

- Maintenance of navigable rivers and harbors and the promotion of the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the state. Directly attached to this general welfare consideration is the power to implement water shortage emergency plans.
- Participation in flood control programs, and the reclamation, conservation, and protection of lands from water surplus or deficiencies.
- Maintaining water management and use facilities of the district and determining the levels of water to be maintained in the district bodies of water. To do so, districts may establish minimum flows for their works and water courses below which further withdrawals would be significantly harmful to the water resources or ecology. This also involves the establishment of minimum water levels for surface water and groundwater.

What is the WMDs' structure?

Each district is run by a governing board consisting of nine members, except the Southwest Florida Water Management District which has eleven. The members serve four year terms and are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state. The governing board sets the policies that will best effectuate the district's powers. Generally, an executive director is responsible for the operation of the district including the implementation of policies and rules. Typically, each district is divided into departments which handle the various permitting programs. Each district is fully equipped to conduct its own inspections, testing, and impact studies.

One district, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, is further divided into watershed basins, which are overseen by basin boards. The board must consist of at least three people, one from each member county. Basin board members have authority to prepare engineering plans for development of water resources, develop secondary water-use plans, submit an annual budget, approve construction plans for works of the district, and plan and provide assistance to local water supply authorities.

What do the WMDs give permits for?

WMD governing board powers include administering the permit programs of Chapter 373, Florida Statutes. Thus, WMDs are responsible for permitting:

1. wells,
2. management and storage of surface waters, and
3. consumptive uses of water.

Each WMD has specific criteria detailing the types of activities that require permits, the contents of permit applications, the procedures that surround submission of an application, and areas specifically exempted from permitting requirements.

The Governor and Cabinet, sitting as the Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission, have authority to review any order or rule of a WMD.

What is the state water quality plan?

The DER has been directed to prepare the state water use plan and to foster to "the greatest extent possible" interagency agreements to achieve the State Water Quality Plan. The water use plan is developed by DER through consultation with federal, state, and local agencies, and particularly the WMDs. The plan includes all water in the state. Its main purpose is to recognize various interests competing for water use rights and to allocate for these rights while retaining reasonable water quality and quantity control, thus promoting the goals