***DRAFT*** Proposed 2024-2025 Plan of Work

and 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan

**Mission**

The Mission of the Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District 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 promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of Bradford County.

**Vision**

Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District’s vision is to perform duties listed as Powers of Districts and Supervisors in [s. 582.20, Florida Statutes].

**Purpose Statement**

Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District’s purpose is to provide assistance and education to landowners, land occupiers, the agricultural industry, and the general public in implementing land and water resource protection policies.

*Supervisors adopted the Mission, Vision, and Purpose Statements by vote at the April 16, 2024, meeting*

**Programs**

The Bradford Soil and Water Conservation District has three areas of focus for programs: water and flooding, owner/operator education, and youth support and education.

Program 1: Water and Flooding

DRAFT program synopsis

Program 2: Owner/Operator Education

DRAFT program synopsis

Program 3: Youth Support and Education

DRAFT program synopsis

**Program Goals, Objectives & Performance Measures**

Program 1: Water and Flooding

DRAFT Program history, background/needs establishment, description. To include geography, geology, major watershed components, economic impacts, needs assessment.

1. 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:

* 1. Perform needs assessment
     1. Meet with local governments and partner agencies to assess needs and potential partnerships
     2. Create public survey to assess landowner/operator needs
     3. Performance measure: Completed needs assessments March 2025
  2. Integrate support mechanisms
     1. Identify potential funding and match sources
     2. Identify relevant training opportunities for supervisors
     3. Performance measure: Completed support assessment May 2025
  3. Develop programs and performance measures:
     1. Create a matrix of needs and opportunities identified.
     2. Create a matrix-based water program goals and objectives
     3. Identify timeline to re-assess program
     4. Completed program matrix and timeline July 2025

1. Goal 2: Implement long-range plan

Objectives:

* 1. Within 2 years, to address needs discovered in assessment BSWCD shall develop or reimplement water and flooding programs with goals, objectives, performance measures, and a plan to periodically reassess programs
     1. Performance measure: Completed program implementation plan September 2026
  2. Within 5 years, BSWCD will acquire additional funding for expanding water programs.
     1. Performance measure: Secured additional funding for minimum one program area by 2028

Program 2: Owner/operator education

DRAFT Program Description:

The Owner/Operator Education program shall connect land owners and operators with opportunities for technical assistance; cost share; and other beneficial opportunities toward soil and water best management practices, and thereby encourage conservation in accordance with the Bradford County Strategic Plan. The program shall also increase understanding among producers by facilitating on-site learning via actual practitioners teaching other owner-operators.

DRAFT Background:

Bradford County is still predominantly rural with more than 30% of the county’s acres in silviculture production by one organization (1) and numerous smaller timber holdings in the county. Besides timber, Bradford County is home to 61,282 acres of farmlands. Between 2017 – 2022 (2), the majority of these non-timber producers are in forage crop production and cattle operations, with a variety of other crop and livestock/poultry producers (2). Increases in market value of products sold (+100%), farm-related income (+2268%) and net cash farm income (+2127%) have been growing favorable for the county. Comparing sales value for 418 reporting farms, 25 farms report 100,000 or more; 18 report $25000 – 99999; 154 report $2500 – 24,999; and 221 farms report less than $2,500.

DRAFT Need:

The Bradford County Commission has related in their Strategic Plan development citizens value preservation of agricultural opportunities and the agricultural character of the county as well as the desire for nature-based eco-tourism opportunities. With more than half of Bradford’s operations in low-earning small farm production, the sector shows an opportunity to encourage agricultural business development the county. With increasing insurance prices and resulting development pressures on inland counties that have lower severe weather impacts than coastal counties, there is a need to encourage and educate the sector.

Currently no USDA/NRCS assistance exists directly in the county. Bradford’s owners/operators use USDA/NRCS services in Gainesville or Gilchrist county. While there is an increased use of government payments (+204%) in the reporting period, more information is needed on the types of assistance being utilized vs underutilized. Other opportunities may exist in natural resources developments towards eco-tourism efforts

Bradford demonstrates a strong need exists to cultivate connections between the agricultural community and opportunities for their growth, development and best management of operations. It appears a low overall per-farm average on net cash farm income ($22,999) is in part due to the imbalance of small farm operations in Bradford County (2), yet the value these

bring to the individuals and families supplementing other income with farming is considerable and has excellent growth potential through increased awareness of assistance. There is a great hand-in-hand opportunity to increase conservation practices in Bradford. For example, current production indicates 6% of farms using land use conservation practices (no till, reduced till, cover crops), while 13% reported using intensive till methods. Most available assistance is based on best management practices, so increasing exposure and encouraging adoption of programs can help enhance and expand operations in Bradford.

1. 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:

* 1. Hold one or more 2024-2025 ‘operator to operator’ education tour event to educate landowners and operators addressing 6 areas of education.
     1. Performance measure: 70% of responding attendees will demonstrate knowledge gained as indicated on a post-tour survey.
  2. Hold one 2025 event to increase awareness of available partner agency technical assistance, cost shares, conservation easements and other available aid.
     1. Performance measure: 70% of responding attendees will demonstrate knowledge gained as indicated on a post-event survey.
     2. Performance measure: 50% of responding attendees will indicate plans to pursue program offerings in the future on a post-event survey.

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

Objectives:

* 1. Create network of partner industries for financial and in-kind support
     1. Performance measure: secure outside funding for 75% of program expenses
  2. Explore feasibility of community giving program
     1. Performance measure: written report on presence or absence of community giving options

Program 3: Create youth support and educational opportunities

DRAFT Program background/needs establishment, description

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

Objectives:

* 1. Seek program development opportunities with 4-H/FFA and Youth Show partners in Bradford-Union County
     1. Performance measure: create input matrix from relevant stakeholders
  2. Develop goals, objectives and performance measure-based Youth Fair Support program
     1. Performance measure: program plan and budget for 2025-2026 plan of work

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

Objectives:

* 1. BSWCD shall identify outside funding methods for its educational programs
     1. Performance measure: Create list of potential funding opportunities and in-kind support
     2. Performance measure: Secure at least one additional source of funding and/or support for a project identified in objective (b) below
  2. BSWCD shall define opportunities for soil and water conservation education
     1. Performance measure: Create list of schools, youth groups, and events for interactive presentations
     2. Performance measure: Create list of potential public locations for educational displays
     3. Performance measure: Develop a relevant list of future projects addressing budget/support, audience, and presentation method and setting.
  3. BSWCD shall plan and implement at least one educational exhibit for community use in the 2024-2025 fiscal year
     1. Performance measure: Implement one project identified in objective (b) (iii) above by August 2025

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

The City of Starke Dump was located on Edwards Road west of the City’s Waste Water Treatment Plant. Most of the dump was covered and is now part of the City’s Edwards Road Sports Complex and Park. Approximately 2 acres of the southwest corner of the old dump remain uncovered and is overgrown with both native and invasive plants. A study was initiated in 2022 that uses only mechanical methods to treat the invasive plants in the 2 acre site. The study will be continued in FY 2024/2025.

The ultimate objective is to create an natural area with plants species including invasive plants that could be used for educational purposes and enjoyment by park visitors.

The area of invasive plant cover must be reduced and managed to avoid the spread of invasive plants to downstream properties.

1. Goal 1: Use volunteers to mechanically treat the invasive plants at the Old Starke Dump Site
   1. Objectives: Reduce invasive plants to the point that the invasive plant cover is less than 5% of the site by 9/30/2025.
      1. performance measure: Five linier invasive plant surveys will be use to estimate invasive plant coverage.
   2. Objective: Provide volunteer support for the project by paying mileage to volunteers who travel to the site to perform mechanical treatments.
      1. performance measure record volunteer work effort and mileage
      2. Include mileage cost in the FY 2024/2025 BSWCD Budget

DRAFT 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan

References

Bradford County Sherrif’s Office. *Bradford County Community Wildfire Protection Plan: 2020 Update*.

* + - 1. USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. *2022 Census of Agriculture County Profile: Bradford County Florida*. <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Florida/cp12007.pdf> Accessed 2024.09.30