

# Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District

## Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report

### Board of Supervisors

Member	Seat
Mariano Corona	Seat 1
Nicki Smith	Seat 2
Donald Sellers, Jr.	Seat 3
Douglas Burnham	Seat 4
Glynn Rutledge	Seat 5

### Staff

Employee	Position Title
Audrey Kuipers	District Administrator
Robbi Sumner	Program Specialist
Colt Kitaif	BMP Conservation Technician
Vicki Wheeler	BMP Conservation Technician

### The Creation of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts

As a result of devastation caused by the 1930's Dust Bowl, U.S. Congress declared soil and water conservation a national policy and priority. Over 3,000 local districts across the U.S. were established to address conservation concerns, serving as liaisons between the federal government and local landowners.

Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District (OSWCD) was organized in 1951 under the provisions of the Florida Conservation Act of 1937 and amended by the Soil Conservation Act, F.S. Chapter 582 and is one of over 50 districts established in Florida. Each of these districts are governed by a board of five, elected nonpartisan, unpaid supervisors, who prioritize and aid in the implementation of services offered by our government to our local landowners.

### The Mission of Conservation Districts

OSWCD is responsible for developing and carrying out locally led agricultural programs for the conservation, protection, and development of soil, water and related plant and animal resources within the district boundaries.

## **Services**

- Provide technical assistance with conservation planning and best management practice implementation through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Provide program enrollment, verification and financial assistance for state mandated programs through the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Ag Water Policy
- Conservation education and agricultural program outreach

## **Year in Review**

### **1.4 million in State Cost Share**

Administered over \$1.4 million in state BMP (Best Management Practice) cost share projects that will help reduce nutrient run-off to Lake Okeechobee and the NEEPA (Northern Everglades and Estuary Protection Area).

### **24 Landowner Agreements**

Entered into cost share agreements with the Florida Department of Agriculture Office of Agricultural Water Policy and 24 agricultural producers in the Northern Everglades Estuary Protection Area, totaling 20,289 acres enrolled.

### **2,349,286 Dollars in New Contracts**

Assisted the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with 29 new federal obligations of \$2,349,286 encompassing 25,302 acres in Okeechobee and Glades Counties.

### **68,311 Acres Enrolled**

Assisted with managing 42 existing Farm Bill Program contracts in Okeechobee and Glades Counties with \$3,205,973 in obligations covering 42,565 acres. Additionally, there are 28 federal conservation easements totaling 25,766 acres in Okeechobee County.

### **Monofilament Recovery**

Recycled 30 pounds of monofilament fishing line collected from local boat ramps and tackle shops.

## OUTREACH

### Community Projects

- Provided funding for UF/IFAS Extension to assist 63 citizens with proper soil testing to help meet water quality compliance regulations.
- Continued assisting with the Agri Center Nature Trail maintenance.
- Instrumental in the establishment of the new Seed Catalog at the County Public Library.
- Introduced a new Feral Hog Management Cost Share Program for landowners

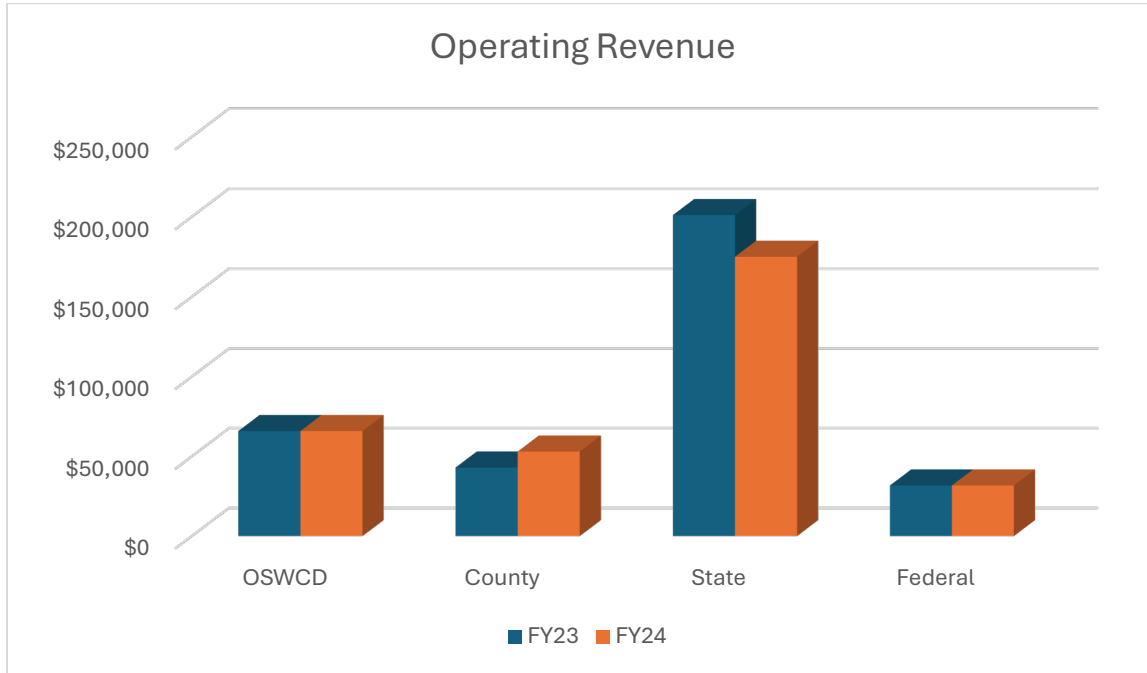
### 700+

Orchestrated soil conservation exhibits, conducted soil erosion and water quality demonstrations to youth ranging from grades K-12 during programs such as:

- **Land Judging Evaluation:** Provided financial assistance that aided with students' understanding of soil and water interactions.
- **Okeechobee AgVenture:** Agricultural conservation demonstrations were given as part of the event to Okeechobee County 4th grade students for the 2-Day event. OSWCD also provided financial assistance.
- **Envirothon:** We assist with the Soils Station and provide an avenue for Okeechobee students to participate in the Indian River Lagoon Envirothon (Environmental Olympics).
- **Speech and Poster Contests:** Engaged students to think about natural resources and agriculture through local, regional, state, and national level opportunities.

## Financial Statement of Activity

**Chart 1. Operating Revenue**



FY 23 operating income totaled \$359,801. FY 24 is projected at \$375,000.

\*\*Not included in Chart 1. Operating Income are FY 2023 Special Revenue projects which totaled \$1,467,892 in best management practice implementation incentive payments to improve water quality in the Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie, and Caloosahatchee BMAPs (Basin Management Action Plan) and surrounding watersheds.

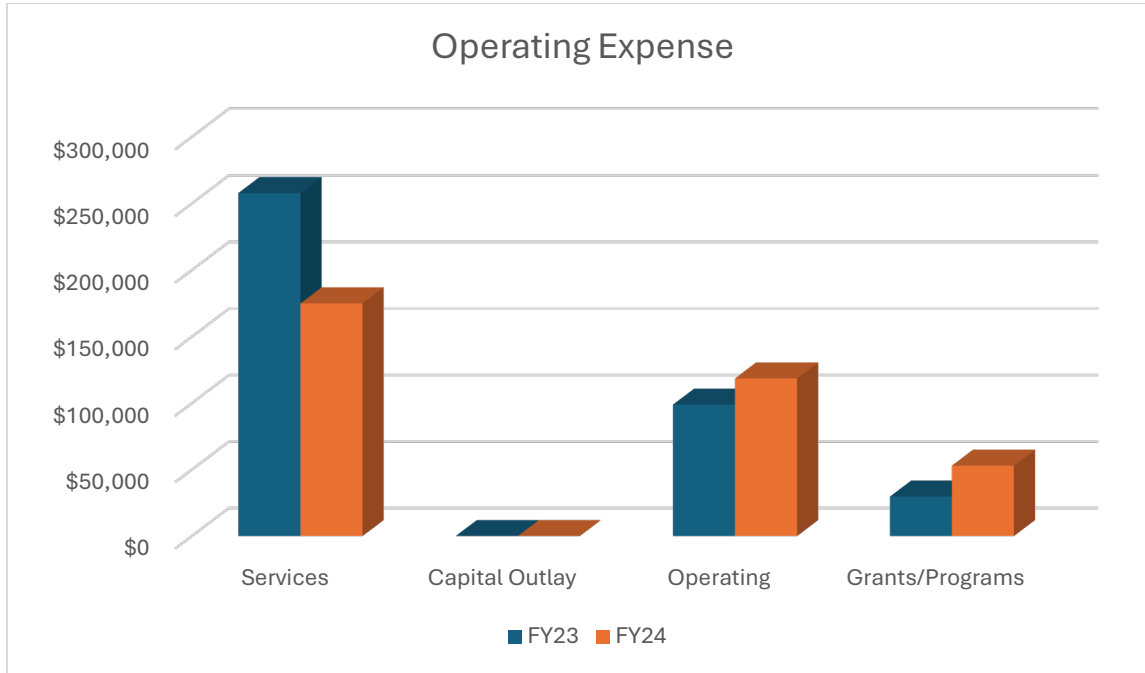
\*\*In Fiscal Year 2024, special revenue projects are projected to total \$2,695,000 in cost share dollars, an increase from the prior year due to the commencement of larger projects.

**Table 1. Operating and Special Revenue**

Revenue	2023	2024
OSWCD	\$65,875	\$65,875
County	\$43,000	\$53,000
State	\$201,070	\$175,000
Federal	\$31,752	\$31,752
**Special Revenue	\$1,467,982	\$2,695,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,809,589</b>	<b>\$3,020,627</b>

## Financial Statement of Activity

**Chart 2. Operating Expense**



FY 23 total operating expense totaled \$386,464. FY 24 is projected at \$473,539.

\*\*Not included in Chart 2. Operating Expense are FY 2023 Special Revenue projects which totaled \$1,467,892 in best management practice conservation payments to improve water quality in the Lake Okeechobee BMAP (Basin Management Action Plan) and surrounding watersheds.

\*\*In Fiscal Year 2024, special revenue projects are projected to total \$2,695,00 in cost share dollars.

**Table 2. Expense and Special Revenue Expense**

Expense	2023	2024
Services	\$257,822	\$175,000
Capital Outlay	\$0	\$0
Operating	\$98,897	\$118,606
Other Grants/Programs	\$29,745	\$53,000
**Special Revenue	\$1,467,982	\$2,695,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,854,356</b>	<b>\$2,988,606</b>