Reserve Program, which provides rental payments to landowners for environmentally sensitive land removed from agricultural production.
  - Local Working Group meeting
    - The District has participated in the annual Local Working Group meeting, which provides an opportunity for the District and Natural Resources Conservation Service to receive feedback on community priorities and needs from local agricultural stakeholders.
- Conservation Farmer of the Year
  - The District selects an agricultural producer in the community to receive the Conservation Farmer of the Year Award. The District selects the award winner based on agricultural excellence through conservation practices and environmental stewardship.
- Support for Community Conservation Projects
  - The District supports conservation projects initiated by local public entities through the submission of grant applications to help fund the projects through the District and letters of support to encourage a third party to fund the project directly with the public entity.
  - The District supported two projects undertaken by the Escambia County Natural Resources Management Department through grant and letter of support submissions during the review period: the Escambia County Watershed Awareness Project and the installation of educational signs about gopher tortoises in a local park.

### I.D: Intergovernmental Interactions

Escambia SWCD has intergovernmental agreements with two government entities. First, the District has a memorandum of agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (“NRCS”) which outlines a statement of mutual benefit and cooperation on conservation objectives, including promoting NRCS programs. An NRCS District Conservationist, through the memorandum of agreement, attends all Board of Supervisor meetings and gives reports related to NRCS program progress and any news related to NRCS activities. An NRCS Soil Conservationist, who worked out of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Molino service center, also attended Board meetings and discussed NRCS programs. The NRCS Soil Conservationist position was vacated in January 2024, and has not been subsequently filled.

Second, the District has a memorandum of understanding with the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners (“BoCC”) which codifies funding and administrative support for the District. The memorandum of understanding permits the District to submit an annual budget request to the BoCC, pursuant to approval by the BoCC. The District has not submitted a budget request during the review period. The memorandum of understanding also provides technical support to the District. An Environmental Specialist, who works in the Escambia County Natural Resources Conservation Division, is assigned part-time to Escambia SWCD. The Environmental Specialist assists the District in administrative tasks and is fully paid for by the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners.

### 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: Fiscal Year 2023 Finances**

	Revenues	Expenditures	Long-term Debt
<b>Total for Year</b>	\$0	\$90	\$0

(Source: Escambia SWCD Bank Statements)

**Figure 4: Fiscal Year 2023 Program Staffing**

	Full-time Staff	Part-time Staff	Contracted Staff	Volunteers
<b>District-employed Staff</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Board of County Commissioners-employed staff</b>	0	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

(Source: Interview with District Chairperson, Interview with Environmental Specialist)



**Figure 5: Fiscal Year 2023 Equipment and Facilities**

	Number	Ownership Status	Type(s)
<b>Vehicles</b>	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Major Equipment</b>	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Facilities</b>	3	1 owned by the United States Department of Agriculture; 1 owned by the Escambia County Farm Bureau; 1 owned by West Florida Public Libraries	1 primary office; 2 meeting spaces

*(Source: Interview with District Chairperson, District Board meeting minutes)*

## II. Findings

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

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

### II.A: Service Delivery

#### Overview of Services

During the review period (October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024), the District has only managed and funded one program, which was the presentation of the Conservation Farmer of the Year Award in December 2022. Board of Supervisors ("Board") meeting minutes indicate that the District selected two farmers, in November 2022, who produce agriculture within the District's service area to receive the award and recognition. The District purchased plaques and presented the awards to the farmers at a year-end appreciation breakfast held after the December 2022 Board meeting.

The District's primary activity during the review period was conducting outreach at various community events and meetings. The District's most frequent outreach event is the Blue Jacket Jamboree, hosted annually by the Northview FFA Alumni and Friends,<sup>11</sup> in conjunction with the Gulf Coast Agriculture and Natural Resources Youth Organization's Spring Livestock Show. The District performs outreach to the local community as an exhibitor at the event.

The District participated in the following additional outreach during the review period: In April 2022, the District set up a booth and handed out educational materials at the Annual Pensacola Earth Day Festival; in August 2023, the District attended and spoke to participants about Escambia SWCD at the Labor Day Classic Cow Show; and in January 2024, a District Supervisor gave a presentation about the District and its responsibilities to the Florida Native Plant Society.

The District also supported community conservation activities that relate to soil and water conservation and education. In May 2023, Natural Resources Conservation, a division of the Escambia County Natural Resources Management Department ("NRM")<sup>12</sup> requested funding and assistance for educational signs to be placed in a park containing gopher tortoises. Board meeting minutes indicate the District applied for grant funding from the Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council ("Three Rivers RC&D"), but did not receive the grant award. In July 2023, the District submitted a letter of support on behalf of NRM's application to receive grant funding for the Escambia County Watershed Awareness Project.

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<sup>11</sup> Northview FFA Alumni and Friends is the alumni organization for Northview High School's FFA chapter, located in the town of Century in northeast Escambia County.

<sup>12</sup> M&J uses the Departmental acronym rather than the Divisional one to avoid confusion with NRCS.

The District has a memorandum of understanding with the United States Department of Agriculture's ("USDA") National Resource Conservation Service ("NRCS") which defines a mutual benefit for the District and NRCS to work together to promote NRCS programs and service offerings. The local NRCS District Conservationist attends the monthly Board meetings and gives updates on application figures for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program ("EQIP") and the Conservation Stewardship Program ("CSP") within the District's service area. EQIP and CSP are NRCS programs that provide financial and technical support to agricultural producers for enhancing conservation practices, and are promoted by the District during outreach events.

The NRCS District Conservationist has additionally presented to the Board plans developed for local participants in the Conservation Reserve Program ("CRP"). CRP is a program administered by the Farm Service Agency, another USDA agency, which provides agricultural producers financial incentives to implement or enhance conservation practices. The program provides land producers rent payments, cost-share payments for materials, and/or implementation reimbursements to remove environmentally sensitive areas from agricultural production. CRP enrollees work with NRCS to develop a plan to meet the program requirements – those plans require approval from the local soil and water conservation district.<sup>13</sup> The NRCS District Conservationist presents to the Board CRP plans that need approval by the District Supervisors. District Supervisors voted on and approved three CRP plans in October 2021, two plans in July 2022, and a sixth in August 2022.

In conjunction with NRCS, the District holds annual Local Working Group meetings where agriculture producers are invited to come and present their priorities and agriculture concerns to the NRCS District Conservationist and District Supervisors, which helps NRCS and the Board understand how the local NRCS office should allocate available funds. The District Chairperson stated in an interview with M&J that the mission of the District is to serve as a liaison between agriculture producers within the District's service area and government entities, achieved through hosting Local Working Group meeting and participating in outreach events.

### Analysis of Service Delivery

As stated above, during the review period, the District only solely managed one program – the Conservation Farmer of the Year Award, which was only discussed and awarded in 2022. The District co-manages the Local Working Group meetings with the NRCS District Conservationist, which could continue without the District's involvement.

The District is currently not able to effectively provide soil and water conservation programs to residents within the District's service area, due to its lack of a revenue source and inability to provide programs that require expenditures. Per the memorandum of understanding between the District and the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners ("BoCC"), the District is able to submit an annual budget request for expenses related to District programs and activities. During the review period, the District did not request a budget allocation from the BoCC.

While the District does not have the funding to provide more programs, soil and water conservation programs are provided by other entities, including NRM, NRCS, and Three Rivers RC&D. According to the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences Extension Office in Escambia County

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<sup>13</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. 2022. "Agricultural Resource Conservation Program – 2-CRP (Revision 6)." Handbook, Farm Service Agency, Washington.

("UF/IFAS Extension"), the District's service area includes more than 30,000 acres of land dedicated to production agriculture.<sup>14</sup> NRM provides soil and water conservation programs to agriculture producers in the District's service area, including prescribed burns, invasive species management, urban forestry, and wildlife management.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Three Rivers RC&D holds a contract with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services ("FDACS") to administer the Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program that covers the District's service area.

The District's activities align with the District's statutory purpose and authority to promote soil and water conservation best practices, as defined in s. 582.02, *Florida Statutes*. Meeting minutes indicate that the District is beginning to compile a list of programs and activities that can potentially address community needs. Until the District begins to receive a consistent source of revenue to fund programs and activities, no findings regarding cost-reducing measures can be made.

**Recommendation:** The District should consider submitting a budget allocation request to the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners based on a list of potential District programs and activities developed as part of an approved strategic plan, estimated costs of those programs and activities, and other anticipated expenses.

### Comparison to Similar Services/Potential Consolidations

The following soil and water conservation programs are provided by other public<sup>16</sup> and nonprofit entities within the District's service area:

- NRM currently provides soil and water conservation programs including prescribed burns, invasive species management, urban forestry, and wildlife management. NRM partners with local schools on projects, such as an initiative with the Northview High School FFA Chapter to place duck boxes in Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve.<sup>17</sup>
- The UF/IFAS 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.<sup>18</sup>
- Three River RC&D has a contract with FDACS to implement the Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program within Okaloosa County, Santa Rosa County, and Escambia County, which provides agriculture producers cost-share funds related to implementing conservation practices.
- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection partners with NRM's Water Quality and Land Management Division and the City of Pensacola Public Works and Engineering Department on a series of restoration and pathogen reduction projects as part of the Bayou Chico Basin Management Action Plan.

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<sup>14</sup> UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County. 2018. *Agriculture*. February 2. Accessed April 25, 2024. <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/escambia/agriculture/>.

<sup>15</sup> Escambia County. 2023. *Natural Resources Conservation Division*. Accessed May 2, 2024. <https://myescambia.com/our-services/natural-resources-management/natural-resources-conservation>.

<sup>16</sup> "Public entity" is defined as "a county or municipal government; a water management district and other special district; a public K-12 school, including a charter school; a public college; and a public university."

<sup>17</sup> Escambia County. 2023. *Natural Resources Conservation Division*. Accessed May 2, 2024. <https://myescambia.com/our-services/natural-resources-management/natural-resources-conservation>.

<sup>18</sup> UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County. 2018. *Agriculture*. February 2. Accessed April 25, 2024. <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/escambia/agriculture/>.



- The Escambia County Farm Bureau hosts an annual Farm Tour in conjunction with the UF/IFAS Extension and NRM. The Farm Tour provides an opportunity for local officials to visit area farm and agricultural production sites to gain a better understanding of the local agriculture industry.<sup>19</sup>
- NRCS provides technical advice and data collection assistance to landowners implementing conservation practices.
- The Northwest Florida Water Management District (“NFWFMD”) manages several conservation-related programs in the 16 counties comprising the Florida Panhandle. NFWFMD programs include acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands along the Perdido and Escambia Rivers, regulating surface water project permits, and providing technical assistance and cost-share opportunities for the implementation of Best Management Practices by landowners.

As the District develops a list of potential programs and services through a strategic planning process, the District should consider the services already provided by these public and nonprofit entities and identify where gaps in conservation programming exist. For example, the Poster and Photo Contests organized by the National Association of Conservation Districts are almost exclusively managed by soil and water conservation districts at the local level;<sup>20</sup> the same situation is the case for the Speech Contest organized by the Association of Florida Conservation Districts and the Florida Conservation District Employees Association.<sup>21</sup> The District could consider whether other educational programs, such as the 4-H/FFA Land Judging Contest<sup>22</sup> or Envirothon,<sup>23</sup> are opportunities for the District to introduce. Additionally, the District’s service area includes Pensacola, which is a large metropolitan area. Currently, there are no public-sector entities providing urban farming programs or activities to residents in the metropolitan areas of the District’s service area.<sup>24</sup> Due to the District’s current lack of programming, the District has an opportunity to identify gaps in programming within its service area.

**Recommendation:** The District should consider identifying opportunities within its service area that align with its statutory purpose and authority, and address the unique soil and water conservation needs identified through a strategic planning process. The District could consider identifying opportunities to develop urban farming programs and provide additional youth conservation education programs.

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<sup>19</sup> Escambia County Farm Bureau. 2024. *Farm Tour*. Accessed May 2, 2024. <https://floridafarmbureau.org/counties/escambia/>.

<sup>20</sup> The Poster and Photo Contests are opportunities to produce educational posters and photos related to conservation topics. Winners at the District level can advance to compete at the State and national levels.

<sup>21</sup> The Speech Contest gives students the opportunity to practice public speaking based on conservation-related prompts. Winners at the District-level can advance to compete at the regional and State levels.

<sup>22</sup> The Land Judging Contest allows students in middle and high school 4-H and FFA programs to compete by observing and interpreting soil in order to make wise land-use decisions.

<sup>23</sup> Envirothon is an outdoor competition in which students develop hands-on skills related to aquatic ecology, forestry, soil and land use, wildlife, and other current environmental issues.

<sup>24</sup> The UF/IFAS Extension defines urban farming as “the production, processing, distribution, and sale of food within urban and suburban areas for noncommercial/hobby, commercial, educational, or nonprofit purposes. Examples of these activities include: food producing gardens (community, backyard, institutional, market, or rooftop); edible landscaping; bee, poultry, and animal keeping; farmers’ markets, CSAs, mobile produce trucks; urban or market farms; and innovative food-production methods, such as hydroponics, aquaponics, and aquaculture.”

## II.B: Resource Management

### Program Staffing

Per the memorandum of agreement between the District and the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners (“BoCC”), the District receives assistance from an Environmental Specialist who is employed by Natural Resources Conservation, a division of the Escambia County Natural Resources Management Department. The Environmental Specialist position assists the District Supervisors with the following administrative duties: taking meeting minutes, posting meeting notices, financial reporting, webpage management, and assisting with special projects, when needed. The Environmental Specialist is a full-time employee of the BoCC and is assigned to work part-time for the District. The position’s salary is fully paid by the BoCC.

The District does not independently employ or pay into the salary of any full-time, part-time, or contract employees. The District has not used volunteers to conduct its operations or programs and activities.

### Equipment and Facilities

Escambia SWCD does not own or rent any equipment or facilities. The District’s principal office and record storage is located at the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) service center in Molino, alongside the Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”). Board of Supervisors (“Board”) meetings are held at the Escambia County Farm Bureau Office in Molino. The District receives access to both spaces as in-kind donations from NRCS and the Escambia County Farm Bureau.

The District’s current memorandum of agreement with NRCS does not include any language permitting or guaranteeing the use of office and storage space. A previous memorandum of agreement executed in May 1997 between the District and NRCS included clauses providing shared working space, equipment use, vehicle use, and records management. Based on discussions with other soil and water conservation districts, M&J has observed that other NRCS offices have been permanently closed and/or relocated with minimal warning, sometimes without providing Districts the opportunity to retrieve files stored at the facility. The memorandum of agreement does not guarantee that, in the event of NRCS office closure, the District will have ample time to retrieve or move records until new storage space is found.

In addition to its regular and special Board meetings held at the Escambia County Farm Bureau office, Escambia SWCD began holding workshop meetings in September 2023. The District holds these workshop meetings at the Pensacola Public Library (a branch of West Florida Public Libraries) at no cost to the District.

Figure 6 shows the facilities used by Escambia SWCD during the review period (October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024).

**Figure 6: District Facilities by Type**

Facility Type	Ownership Status			
	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
<b>Principal Office</b>	Office owned by the USDA and provided to the District as an in-kind donation	Office owned by the USDA and provided to the District as an in-kind donation	Office owned by the USDA and provided to the District as an in-kind donation	Office owned by the USDA and provided to the District as an in-kind donation
<b>Meeting Space</b>	Space owned by the Escambia County Farm Bureau and provided to the District as an in-kind donation	Space owned by the Escambia County Farm Bureau and provided to the District as an in-kind donation	Space owned by the Escambia County Farm Bureau and provided to the District as an in-kind donation	Space owned by the Escambia County Farm Bureau and provided to the District as an in-kind donation
<b>Meeting Space</b>	N/A	N/A	Space owned by West Florida Public Libraries and used by the District at no cost	Space owned by West Florida Public Libraries and used by the District at no cost

*(Source: Interview with District Chairman, District Board meeting minutes)*

**Recommendation:** The District should consider proposing an agreement with NRCS to mitigate risks associated with operating out of an office owned by another entity. The lease should include provisions that ensure the District is provided with a reasonable period of notice in the event of the office’s closure and that the District has the right to access and remove any of its files stored at the office.

**Current and Historic Revenues and Expenditures**

Escambia SWCD does not develop an annual budget or track annual revenue and expenditure data. In order to determine revenues and expenditures during the review period, M&J reviewed bank statements provided by the District.

Escambia SWCD does not have a revenue source or consistent expenditures. The District has a memorandum of understanding with the BoCC which allows the District to submit annual budget requests, pursuant to BoCC approval. The District has not submitted a budget request during the review period.

During the first half of the review period, the District maintained a bank account with Bank of the South in Pensacola. In April of FY22, Bank of the South was acquired by Warrington Bank and the District’s assets were transferred to Warrington Bank.

Figure 7 shows the District’s revenues during the review period. The \$35 credit in FY21 was a refund from Bank of the South for previously charged bank service charges. The \$131 credit in FY24 is the largest credit in the review period and is a reimbursement from the Association of Florida Conservation Districts (“AFCD”) for expenses related to a District Supervisor attending the annual AFCD meeting. AFCD reimbursed the District for all expenses related to attending the meeting through a Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services grant. The remaining \$15 credits were donations from a District Supervisor.

**Figure 7: District Revenues<sup>25</sup>**

Revenue Source	Total Revenues			
	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24 (through 12/31/2023)
Service Charge Refund	\$35	\$0	\$0	\$0
Supervisor Donations	\$0	\$5	\$0	\$10
AFCD Reimbursement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$131
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$35</b>	<b>\$5</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$141</b>

(Source: Escambia SWCD Bank Statements)

As shown in Figure 8, the District had expenses related to service charges from the account at Bank of the South, reimbursement for expenses related to a District Supervisor attending the annual AFCD conference, and \$90 to pay for food and drinks at the December 2022 Board Christmas Appreciation breakfast and for plaques for the winners of the 2022 Conservation Farmer of Year Award. In the February 2024 meeting minutes, the Board voted to approve a \$60 payment to the Northview FFA Alumni and Friends to host a booth at the annual Blue Jacket Jamboree. The Supervisors who proposed the payment offered to pay the expense directly as a donation.

**Figure 8: District Expenditures**

Program or Activity	Total Expenditures			
	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24 (through 12/31/2023)
Service Charges	\$25	\$0	\$0	\$0
Conservation Farmer of the Year	\$0	\$0	\$90	\$0
Conference Attendance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$131
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$25</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$90</b>	<b>\$131</b>

(Source: Escambia SWCD Bank Statements)

<sup>25</sup> Tables in this report are through December 31, 2023, for FY24 to maintain consistency across all district reports.



## Trends and Sustainability

As detailed in Figure 7 and Figure 8, the District's revenues and expenditures have remained relatively consistent year to year, with no notable trends upwards or downwards. The District has not funded soil and water conservation programs or activities during the review period, except for the 2022 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award, and does not provide funding for any programs or activities managed by other entities. As Escambia SWCD has not incurred any regular expenses within the review period, it has limited opportunities to introduce cost reduction efforts.

The District has the ability to submit budget requests to the BoCC, but has not done so in the review period. While the District is currently financially stable due to the lack of programming and consistent expenditures, it is not financially secure. Meeting minutes from the review period indicate that the District has sent "hardship letters" to the National Association of Conservation Districts and AFCD because the District was unable to pay annual dues. Additionally, in the meeting minutes from June 2022 and October 2023, District Supervisors stated that they deposited a total of \$15 of their own money into the District's bank account to avoid account inactivity – \$5 in FY22 and \$10 in FY24.

**Recommendation:** The District should consider submitting a budget allocation request to the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners based on a list of potential District programs and activities developed as part of an approved strategic plan, estimated costs of those programs and activities, and other anticipated expenses.

## II.C: Performance Management

### Strategic and Other Future Plans

Escambia SWCD does not have an adopted strategic plan in place. Through an interview with the District Chairperson, M&J identified unwritten short-term strategic initiatives to fill the two open Supervisor seats and build a list of potential programs and activities for the District. Through the interview, M&J further identified a longer-term, unwritten initiative to serve as a liaison between agriculture producers within the District's service area and government entities. The District Chairperson stated that the District is in the process of growing relationships with agricultural producers within the District's service area and offering the District as a resource for the agriculture producers.

According to Board of Supervisors ("Board") meeting minutes, District Supervisors identified during the September 2023 workshop meeting three primary roles and responsibilities of the District:

- "A 'watchdog' role with respect to intersectional issues in Escambia County having an impact on soil and/or water quality or impacts on soil/water stakeholders.
- "A proactive role of connecting people with programs through which their participation will preserve or enhance soil and water quality.
- "Supervisor-led projects having a particular importance to that Supervisor's District and/or relevance to that Supervisor's expertise. The Board will encourage and assist each Supervisor to cultivate and lead their own project area(s), provided such projects are within the scope and statutory authority of the Board."

While the Board-defined roles do lay out a framework of responsibilities that the District Supervisors plan to achieve, the District has not developed action steps to carry out the responsibilities. Furthermore, the meeting minutes from the workshop do not indicate that Supervisors developed the roles through a strategic planning process that uses the District's statutory purpose and authority, and the unique needs of the local community, as guidance for the District's proposed activities.

**Recommendation:** The District should consider developing and then adopting a strategic plan that builds on the District's purpose and responsibilities defined in s. [582.02\(4\)](#), *Florida Statutes*, and the September 2023 workshop meeting. The strategic plan should not simply describe the District's current programs or contracts, 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. A strategic plan does not need to be extensive as long as the document provides the District with direction for addressing the community's needs.

### Goals and Objectives

Escambia SWCD does not have any written goals or objectives. The District's unwritten goal is to begin providing programs to the District's service area. The District Chairperson stated in an interview with M&J that Supervisors have begun compiling a list of potential program and service opportunities. Although, to provide programs and services, the District needs to secure one or more sources of revenue, which, at the time of this report, has not been done.

According to M&J's interview with the District Chairperson, the District's current top priority is to fill the two vacant District Supervisor positions. The District Chairperson expressed an unwritten goal to fill one of the vacant District Supervisor positions with someone who has a commercial agricultural production background in order to strengthen the relationship of the District and the community of agriculture producers within the northern, more rural half of the District's service area.

**Recommendation:** The District should consider writing and then adopting a set of goals and objectives that 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

Escambia SWCD does not have any performance measures or standards, written or unwritten, related to program offerings that the District provides or activities that the District participates in – primarily the conduct of outreach through community events.

The memorandum of agreement between the District and the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service ("NRCS") includes a statement of mutual benefit wherein both parties agree to "facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and agreement between agencies, landowners, and other stakeholders; develop comprehensive conservation plans; and bring those plans to the attention of landowners and others within the district." While the statement of mutual benefit encourages cooperation, it does not include performance measures, standards, or deliverables that the District is required to meet.

**Recommendation:** 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.

### Analysis of Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures and Standards

Escambia SWCD does not have written goals, objectives, or performance measures and standards. While District Supervisors have unwritten goals and objectives including providing more programs and activities, and developing relationships with agriculture producers within the District’s service, the goals and objectives are too broad for the District to communicate any meaningful progress.

The District Supervisors have participated in outreach activities to grow relationships with agriculture producers in the District’s service area by attending community events and hosting the annual Local Working Group meeting. In meeting minutes, the Board additionally suggested each Supervisor should invite community members to the District’s public workshop meetings. The minutes do not indicate that Supervisors have been successful in encouraging community attendance at these workshops and these meetings have not been adequately marketed, or noticed, to the community (as further discussed in section II.D [Organization and Governance] of this report). As a result, the District has not been able to create new meaningful relationships with agriculture producers within the District’s service area beyond brief interactions at community events without any plans for post-event follow-up.

According to M&J’s interview with the District Chairperson, the District is attempting to progress towards the goal of providing more programs by creating a list of potential program and service opportunities, though without a written strategic plan, unwritten goals and objectives do not have a clear direction and are reactive to occurrences in the District, rather than proactive plans to address community needs and future land-use changes. Because the District does not have a strategic plan in place guiding goals and objectives and developing a concrete plan of action, the District has overlooked the opportunity to submit annual requests for possible revenues from the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners. The District does not have a revenue source, and so the District cannot begin to provide more programs to the District’s service area, hampering the District’s ability to meet its unwritten goal and serve in the principal roles discussed by the Supervisors.

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

Escambia SWCD is required per s. [218.32](#), *Florida Statutes*, to submit an annual financial report to the Florida Department of Financial Services within nine months of the end of the District’s fiscal year (September 30). According to Annual Financial Reports sourced from the Florida Department of Financial Services’ online database, the District submitted the FY21, FY22, and FY23 Annual Financial Reports by the compliance deadline. The District has until June 30, 2025, to submit the FY24 Annual Financial Report (after FY24 closes out in September 2024). For the years included in the review period, Escambia SWCD has met the reporting requirements of s. [218.32](#), *Florida Statutes*.

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

### Performance Reviews and District Performance Feedback

During the review period (October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024), Escambia SWCD did not receive any performance reviews for District operations. For feedback, the District, in conjunction with NRCS, holds annual Local Working Group meetings where local agricultural producers have the opportunity to share their priorities and agriculture-related concerns. The meetings can serve as an opportunity for the District to use the feedback provided to strategically make decisions regarding future program offerings.

**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 to use 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\(1\)](#), *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.

Two of the current Supervisors were elected in the November 2022 elections. Since the start of the January 2023 term, three Supervisors have been appointed. Two of the appointed Supervisors subsequently resigned, resulting in three current Supervisors for the District – two elected Supervisors and one appointed Supervisor.

The District Chairperson provided a written statement detailing each Supervisor’s qualifications, which are consistent with the residency and agricultural experience qualifications in s. [582.19\(1\)](#), *Florida Statutes*. To confirm this assertion, M&J requested the elected Supervisors’ affirmations as part of a public records request to the Escambia County Supervisor of Elections, but did not receive any documentation in response to this request. As a result, M&J cannot verify whether the Supervisors signed the required affirmation of qualifications.

According to the Escambia County Supervisor of Elections website, all five Supervisor seats are up for election in November 2024. Seats 2 and 4 are up for election as part of the regular cycle defined by Chapter [2022-191](#), *Laws of Florida*; seats 1 and 5 are up for election as they were filled by appointment and, therefore must come up for election at the next general election (in this case, November 2024) per s. [582.18](#), *Florida Statutes*, and Florida Attorney General Opinion [2010-36](#).

**Recommendation:** The District should consider collaborating with the Escambia County Supervisor of Elections to ensure that all Supervisors, whether elected or appointed, complete the affirmations necessary to document each Supervisor’s compliance with the requirements of s. [582.19\(1\)](#), *Florida Statutes*.



## Notices of Public Meetings

Section [189.015](#), *Florida Statutes*, requires that all Board meeting minutes be publicly noticed in accordance with the procedures listed in ch. [50](#), *Florida Statutes*. This chapter has been amended twice during the review period (October 1, 2020, through April 30, 2024), and M&J reviewed for compliance with the governing statute in effect at the time of each meeting date and applicable notice period.

Notices of the Escambia SWCD Board meetings are published by the Environmental Specialist who provides administrative support for the District. M&J reviewed proofs of publication to confirm that the District's seven regular meetings between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021, were noticed in the *Pensacola News Journal*, and 30 regular and special meetings between October 1, 2021, and April 18, 2024, were noticed in the *Escambia Sun Press*. The District's calendar year 2024 regular meeting dates have been pre-populated on the BoCC website and in the *Florida Administrative Register*.

The dates of the District's six workshops (meetings at which no votes are taken) during the review period were populated to the District's website in advance of the meeting date and were occasionally posted to the BoCC website. One workshop was also noticed in the *Escambia Sun Press*.

M&J's review concluded that District notices for regular and special meetings met the requirements of the version of ch. [50](#), *Florida Statutes*, in effect at the time of each meeting date and applicable notice period. District notices for workshop meetings did not consistently meet the requirements. 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 met 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 met this requirement for regular and special meetings held in 2023 and 2024, as well as one of the six workshops. The District did not meet this requirement for the remaining five workshops 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 workshop notice procedures to ensure compliance with s. [189.015](#) and ch. [50](#), *Florida Statutes*, that govern 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.

## Retention of Record and Public Access to Documentation

The District uploaded meeting agendas and minutes from January 2021 through the most recent meetings on its website, and was able to provide the remaining FY21 agendas and minutes to M&J on request. The District was able to provide the other existing records and documentation requested by M&J for this performance review, and includes the appropriate link to the District's Annual Financial Reports on its website. M&J concludes that there are no notable issues with the District's records retention and public access to information as required s. [119.021](#), *Florida Statutes*.

### 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 submitting a budget allocation request to the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners (“BoCC”) based upon a list of potential District programs and activities developed as part of an approved strategic plan, estimated costs of those programs and activities, and other anticipated expenses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potential Benefits: If the Escambia County BoCC approves the funding request, the District will have revenue in order to maintain operations and provide programs to the District’s service area.</li> <li>● Potential Adverse Consequences: The District and its activities may be subject to more scrutiny by the BoCC.</li> <li>● Costs: None significant.</li> <li>● Statutory Considerations: If the District receives more funding, the District should ensure programs and activities align with the District’s statutory purpose as defined in s. <a href="#">582.02(4), Florida Statutes</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>The District should consider identifying opportunities within its service area that align with its statutory purpose and authority, and address the unique soil and water conservation needs identified through a strategic planning process. The District could consider identifying opportunities to develop urban farming programs and provide additional youth conservation education programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potential Benefits: By identifying needs within the District’s service area, the District will be able to develop and prioritize appropriate projects.</li> <li>● Potential Adverse Consequences: The District should avoid focusing on one type of program, which would isolate groups of stakeholders, and projects that are developed due to Supervisors’ interests rather than prioritized needs.</li> <li>● Costs: New programs and activities will incur expenses, for which the District will need a revenue source.</li> <li>● Statutory Considerations: The District should ensure that new programs align with the District’s statutory purpose as defined in s. <a href="#">582.02(4), Florida Statutes</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>The District should consider proposing an agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”) to mitigate risks associated with operating out of an office owned by another entity. The lease should include provisions that ensure the District is provided with a reasonable period of notice in the event of the office’s closure and that the District has the right to access and remove any of its files stored at the office.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potential Benefits: An executed agreement will provide the District more protection for the recovery of records and time for the identification of a new primary office in the case of a temporary or permanent NRCS office closure.</li> <li>● Potential Adverse Consequences: In return for resources, NRCS may include in an agreement expectations and deliverables for the District to meet.</li> <li>● Costs: None significant.</li> <li>● Statutory Considerations: None significant.</li> </ul>

Recommendation Text	Associated Considerations
<p>The District should consider developing and then adopting a strategic plan that builds on the District’s purpose and responsibilities defined in s. <a href="#">582.02(4)</a>, <i>Florida Statutes</i>, the September 2023 workshop meeting. The strategic plan should not simply describe the District’s current programs or contracts, 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. A strategic plan does not need to be extensive as long as the document provides the District with direction for addressing the community’s needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential Benefits: A strategic plan can provide a better understanding of the community’s needs and more guidance for decision making related to program funding.</li> <li>• Potential Adverse Consequences: None significant.</li> <li>• Costs: Possible costs if the District uses a third-party vendor for assistance.</li> <li>• Statutory Considerations: Ensure identified strategies align with the District’s statutory purpose and authority.</li> </ul>
<p>The District should consider writing and then adopting a set of goals and objectives that align with the District’s statutory purpose, as defined in s. <a href="#">582.02(4)</a>, <i>Florida Statutes</i>, 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"> <li>• Potential Benefits: Goals and objectives can help with the development of specific actions the District can take to address the community’s needs as described in the strategic plan.</li> <li>• Potential Adverse Consequences: None significant.</li> <li>• Costs: Possible costs if the District uses a third-party vendor for assistance.</li> <li>• Statutory Considerations: Ensure goals and objectives align with the District’s statutory purpose and authority.</li> </ul>
<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"> <li>• Potential Benefits: Establishing performance measures and standards will allow the District to measure program successes and assist the District in creating more educated decisions regarding future programming, as well as improve transparency.</li> <li>• Potential Adverse Consequences: None significant.</li> <li>• Costs: Any time costs related to data gathering or measurements necessary in monitoring the District’s performance.</li> <li>• Statutory Considerations: None significant.</li> </ul>

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"> <li>• Potential Benefits: By collecting feedback from the community, the District will be able to review community priorities and identify service enhancement opportunities.</li> <li>• Potential Adverse Consequences: None significant.</li> <li>• Costs: Any time costs associated with soliciting, collecting, and reviewing performance feedback for trends.</li> <li>• Statutory Considerations: None significant.</li> </ul>
<p>The District should consider collaborating with the Escambia County Supervisor of Elections to ensure that all Supervisors, whether elected or appointed, complete the affirmations necessary to document each Supervisor’s compliance with the requirements of s. <a href="#">582.19(1), Florida Statutes</a>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential Benefits: The District will provide more transparency.</li> <li>• Potential Adverse Consequences: None significant.</li> <li>• Cost: None significant.</li> <li>• Statutory Considerations: The affirmation should follow the requirements and text of s. <a href="#">582.19, Florida Statutes</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>The District should consider improving its workshop notice procedures to ensure compliance with s. <a href="#">189.015</a> and ch. <a href="#">50, Florida Statutes</a>, 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"> <li>• Potential Benefits: The District ensures better transparency, provides more public access to all meetings, and avoids the risk of penalties.</li> <li>• Potential Adverse Consequences: None significant.</li> <li>• Cost: Any publication costs charged by publishers.</li> <li>• Statutory Considerations: If the District wishes to post workshops online only, the District should meet the requirement of s. <a href="#">50.0311(6), Florida Statutes</a>.</li> </ul>

## 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. Escambia SWCD did not provide M&J with a response letter for inclusion in the final report.