

MADISON COUNTY SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# Strategic Plan

2025



**BUCK M. CARPENTER**  
Secretary/Treasurer

## Bottom Line Up Front

**INTENT:** This document's purpose is to articulate the Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District's Strategic Plan for assisting producers with the effective implementation of Best Management Practices (BMP's) through collaborative partnerships and leveraged resources.

**OBJECTIVE:** To effectively implement conservation practices and procedures through producer assistance in Madison County for FY2025 and beyond.

**OVERVIEW:** The Madison Soil & Water Conservation District is a diverse area representing many different forms of agriculture production from vegetable and agronomic crops to nursery. Paralleling this, the district has seen a rise in irrigated acreage and the development of recovery strategies to combat soil and water quality issues. Effectively managing a Strategic Plan in this county would increase conservation potential through collaborative partnerships and more effective resource availability.

**AUTHORIZATION:** The Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District in regular session 18 December, 2024 authorized the adoption of this Strategic Plan.

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# Background



The Madison County Soil & Water Conservation District (MCSWCD) is a partner with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service's (FDACS) Office of Agricultural Water Policy (OAWP) assisting in the facilitation of the Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation program. In addition, the MCSWCD is a member of the Suwannee River Partnership (SRP) working with agricultural land users to implement more efficient water conservation and improved water quality practices throughout the Suwannee River Basin. The MCSWCD currently holds three contracts with FDACS, one for the provision of a Conservation Technician and the second for the BMP Tools Cost-Share program and the third being the Mobile Irrigation Lab contract. The MCSWCD's Conservation Technician oversees the daily operations of the Cost- Share program and helps producers carry out BMP's on their land. In addition, the District Staff Assistant charged with the administration of the MCSWCD's various programs. Working together, the assets of the MCSWCD lend themselves to a greater capacity to serve area land owners.

The Madison Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) collaborates closely with the Mobile Irrigation Lab (MIL) to promote sustainable water management and agricultural efficiency in Madison County. The SWCD, as a local resource for conservation planning and education, supports the MIL's mission to evaluate and enhance irrigation practices. By conducting on-site evaluations of irrigation systems, the MIL provides farmers and landowners with tailored recommendations to optimize water use, reduce runoff, and improve crop yields. The partnership leverages the SWCD's outreach capabilities and the MIL's technical expertise to implement conservation strategies that benefit both the environment and the local agricultural community.

# Landscape

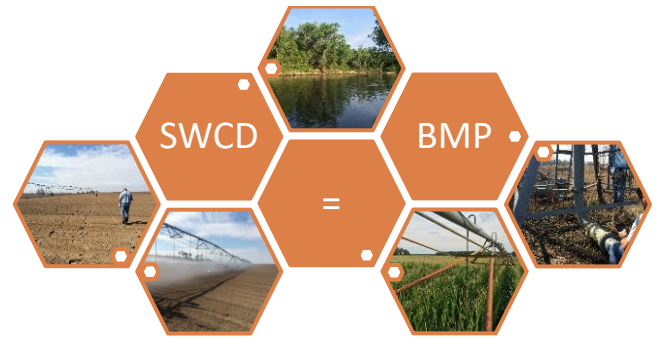
Madison County, Florida, boasts a rich agricultural heritage rooted in its fertile soils and favorable climate. This rural county, located in the Florida Panhandle, supports a diverse range of farming activities, with traditional crops such as cotton, peanuts, and corn playing a prominent role. Livestock operations, particularly cattle, are also integral to the local economy, with ranching practices passed down through generations. The combination of mild winters, abundant rainfall, and long growing seasons makes Madison County an ideal location for farming, allowing producers to achieve multiple harvests annually and maintain thriving pastures for grazing animals.

In recent years, Madison County's agricultural landscape has embraced diversification and innovation to adapt to changing market demands and environmental challenges. Specialty crops such as blueberries, Perennial Peanut hay, and organic produce have emerged as lucrative alternatives to traditional farming. Additionally, sustainable practices like cover cropping, no-till farming, and precision irrigation are gaining traction among local farmers, driven by the need to conserve resources and protect the county's natural environment. These progressive measures, supported by organizations like the Madison Soil & Water Conservation District, aim to balance economic productivity with environmental stewardship.

The agricultural atmosphere in Madison County is also deeply tied to the community's cultural identity and economy. Local events such as Down Home Days, 4-H Ecology Field Day and Hickory Grove Founders Day celebrate the county's farming heritage and provide opportunities for producers to connect directly with consumers. Agriculture remains the backbone of the local economy, creating jobs and supporting allied industries such as equipment sales, transportation, and agritourism. As the county navigates modern agricultural challenges, its deep-rooted traditions, coupled with a willingness to innovate, ensure that farming will continue to play a vital role in shaping Madison County's future..



# Intro



## Introduction

The Madison Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is dedicated to promoting sustainable land use practices, conserving natural resources, and enhancing agricultural productivity within Madison County, Florida. This strategic plan outlines the district's vision, mission, goals, and action steps for the next five years (2025-2030) to ensure long-term environmental stewardship and community engagement.

## Vision

A thriving Madison County where agricultural productivity and natural resources are preserved and enhanced for future generations.

## Mission

To provide leadership, technical expertise, and resources to conserve soil, water, and other natural resources in collaboration with landowners, farmers, and community stakeholders.

## Core Values

- **Sustainability:** Promote practices that ensure the long-term health of natural resources.
- **Collaboration:** Foster partnerships with local, state, and federal organizations.
- **Education:** Empower the community through conservation education and outreach.
- **Innovation:** Embrace and promote modern technologies and practices in conservation.



# Strategic Goals

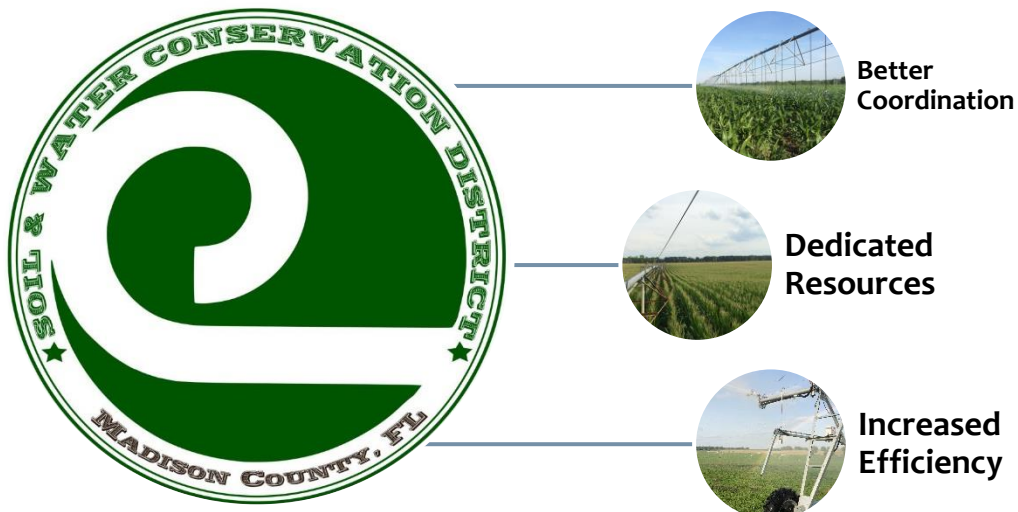
## Strategic Goals and Objectives

### 1. Enhance Soil and Water Conservation Practices

- Promote sustainable farming techniques such as no-till farming, cover cropping, and crop rotation.
- Expand the use of precision agriculture tools to optimize water and nutrient use.
- Partner with the Mobile Irrigation Lab (MIL) to provide on-site irrigation assessments and recommendations.
- Provide cost-share and grant opportunities to incentivize conservation practices.

### 2. Protect and Restore Natural Resources

- Identify and restore degraded lands through reforestation, erosion control, and habitat restoration programs.
- Collaborate with local agencies to monitor and improve water quality in lakes, rivers, and aquifers.
- Develop plans to address runoff and sedimentation issues affecting water bodies.
- Support initiatives to conserve wetlands and protect wildlife habitats.



### **3. Strengthen Community Engagement and Education**

- Conduct workshops and field demonstrations for farmers, ranchers, and landowners on best conservation practices.
- Develop educational programs for schools to instill conservation values in youth.
- Host community events, such as soil health days and water conservation fairs, to raise awareness.
- Publish newsletters and maintain an active online presence to keep the community informed.

### **4. Expand Partnerships and Funding Opportunities**

- Strengthen relationships with organizations like the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), and local governments.
- Pursue grant funding from state and federal agencies to support district initiatives.
- Partner with private sector entities to pilot and promote innovative conservation technologies.
- Engage with local businesses and non-profits to expand funding and resource-sharing opportunities.

### **5. Improve Organizational Capacity**

- Invest in staff training to enhance technical expertise and service delivery.
- Modernize district operations with updated tools, software, and equipment.
- Develop a comprehensive data management system to track progress and measure outcomes.
- Evaluate and refine policies to ensure alignment with current conservation challenges and opportunities.



# Action Plan

## Action Plan

### 1. Year 1 (2025)

- Conduct a baseline assessment of soil and water resources in Madison County.
- Launch a marketing campaign to raise awareness about district services.
- Host two community workshops on irrigation efficiency and soil health.

### 2. Year 2 (2026)

- Implement pilot projects for precision agriculture and cover cropping in partnership with local farmers.
- Source additional grant funding sources.
- Begin highlighting BMP implementation success in the county.

### 3. Year 3 (2027)

- Expand educational programs to include outreach to high schools and community colleges.
- Increase participation in the cost-share program by 20%.
- Relaunch and renew the annual conservation award to recognize outstanding stewardship efforts.

### 4. Year 4 (2028)

- Evaluate progress on water quality improvement projects and refine strategies.
- Establish a conservation advisory council with stakeholders from agriculture, business, and community sectors.
- Participate in a regional conservation symposium to share best practices.

### 5. Year 5 (2029)

- Publish a five-year impact report highlighting key achievements and lessons learned.
- Develop the next five-year strategic plan based on community input and data-driven insights.
- Scale up successful programs to reach additional farmers and landowners.



# Summary

## Measuring Success

The Madison SWCD will track progress through measurable indicators, including:

- Number of acres treated with conservation practices.
- Improvement in water quality metrics.
- Participation rates in workshops, cost-share programs, and community events.
- Amount of funding secured from external sources.

## Conclusion

The Madison Soil & Water Conservation District is committed to preserving Madison County's natural resources while supporting its agricultural community. This strategic plan provides a roadmap to achieve meaningful conservation outcomes through collaboration, education, and innovation. By working together, we can ensure a sustainable future for Madison County.

Sincerely,



BUCK M. CARPENTER  
Secretary/ Treasurer

