

*<click to start presentation>*



# Services to the Agricultural Community offered by the SWFWMD

*We're the Government and We're Here to Help!*



# A.G.S.W.M.

Commonly referred to as "AgSwim"

The acronym stands for:

**Agricultural**

**Ground (and)**

**Surface**

**Water**

**Management**

But... What is it?



# A.G.S.W.M.

In a nut shell...

...the AGSWM process is a means by which farmers can provide alternative site planning and layout that, in some situations, allows for exemption from surface water permitting (called ERPs).



# A.G.S.W.M.

History of the Program

## **The Dark Ages: 1984 – 1989**

- \* “Ivory Tower” Oversight  
*Regulation from 100 Miles Away*
- \* Square Pegs in a Round Hole Approach  
*A Watermelon field isn't the same as a WalMart*
- \* Staff  
*Staff and projects weren't paired up efficiently*



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History of the Program

## **Enlightenment: 1989 – 1991**

- \* Alternatives needed  
*Ag industries looked to for suggestions*
- \* Ag Advisory Committee working group formed  
*Innovative solutions wanted*
- \* NRCS involved early in the process  
*Expertise on standard ag practices*



# A.G.S.W.M.

## History of the Program

### **Continued Growth: 1991 - Present**

\*Projects keep rolling in. To date, approximately 800 AGSWM projects have been completed.

\* AGSWM program continues to evolve and respond to growers concerns.

- Permanent
- Ordinary
- Temporary

\* Combined with other programs such as FARMS (discussed later), there's even more benefit for the farmer.



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## Benefits

### What does each party get out of this?

#### \* Grower

- Surveying
- Drainage/irrigation design
- Conservation plan
- Exemption letter/**No ERP**
- Value of each project submitted by the NRCS ranges from about \$6,000 to \$14,000

#### \* District

- Better relationships with growers
- Sustainable agriculture
- Reduced compliance/enforcement issues



# A.G.S.W.M.

## Ag Teams

### **The “Ag Team” concept is a key element of the AGSWM program**

- \* Each office has an Ag Team. These are the “Local” Ag Teams.
- \* In each Ag Team there is:
  - Engineer
  - Environmental Scientist
  - Hydrologist
- \*A Regional Ag Team Provides technical oversight for the local Ag Teams and also coordinates much of the District’s agricultural outreach and programs (including AGSWM)



# A.G.S.W.M.

## Exemption Requests

**At the core of AGSWM is the fact that the process boils down to an option for the farmer that is something other than a permit.**

Exemption verification is built into the AGSWM process.

However, anyone can request an exemption for any surface water related issue.

Written exemption verification documents a District determination.

Written exemption verification helps stifle complaints.

As of July 1, 2008, the legislature mandated a fee for all exemption verifications.



# Mobile Irrigation Laboratories

## **Two similar programs available to Farmers: MIL and PrOMIL**

- \* Both programs are designed to help farm operators save water through efficient irrigation practices
- \* The MIL is a lab operated by the NRCS out of Wauchula. This service is voluntary and confidential
- \* The PrOMIL is a lab operated by a private contractor. This is predominantly done at the request of the District but with the cooperation of the land owner to help sort out compliance matters.
- \* Both MILs are funded by the District. Value for a typical MIL project is about \$500 - \$700 dollars.



# F.A.R.M.S.

Facilitating  
Agricultural  
Resource  
Management  
Systems



# **FARMS Program – Background, Objectives**

- \* **FARMS is a Best Management Practice (BMP) cost-share reimbursement program for agricultural projects**
  - Created in 2003 as a cooperative program with FDACS
  - Goal: Provide 40 mgd of groundwater offset in 20 years
- \* **FARMS promotes public-private partnerships to implement agricultural BMPs that:**
  - Reduce Floridan Aquifer withdrawals (groundwater)
  - Improve water quality
  - Conserve, restore, or augment water resources and ecology
- \* **FARMS coordinates closely with the USDA – NRCS EQIP Program**
- \* **Provides reimbursement of project costs at 50% & 75% levels, depending on BMPs implemented**



# Onsite Assistance

## **The District makes house calls**

- \* Both the Local and Regional Ag Teams are available to assist farmers onsite.
- \* Common reasons for site visits include questions about wetlands, pond siting, ditch maintenance, project layout, etc...
- \* All it takes is a phone call



# Questions



# The Bottom Line

- \* Great strides
- \* More to come
- \* Communication is key



# Visit...

[www.WaterMatters.org/Ag](http://www.WaterMatters.org/Ag)

For...

- \* Staff contacts
- \* Program information
- \* Technical literature
- \* Permitting information



Thank you!

