

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board Members

FROM: Maricruz R. Fincher, Office of Counsel

DATE: February 12, 2026

SUBJECT: Amendments to the Criteria Manual for Seminole Water Rights Compact

Agenda Item Background:

In 1987, the Seminole Tribe of Indians of Florida (Tribe), the South Florida Water Management District (District), and the State of Florida entered into the Seminole Water Rights Compact (Compact), which was adopted as both state and federal law. The Compact recognizes the Tribe's sovereign status while establishing a regulatory framework consistent with Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, to protect surface and groundwater resources, prevent adverse environmental impacts, and provide a mechanism for resolving disputes among the District, the Tribe, and third parties.

The Compact is implemented through the Criteria Manual for the Seminole Water Rights Compact (Manual), which sets forth detailed criteria comparable to the District's Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) and Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) rules. The Manual addresses consumptive use, surface water management, underground injection, water shortage, well construction, and administrative procedures.

The proposed amendments update the Manual's administrative procedures to improve clarity, efficiency, and predictability in implementing the Compact. The amendments restructure the administrative framework, establish rolling timelines in place of rigid date-specific deadlines, and align review and approval steps with current District permitting practices modeled after the District's ERP and CUP programs.

The amendments allow for multiple Work Plan submittals throughout the year, establish consistent timelines for District review and requests for additional information, and clarify procedures for Work Plan amendments, minor modifications, rehearing requests, and finality of Governing Board actions. The amendments also address early work orders and emergency actions under defined conditions with appropriate notice, coordination, and enforcement safeguards. Overall, the amendments do not alter substantive Compact rights or protections but instead provide a clearer, more structured administrative framework modeled on the District's existing permitting processes.

Additional Item Background:

Core Mission and Strategic Priorities:

The proposed amendments support the District's core mission to protect and manage South Florida's water resources by improving the efficiency, clarity, and predictability of the administrative processes used to implement the Seminole Water Rights Compact. Aligning the Manual's procedures with established District practices promotes regulatory consistency, transparency, and effective intergovernmental coordination while maintaining environmental protections and respecting Tribal sovereignty.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

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ATTACHMENTS:

[Resolution No. 2026-0209](#)

[Exhibit A](#)