

Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District

Strategic Plan 2025-2029

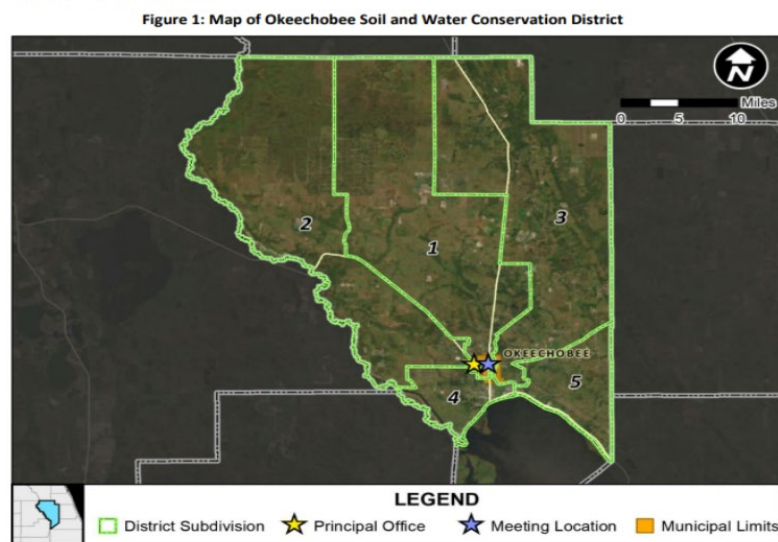
The Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District (the District), located in Okeechobee, FL is a special district guided by F.S. Chapter 582. The District is the local delivery system for the state’s agricultural conservation program to install best management practices (BMPs) on farms and ranches. The primary goal is to conserve our natural resources and protect Lake Okeechobee and its surrounding watersheds.

Soil Conservation Districts were organized and created by federal law in 1937 in response to devastating soil erosion conditions that existed in the United States. The Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District was established on January 9, 1951, and is governed by five elected officials- the Board of Supervisors (the Board).

The mission of the District is to develop and carry out locally led programs for the conservation, protection, and development of soil, water, and related plant and animal resources within the District’s boundaries.

Our vision is to remain the primary resource for landowners interested in agricultural conservation programs.

Figure 1 is a map of the District’s service area, based on the map incorporated by reference in Rule [5M-20.002\(3\)\(a\)32](#), Florida Administrative Code, showing the District’s boundaries, electoral subdivisions, major municipalities within the service area, the District’s principal office, and the primary meeting location used by Supervisors.



Population

Based on the Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research population estimates, the population within the District’s service area was 39,591 as of April 1, 2023.

1. Special District Compliance

- To keep the District compliant with state requirements.
- To improve District operations and implement unified, internal procedures.
- To maintain the level of staff needed to carry out the mission of the Board.

Goals	Performance Measures
Conduct 10 public Board Meetings	Track the number of meetings.
Encourage the Board to complete Ethics training, file Form-1 and elections paperwork on time.	Evaluate the number of training courses taken and monitor training needs through Board discussion and record state filing completion and deadline dates.
Review internal procedures on a yearly basis.	Record procedure reviews in meeting minutes.
Encourage professional development through workshops, trainings, meetings, and conferences for professional development.	Monitor the number of training opportunities and review trip reports.
Maintain website and District Facebook page.	Review analytics (engagement) of the website and social media.
Have a clean financial audit.	Auditor findings report.

Strategies:

- Post meeting schedule in the newspaper, on the website, on social media, and other relevant locations.
- Attend conferences, workshops, and trainings related to special districts and specific job duties.

2. Programing

- To improve public awareness of natural resource concerns.
- To promote program participation.

Goals	Performance Measures
Develop strong outreach programs for youth and adults.	The number of participants of outreach programs and events compared to the previous year.
Host outreach and educational events.	The number of completed pre and post assessments and surveys for programs and events.
Partner with other agencies and organizations that support our mission of protecting natural resources.	The number of partner agreements.
Increase the non-ag community awareness of the District.	The number of outreach programs

Strategies:

- Continue to support Okeechobee County Ag-Venture Inc. with their 4th grade agriculture program.
- Continue to support the National Association of Conservation Districts youth and adult outreach opportunities.
- Continue to offer Educator Grants to educators, schools, and other agencies.
- Maintain and seek out agreements with other agencies to achieve outreach and mission goals.

3. MARKETING/PUBLIC RELATIONS

- To develop a relationship with the newspaper, radio, TV, and online outlets.
- To promote public awareness and improve perception of the District’s mission.

Goals	Performance Measures
Appear 4 times per year in the newspaper.	Number of appearances in the newspaper
Post at least twice a week on social media.	Quarterly engagement reports.
Maintain website compliance.	Monthly report from compliance check software.
Promote the District brand.	
Increase District awareness in the Service Center.	

Strategies:

- Develop a relationship with the local newspaper.
- Stay on top of current events and create relevant social media posts.
- Run compliance check software monthly.
- Provide District apparel to Board members and staff.
- Provide promotional materials during programs and events.
- Post Board member photos and term in the Service Center.

4. Landowner Assistance

- To encourage participation in conservation programs.
- To promote awareness of natural resources concerns.

Goals	Performance Measures
Increase program applications in all landowner programs.	Compare the number of program applications from the previous year.
Provide program information at industry related functions.	Track staff or Board attendance at functions.

Strategies:

- Continue to offer small farms grants to smaller scale producers that do not qualify for state or federal funding.
- Attend industry appropriate functions and promote programs.
- Promote best management practice implementation through FDACS cost share.

5. Funding

- To maintain existing funding sources.
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Goals	Performance Measures
To procure innovative and diversified funding sources.	Track the number of funding resources.

Strategies:

- Maintain rental income from the District’s building.
- Maintain existing agreements with USDA-NRCS and FDACS-OAWP.
- Research and apply for grant opportunities with NACD and other organizations.

6. Legislative/Government Relations

- To work with partners that impact policy decisions at the local, state and national level.
- To work with government officials to shape public opinion about sustainable agriculture and conservation.

Goals	Performance Measures
Communicate with our government officials on a consistent basis.	Track the number of engagements with officials.

Strategies:

- Provide opportunity to include Legislators in District operations.
- Meet with County Commissioners one-on-one prior to BOCC Budget Workshop.
- Review the NRCS Contribution Agreement with NRCS Partnership liaison.
- Meet with our State Legislators one-on-one prior to session.