



Watershed Management Policy Board

2006 Annual Report

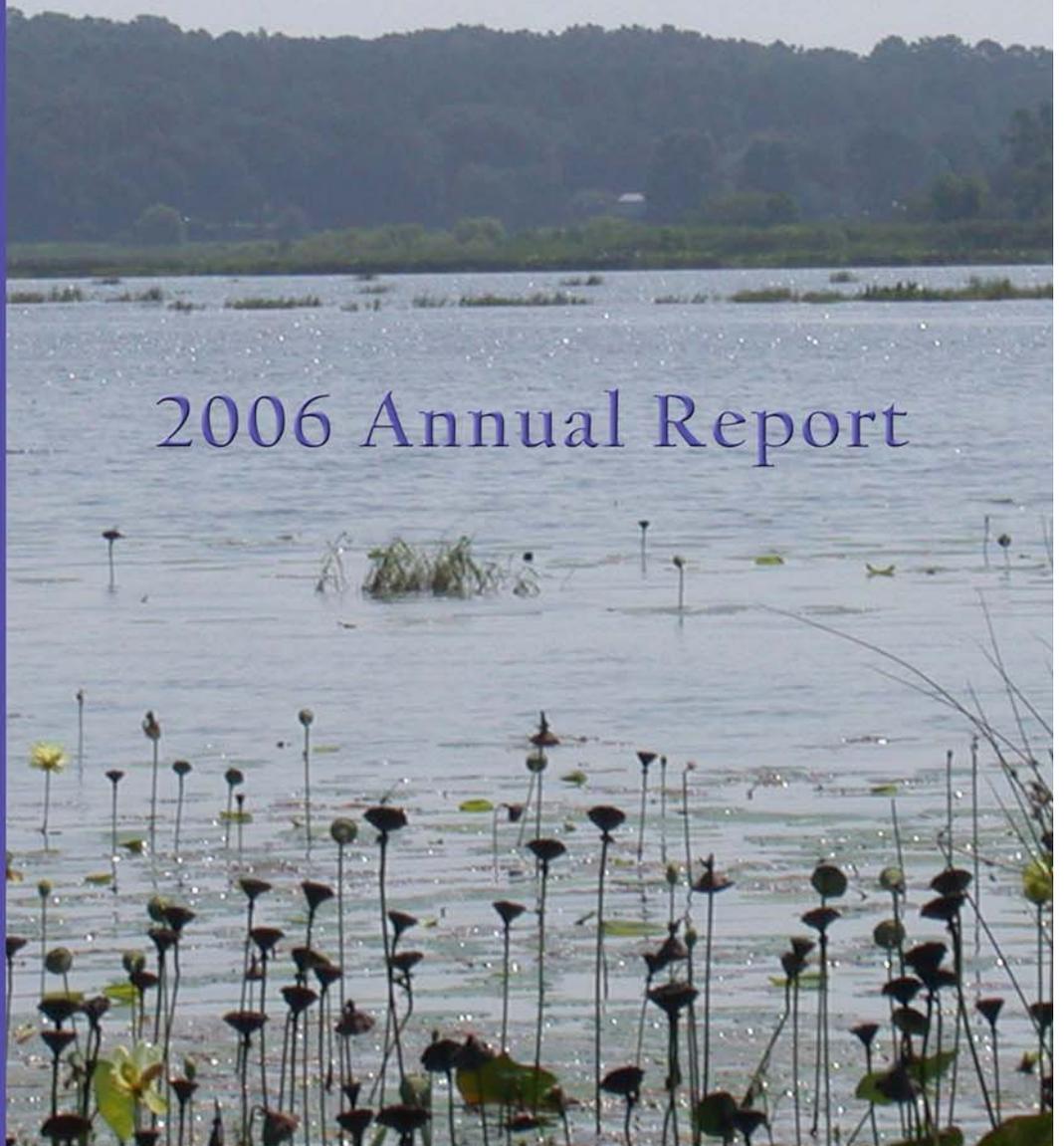


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Introduction

In order to enhance the protection of our community's water resources, Leon County (County) and the City of Tallahassee (City) have taken the initiative to create a consolidated stormwater and watershed management approach. The Watershed Management Policy Board was convened in 2006 to facilitate this process by working with both governments, conducting a review of their existing development standards, looking at the needs of the region's affected watershed areas or basins rather than jurisdictional boundaries, and making recommendations for any changes that would be appropriate for the betterment of the local water resources within the community.

What is a watershed?

A Watershed is the land area up hill that drains runoff from rain or seepage to a common water body like a river, lake, or stream. Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. They can cross city, county, state, and national boundaries. No matter where you are, you're in a watershed and our individual actions can directly affect it! Watersheds are the source of the water that sustains and enriches our daily lives: seepage over a watershed can recharge the aquifer used for drinking water; the lakes, streams and wetlands supported by a watershed provide critical habitat for plants and animals, areas of natural beauty and a home to water bodies for recreation and relaxation.

Why is it important to manage stormwater runoff from a watershed?

Stormwater runoff is surface water that does not filter into the ground or evaporates and flows off a watershed during a storm. Natural watersheds have very little runoff because most rain is filtered into the ground. As we pave over a watershed during development the level of runoff increases and more flooding is one of the results. However, on its way downstream urban runoff also collects all kinds of materials such as, sediment, leaves, fertilizer, pesticides, pet waste and automobile fluids and transports the pollutants through stormwater drain pipes and ditches and eventually into our streams, rivers, and lakes. Through an Interlocal Agreement the County and City have identified five major urbanized watershed basins in Leon County as "Affected Watersheds":

- Lake Jackson Basin
- Lake Iamonia Basin
- Lake Lafayette Basin
- Lake Munson Basin
- Fred George Basin

The County and City are working together to define watershed standards. By managing watersheds, the Watershed Management Policy Board has the ability to address water quality and quantity issues so that more comprehensive strategies can be implemented.

The Watershed Protection Plan

For many years, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners and the City of Tallahassee Commission have worked toward eliminating inconsistencies, improving environmental protection, and providing a more efficient use of financial resources in their watershed protection efforts. Commissioner Cliff Thael and Commissioner Debbie Lightsey were appointed as representatives of the County and City respectively in an endeavor to resolve the stormwater management differences between the two governments. Through these discussions the idea of a coordinated watershed management plan was created.

In April of 2005, the County and the City entered into an Interlocal Agreement regarding the creation and operation of a watershed protection plan (Attachment #1). The agreement established the Watershed Management Policy Board (Policy Board) to oversee the implementation of the Watershed Protection Plan and the Technical Support Staff (TSS) to assist in the development of this effort.

The Agreement outlines the Strategic Action Plan that guides the County and City in the development of a joint stormwater program. The Strategic Action Plan focuses on short- and long-term goals of the Policy Board, as well as approaches to enhance public education and participation. The short-term goals are to be implemented over a three-year phase-in period. During that period the Policy Board is to develop a watershed protection plan which incorporates joint approaches and initiatives in addressing watershed management and include the following:

The Agreement outlines the Strategic Action Plan that guides the County and City in the development of joint stormwater management efforts. The Strategic Action Plan focuses on short- and long-term goals of the Policy Board, as well as approaches to enhance public education and participation. The short-term goals are to be implemented over a three-year phase-in period. During that period the goal of the Policy Board is to develop a Watershed Protection Plan that incorporates joint approaches and initiatives in addressing watershed management.

Watershed Management Policy Board

Composition of the Policy Board and Technical Support Staff

The Policy Board is comprised of a County Commissioner, a City Commissioner, one representative of the Leon County Science Advisory Committee, a professor from Florida State University or Florida A&M University with credentials relevant to the subject of stormwater and watershed management, and one private citizen who has knowledge of stormwater issues and is directly engaged in permitting in the County and/or City. The Policy Board is required to meet quarterly to implement the goals of the Strategic Action Plan. The current members of the Policy Board are:

Commissioner Cliff Thaele, County Commissioner (2006 Policy Board Chairman)
Commissioner Debbie Lightsey, City Commissioner (2006 Policy Board Vice-Chair)
Mr. Tom Kwader, Ph.D, Leon County Science Advisory Committee
Mr. Andy Dzurick, Ph.D, Florida State University
Mr. Skip Cook, Citizen Representative

The Policy Board receives technical support from a professional group of staff members with the knowledge and experience to advise and provide recommendations that will fulfill the goals of the Strategic Action Plan. The TSS meets prior to each Policy Board meeting to discuss issues and initiatives that will be presented to the members. The members of the TSS represent intergovernmental stakeholders that have an interest in protecting local watersheds. The TSS members are:

Joe Brown, County Engineering Services Director
John Buss, City Stormwater Management Division Director
Doug Fry, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Ron Bartel, Northwest Florida Water Management District
Dr. Julie Harrington, Florida Lakes Management Society

In addition to the TSS, key staff members of the County and City assist the Policy Board. These staff members' responsibilities include coordinating the meetings of the Policy Board and TSS, preparing documentation for distribution to the public, recording the minutes at Policy Board meetings, and maintaining the Watershed Protection Initiative website.

Policy Board Achievements

As reflected in the attached minutes (Attachment #2), the Policy Board held six meetings commencing on January 25, 2006 to implement the goals of the Strategic Action Plan. The Policy Board determined that the first year's focus would be on gathering information. At the first meeting the Policy Board identified priority subject areas from the Strategic Action Plan to be the focus of subsequent quarterly meetings (later modified) as illustrated below.

Meeting Date	Subject Areas
March 2006	Review of Structural and Non-Structural Capital Improvement Projects; Review of Public Education and Participation Plan.
May 2006	Tour of Area Stormwater Facilities
October 2006	Review of Existing Water Quality and Bioassessment Data; Review Comprehensive City/County CIP Map.
December 2006	Introduction to the Water Atlas Program and Overview of Watershed Champion Award

Identification of Structural and Non-Structural Improvement Projects

The TSS provided the Policy Board a highly detailed overview of ongoing City and County structural and non-structural stormwater capital improvement projects and those completed in the last 10 years. The Policy Board and the TSS identified capital improvement projects that the County and City had undertaken in the past five years in the affected watersheds. This identification process provided information that can be used to prioritize County and City stormwater projects that lead to water quality and flooding solutions.

On May 18, 2006, the Policy Board conducted a bus tour of local stormwater facilities. The tour afforded the board members, as well as citizens, the ability to observe the type of capital improvement projects utilized by both the City and County to improve water quality and provide flood control in the community and view those areas where capital improvement projects are projected to be built.

Watershed Protection Initiative Website

In order to better publicize the initiative that the County and City had undertaken to improve water quality in the community, the Policy Board established a website (www.protectyourwater.org) that provides information to the public regarding the purpose and functions of the Policy Board. The website explains the reasons why the County and City have identified watershed protection as a priority for the community and also lists the short- and long-term goals of the Policy Board to develop unified stormwater management standards. Additionally, the website lists the locations of the five affected watersheds in Leon County and provides maps that show stormwater capital improvement projects that are currently in progress and that have been undertaken by the County and City in the past five years. Through this tool,

citizens are given the opportunity to see where the County and City have spent public dollars to improve water quality and relieve flooding in our community.

In addition, the website has allowed the Policy Board to publicize upcoming meetings and provide citizens the ability to download minutes from previous meetings. The website also includes links to additional information about other governmental and private organizations that have made water protection and awareness a top priority.

Watershed Signage

The Policy Board directed the development of road signs to identify the location of the affected watersheds in our region. The purpose of this project is to increase community awareness of watershed boundaries, as well as accentuate the interaction citizens have with watersheds throughout their daily activities, such as driving, biking, and walking. Should funding be approved, the TSS will work with the Florida Department of Transportation to ensure that the proposed watershed signage meets the required State standards. The signs would vary based on size and location. The signs would also include the website address (www.protectyourwater.org) to promote the educational component of the Interlocal Agreement.

A cost analysis for the watershed signs was conducted by the TSS which provided information on the cost of design, location, installation, and permitting. There were 40 locations identified for signage. Signs would be installed on both sides of the road to identify watershed basins resulting in a total of 80 signs. The projected cost of erecting the watershed signs is estimated at \$50,000 which would be equally divided between the County and City. Such funding would be incorporated as part of the annual budget of the Policy Board for fiscal year 2007/2008.

Watershed Champion Award

As part of the Interlocal Agreement to increase awareness and the involvement of protecting our community's water, the Policy Board was charged with creating the Watershed Champion Award. The Watershed Champion Award recognizes annually individuals and/or organizations that have exemplified leadership in the protection of watersheds in our community.

In order to identify the Watershed Champion for 2006, during the week of January 29, 2007, letters and applications for nominations were mailed to over 600 community organizations and 25 environmental organizations. The Tallahassee Democrat ran an article highlighting the Policy Board's search for the 2006 Watershed Champion (Attachment #3). In addition an interactive application was made available on the watershed initiative website to provide for greater advertisement of the award.

Nine nominations were received for the 2006 Watershed Champion Award. This award not only recognizes individuals and groups that are taking the lead to protect one of our most precious resources, it also increases community awareness of the joint stormwater initiative the County and City have established through the Policy Board. The winner of the award is to be determined by the TSS and will be announced in May 2007 at the Policy Board meeting.

Water Atlas Program

The Strategic Action Plan requires the development and management of a central database for existing water quality and bioassessment data. Additionally, the Strategic Action Plan sets forth a goal to advance public education and involvement in watershed protection. The Water Atlas is a program operated at the University of South Florida, Florida Center for Community Design and Research that assists local governments in providing information regarding water resource data and other customized local water resource information to the public via the Internet.

The program offers a service that combines Geographic Information System capabilities with existing water resources data. The Water Atlas website gives citizens and water resource managers the ability to view and download selected water quality data. The program also provides user-friendly resources that help citizens understand the water quality data and the condition of the lakes and streams in their community.

Currently, eight counties and one city participate in the Water Atlas program. Each local government's Water Atlas website provides information unique to its area. This information includes descriptions and maps of lakes, rivers, and streams; stormwater information; the water quality of each monitored water source; and a library of data spanning over 100 years. The websites incorporate information from other agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the state water management districts.

On January 25, 2007, the Policy Board approved the TSS recommendation to participate in the Water Atlas. The start-up cost of the Tallahassee-Leon County Water Atlas website approximately \$55,000, divided equally between the two governments. Fifty percent of the start up cost would be needed to initiate work in the 2006/2007 fiscal year (\$27,500). The annual cost for maintenance of the Water Atlas website is \$33,186. As no budget was allotted for the 2006/2007 fiscal year for the Watershed Protection Plan, the County and City will provide the necessary funds.

Commissioners Thael and Lightsey have made their respective Commissions aware of the Policy Boards recommendation that the two governments participate in the Water Atlas program. In addition, each Commission has been supportive of initial funding for the start up of a Tallahassee-Leon County Water Atlas Program.

Tallahassee-Leon County Geographic Information System (TLCGIS), in coordination the County and City staff, will manage the contract with representatives of the University of South Florida's Water Atlas Program. The funding for the Water Atlas would be incorporated into the TLCGIS budget.

In order to implement the goals of the Interlocal Agreement, the County and City agreed to equally fund the operation of the Policy Board. Funding for the first year was not expected to exceed a total of \$100,000. Since its establishment, the Policy Board has not requested funding for operational costs.

The Policy Board's operating budget for fiscal year 2007/08 is composed of costs for the remaining balance for the start-up cost of the Water Atlas, the maintenance of the Tallahassee-Leon County Water Atlas website, design, installation, and permitting of the proposed watershed signs, and incidental operating costs which would include the printing and copying of documents and materials for Policy Board and TSS meetings. The incidental operating costs also includes funding for the Watershed Champion Award. The following table shows Watershed Protection Plan project and operating costs for this fiscal year and proposed costs for FY2007/2008 and estimates for subsequent fiscal years.

Items	FY06/07	FY07/08	FY08/09	FY09/10
Water Atlas Startup Cost	\$27,500	\$27,500	-----	-----
Water Atlas Maintenance	-----	\$16,593	\$33,186	\$33,186
Watershed Signage	-----	\$50,000	-----	-----
Incidental Operating Costs	-----	\$5,907	\$6,000	\$6000
Total	\$27,500	\$100,000	\$39,186	\$39,186

**Funding for fiscal year 2007 has already been identified and approved by the County and the City. The amounts listed would be divided evenly by the County and the City.*

Conclusion

The Interlocal Agreement directs the Policy Board to serve in an advisory role for the coordination of County and City stormwater capital projects for the identified affected watersheds. The bus tour provided board members with the opportunity to observe the stormwater projects currently taking place, as well as identify those areas where stormwater improvements are being planned for future construction.

The establishment of the Watershed Protection Initiative website has allowed the Policy Board to advance public education and involvement in watershed protection by providing information to the public about the importance of watersheds to our lakes and overall water supply. The installation of watershed signs will further assist in raising the awareness of the citizens of Tallahassee and Leon County about the frequency with which they come in contact with our community's affected watersheds.

The County and City's participation in the Water Atlas program is an accomplishment for the community by making valuable water resource data available online to the public and water resource professionals. The Water Atlas program provides easy access to local information with user-friendly explanations. Participation in the Water Atlas program also would fulfill the interlocal agreement's call for storage of collected data in a single database.

The completion of the first year of the Water Management Policy Board marked a rotation of the leadership roles. At the end of the January 25, 2007 meeting of the Policy Board, in accordance with the interlocal agreement, Commissioner Debbie Lightsey assumed the position of chairperson and Commissioner Cliff Thaell became the vice-chairman.