North Florida Water Utility Association

Business Plan

Columbia and Suwannee Counties, Florida

September 2025

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Preface and Background:

Florida's policy emphasizes managing water resources at both state and regional levels. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) oversees the state's water resources, while five regional water management districts handle regional administration. This structure ensures that water supply planning is tailored to the specific needs and conditions of each region while focusing on the following.

1. State Policy and Legislative Mandates

Every five years, Florida law mandates that each of the water management districts develops a Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP). These plans include components such as water supply and resource development, funding strategies, technical data, and lists of water bodies with established minimum flows and levels. The goal is to ensure that existing water sources can meet reasonable-beneficial needs for the next 20 years.

2. Interconnected Water Systems

Florida's aquifers, rivers, and ecosystems often span

multiple communities and counties. Managing these interconnected systems at a regional level allows for more effective coordination and protection of shared water resources, preventing overuse and ensuring equitable distribution.

3. Addressing Population Growth and Development

Florida is experiencing significant population growth and regional planning helps anticipate and meet increasing water demands. By evaluating broader trends and potential impacts, reginal plans can implement strategies to accommodate growth while preserving water quality and availability.

(See attachment B)

4. Collaborative Resource Management

Regional plans foster collaboration among stakeholders, including local governments, utilities, environmental groups, and state agencies. This collective approach facilitates the sharing of data, resources, and best practices, leading to more efficient and effective water management solutions.

5. Implementation of Large-Scale Projects

Regional planning enables the development and execution of large-scale water projects and benefits multiple communities. For example, the Central Florida Water Initiative is a collaborative effort among several water management districts to address water supply challenges in a rapid growing region.

The Florida Legislature has established a coordinated planning process between regional water supply and local government comprehensive plans. This integration ensures that water supply considerations are incorporated into broader community planning efforts.

In summary, Florida supports a collaborative approach to water resource management, involving state oversight, regional planning, and local government coordination to ensure sustainable water supplies for the future.

Contents

1. Executive Summary

The North Florida Water Utility Association (NFWUA) was established on April 16, 2024, by an Interlocal Agreement (Attachment A) between Columbia and Suwannee Counties, using Section 163.01, Florida Statutes, as the legal basis for its formation as an independent special district and interlocal government agency. Its purpose is to oversee regional water utility planning and delivery in Columbia and Suwannee Counties, Florida. This business plan outlines a five-year roadmap to modernize infrastructure, expand service capacity, and enhance governance.

NFWUA's mission is to provide safe, efficient, and sustainable water services while protecting the region's natural resources. The authority leverages local assets, including the Floridan Aquifer, state-certified water facilities, and over 350 miles of utility lines, to potentially serve more than 110,000 residents. With aging infrastructure and increased demand, the plan prioritizes a $26 million Capital Improvement Plan focusing on pipe replacements, new wells, treatment upgrades, and wastewater resiliency.

Financial sustainability is supported through a transparent rate structure, affordability programs for low-income households, and

the strategic use of state and federal funding, including SRF and USDA grants. The plan also emphasizes intergovernmental partnerships, environmental stewardship, and the adoption of smart technologies like advanced metering infrastructure and SCADA systems.

Workforce development, customer engagement, emergency preparedness, and cybersecurity are addressed as core strategic pillars. Key performance indicators will track water loss, customer satisfaction, regulatory compliance, and project delivery.

This positions the NFWUA as a regional leader in utility management—committed to meeting today's needs while planning responsibly for future generations across Columbia and Suwannee Counties.

2. Organizational Background

NFWUA was formed through interlocal agreements (Attachment A) between Columbia and Suwannee Counties, with the goal of managing and coordinating water resources, infrastructure, and services. The association serves municipal, industrial, and agricultural customers and supports public health, economic development, and environmental protection.

3. Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Mission Statement

The mission of the North Florida Water Utility Association (NFWUA) is to deliver safe, reliable, and high-quality water and wastewater services to the residents and businesses of Columbia and Suwannee Counties. We are committed to protecting public health, preserving natural resources, and fostering sustainable regional growth through responsible utility management, innovation, and intergovernmental collaboration.

Vision Statement

The vision of NFWUA is to become North Florida's leading regional water utility—recognized for excellence in service delivery, environmental stewardship, and long-term infrastructure resiliency. We aim to serve as a model for rural and regional utility partnerships by providing efficient operations, maintaining strong community trust, and ensuring resource sustainability for future generations.

Core Values

1. Public Stewardship

We are caretakers of vital public resources. Every decision is made with the well-being of our communities, environment, and future generations in mind.

2. Transparency and Accountability

We operate with full transparency in our governance and financial management. We are accountable to the public, our partners, and regulatory agencies.

3. Reliability and Quality

We are committed to delivering dependable, high-quality water and wastewater services through proactive maintenance and continuous improvement.

4. Collaboration

We value regional cooperation and work closely with local governments, water management districts, and state agencies to develop sustainable solutions.

5. Innovation and Efficiency

We embrace modern technology and smart practices to improve operations, reduce costs, and enhance customer service.

6. Environmental Responsibility

We are dedicated to protecting Florida's natural water resources, springs, and aquifers through conservation, monitoring, and responsible planning.

7. Customer Focus

We listen to our customers, respond promptly to their needs, and strive to deliver fair and equitable service across all communities.

These guiding principles shape every aspect of NFWUA's operations and strategic direction.

4. Governance Structure

Board of Directors:

Appointed representatives from each county's commission.

Executive Director:

Oversees operations and staff. Mr. Shannon Roberts was hired – June 9, 2025, as the Executive Director of NFWUA

Committees:

Finance, Infrastructure, Environmental Stewardship, Public Engagement.

Regular meetings are governed by Florida Sunshine Laws. Stakeholders include municipalities, private water systems, and regulatory agencies.

5. Market and Service Area Overview

Geographic Scope:
Columbia and Suwannee Counties, encompassing rural and semi-urban areas with key population centers like Lake City and Live Oak.

Demographics:
Combined population of approximately 110,000. Growing at a projected rate of 1.2% annually.

Customer Base:
Residential (80%), Commercial (15%), Industrial/Agricultural (5%).

Water Demand Forecast (2035):

- Columbia: 13 MGD
- Suwannee: 10 MGD
- Combined: ~23 MGD, with projected 25% increase over 10 years.

6. Inventory of County Resources

Water Resources:

The North Florida Water Utility Association (NFWUA), serving Columbia and Suwannee Counties, oversees an integrated water and wastewater utility system vital to the region's public health, economic development, and environmental protection. NFWUA's water resources are drawn from one of the most important and sensitive hydrological features in the southeastern United States—the Floridan Aquifer System—while its infrastructure spans hundreds of miles, interconnecting municipal, unincorporated, and rural communities with essential water services.

Primary Water Resource: The Floridan Aquifer

The Floridan Aquifer is the primary water supply source for both Columbia and Suwannee Counties. Renowned for its high yield and exceptional water quality, the aquifer supports not only drinking water but also agricultural irrigation, industrial use, and environmental recharge. Groundwater is withdrawn through deep wells strategically located across both counties. These wells are managed with strict adherence to withdrawal permits issued by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) to ensure sustainability and protect neighboring springs and water

bodies such as Ichetucknee Springs, the Suwannee River, and Santa Fe River.

Water Treatment and Distribution Systems

NFWUA manages multiple wellfields equipped with chlorination, fluoridation, and filtration systems to meet Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. These systems are linked by over 350 miles of water distribution lines of varying sizes and materials. Advanced Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems are deployed to remotely monitor pump stations, reservoir levels, and water quality parameters in real time. Pressurized storage tanks and elevated towers help regulate system pressure and ensure consistent service during peak demand periods.

The Association also plans to integrate advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) throughout the service area, allowing for real-time usage monitoring, leak detection, and data-driven operational efficiency.

Wastewater and Reuse Systems

NFWUA operates regional wastewater treatment facilities in both Columbia and Suwannee Counties. These plants utilize biological nutrient removal (BNR) processes to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus levels, meeting stringent effluent discharge requirements. Treated wastewater is either safely discharged into permitted outfalls or reused for irrigation through reuse water systems that support golf courses, agriculture, and public green spaces.

Efforts are ongoing to expand reclaimed water infrastructure to reduce dependency on groundwater withdrawals and support aquifer recharge. Biosolids generated through treatment processes shall be handled through composting, land application, or off-site disposal per regulatory standards.

Emergency and Redundancy Systems

Critical components of the system, including generators, booster stations, and storage tanks, are hardened for resiliency during hurricanes and emergencies. Mutual aid agreements with local governments and interconnection valves between systems allow water to be rerouted quickly in case of a disruption. Backup wells, mobile generators, and redundant chemical feeds further strengthen NFWUA's ability to maintain uninterrupted service.

Resource Protection and Monitoring

The Association actively monitors groundwater levels, spring flows, and water quality trends in collaboration with SRWMD and FDEP. Water conservation programs, leak detection, and public education efforts help reduce per capita consumption and preserve long-term water availability. Protection of recharge areas and coordination on land use planning ensures that growth does not compromise the sustainability of the regional water system.

Together, these systems form a robust foundation for delivering safe, efficient, and sustainable water services across North Florida.

Existing Infrastructure:

- Columbia County Utilities (5 major wells, 3 treatment plants)
- City of Lake City Water and Sewer Department
- Suwannee County Regional Water System
- Private small systems and package plants

Land and Facilities:

- County-owned easements for utility expansion
- Public works and emergency management support
- Existing utility office space and maintenance facilities

Technology Assets:

- SCADA systems in place for monitoring
- GIS mapping platforms
- Asset management software in Columbia County

Personnel Resources:

- Certified water and wastewater operators
- Existing utility staff from municipal systems
- Engineering and compliance staff

7. Infrastructure Overview

Water Supply and Treatment Systems:

- Columbia County: Multiple well fields drawing from the Floridan Aquifer, supported by chlorination disinfection systems. Capacity ~10 MGD.
- City of Lake City: Serves ~12,000 customers.
- Suwannee County: Community water systems, ~2–3 MGD capacity.

Distribution and Storage:

- 350+ miles of combined water lines.
- Elevated storage tanks and booster stations.

Sewer Infrastructure:

- Lake City: Advanced wastewater treatment facility.
- Suwannee: Multiple lift stations, 2 small treatment plants.

Asset Condition:

- 30–50% of lines are 30+ years old.
- SCADA and pump systems need upgrades.

8. Regulatory Environment and Compliance

Regulatory Authorities:

- FDEP, SRWMD, EPA

Compliance Responsibilities:

- Drinking water and wastewater discharge permits
- Stormwater and nutrient reduction compliance

Reporting:

- Monthly Operations, Annual Confidence Reports

Challenges:

- PFAS testing
- Nutrient reductions in impaired basins
- Upgrading biosolid management

9. Financial Strategy and Funding Sources

Revenue:

- User fees, impact fees, service payments

Budget:

- Operating: $12.4M
- Capital: $26M over 5 years

Funding:

- State Revolving fund (SRF), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) grants, American Rescue Plan (ARPA), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Florida legislative Appropriations. (See Attachment D: Funding)

Controls:

- Independent audits, rate reviews, capital reserves

10. Operational Plan

Objectives:

- Reliable 24/7 service
- Regulatory compliance
- Quick response to service issues

Staffing:

- Director, operators, techs, finance, compliance

Tools:

- Computerized maintenance management systems (CMMS), SCADA, asset databases

Optimization:

- Automated meter reading (AMR)/advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) meter upgrades
- Leak detection, flushing programs
- Generator coverage

11. Rate Structure and Affordability Strategy

Rate Philosophy:

- The NFWUA adopts a cost-of-service rate model to ensure financial sustainability while maintaining affordability for low-income and rural residents.

Rate Structure Components:

- Base charge by meter size
- Volume tier rates for usage (conservation pricing)
- Sewer rates based on water consumption
- Lifeline rates or discounts for seniors and low-income households
- Affordability Programs:
- Hardship waivers
- Payment plans
- Leak forgiveness and conservation rebates

Planned Actions:

- Rate study every 3 years
- Implement advanced meter infrastructure, (AMI) for transparent billing
- Public education on bill components

12. Capital Improvement Plan

Objectives:

- Replace aging infrastructure
- Expand service capacity
- Improve efficiency and regulatory compliance

Five-Year CIP Budget: $26 million

- Water line replacement: $9 million
- New wells and treatment: $7 million
- Sewer lift stations upgrades: $5 million
- Emergency interconnects: $2.5 million
- SCADA and technology: $2.5 million

Project Prioritization Criteria:

- Health/safety risks
- Regulatory mandates
- Economic development alignment
- Cost-benefit analysis

Funding Strategy:

- SRF and USDA grants and miscellaneous other. (See Attachment D: Funding)
- Rate-based reserve funds
- Legislative appropriations

13. Strategic Partnerships and Interlocal Agreements

Current Partnerships:

- Columbia County, Suwannee County
- Lake City and Live Oak utilities
- Suwannee River Water Management District

Goals:

- Expand water service across county lines
- Coordinate regional planning and shared infrastructure
- Emergency water sharing agreements

Key Agreements:

- Mutual aid agreements
- Infrastructure cost-sharing MOU
- Joint grant applications

Future Opportunities:

- Regional wastewater partnerships
- Interconnectivity with adjacent counties
- Public-private project collaboration

14. Emergency Management and Resiliency Planning

Preparedness Goals:

- Maintain continuous service during hurricanes, floods, and system failures

Key Measures:

- Backup generators at critical facilities
- Emergency water storage tanks
- Cross-training of staff
- Inventory of critical parts

Partnerships:

- County emergency management teams
- Florida Rural Water Association
- FEMA and state resiliency programs

Resiliency Projects:

- Storm-hardened pump stations
- Elevated well control panels
- Mobile backup chlorination systems

Planning:

- Annual tabletop drills and continuity updates
- Integration with county EOCs

15. Workforce Development and Training

Staff Development Goals:

- Build and retain a skilled utility workforce

Current Workforce

- 25 full-time equivalent positions across operations, admin, and maintenance

Key Programs:

- Apprenticeship and certification programs
- Cross-training for emergency response
- Supervisor and leadership development

Training Partners:

- Florida Gateway College
- Rural Water Association training sessions
- DEP Operator Certification programs

Retention Strategies:

- Competitive pay scale
- Performance incentives and promotions
- Work-life balance and safety programs

16. Customer Service and Engagement

Customer Service Standards:

- 24-hour issue response
- Transparent billing and policies
- Multiple payment and communication options

Engagement Strategy:

- Quarterly newsletter (print + digital)
- Website with outage maps and service updates
- Social media for alerts and engagement

Community Outreach:

- Water conservation education in schools
- Ratepayer advisory board
- Listening sessions and surveys

Technology:

- Customer portal for usage tracking and billing
- IVR, (interactive voice response) and text alerts for emergencies

17. Environmental Stewardship and Conservation

Stewardship Goals:

- Protect aquifer and surface water
- Encourage responsible use

Programs:

- Leak detection and repair
- Irrigation audits and rebates
- Septic-to-sewer transition planning

Monitoring:

- Daily well drawdown tracking
- Monthly water quality and nitrate levels

Partnerships:

- Suwannee River Partnership
- Springs Protection Programs (FDEP)
- Agricultural best management practices coordination

Long-Term Plans:

- Recharge area protection via conservation easements
- Advanced reuse feasibility study

18. Technology and Innovation Plan

Strategic Goals:

- Increase efficiency and data-driven operations

Priority Technologies:

- Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)
- Real-time SCADA with cloud backup
- GIS-based asset tracking
- Customer service and billing software integration

Innovation Opportunities:

- Smart sensors for leak detection
- AI-Artificial Intelligence driven water quality trend forecasting
- Drones for remote site inspection

Cybersecurity:

- VPN-virtual private network secured SCADA access
- Regular penetration testing and backups

19. Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Top Risks:

- Aging infrastructure failures
- Contamination events (PFAS, bacteria)
- Cyberattacks or IT outages
- Ratepayer affordability issues

Mitigation Strategies:

- Capital replacement planning
- Emergency water and power backups
- Redundant systems and SCADA alerts
- Insurance reviews and financial reserves

Monitoring:

- Quarterly risk review by Board
- Incident log audits and policy updates

20. Implementation Timeline and Key Metrics

Year 1 (2025–26):

- Finalize governance and staffing
- Rate study and budget adoption
- Begin CIP Phase I projects

Year 2–3:

- Launch advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) implementation
- Expand septic-to-sewer efforts
- Build new interconnects

Year 4–5:

- Full SCADA integration
- Additional wells or storage

Key Metrics:

- Customer complaints resolved <24 hours
- Water loss <10%
- Regulatory violations = 0
- Capital project delivery on budget/schedule

Attachment A

INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT

This INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT is made and entered into on this 16th day of April 2024, by and between Columbia County, Florida; and Suwannee County, Florida, each a political subdivision of the State of Florida, hereinafter referred to collectively as the "Counties".

WITNESSETH

WHEREAS, the Counties have determined that it is in the best interests of the Counties that a single, separate legal entity known as the North Florida Water Utilities Authority ("NFWUA") be formed to make all policies necessary in the discretion of that entity and to contract for and to provide for the operation and maintenance of their respective water, wastewater, and reclaimed (i.e., "reuse") water facilities located within the Counties or either one of them;

WHEREAS, the Counties are authorized pursuant to section 163.01, Florida Statutes, to enter into Interlocal Agreements to cooperatively make the most efficient use of their powers to their mutual advantage, and to provide services and facilities in accordance with geographic, economic, demographic, and other factors influencing the needs and development of the local community; and

WHEREAS, the Counties are authorized pursuant to section 125.01(1), Florida Statutes, to independently exercise the powers they agree to jointly exercise through this Agreement;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual promises set forth herein, the Counties agree as follows:

I. RECITALS

a. The above recitals are true and correct and are incorporated herein by reference.

II. PURPOSE and GOALS

a. PURPOSE: The purpose of this Interlocal Agreement is to create the NFWUA as an independent special district and interlocal government agency pursuant to section 163.01, Florida Statutes, and the terms of this Interlocal Agreement, and to establish the constitution of its Board of Directors.

b. GOALS: The goals of the NFWUA pursuant to this Agreement are:

1. To provide to the citizens of the Counties reliable, cost effective, and regulatory compliant maintenance, service, and operation of the Counties' respective water, wastewater, and reclaimed water facilities;

2. To provide to the citizens of the Counties sustainable, clean, and safe potable water distribution service, operated by competent, courteous, and well-trained employees;
3. To provide to the citizens of the Counties sustainable, treated, and properly discharged or conserved wastewater collection and effluent management;
4. To provide to the citizens of the Counties sustainable, properly treated, and regulatory compliant reuse water for irrigation and any other lawfully permitted purpose;
5. To provide to the citizens of the Counties responsive, efficient, and accountable maintenance and operational management of the Counties' respective water, wastewater, and reclaimed water facilities;

III. FUNDING

Each of the Counties shall contribute to the NFWUA annually in the following amounts, paid in one installment at the beginning of each fiscal year, in an amount based on the pro forma proportionate share of maintenance and operation costs of each such County's respective water, wastewater, and reclaimed water facilities.

a. Each County shall also be solely responsible for any additional specially allocated costs pertaining to that County's own water, wastewater, and reclaimed water systems, in such amount as specifically approved by the Board of County Commissioners for that County, as requested by the Board of Directors of the NFWUA, to be separately paid by that County to NFWUA within thirty (30) days of such final authorization and approval for payment.

b. No County shall be required to contribute any additional sums. The Counties may, however, from time to time pay such additional sums as may be approved by their respective Boards of County Commissioners. Counties shall have no liabilities of any kind under this Agreement except for payment of the above-referenced sums.

IV. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

a. The NFWUA shall be managed by a Board of Directors (the "Board"). The Board is charged with fulfilling the purposes and goals of this Agreement by providing water, wastewater, and reclaimed water maintenance and operational services to the Counties' respective water, wastewater, and reclaimed water facilities. The Board shall make all policies for the administration, fees, rates, charges, collections, enforcement, operation, maintenance, extension, enlargement, development, replacement, and repair of these utility systems.

V. DURATION

a. The Board shall continue in existence until dissolved by a joint resolution of the Boards of County Commissioners for Columbia and Suwannee Counties. Any such joint resolution, if adopted by both Counties, shall be filed with the Clerks of the Circuit Courts of the participating Counties prior to its becoming effective.
b. Any one County may withdraw from this Agreement at any time by giving 180 days written notice to the Board, accompanied by a Resolution of that County's Board of County Commissioners authorizing withdrawal from this Agreement.
c. A County may be added to this Agreement upon submission of a resolution from the Board of County Commissioners for that County (the "applicant County") requesting membership and agreeing to abide by the terms and conditions of this Agreement. Upon submission, the Board shall cause to be submitted to each of the member Counties true copies of the applicant County's resolution together with a statement from the Board indicating the financial and practical feasibility of adding the applicant County under this Agreement. Upon approval by a simple majority of the member Counties, indicated by resolutions, the Board shall cause to be recorded in the official records of each of the member Counties those resolutions indicating approval of the applicant County as well as the applicant County's resolution indicating its willingness to be bound by this Agreement.
d. Funding contributions by a new County pursuant to above, shall be as outlined in Section III, above.

VI. BOARD COMPOSITION, OFFICERS, AND MEETINGS

a. The Board initially shall be composed of two (2) members from each of the Counties. Each Board member shall be appointed by his or her respective Board of County Commissioners for a term of one year or until a successor is appointed.
b. In the event of the addition of another member County, there shall be two Board seats created for each new member County, filled and held in accordance with this agreement.
c. In order to ensure an odd number of members of the Board, the members of the Board as appointed by the Boards of County Commissioners shall nominate and appoint one additional member to the Board, who shall be a resident of one of the Counties, for a term of one year or until a successor is appointed.
d. Vacancies shall be filled by the appropriate Board of County Commissioners, or by the Board as to the additional member of the Board, making sure that each County has at least two (2) appointed representatives on the Board at all times.
e. The Board shall elect by majority vote from among its members a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson shall not be an appointee of the same Board of County Commissioners that appointed the Chairperson. The term of each office shall be one year or until a successor in office is elected.
f. The Board shall meet at least once each quarter or more often if deemed necessary by the Chairperson to transact the business of the Board.

g. A quorum for the purpose of transacting business shall be a simple majority of the full Board membership. A simple majority of a quorum shall be necessary to decide any question.
h. The Board may adopt bylaws consistent with this Agreement to govern the conduct of its meetings and the taking of official action pursuant to the Board's enumerated powers.

VII. POWERS

a. The Board shall have the power and authority to accept funds appropriated to it by any governmental body or other sources. It may apply for and receive grants and donations of all kinds. All such collected funds may be lawfully expended for any purpose under this Agreement. The Board shall have the independent authority, or with the assistance of the participating parties hereto, to enforce all rules, regulations and policies adopted pursuant to this Agreement, and may resort to any available legal process for this purpose.
b. In addition, the Board shall have the authority:
    1. To sue and be sued;
    2. To adopt, use and alter at will, a corporate seal;
    3. To acquire, purchase, hold, lease as a lessee, and use any whole or fractional interest in real or personal property, both tangible and intangible, as necessary or desirable for carrying out the purposes of the Board, and to sell, lease as lessor, transfer or dispose of any property or interest therein acquired by the Board;
    4. To review and approve the establishment of rates, fees, and other charges for the services and facilities within the areas of operation and, if deemed appropriate, to set, alter, charge and establish rates, fees, and other charges to ensure that same are just and equitable;
    5. To make contracts and to execute all instruments necessary for carrying on the Board's business;
    6. To accept gifts or grants or loans of money or other property to the Board to be lawfully expended according to the purposes of this Interlocal Agreement;
    7. To enter into contracts, leases, or other transactions with any state or federal agency or with any other public body of the state, including municipalities, school districts, and other authorities;
    8. To borrow money and issue evidence of indebtedness as permitted or provided by law. The cost of debt service shall be included in NFWUA's annual budget; and
    9. To develop water conservation and related plans, and to coordinate planning and programs with appropriate municipal, county, regional, and state agencies located within the NFWUA region.

c. Each member of the Board shall attend and maintain training as required by state, regional, or federal regulatory authorities, if any.

VIII. PERSONNEL AND SERVICES

a. The Board may employ a Secretary to the Board, and such other persons, firms, or corporations as it deems necessary to provide adequate administrative, clerical, professional, and technical assistance and services to conduct Board business. The Board may determine the qualifications and fix the compensation of such persons, firms or corporations, and make its elections as to service providers pursuant to Florida law. Budget and funding for said staff and services shall be established by the Board.

b. The Board shall appoint a NFWUA Administrator who shall serve at the pleasure of the Board and shall have the exclusive day to day authority and full command and control over NFWUA's administrative, human resources, training, operational, security, and logistics affairs. The Administrator shall be employed pursuant to an individual, written contract which shall be negotiated and entered between the Administrator and the Board. In addition, the Board may provide for a written and approved incentive compensation plan based on achievement of service standards adopted by the Board. In addition to pursuing the directed goals and purposes as stated above, the Administrator shall be charged with and have authority for the following:

   i. Employ, contract with, train, and/or terminate all subordinate personnel for NFWUA. Subject to Board approval, the Administrator shall develop policies and procedures as to all human resources functions and, if approved by the Board, the Administrator shall be charged with ensuring compliance with all such policies and procedures.

   ii. Upon recommendation of the Board's staff attorney, and with the consent and approval of the Board, compromise, settle, or dismiss any litigation, legal proceedings, claims, demands, or grievances which may be pending for or on behalf of, or against NFWUA, as applicable. Litigation of claims or demands against the NFWUA shall at all times be pursued as provided by and in accordance with Florida Law and applicable court rules.

   iii. Serve as the Board's contact as to all matters relating to daily operations of NFWUA. Circumvention of this subsection by any member of the Board resulting in that Board member directing or personally influencing the day to day administrative, financial, security, logistical, or operational affairs of the NFWUA may constitute official misconduct by that member of the Board.

   iv. Have the authority to negotiate the terms and conditions of contracts or agreements necessary for the operation of NFWUA. Notwithstanding this

subsection, no contracts or agreements shall be binding upon NFWUA unless and until approved by the Board.

v. Develop and set administrative and operational policies, schedule of rates, fees, and charges, regulations, rules, and procedures for the operation of NFWUA, subject to approval by the Board and compliance with all local, state, and federal laws, and regulations.

vi. Shall immediately inform the Board on all urgent or important matters as determined in the judgment of the Administrator.

IX. ANNUAL AUDIT

a. The Board and NFWUA shall have all books, records, and accounts in the control of the Board or NFWUA audited annually and shall provide copies of the audit to all Board members and to any federal, state, or local government agencies that require review of said audits. Audit of the immediate previous fiscal year shall commence not later than December 1 of each year.

X. OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION

a. It is the intention at that time of entering this Agreement that upon further authorization and approval by each affected County, and the approval of the Board itself, that the Board shall own and operate all of the combined water, wastewater, and reclaimed water system assets of the Counties in accordance with such rules and policies as it may adopt with the assistance of the Administrator. In the event such conveyance of ownership occurs, this Agreement may be revisited for purpose of constituting future Boards.

XI. BUDGET AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

a. The Administrator shall prepare and submit a proposed annual budget for the operation of the systems, with the pro forma proportionate breakdown by County for the upcoming fiscal year, and shall do so at least sixty (60) days in advance of each fiscal year for consideration and approval by the Board. The Administrator shall also file with the Board a financial report on or before each regularly scheduled Board meeting showing the financial status of NFWUA and the disposition of any funds received from the system as well as any other funds provided for the system's operation. The Administrator may make line-item adjustments to the budget but shall obtain Board approval for any changes that will or may affect the budget totals. Any expansion of fiscal responsibility of any County beyond that which has previously been authorized and approved of by that County pursuant to this Interlocal Agreement must be separately authorized and approved by the formal action of that County's Board of County Commissioners. For any fiscal year or portion thereof during which the respective Counties' utility systems are owned separately by each respective County, the Administrator shall

breakout the budget and financial reports to correspond appropriately to each such separate County owned utility system.

XII. PROHIBITED ACTS

a. Except for the purposes of an inquiry, members of the Board shall deal with the affairs of the NFWUA solely through the Administrator and neither the Board nor any member thereof shall publicly or privately give orders to any subordinate of the Administrator.

XIII. SPECIAL SESSIONS OF THE BOARD

a. The Board shall annually take up for consideration the status of the Counties' respective water, wastewater, and reclaimed water systems being maintained and operated by the NFWUA, including the policies, rates, fees, charges, maintenance, repairs and replacements, expansion, financing, and management of the system. The Board shall thereafter make recommendations to the Boards of County Commissioners for modification of this Agreement as are determined appropriate or shall make a finding that no changes are in order as of that meeting.

XIV. EFFECTIVE DATE

a. This agreement shall take effect immediately upon its approval by each County's Board of County Commissioners. This Agreement shall be filed pursuant to section 163.01(11), Florida Statutes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the Boards of County Commissioners of Columbia County and Suwannee County, Florida, have each entered into this agreement and have caused it to be executed by their duly authorized officers.

COLUMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA
A political subdivision of the State of Florida

SIGNED: _____
Chairman of the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST: _____
Clerk for the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners

DATE: April 18, 2024

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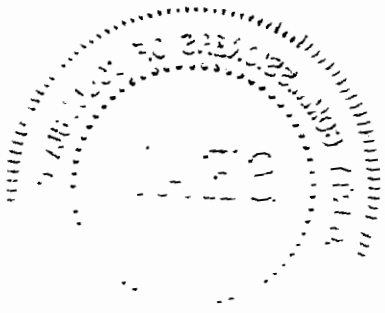

SUWANNEE COUNTY, FLORIDA
A political subdivision of the State of Florida

SIGNED: _____
Chairman of the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST: Logan Woods, DC
Clerk for the Suwannee County Board of County Commissioners

DATE: 04.16.24

Attachment B

Projections of Florida Population by County, 2025–2045, with Estimates for 2020

County and State	Estimates April 1, 2020	Projections, April 1 2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Alachua	271,588	283,035	292,692	300,261	306,332	311,324
Baker	28,532	29,882	31,017	31,957	32,728	33,387
Bay	174,410	185,038	193,082	199,010	203,693	207,593
Bradford	28,725	29,260	29,650	29,930	30,190	30,441
Brevard	606,671	643,112	671,329	694,250	714,874	733,563
Broward	1,932,212	2,013,797	2,083,767	2,142,335	2,192,705	2,237,840
Calhoun	14,489	15,120	15,598	15,950	16,228	16,460
Charlotte	187,904	203,016	215,478	225,562	234,391	242,460
Citrus	149,383	156,569	162,381	166,880	170,762	174,329
Clay	219,575	237,339	252,446	264,550	274,802	283,855
Collier	387,450	423,564	452,806	477,771	499,729	518,956
Columbia	70,617	73,506	75,881	77,689	79,177	80,462
DeSoto	37,082	38,730	39,959	40,941	41,754	42,469
Dixie	16,663	16,956	17,166	17,313	17,424	17,528
Duval	982,080	1,043,160	1,092,238	1,131,522	1,164,144	1,192,525
Escambia	323,714	335,093	344,048	351,239	357,680	363,494
Flagler	114,173	128,283	140,758	150,941	159,426	166,907
Franklin	11,864	12,384	12,778	13,068	13,297	13,488
Gadsden	46,226	46,820	47,204	47,426	47,563	47,649
Gilchrist	18,269	19,332	20,170	20,848	21,420	21,924
Glades	13,609	14,272	14,811	15,222	15,560	15,851
Gulf	14,724	15,399	15,909	16,286	16,583	16,831
Hamilton	14,570	14,824	15,012	15,140	15,231	15,300
Hardee	27,443	27,464	27,483	27,500	27,515	27,529
Hendry	40,953	42,898	44,380	45,554	46,570	47,468
Hernando	192,186	206,365	218,237	227,500	235,005	241,532
Highlands	104,834	108,990	112,385	115,203	117,667	119,883
Hillsborough	1,478,759	1,614,227	1,723,500	1,811,841	1,889,150	1,958,324
Holmes	20,001	20,067	20,128	20,181	20,230	20,275
Indian River	158,834	171,332	181,673	189,917	196,897	203,110
Jackson	46,587	47,096	47,507	47,721	47,827	47,870
Jefferson	14,394	14,558	14,708	14,843	14,965	15,079
Lafayette	8,690	9,044	9,340	9,568	9,756	9,920
Lake	366,742	409,201	445,438	475,796	501,692	525,207

Source: Florida Demographic Estimating Conference, March 2021 and the University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, Florida Population Studies, Volume 54, Bulletin 189, April 2021

Projections of Florida Population by County, 2025–2045, with Estimates for 2020

County and State	Estimates April 1, 2020	Projections, April 1 2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Lee	750,493	829,303	894,597	948,834	996,086	1,038,511
Leon	299,484	312,338	323,012	331,425	338,510	344,579
Levy	41,699	43,115	44,260	45,176	45,947	46,650
Liberty	8,575	8,848	9,068	9,229	9,354	9,459
Madison	18,954	19,038	19,114	19,181	19,242	19,298
Manatee	398,503	437,640	470,632	498,045	522,641	544,365
Marion	368,135	394,914	417,138	434,244	448,104	459,981
Martin	161,301	170,496	177,612	183,467	188,675	193,311
Miami-Dade	2,832,794	2,992,713	3,128,267	3,234,615	3,322,226	3,398,177
Monroe	77,823	78,799	79,424	79,793	80,020	80,159
Nassau	89,258	99,151	107,454	114,621	121,087	126,888
Okaloosa	203,951	214,634	223,161	230,024	236,005	241,122
Okeechobee	42,112	43,443	44,497	45,314	46,043	46,698
Orange	1,415,260	1,558,673	1,678,397	1,777,854	1,864,282	1,941,833
Osceola	387,055	453,633	512,481	560,690	603,577	643,089
Palm Beach	1,466,494	1,544,853	1,612,167	1,668,575	1,716,971	1,758,539
Pasco	542,638	592,955	635,684	668,774	696,407	720,542
Pinellas	984,054	1,011,799	1,031,377	1,045,155	1,055,506	1,063,764
Polk	715,090	783,145	840,192	888,368	929,316	965,766
Putnam	73,723	74,225	74,692	75,096	75,451	75,772
Saint Johns	261,900	304,567	340,548	370,871	398,005	422,755
Saint Lucie	322,265	355,760	384,794	407,451	426,418	443,052
Santa Rosa	184,653	201,790	215,932	227,843	238,660	248,474
Sarasota	438,816	472,115	498,160	520,376	539,897	557,545
Seminole	476,727	505,142	528,478	548,354	565,100	579,426
Sumter	141,422	167,786	189,956	208,161	223,844	237,883
Suwannee	45,463	47,232	48,716	49,888	50,841	51,669
Taylor	22,436	22,762	22,994	23,148	23,247	23,315
Union	15,410	15,603	15,722	15,784	15,817	15,833
Volusia	551,588	583,919	608,945	628,786	646,107	662,049
Wakulla	33,981	36,383	38,402	40,070	41,429	42,582
Walton	74,724	85,868	95,460	103,610	110,913	117,864
Washington	25,334	26,178	26,835	27,326	27,720	28,052
FLORIDA	21,596,068	23,138,553	24,419,127	25,461,863	26,356,415	27,149,835

Source: Florida Demographic Estimating Conference, March 2021 and the University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, Florida Population Studies, Volume 54, Bulletin 189, April 2021

Attachment C

Projections of Florida Population by County, 2025–2050, with Estimates for 2023

Stefan Rayer, Population Program Director
Conor Comfort, Research Demographer

Extracted from Florida Population Studies,
Volume 57, Bulletin 198, January 2024

The Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida has produced population projections for Florida and its counties since the 1970s. This report presents our 2024 set of projections and describes the methodology used to construct those projections. To account for uncertainty regarding future population growth, we publish three series of projections – low, medium, and high. We recommend using the medium series for most purposes; this series has historically provided the most accurate forecasts for Florida counties. It should be noted that these projections refer solely to the resident population of Florida; they do not include temporary or seasonal residents whose usual place of residence is in another jurisdiction.

State Projections

The starting point for the state-level projections was the decennial census count for April 1, 2020. Projections were made in one-year intervals using a cohortcomponent methodology in which births, deaths, and migration are projected separately for each age-sex cohort in Florida.

Survival rates were applied by single year of age and sex to project future deaths in the population. These rates were based on Florida Life Tables for 2012–2018, using mortality data published by the Office of Vital Statistics in the Florida Department of Health. We adjusted the survival rates for 2020–2028 to make them consistent with recent mortality trends, and to align the projected deaths with those from the State of Florida's Demographic Estimating Conference (DEC) held November 28, 2023. After 2028, we made small adjustments to the survival rates based on projected changes in survival rates released by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Domestic migration rates by age and sex were based on Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 2011–2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates and 2015–2019 ACS 5-year estimates. We calculated an average of those two sets of migration estimates; projections based on input data from more than one period tend to be more accurate than those based on a single period. By combining 1-year ACS estimates, which are more current, with 5-year ACS estimates, which are more stable, we make use of the different strengths of each type of ACS data.

We applied smoothing techniques to the migration rates by single year of age and sex to adjust for data irregularities caused by small sample sizes. The smoothed in- and out-migration rates were weighted to account for recent changes in Florida's population growth rates. Projections of domestic in-migration were made by applying weighted in-migration rates to the projected population of the United States (minus Florida), using the most recent set of national projections produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. Projections of out-migration were made by applying weighted outmigration rates to the Florida population. In both instances, rates were calculated separately for males and females for each age up to 90 and over.

The distribution of foreign immigrants by age and sex was also based on averages of the patterns observed over the same time periods using the same ACS data sets as for domestic migration. Again, we smoothed the estimates to account for irregularities in the age/sex distribution of immigrants.

Projections were made in one-year intervals, with each projection serving as the base for the following projection. Projected in-migration for each one-year interval was added to the survived Florida population at the end of the interval and projected out-migration was subtracted, giving a projection of the population age one and older.

Births were projected by applying age-specific birth rates (adjusted for child mortality) to the projected female population. These birth rates were based on Florida birth data for 2012–2018 published by the Office of Vital Statistics in the Florida Department of Health. They imply a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.75 births per woman. These rates were reduced in the short-term projections to make

them consistent with recent fertility trends, and to align the projected births with those from the November 28, 2023 DEC. The long-term projections imply about 1.83 births per woman.

The medium projections of total population for 2024–2028 were adjusted to be consistent with the state population forecasts for those years produced by the November 28, 2023 DEC. None of the projections after 2028 had any further controls.

In the addition to the medium series, we also created a low and a high series for Florida. These should not be considered low and high growth scenarios; rather, they represent an indication of the uncertainty surrounding the medium projections. The low and high series were based on analyses of past population forecast errors for Florida. In this publication, we provide projections for 2025, 2030, 2035, 2040, 2045, and 2050. State projections for other years are available by request.

County Projections

The cohort-component model is the most widely used technique to make population projections for larger areas such as states, but it is not necessarily the best way to make projections at the county level. Many counties in Florida have small populations, which make it difficult to produce reliable cohort-component projections by age and sex. Furthermore, county growth patterns can be volatile, and projections based on a single technique using data from a single time period may provide suboptimal results. We believe more useful projections of total population can be made by applying different techniques that incorporate data from different time periods.

For counties, we started with the population estimate constructed by BEBR for April 1, 2023. We made projections for each county using six different techniques in five-year increments. The six techniques were:

Linear – the population will change by the same number of persons in each future year as the average annual change during the base period.

1. Exponential – the population will change at the same percentage rate in each future year as the average annual rate during the base period.
2. Share-of-growth – each county's share of state population growth in the future will be the same as its share during the base period.
3. Shift-share – each county's share of the state population will change by the same annual amount in the future as the average annual change during the base period.
4. Constant-share – each county's share of the state population will remain constant at its 2023 level.
5. Constant – each county's population will remain equal to its 2023 estimate.

For the linear technique, we used base periods of ten and twenty years (2013–2023, and 2003–2023) yielding two sets of projections; for the exponential technique, we used a fifteen-year base period (2008-2023) yielding one projection; for the share-of-growth technique, we used base periods of two, ten, and twenty years (2021–2023, 2013–2023, and 2003–2023) yielding three sets of projections; and for the shift-share technique, we used base periods of five and fifteen years (2018–2023 and 2008–2023) yielding two sets of projections; and. The constant-share and constant techniques were based on data from a single year (2023).

This methodology produced ten different projections for each county for each projection year (2025, 2030, 2035, 2040, 2045, and 2050). From these, we calculated four averages: one using all ten projections (AVE10), one that excluded the highest and lowest projections (AVE-8), one that excluded the two highest and two lowest projections (AVE-6), and one that excluded the three highest and three lowest projections (AVE-4). Based on the results of previous research, we designated the average that excluded the three highest and three lowest projections (AVE-4) as the default technique for each county. For counties in which AVE-4 did not provide reasonable projections, we selected the technique producing projections that fit most closely with our evaluation criteria. We evaluated the resulting projections by comparing them with historical population trends and with the level of population growth projected for the state.

For 62 counties we selected projections made with AVE4, the default technique. In the remaining five counties, we selected projections made with an individual technique or calculated a custom average (e.g., an average of two individual techniques). These include Gadsden, Hardee, Lee, Monroe, and Sumter counties.

In counties with large institutional populations – including university students and state and federal prison inmates – we projected the non-institutional population separately from the institutional population. In the present set of projections, such adjustments were made for Alachua,

Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, Columbia, DeSoto, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Okeechobee, Santa Rosa, Sumter, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla, Walton, and Washington counties. In all other counties the projections were made for total population.

Range of County Projections

The methodology described above was used to construct the medium series of county projections. This is the series we believe will generally provide the most accurate forecasts of future population change. We also constructed a low and a high series, which provide an indication of the uncertainty surrounding the medium county projections. The low and high series were based on analyses of past population forecast errors for counties in Florida, broken down by population size and growth rate. They indicate the range into which approximately three-quarters of future county populations will fall, if the future distribution of forecast errors is similar to the past distribution.

The range between the low and high projections varies based on three factors: a county's population size in 2023 (less than 30,000; 30,000–199,999; and 200,000 or more), rate of population growth between 2013 and 2023 (less than 7.5%; 7.5–15%; 15–30%; and 30% or more), and the length of the projection horizon. Our studies have found that the distribution of absolute percent errors tends to remain relatively stable over time, leading us to believe that the low and high projections provide a reasonable range of errors for most counties. It must be emphasized, however, that the actual future population of any given county could be below the low projection or above the high projection.

For the medium series of projections, the sum of the county projections equals the state projection for each year (except for slight differences due to rounding). However, for the low and the high series, the sum of the county projections does not equal the state projection. The sum of the low projections for counties is lower than the state's low projection and the sum of the high projections for counties is higher than the state's high projection. This occurs because potential variation around the medium projection is greater for counties than for the state.

Acknowledgement

Funding for these projections was provided by the Florida Legislature.

Attachment D

In Florida, rural water authority districts and related entities may access various state funding sources to support water infrastructure, resource management, and improvement projects. Some key funding options include:

1. State Revolving Fund (SRF) Programs

• **Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF):** Provides low-interest loans for wastewater and stormwater infrastructure projects.

• **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF):** Offers low-interest loans for projects to improve drinking water systems, including compliance with state and federal standards.

• Administered by the **Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).**

2. Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Grants

• **Small Community Wastewater Grant Program***:* Provides funding for small, financially disadvantaged communities for wastewater treatment facilities.

• **Nonpoint Source Management Grants (319 Grants):** Support projects that address nonpoint source pollution and improve water quality.

3. Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF)

• Administered by the **Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)**, this fund supports projects in rural communities, including infrastructure development, which can encompass water and wastewater systems.

4. Florida Rural Water Association (FRWA)

• While not a direct funding source, FRWA assists rural water systems with accessing state and federal funding, technical assistance, and grant writing.

5. Water Management District (WMD) Funding Programs

Florida's five water management districts offer funding programs for water-related projects:

• **District Grants***:* Support local water supply, resource management, and environmental restoration efforts.

• Example: The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) often provide funding for rural projects.

6. Special Appropriations

• The Florida Legislature may allocate funding to rural water districts through special appropriations or state budgets. Collaboration with local legislators can help secure these funds.

7. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

• The **Florida Small Cities CDBG Program**, administered by the DEO, can fund water and wastewater infrastructure in low- to moderate-income rural areas.

8. Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Programs

• FDACS provides funding for agricultural water conservation programs, which may benefit rural water districts serving agricultural communities.

Steps to Access Funding:

• Contact the **Florida Department of Environmental Protection** or the relevant water management district.

• Work with the **Florida Rural Water Association** for technical and funding application support.

• Monitor opportunities for legislative appropriations or state budget inclusions.

Shannon Roberts

From: bobby bobbypayne.net <bobby@bobbypayne.net>
Sent: Sunday, September 7, 2025 1:53 PM
To: bobby bobbypayne.net
Subject: Special versus interlocal

Category	County/Municipal Utility	Interlocal Agreement	Independent Special District (Special Act)
Creation Process	County or city ordinance; no Legislature needed	Chapter 163 interlocal agreement; no Legislature needed	Requires bill passed by Florida Legislature
Authority to Serve Across Counties	Limited to county boundaries unless agreements are made	Can operate across counties as agreed in contract	Full statutory authority to serve multiple counties
Governance	County/city commission or appointed utility board	Board appointed by participating counties; structure flexible	Independent board set by statute; can have weighted voting or representation from each county
Taxing Authority	None; may issue revenue bonds	None; must rely on counties for funding or bonding	Can be granted taxing authority, special assessments, or bond issuance independently
Bonding / Financing	Revenue bonds backed by system revenues	Must be approved or backed by counties	Independent bond issuance possible; broader access to financing
Eminent Domain	County only	Only if delegated by counties	Can be granted by statute for the district
Flexibility / Adaptability	Moderate; changes handled by county ordinance	High; agreement can be amended by counties	Low; changes require legislative action
Political / State Oversight	Minimal; mostly local	Minimal; local control retained	Higher; subject to state oversight and reporting
Stability / Permanence	High locally, but limited scope	Moderate; depends on intercounty cooperation	High; statutory existence is long-term and stable
Best For	Single-county systems; simple setup		

- **Interlocal Agreement** = fastest, most flexible, good for joint planning without going to Tallahassee.

• **Special Act / Independent District** = strongest long-term authority, financing, and cross-county power, but slower and less flexible.
• **County Utility** = simple, local control, limited cross-county options.

Category	**County/Municipal Utility**	**Interlocal Agreement**	**Independent Special District (Special Act)**
Creation Process	County or city ordinance; no Legislature needed	Chapter 163 interlocal agreement; no Legislature needed	Requires bill passed by Florida Legislature
Authority to Serve Across Counties	Limited to county boundaries; needs intergovernmental agreements to serve other counties	Can serve multiple counties as agreed; boundaries defined in the agreement	Full statutory authority to serve multiple counties, cities, or regions
Governance	County/city commission or appointed utility board	Joint board appointed by participating counties; structure flexible	Independent board set by statute; can specify weighted voting or representation for each county
Taxing Authority	❌ None; must rely on fees and revenue bonds	❌ None; relies on member counties for funding or bonding	✅ Can levy ad valorem taxes or special assessments if authorized in the special act
Bonding / Financing	Revenue bonds backed by utility revenues only	Requires county approval or backing; limited financial independence	✅ Can issue bonds independently and access broader financing options
Eminent Domain	Limited to county jurisdiction	Only if counties delegate this authority	✅ Can be granted in statute to acquire property for the district
Rate/Service Control	County sets rates and policies	Board sets rates and policies within agreement limits	✅ District board sets rates and policies independently
Flexibility / Adaptability	Moderate; changes handled by county ordinance	High; agreement can be amended by counties	Low; changes require legislative amendment

Political / State Oversight	Minimal; mostly local	Minimal; controlled by member counties	Higher; subject to legislative oversight and state reporting
Stability / Permanence	High locally, but scope limited	Moderate; depends on cooperation between counties	High; statutory authority ensures long-term stability
Funding Access	Moderate; limited to revenue bonds	Limited; depends on counties	High; can independently issue bonds and secure grants
Best Use	Single-county systems; straightforward setup		

Summary for Columbia & Suwannee Counties:

- **If the goal is local control with minimal state involvement:**County utility is sufficient.
- **If the goal is cooperation without legislative approval:** Interlocal agreement works best.
- **If the goal is long-term regional authority, independent financing, and full statutory powers:** Special act creating an independent district is the strongest option

SWOT ANALYSIS FOR NFWUA SEPT. 2015

INTERNAL

STRENGTHS

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND HISTORY OF RESOURCES, CHALLENGES AND NEEDS
LARGE AREA WITH NATURAL RESOURCES, AQUIFER LOCATION IN PROXIMITY AND RECLAIM WATER OPPORTUNITIES
RURAL COMMUNITIES WITH UNIQUE OPPORTY AS A SMALLER ORGANIZATION
PARTNERING WITH SRWMD, SRWMD TO SUPPORT REGIONAL WATER MISSION IN ALIGNMENT WITH STATE GOALS
FLEXIBILITY, LOCALIZED CONTROL AND DECISION MAKING

WEAKNESSES

LIMITED FUNDING, SMALLER TAX BASED
AGING INFRASTRUCTURE, OUTDATED, INEFFICIENT AND FAILURE PRONE
LIMITED WORKFORCE AND MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE
GEOGRAPHIC, WIDELY DISPERSED POPULATIONS INCREASE COSTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE
MINIMAL STAFF AND LIMITED CAPACITY TO KEEP UP WITH INCREASING STRINGENT STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS
INCOMPLETE VISION, STRATEGIC ROADMAP AND BUSINESS PLAN
IMPROVE CULTURAL NEEDS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS, GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND BUILDING OF PUBLIC TRUST IS NEEDED

EXTERNAL

OPPORTUNITES

STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS INCREASING NEED FOR AVAILABLE FUNDS FOR RURAL WATER PROJECTS THROUGH USDA AND EPA
COLLABORATION WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTY (S) AND OR OTHER PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS FOR POOLING RESOURCES
MAY INSTALL SMART METERING, LEAK DETECTION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN FIRST TIME CAPITAL BUDGETS TO REDUCE LONG SERVICE AND EMPLOYEE NEEDS
PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN CONJUNCTION WITH WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICTS AND COOPERATIVES
ADDING ADDITIONAL COUNTIES OVER FUTURE YEARS TO GROW THE ORGANIZATION
COULD BE A MODEL FOR THE STATE IN REUSE INITIATIVES THAT PROVIDES LARGE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

THREATS

CLIMATE VOLITATILY AND VARIABILITY INCREASES FLOODING AND DROUGHT CONCERNS
POPULATION DECLINE OR LACK OF GROWTH MAY LEAD TO REVENUE AND INFRASTRUCTURE UTILIZATION, CUSTOMERS
COMPETION FOR WATER RESOURCES, GROWING DEMAND IN URBAN AREAS, AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY LIMIT WATER AVAILBILITY
REGULATORY PENALTIES, RISK OF FINES, NON COMPLIANCE WITH WATER QUALITY REGULATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGS
NATURAL DISASTERS AND CONTAMINATION AND DISRUPTIONS OF SERVICE.
LACK OF PUBLIC TRUST AND EXPOSURE DUE TO ANTI-GOVERNMENT, COMMISSION DRIVEN INIATIVE
COMPETING LOCAL UTILITIES.