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2025

Annual Report



Bradford Soil and Water
Conservation District
Bradford County, Florida
12/1/2025

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2025 Annual Report

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ADA Statement

Americans with Disabilities Act: Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District (BSWCD) does not discriminate upon the basis of any individual's disability status. This nondiscrimination policy extends to every aspect of BSWCD's functions including one's access to, participation, or treatment in its programs or activities. Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation as provided for in the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the District at 904.966.6224 or bswcd.fl@gmail.com.

Message from the board

Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District (BSWCD) would like to extend their appreciation to all those serving the county and working in the interest of conservation of our soil and water resources and the health, safety and welfare of our residents. For project input and collaboration with BSWCD's first annual planning process, the District extends its thanks to:

Bradford County Board of County Commissioners

City of Starke, FL

City of Lawtey, Florida

Town of Hampton, FL

Bradford County Sheriff's Office Emergency Management Division

USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service, Area 2 - Gainesville

UF/IFAS Extension Bradford County

UF/IFAS Extension Union County

UF/IFAS Extension Baker County

Florida Department of Agriculture,

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Florida Forest Service

Clay Soil and Water Conservation District

Bradford County Farm Bureau

Frances Bradley, BSWCD Volunteer

Thomas Craighead, BSWCD Volunteer

Special thanks for his continuing service and dedication to Bradford County:

Dr. Paul Still, Bradford Environmental Forum; BSWCD Volunteer; past BSWCD supervisor

Introduction

Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District (BSWCD) 2025 annual report is published in part to meet the requirements of FS Chapter 189: Uniform Special District Accountability Act. This report serves to satisfy part (2) of the statute.

189.0694 Special districts; performance measures and standards. —

(1) Beginning October 1, 2024, or by the end of the first full fiscal year after its creation, whichever is later, each special district must establish goals and objectives for each program and activity undertaken by the district, as well as performance measures and standards to determine if the district's goals and objectives are being achieved.

(2) By December 1 of each year thereafter, each special district must publish an annual report on the district's website describing:

(a) The goals and objectives achieved by the district, as well as the performance measures and standards used by the district to make this determination.

(b) Any goals or objectives the district failed to achieve.

District Description - Bradford District

- **General Description**

Bradford County is situated in north-central Florida. The County is bounded by the Trail Ridge land formation to the east, the Santa Fe River and Santa Fe Lake to the south, and the New River to the west-northwest. The total area of the county is 300 square miles (192,100 acres).

Bradford County is the 51st largest county in Florida, with an estimated 2025 population of 28,362. The county Average Income is \$41,534 and the Median Household Income is \$59,740. Bradford county currently has a 19.05% Poverty Rate.

Agriculture operations, particularly forestry/silviculture, are active in the county with \$22 million in reported *Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold Including Food and Marketing Practices and Value-Added Products: 2022*

- **Topographic Features:** The county's topography is part of the Northern Highlands physiographic province, which extends from the eastern edge of the county through north Florida and into Alabama. is characterized by higher uplands elevations bordering low-lying areas. A significant feature is **Trail Ridge**, an extended series of quartz sand hills running north-south along the county's eastern border. This ridge represents the highest elevation in the area, with the county high point reaching over 250 feet above sea level. Trail Ridge is representative of Florida's oldest exposed land formations.
- **Elevation Gradients:** The land in Bradford County generally slopes downward to the west and south, with elevation heights up to about 250 feet above sea level on Trail Ridge (the county's border to the east). Elevation change along the edge of the ridge is more pronounced, with elevation dropping to between 150-160 feet along the base of the Trail Ridge and 141 feet at Lake Santa Fe. Most of the county has a more gradual slope toward the Santa Fe River Valley in the southwest and its tributary the New River to the northeast, which are 49 feet above sea level where the rivers converge.
- **Soils:** Bradford County Soils are primarily the poorly drained, sandy soils of the flatwoods. The county is characterized by flat, poorly drained plains with soils rich in clay, phosphatic deposits, and organic muck. Reportedly, "Soil is the most important resource in Bradford County" (3).
- **Mineral Resources:** The county generally has low potential for mining commercially, although new technology development may change this potential. Limestone deposits are generally too deep for mining. The county contains phosphate sediments, but with a county-wide average of only 3.5 %. Deposits of heavy minerals, predominately ilmenite, were not economical to mine here 35 years ago, but are now being mined in parts of eastern Bradford County along the Trail Ridge.

- **Water Resources:** Bradford County's water resources are a mix of groundwater and numerous surface water resources, primarily lakes and creeks.

Groundwater

Most of the county's groundwater comes from rain. Underlying the county are, in order of increasing depth, the surficial aquifer, intermediate aquifer, and the Floridan aquifer system.

Surficial aquifer The water table in the county is generally 10' or less below the soil surface and averages 40' thick in the county. This surficial aquifer is primarily recharged by rainfall percolation and discharges naturally through evaporation, transpiration, spring flow, and seepage into the Intermediate and Floridan aquifers. In this aquifer, water is available in limited amounts before the water table is lowered.

Intermediate aquifer This aquifer is generally separated and confined under Artesian conditions by the presence of slowly permeable clays above water-bearing sand and limestone layers. Recharge is primarily from downward seepage from the surficial aquifer as well as upward recharge in areas with higher potentiometric surface of the Floridan Aquifer than the intermediate aquifer. Water in this aquifer is dependent on the local thickness of the aquifer. It is the source for numerous rural and domestic wells.

Floridan aquifer:

At a thickness of several hundred feet, the deepest aquifer beneath Bradford County is also the most productive. Its recharge source are the surficial and intermediate aquifers. Water discharges from the Floridan aquifer westward, through natural downgradient movement that eventually discharges through springs, lakes, and the Santa Fe River. Depth to the Floridan aquifer ranges between 75' – 300' in Bradford County. This aquifer serves many deep domestic wells as well as most of the municipal and industrial wells in the county

.

Surface water

Key water features include the Santa Fe River, the New River, Alligator Creek, Sampson Lake, Lake Rowell, Lake Crosby, and Hampton Lake. Numerous slow-flowing creeks and large swampy areas are also present due to the mild slopes and poorly draining soils. While no comprehensive map exists, many drainage conveyances drain land in the county, with some dating back to the turn of the 20th century still in service.

- Santa Fe and New Rivers: Forming two of the county's three borders, the Santa Fe and its tributary the New River are the upper headwaters of the Santa Fe river, which includes the Devil's Complex Priority Focus Area of springs.

- Aquifers: The region's geology contributes to a series of highly productive aquifers, including the vast Floridan Aquifer, which is the primary source of drinking water for over 90% of people in northeast and east-central Florida.
- Brooks Sink: The county is home to Brooks Sink, Florida's largest sinkhole, and a surface water diversion project which funnels millions of gallons of water into the Floridan aquifer, creating a major recharge point.
- **Flooding Potential:** The relatively low, mild slopes in areas contribute to flooding during heavy rains or hurricanes. The Trail Ridge acts in part as an earthen dam, blocking drainage from west-east along the county's eastern border, while low-lying soil formations create slow and/or poorly draining conditions. Channelization and water-slowing conditions through the city of Starke along Alligator Creek and for residents along Lakes Sampson, Lake Crosby, and other populated waterbodies further the flooding potential where health and safety are most concerning. Slow drainage creates additional health hazards from mosquito-borne illness and other risks from standing water
- **Waters Not Attaining Standards:** The following descriptions come from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's map layers and feature descriptions <https://fddep.maps.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=b63808e0b3004fdc8b0856b3c7426fb0> accessed 11/1/2025.

New River: Impaired iron ≤ 1.0 mg/L. This waterbody is impaired for this parameter based on the number of exceedances for the sample size. After further investigation, FDEP cannot rule out the possibility of anthropogenic sources. List.; causative pollutant has not been determined. Assessed for protection of the endangered Oval Pigtoe Mussel.

Alligator Creek (Starke): impaired for E. coli based on the number of exceedances for the sample size. Anthropogenic sources have been identified using land use and confirmed using genetic marker and chemical tracer data.

Lake Rowell: is classified as impaired due to failing biological health assessments, but it remains in category 4d of the state's impaired waters list because a specific causative pollutant has not yet been identified.

Bradford Supervisors

Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District supervisors in office during the planning period:

District 1: Walter Westcott, Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District

Walter served as agriculture faculty and FFA Advisor for the Bradford County School District until his retirement. He and his family still farm in Florida. Walter holds a BS and MA in Agriculture and a MS in Geography.

District 2: Amy Morie - Chair, Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District

Amy is a Florida registered Landscape Architect and owner of Mulberry Hill Studio and Tiny Worlds Farm plant nursery. She specializes in education, , land use study and site planning, participatory planning, design for conservation and habitat enhancement, and code approval construction documents for agencies and non-profits as well as commercial and residential clients. She has also served as faculty with UF Landscape Architecture and UF/IFAS Extension Clay County – Horticulture. Amy holds a BLA and MLA in landscape architecture and is a graduate of UF/IFAS's Leadership training program.

District 3: Ok Sun Burks - Secretary, Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District

Ok Sun is a seasoned nonprofit leader with expertise in board governance, program development, and community engagement. She has served in leadership roles with North Florida Land Trust, Theatreworks, Sister Cities International, and Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services. Her background includes grant writing, small business training, and cultural programming. Ok Sun holds a BA in Business Administration and is a graduate of multiple civic leadership programs, including Blueprint for Leadership and the University of Oklahoma Economic Development Institute.

District 4: -vacant-

District 5: Paul Still - past Treasurer, Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District

Forest management and invasive plant control consulting. He manages a 115 acre forested tract on the west side of Lake Sampson. He is the President of Bradford Environmental Forum a Florida not for profit corporation that works on environmental issues in the Upper Santa Fe Basin. He has a PhD in Plant Pathology from the University of Wisconsin.

Mission, vision and purpose statement

Mission

The mission of the BSWCD is to promote the appropriate and efficient use of soil and water resources, protect water quality, prevent floodwater and sediment damage, preserve wildlife, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of Bradford County.

Vision

The vision of the BSWCD is to perform duties listed as Powers of Districts and Supervisors in Florida Statutes 582.20 in accordance with the BSWCD annual plan and its goals, objectives and performance-based outcomes:

- To conduct surveys, studies, and research relating to soil and water resources and to publish and disseminate the results of such surveys, studies, research, and related information
- To conduct agricultural best management practices demonstration projects and projects for the conservation, protection, and restoration of soil and water resources
- To cooperate, or enter into agreements with, any special district, municipality, county, water management district, state or federal agency, governmental or otherwise, or owner or occupier of lands within the district's boundaries
- To provide, or assist in providing, training and education programs that further the purposes and provisions of this chapter

Purpose

The purpose of the soil and water conservation districts per Florida Statute 582.02 (4) "...is to provide assistance, guidance, and education to landowners, land occupiers, the agricultural industry, and the general public in implementing land and water resource protection practices."

Supervisors adopted the Mission, Vision, and Purpose Statements

by vote at the April 16, 2024, meeting

Reporting Guide

For clarity, BSWCD's program goals, objectives and performance measures as duplicated below as created for October 1, 2024 submission to the state of Florida to comply with Florida Statute 189.0694: Special districts; performance measures and standards. Outcomes to the 2024 submission are here written in **bold colored** font (will appear dark grey with greyscale printing).

Program Goals, Objectives & Performance Measures

Program 1: Water and Flooding **Outcomes**

A. Goal 1: Assess community needs- water and flooding projects

Within one year, BSWCD will conduct a needs assessment of water/flooding projects, potential partnerships and funding to develop water program goals and objectives for implementation.

Objectives:

- a. Perform needs assessment
 - i. Meet with local governments and partner agencies to assess needs and potential partnerships
BSWCD met with, presented to, and/or surveyed five local governments and six partner agencies for needs analysis. BSWCD became an active member of the Bradford County Sheriff's Office Emergency Management Division Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group for further input and coordination.
 - ii. Create public survey to assess landowner/operator needs
Countywide input was included from resident reports during public meetings. A public workshop was held for the most frequently identified area of concern, with 12 residents providing input. Potential partnerships have been identified with local residents and support organizations for cleanup days and monitoring.
 - iii. **Performance measure:** Completed needs assessment March 2025
Outcome: This performance measure was met but the completed needs assessment deadline was rescheduled from March to August 2025. The survey was combined with questions on invasive plants to explore expanding BSWCD Program 4, and a cold winter and delayed plant response conditions factored into moving the target date.
- b. Integrate support mechanisms
 - i. Identify potential funding and match sources
BSWCD identified and is keeping an ongoing record of potential state and local grant and match funding sources for which the District is a potential grant recipient or partner for program administration and support. BSWCD also identified and shared local governments on funding sources where soil and water conservation goals were potential outcomes.
 - ii. Identify relevant training opportunities for supervisors
BSWCD identified training opportunities for supervisors on surface water testing and will be scheduling training at the first opportunity in 2026. The District will continue to seek new training opportunities for

volunteers and supervisors on surface water quality and levels for Bradford County

- iii. **Performance measure:** Completed support assessment May 2025
Outcome: This performance measure was met on schedule. The district continues to seek new opportunities that may arise for funding and training.

c. Develop programs and performance measures:

- i. Create a matrix of needs and opportunities identified.
Outcome: The needs and opportunities matrix was completed August 2025.
- ii. Create a matrix-based water program goals and objectives
Outcome: The water program goals and objectives are not completed as additional data was needed to coordinate partners and develop a volunteer program identified in the needs assessment; this is in progress and anticipated to be complete January 2026 for the near-future and September 2026 for long-range plans.
- iii. Identify timeline to re-assess program
Outcome: A 5-year schedule was identified as the timeline to re-assess programs.
- iv. Completed program matrix and timeline July 2025
Outcome: The completed program matrix and timeline has been drafted and will be finalized pending completion of the water program goals and objectives.

B. Goal 2: Implement long-range plan

Objectives:

- a. Within 2 years, to address needs discovered in assessment BSWCD shall develop or re-implement water and flooding programs with goals, objectives, performance measures, and a plan to periodically reassess programs
 - i. **Performance measure:** Completed program implementation plan September 2026
Outcome: This performance measure is in progress and on track to be met by the target deadline. BSWCD compiled a preliminary program structure based on needs assessment and is scheduling public education opportunities for 2026 while continuing to plan long-term for this program and to seek solutions that meet program needs. BSWCD considers this measure on track to be met by the target deadline.

- b. Within 5 years, BSWCD will acquire additional funding for expanding water programs.
 - i. **Performance measure:** Secured additional funding for minimum one program area by 2028
Outcome: This performance measure is in progress. BSWCD has researched several potential funding sources and continues to seek solutions that meet program needs. BSWCD considers this measure on track to be met by the target deadline.

Program 2: Owner/operator education **Outcomes**

- A. Goal 1: Within one year, BSWCD will assist area landowners/operators through three educational and networking events increasing awareness of opportunities toward sound soil and water conservation practices.

Objectives:

- a. Hold one or more 2024-2025 ‘operator to operator’ education tour event to educate landowners and operators addressing 6 areas of education.
 - i. Performance measure: 70% of responding attendees will demonstrate knowledge gained as indicated on a post-tour survey.
Outcome: This performance measure was met on schedule. BSWCD partnered with one landowner, one conservation trust, and one state agency to hold one ‘operator to operator’ education tour with presentations on management best practices, technical assistance . Of 8 attending landowners, 6 responded to informal post-event surveying. 100% (N=6) of respondents indicated knowledge gain and 84% (N=5) intended to adopt one or more practices learned on the tour.
- b. Hold one 2025 event to increase awareness of available partner agency technical assistance, cost shares, conservation easements and other available aid.
This performance measure was met on schedule. BSWCD held its second annual Landowner Expo event:. 17 Expo exhibitor groups from state, regional and local agencies and organizations and 37 members of the public attended, with 32 (N=86%) of public attendees responding to a post-event survey
 - i. Performance measure: 70% of responding attendees will demonstrate knowledge gained as indicated on a post-event survey.
Outcome: This performance measure was met on schedule. 97% (N=31) of survey respondents indicated knowledge gain on one or more topics presented.

- ii. Performance measure: 50% of responding attendees will indicate plans to pursue program offerings in the future on a post-event survey.

Outcome: This performance measure was met on schedule. Survey respondents indicated plans to pursue various program offerings in the future on a post-event survey, with two out of three practices indicating plans to adopt with 50% or greater responses:

47% (N=15) will apply for a cost-share program for adoption of Best Management Practices

59% (N=19) will apply with USDA or other available agencies for applicable funding opportunities

81% (N=26) will continue or implement soil sampling

- B. Goal 2: Within one year, BSWCD shall identify partners for in-kind and financial support of the owner/operator education program.

Objectives:

- a. Create network of partner industries for financial and in-kind support
 - i. Performance measure: secure outside funding for 75% of program expenses

Outcome: This performance measure was met on schedule. For the October landowner expo and dinner, the only cost-incurring event in the reporting period, BSWCD secured the following donations for program expense support:

BSWCD was able to secure 81% of direct expenses

Direct expenses: \$829.15

Less cash donations: \$675.00

Internal funding: -\$154.15

Donation sources:

-\$475 cash donation: Bradford Farm Bureau for Expo dinner expenses

-\$200 cash donation: Sierra Club Florida Chapter: Suwannee St. Johns Group donation for Expo dinner expenses

In addition, BSWCD received \$2100 of in-kind support for the event:

-\$1500: Bradford County Conference space rental fee waiver

-\$200: Tiny Worlds Farm toward Expo dinner

-\$400: estimated labor services provided by Bradford County Sheriff's Office for setup and take-down labor

- b. Explore feasibility of community giving program
 - i. Performance measure: written report on presence or absence of community giving options
Outcome: The report was completed and indicated the presence of community giving options BSWCD may pursue. Report copy:

**2025 Report on Community Giving Options
as fundraising for the
Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District
Prepared by Amy Morie, Chair BSWCD**

Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District (BSWCD) researched legal requirements as a governmental subdivision of the state of Florida, under Florida Statutes and Rules for requirements on accepting charitable contributions.

BSWCD appears to qualify as exempt under Florida Statute § 496.406(1)(d)

Low contributions: The organization must have had total contributions of less than \$50,000 in the prior fiscal year.

-BSWCD meets this threshold.

Unpaid personnel: All fundraising and other activities must be performed exclusively by volunteers, members, or officers who are not compensated.

-BSWCD only has unpaid supervisors and volunteers.

Annual application: Exempt organizations are required to annually submit a specific application form, known as the FDACS-10110, to the state.

-BSWCD shall submit a 2026 application, the FDACS-10110 form, to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to claim the exemption.

Program 3: Create youth support and educational opportunities Outcomes

- A. Goal 1: By February 2025, BSWCD shall evaluate the current Youth Fair Support program for goal, objectives, and performance measure opportunities

Objectives:

- a. Seek program development opportunities with 4-H/FFA and Youth Show partners in Bradford-Union County
 - i. Performance measure: create input matrix from relevant stakeholders

Outcome: The matrix is started but not complete. Restructuring of the Bradford County Fair took place through late fall of 2025, forcing an adjustment to this timeline. The new target date for completing the matrix is now July 2025.

- b. Develop goals, objectives and performance measure-based Youth Fair Support program
 - i. Performance measure: program plan and budget for 2025-2026 plan of work

Outcome: Due to the delays with objective a, objective b is not complete. The new target date for completing the plan of works for program 3 is now September 2025.

- B. Goal 2: By January 2025, BSWCD shall identify funding and stakeholder opportunities to create youth educational exhibits for the 2025-2026 fiscal year

Objectives:

- a. BSWCD shall identify outside funding methods for its educational programs
 - i. Performance measure: Create list of potential funding opportunities and in-kind support.

Outcome: BSWCD has identified two potential sources of funding and two for in-kind support to pursue for this program. This shall be an ongoing process seeking support on an annual basis as well as occasional support throughout the year.

- ii. Performance measure: Secure at least one additional source of funding and/or support for a project identified in objective (b) below

Outcome: BSWCD has identified and is in the process of securing funding for one interactive exhibit to be used in objective b. i. below.

- b. BSWCD shall define opportunities for soil and water conservation education
 - i. Performance measure: Create list of schools, youth groups, and events for interactive presentations.

Outcome: This objective was completed on time. The list consists of five public schools, two charter schools, and one private school. Work continues to ensure all private schools in the county are added. Apart from FFA chapters in the schools, no youth groups were identified. The Bradford County Fair was the only event identified, although BSWCD will continue to look for youth events where conservation education is appropriate.

- ii. Performance measure: Create list of potential public locations for educational displays

Outcome: This objective was completed on time. The list currently consists of the public library in Starke FL.. BSWCD will actively seek other venues for static displays in 2026.

- iii. Performance measure: Develop a relevant list of future projects addressing budget/support, audience, and presentation method and setting.

Outcome: This objective was not completed due to delays noted in objective 1 for this program. The deadline will shift to November 2026 to complete objective 1 and provide data relevant to this performance measure.

- c. BSWCD shall plan and implement at least one educational exhibit for community use in the 2024-2025 fiscal year

- i. Performance measure: Implement one project identified in objective (b) (iii) above by August 2025

Outcome: This objective was not completed due to delays noted in objective 1 for this program. The deadline will shift to August 2026 to complete objective 1 and provide data relevant to this performance measure.

Program 4: Mechanical Invasive Plant Control Study at the Old City of Starke Dump **Outcomes**

- A. Goal 1: Use volunteers to mechanically treat the invasive plants at the Old Starke Dump Site

- a. Objectives: Reduce invasive plants to the point that the invasive plant cover is less than 5% of the site by 9/30/2025.

- i. **Performance measure:** Five linier invasive plant surveys will be use to estimate invasive plant coverage.

Outcome: BSWCD did not meet the goal of reducing invasive plants to the point that the invasive plant cover is less than 5% of the site by 9/30/2025. Manpower, equipment and logistics all played a role in failing to achieve this goal.

Significant invasive cover of the 2.75 acre research site is from invasive trees larger than 2 inches in diameter. They are scheduled to be cut with a chain saw in 2025/2026.

The date for achieving that the invasive plant cover is less than 5% of the site shall be moved to 2027/2028.

- b. Objective: Provide volunteer support for the project by paying mileage to volunteers who travel to the site to perform mechanical treatments.

- i. **Performance measure** record volunteer work effort and mileage
Outcome: One volunteer contributed 90 hours of effort on the project and made 55 visits to the site. His total miles associated with site visits was 990. Mileage cost associated with the project was \$440.55.
- ii. Include mileage cost in the FY 2024/2025 BSWCD Budget
Outcome: Mileage cost was included FY 2024/2025 BSWCD Budget.

References

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