

MARION SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2024-2028 LONG RANGE PLAN

Chairman's Statement

The mission of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District is to manage programs that conserve soil, improve water quality, and enhance water quantity in Marion County, while also providing leadership in the conservation of these natural resources through local involvement and community education. We are dedicated to these principles every day, striving to better our community through outreach, education, and cost-share programs highlighting the importance of our natural resources. Our goal is to create a better future for upcoming generations. By passionately working to inform and engage people of all ages, the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District aims to emphasize the crucial role of water and soil in our lives.

VIVI SERENA
CHAIRMAN

HISTORY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MARION SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

In 1937, the Florida Legislature established Florida's Soil & Water Conservation Districts, governmental subdivisions of the State of Florida, under Florida Statutes Chapter 582. These districts were initiated by local residents to promote and encourage the wise use, management, and conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

The Marion Soil and Water Conservation District was initially established as the Oklawaha Soil Conservation District, encompassing Marion County and the Oxford area of Sumter County. However, on April 22, 1947, the district's name was changed to Marion Soil Conservation District, excluding Sumter County. In 1965, the Florida Legislature amended Chapter 582 of the Florida Statutes, renaming the district to the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District.

MISSION

To manage programs that conserve soil, improve water quality, and enhance water quantity in Marion County, Florida.

VISION

The District promotes best land use and management practices for conserving, improving, and sustaining our natural resources and our environment through outreach and educational programs.

OUR VALUES

- **Learning:** Expanding our collective understanding of natural resources and conservation practices.
- **Stewardship:** Leading initiatives to conserve natural resources and advocate for environmental awareness and responsible management.
- **Community:** Engaging and collaborating with our community and partners for collective growth.
- **Support and Sustainability:** Promoting Best Management Practices and providing continuous support for environmental health.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Collect data, surveys, and information for district partners.
- Conduct demonstrations and presentations.
- Educate stakeholders, particularly the public, on local natural resource concerns.
- Assist in best management practices and implementation.
- Provide incentives, when feasible and applicable, to stakeholders who implement best management practices or conserve natural resources.
- Make conservation materials available.
- Assist in developing Comprehensive Plans.

PRIORITIES

1. **Water Resource Protection**
 - Water Conservation
 - Water Quality
2. **Community Outreach and Education**
 - Community Outreach
 - Farmland Preservation Day
 - Springs Festival
 - School Presentations
 - Community Group Presentations
 - Springs Working Groups
 - Youth Conservation Education Programs
 - Poster Contest
 - Found "Junk" Art
 - Essay Contest
 - Envirothon
 - Land Judging
 - Grace Force Scholarship
 - Conservation Landscape Tray
 - Public Speaking Contest
3. **Farms of Environmental Distinction Program**
4. **Central Florida Springs Cost Share Program**

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION & PROTECTION

WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS BY:

- Promoting participation in USDA, NRCS (WHIP, EQIP, CSP, etc.) and FDACS programs, making landowners aware of deadlines and application processes.
- Encouraging applicants to sign up for our FED Program.
- Educating the public on the Water Management District(s) water use policies by holding an annual workshop.
- Establishing and continuing a relationship with County representatives on County Comprehensive Land Use Plan(s).
- Continuing our relationship and working with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as advisors for local land management reviews.

GOAL 1: WATER RESOURCE CONSERVATION & PROTECTION

Continue to promote water conservation. By 2028, we aim to increase participation in our FED program by 1 producer per year and recognize 1 producer annually for exceptional contributions to best management practices.

GOAL 2: WATER RESOURCE AWARENESS AND SOIL HEALTH PRACTICES

By 2028, we aim to educate 60 residents on water resources, direct 15 landowners to soil testing agencies, provide soil survey information to 9 stakeholders, and promote soil health to 60 residents.

WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS BY:

- Working with and educating the public about water resources.
- Directing landowners to agencies that provide soil testing.
- Providing soil survey information.
- Promoting soil health through the dissemination of literature at workshops, events, and presentations.

GOAL 3: COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Outreach Events 2024: Continue to expand the eight (8) existing youth conservation education programs.

WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS BY:

- Developing a presentation to target teachers, advisors, and community program leaders.
- Determining annual contest dates with careful review of the school board's academic calendar.

- Developing literature to distribute at local youth events and gatherings.
- Promoting contests via email to teachers, advisors, and community program leaders, and sending reminders before deadlines.
- Making an annual presentation to the School Board.
- Partnering with neighboring counties regarding Envirothon and Land Judging Contests.

By 2028, we aim to reach 100 students annually, distribute literature at 9 local events, and partner with 3 neighboring counties for contests. We will promote our programs to a minimum of 25 teachers and community leaders annually with timely reminders.

GOAL 4: BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES EDUCATION

WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS BY:

- Providing demonstrations, setting up informational booths, and giving presentations at area festivals, events, community forums, and area working groups.
- Providing input and technical support to local, state, and federal government working groups to identify local resource concerns.
- Continuing to provide Best Management Practice (BMP) education to landowners through the Farms of Environmental Distinction Program - expanding the program to include all Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Best Management Practice (BMP) compliance manuals.
- Continuing to promote natural resource conservation to the community.

By 2028, we aim to participate in 9 community events that offer a combination of demonstrations, informational booths, and/or presentations. We will continue to hold an annual local working group, educating a minimum of 15 landowners in BMPs by 2028.

GOAL 5: EXPAND SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE FOR EDUCATION

By 2028, we aim to post 36 updates and host 3 virtual presentations.

WE WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS BY:

- Launching our social media presence in 2024 to engage with the community and promote natural resource conservation.
- Creating and sharing educational content such as demonstrations, informational posts, and virtual presentations on social media.

ADOPTION OF PLAN

The purpose of the Long Range Plan is to state the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District's priorities, objectives, and goals. Actions to achieve these goals will be listed by date and appointment of supervisor responsible for the work carried out. These actions will be reviewed routinely at regularly scheduled board meetings to evaluate the effectiveness of these actions. This Plan is in effect through December 2028 and is not all-inclusive and is subject to modification at any time by a majority vote of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District Board. This document supersedes all earlier Long Range Plans. With this Plan, the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors expects to have a major, positive impact on land use and the conservation of natural resources in Marion County over the next four (4) years.

Adopted this 12th day of August 2024 by majority vote:

Updated then readopted on *day of, 20_* by majority vote:

Marion Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors:

Vivi Serena

Justin Albright

Colleen Stenstream

David Shults

Amy Davis