

ST. JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

In Re:

Declaration of a Modified Phase II Severe
Water Shortage Within
Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Flagler,
Marion, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties

F.O.R. NO. 2026-0005

**WATER SHORTAGE ORDER DECLARING A MODIFIED PHASE II SEVERE WATER
SHORTAGE WITHIN ALACHUA, BAKER, BRADFORD, CLAY, DUVAL, FLAGLER,
MARION, NASSAU, PUTNAM, AND ST. JOHNS COUNTIES**

This matter came before the Executive Director of the St. Johns River Water Management District (“District”) on March 2, 2026, at District Headquarters in Palatka, Florida. After consideration and being fully apprised of the matter, the Executive Director issues this Order containing the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Governing Board issued an Order declaring a Phase I Moderate Water Shortage within Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Duval, and Marion counties on February 10, 2026.
2. On February 23, 2026, the Executive Director issued an Amended and Restated Order (“Amended Order”) adding Clay, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties (together with Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Duval, and Marion counties collectively referred to as “Counties of Concern”) to the Phase I Moderate Water Shortage declaration.
3. The District’s Water Shortage Plan, adopted as Chapter 40C-21 of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), provides that the District will periodically evaluate water conditions within the District and use that information to determine whether and to what extent a water shortage should be declared.

4. As of February 23, 2026, the current county average rainfall over the past year is at or below 40 inches for Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Marion, Nassau, and Putnam, with Baker, Bradford, and Clay being at or below 36 inches.

5. Additionally, as of February 23, 2026, multiple groundwater monitoring locations in Alachua, Duval, Flagler, Marion, Putnam, and St. Johns counties show groundwater levels at or below the 15th percentile, with Duval, Marion, Putnam, and St. Johns showing groundwater levels at or below the 10th percentile.

6. As of February 23, 2026, the U.S. Drought Monitor for Florida designates all of the Counties of Concern as Extreme Drought (D3), and the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center (“NWSCPC”) depicts the drought tending to persist for the next three months (February – May 2026).

7. The NWSCPC also notes that the seasonal (3-month) precipitation outlook (February – April 2026) favors below normal precipitation and the seasonal (3-month) temperature outlook (March – May 2024) favors above normal temperatures.

8. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Drought Information Statement for Southeast Georgia and Northeast Florida, issued on February 19, 2026 (“NOAA Report”), notes that streamflow on all mainstem rivers in southeast Georgia and Northeast Florida is especially low, having dropped below the 10th percentile for flow this time of year. In particular, stretches of the Santa Fe River are at record-low flows, and non-tidal rivers are expected to continue decreasing due to the lack of widespread heavy rainfall. Additionally, Springs along the Suwannee River are discharging rapidly into the Middle Suwannee due to the Middle Suwannee’s low level.

9. Regarding fire hazard impacts due to the severe drought, the NOAA Report also notes that the Keetch-Byram Drought Index continues to rise, with portions of Alachua and Marion County now above 600 and the remainder of Northeast Florida being in the 400-600 range. The NOAA Report notes that wildfire activity has increased in many counties and that burn bans are now in effect in Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Flagler, Marion, and Putnam counties, among others. Additionally, the Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook for March calls for above-normal wildfire activity across the area.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

10. Pursuant to section 373.246(1), Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Governing Board of the District shall formulate a plan for implementation during periods of water shortage to regulate the withdrawal and use of water to protect the water resources of the District. The District's Water Shortage Plan (Chapter 40C-21, F.A.C.) was adopted to accomplish this purpose.

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

12. The District has monitored and evaluated water conditions within the District as required by rule 40C-21.221, F.A.C., and the conditions in the Counties of Concern are such that the Governing Board may declare a water shortage in these areas.

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

14. Rule 40C-21.631, F.A.C., contains water use restrictions and measures that will be in effect when a Phase II Severe Water Shortage is declared, unless otherwise provided in this

Order. The District has determined that the water use restrictions and measures set forth below are warranted, given conditions in the Counties of Concern.

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

16. The Amended Order is currently in effect.

17. Pursuant to the Governing Board action taken on February 10, 2026, the Executive Director has been delegated the authority to declare a water shortage in additional areas as well as to change the drought condition level (i.e., phase), as necessary, to address changing circumstances.

ORDER

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

1. The Amended Order is hereby modified.
2. A Modified Phase II Severe Water Shortage is declared for all sources of water within the following areas:
 - a. All of Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties.
 - b. Those portions of Baker and Bradford counties located within the District.
 - c. Those portions of Alachua County located within the District, except for the unincorporated areas, for which water shortage-related orders have been delegated to the Suwannee River Water Management District.
 - d. Those portions of Marion County located within the District, the City of Ocala, and all unincorporated areas of Marion County, except the unincorporated area

lying within The Villages of Marion, FQD, for which water shortage-related orders have been delegated to the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

3. All classes of water users are encouraged to reduce their water use and conserve water to the maximum extent possible.
4. All classes of water users are encouraged to proactively plan for extended severe drought conditions, and additional mandatory water use restrictions should this Modified Phase II Severe Water Shortage Order be modified or advance to a Phase III Extreme Water Shortage Order.
5. Wasteful and unnecessary water use is prohibited regardless of the phase of water shortage. Such wasteful and unnecessary water use includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Allowing water to be dispersed without any practical purpose to the water user, regardless of the type of water use.
 - b. Allowing water to be dispersed in a grossly inefficient manner, regardless of the type of water use.
 - c. Allowing water to be dispersed to accomplish a purpose for which water use is unnecessary or which can be readily accomplished through alternative methods of significantly less water use.
6. The following restrictions and measures, as detailed in rules 40C-21.601, 40C-21.631, and 40C-21.641, F.A.C., are imposed for all sources and uses of water, including those exempt from permitting pursuant to Chapter 40C-2, F.A.C., except for the domestic use of water as defined in section 373.019(6), F.S., and users whose sole source of water is reclaimed water or seawater.

7. Public Supply Uses

- a. All public supply water consumptive use permittees should institute or accelerate system-level water conservation measures that can help manage demand.

8. Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Uses

- a. Whether or not a Consumptive Use Permit authorizes a commercial/industrial/institutional water use activity with associated landscape irrigation, the landscape irrigation component is separately regulated for purposes of this Order and is subject to the Landscape Irrigation and Uses restrictions outlined below.
- b. All commercial/industrial/institutional water use should be voluntarily reduced.
- c. For all commercial/industrial/institutional water use, the following demand management measures should be implemented as applicable:
 - i. Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - ii. Reduce clean-up requiring water use to the minimum required to protect efficiency of the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
 - iii. Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.

9. Agriculture Uses

- a. Whether or not a Consumptive Use Permit authorizes an agricultural water use activity with associated landscape irrigation, the landscape irrigation component is separately regulated for purposes of this Order and is subject to the Landscape Irrigation and Uses restrictions outlined below.

- b. The following demand management measures should be implemented, as applicable:
 - i. Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - ii. Reduce clean-up requiring water use to the minimum required to protect efficiency of the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
 - iii. Maximize the use of the lesser or least restricted Source Class to which there is access.

10. Landscape/Recreation/Aesthetic Uses

- a. Landscape Irrigation and Uses
 - i. All residential landscape irrigation is limited to one day a week in accordance with the schedule outlined in subparagraph 40C-2.042(2)(a)2., F.A.C., (Eastern Standard Time one-day a week irrigation schedule), regardless of the time of year.
 - ii. The following restrictions and measures shall apply to all landscape uses, as applicable:
 - 1) All landscape use should be voluntarily reduced.
 - 2) All of the following demand management measures shall be implemented, as applicable:
 - a) Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - b) Recycle water to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.

- c) Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.

b. Golf Courses

- i. The following water use measures shall apply to all golf courses:

- 1) All golf course water use should be voluntarily reduced.
- 2) The following demand management measures should be implemented, as applicable:
 - a) Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - b) Recycle water to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - c) Reduce clean-up requiring water use to the minimum required to protect efficiency of the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
 - d) Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.

c. Recreational Areas

- i. The following water use measures shall apply to all recreational areas, such as playgrounds, football, baseball, and soccer fields, but do not apply to golf courses.

- 1) All recreational area water use should be voluntarily reduced.
- 2) The following demand management measures shall be implemented, as applicable:

- a) Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - b) Recycle water on-site to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - c) Reduce clean-up requiring water use to the minimum required to protect efficiency of the operation and prevent damage to equipment.
 - d) Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.
- 3) Applications of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides should be coordinated with irrigation schedules.

d. Water-Based Recreation

- i. All pools shall be maintained in a manner that minimizes the need for make-up water. Examples of such actions include, but are not limited to, the prompt repair of leaks, optimum scheduling of backwash filtration, and the use of shade or covers to reduce evaporation.
- ii. Commercial and institutional uses of water for recreational purposes shall comply with the requirements outlined in the Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Uses section above.

e. Aesthetic Uses

- i. Aesthetic uses of water are prohibited.

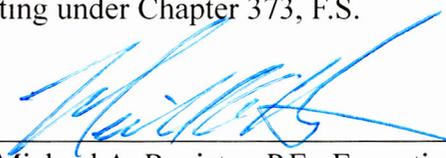
11. Other Uses

- a. Except as provided in this section, all other uses of water should be voluntarily reduced, and the following demand management measures shall be implemented, as applicable:
 - i. Reduce off-site discharge to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - ii. Recycle water to the extent economically, environmentally, and technically feasible.
 - iii. Maximize the use of the least restricted Source Class to which there is access.
- b. Washing or cleaning of buildings, structures, and outdoor impervious surfaces:
 - i. Pressure washing of buildings or other structures in preparation for painting, sealing, or as a construction practice is allowed.
 - ii. Pressure washing driveways, sidewalks, and other impervious surfaces is allowed for necessary maintenance, such as to either maintain a warranty or remove mold, mildew, and other potentially hazardous materials that cannot be removed by mechanical means (such as broom or leaf blower), and as a construction practice (such as cleaning a concrete surface before painting or sealing). Compliance with homeowner association or other aesthetic standards does not constitute necessary maintenance.
- c. Mobile equipment washing
 - i. Commercial car washes, hand-detailing operations, and similar establishments shall comply with the requirements outlined in the Commercial/Industrial/Institutional Uses section above.

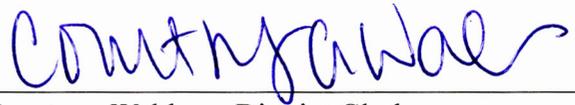
- d. No person or entity, like a homeowner's association or property manager, shall enforce any deed restrictions or other community standards that would cause a violation of this Order.
- 12. The Executive Director requests that every city and county commission, state and county attorney, sheriff, police officer, and other appropriate local governmental official assist in the implementation and enforcement of this Order.
- 13. This Order shall supersede the Amended Order, and shall become immediately effective once executed by the Executive Director and rendered by the District Clerk.

Done and Ordered this 2nd day of March, 2026, at Palatka, Florida.

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

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

RENDERED this 2nd day of March, 2026.

BY: 
Courtney Waldron, District Clerk