

PAT HARRISON WATERWAY DISTRICT

5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR THE FISCAL YEARS 2023-2027

1. Comprehensive Mission Statement:

The mission of the Pat Harrison Waterway District, a special fund agency of the State, is to develop and manage the Pascagoula River and its tributaries for; a) flood control, b) water management, and c) recreation for the general welfare of all Mississippi residents. The basin includes more than 15,000 miles of rivers and streams in fifteen counties in Southeast Mississippi from north of I-20 to the Gulf of Mexico. As part of the mission, the district operates and maintains: a) eight (8) multi-purpose/multi-use reservoirs/dams, b) sixty-five (65) flood control structures, c) nine (9) recreational parks and d) provides technical and financial assistance (Works Project grants) to member counties.

2. Philosophy

The Pat Harrison Waterway District, its Board of Directors and staff are committed to sustainably developing and managing the Pascagoula Basin's water and recreational resources. The district's philosophy is to adhere to the highest professional standards, provide outstanding public service and demonstrate the highest respect for individual rights and values.

3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks

Statewide Goal #1.: To provide and maintain an integrated structural and nonstructural system to protect life and property from severe storms and flooding.

Relevant Benchmarks #1.: Flood Control

- 1) Annual frequency and severity of floods in PHWD member counties.
- 2) Number and extent of injury/death and property damage per flood.
- 3) Number of district high hazard dams being rehabilitated.
- 4) Number and average budget of district sponsored Natural Resources Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection Program grants per member county.
- 5) Number of completed Works Projects, drainage/erosion control projects in member counties.

Relevant Benchmarks #2.: Water Management

- 1) Measure water quality of discharges from district wastewater systems.
- 2) Number of long-term, severe droughts/low flow events on the Pascagoula River and tributaries.
- 3) Number of member counties seeking assistance to build dry fire hydrant systems to lower rural insurance rates.

Relevant Benchmarks #3.: Recreation and Tourism

- 1) Number of visitors on district Facebook site and promotional events.
- 2) Number of visitors and income at district parks
- 3) Number of new district amenities for water dependent/enhanced recreation (e.g., trails, boat ramps, fishing piers, etc.).
- 4) Number of new or rehabilitated district water dependent/enhanced recreational facilities (e.g., cabins, RV-sites, camp sites, bath houses, etc.).
- 5) Number of rehabilitated or extended basic district infrastructure to meet public or community demands (e.g., roads, utilities, water/wastewater, etc.).

4. Overview of the Agency 5-year Strategic Plan:

The Pat Harrison Waterway District must continue demonstrating that it is accomplishing its broad mission in a responsible, efficient manner and continuing to provide services that counties and the state will support. The district realizes that it must continue being proactive to identify and provide services that are important to State and local elected officials, regulatory entities, current and potential member counties and cities, and Mississippi residents and tourists. With this in mind, the district has three (3) primary priorities for 2023-2027; 1) continue recruiting new county and city members, 2) expand efforts to secure federal funding for single and multi-county projects to leverage district funds; and 3) be flexible to respond to Covid-19 pandemic's unprecedented demand for safe, outdoor recreation. First, regarding new members, the district's 2019-2023 5-year Strategic Plan, discussed the district's concerns about counties withdrawing from the district. A concerted effort was made to quantify and educate current and potential members on the benefits and costs of district membership. The district anticipates seeing the benefits of those efforts by entering into negotiations with potential new city and county members in FY 2022. The Mississippi Legislature explicitly authorized interested counties to join the district (H. Bill 1661 Sec. 6, 2019 Regular Session, March 3, 2019).

Secondly, the district has and will continue working with the Congressional delegation, the legislature and federal and state agencies to show the benefits of district membership by identifying and pursuing federal and state programmatic funding for important flood control,

water management and recreational issues. This continues the district's work on the federal Water Resources Development Act of 2020 (Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, Division AA, Pub. Law. 116-260 (Dec. 27, 2020) which resulted in Congress authorizing two (2) new Feasibility Studies; 1) Long Beach, Bay St. Louis and Mississippi Sound Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction; 2) Tallahoma and Tallahala Creeks flood risk management in Jones County (Sec. 201(a)(13 and 14). The district also worked with member counties to get Congress to authorize a broad Pascagoula River Basin Assessment (Sec. 202(c)(3)). The PHWD will work to secure a Congressional appropriation for these studies and to organize the necessary non-federal cost share to start these important flood control and water management efforts. The district will continue participating in the Pascagoula River Species Stewardship Program on a monitoring and planning program to increase and maintain habitat for the Pascagoula Basin's native species.

Finally, as of May 2021, the district had an unprecedented 20% (\$564,303) increase in year-to-year visitation and income as Mississippi residents and tourists sought safe, outdoor recreation to escape the long-term Covid-19 pandemic quarantine. The district plans to accelerate upgrading and expanding water parks' amenities, facilities and infrastructure to meet this increased demand. Given its experience sustainably operating parks without an appropriation, the district intends to continue discussions with the Legislature about transferring Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks parks located south of I-20 to the district. The district also negotiated a private lease for operation of the Little Black Creek Park campgrounds that generates an average of \$7,000.00 per month net profit for the district.

The district continues building new and improved camp sites and recreational amenities as the budget allows. The district funded construction of an ATV trail at Maynor Creek Park. The district also applies for funding from other agencies whenever possible. The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks helped fund a new 13-mile equestrian trail at Turkey Creek Water Park in Newton County. In 2021 the Mississippi Department of Transportation provided grant funds to begin building a 14-mile equestrian trail and parking areas at Flint Creek Park in Stone County.

The district has a proactive approach to managing its lands and providing technical assistance to the basin's private landowners. Forest lands account for approximately seventy-nine percent of the basin's land cover. The district's forest management is greatly assisted by Gerald Moore, a Governor appointed Director, with several years of forestry consulting experience. Director Moore helps guide the district's sustainable forest harvesting and re-planting program. The district also participates in the Pascagoula River Basin Program to restore pine and hardwood and provide technical on-the-ground restoration assistance to family forest landowners interested in managing or restoring private pine and hardwood forests.

5. External/Internal Assessment

- 1) Changing priorities and funding levels for federal flood control, water management and recreation grants.
- 2) Frequency, severity and duration of floods/storm could cause loss of park facilities.
- 3) Continued declining county membership would cause loss of revenue.
- 4) Federal/State and private Covid-19 responses.
- 5) Internal program to inspect district dams, outfall structures and spillways.
- 6) Internal Audit Committee meets with external accounting firm during the district's annual financial audit before audit is presented to the entire Board for approval.

The district has monthly committee and Board meetings. Committees meet at the district office in Hattiesburg. Board meetings usually rotate between district parks. Member boards of supervisors and legislators invited to all board meetings. Management policies are in place to quickly identify and correct any administrative, fiscal or personnel deficiencies.

6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Measures by Program for FY 2023 through FY 2027:

Program 1: Recreation and Tourism

GOAL A: Meet or exceed Mississippi resident and tourist expectations for outdoor recreation at the district's parks.

OBJECTIVE A.1. Increase number of visitors and park income.

Output: Park visitors

Output: Park income

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Increase number of visitors and park income.

Efficiency: Personnel cost per visitor

Efficiency: Other cost per visitor

Outcomes: Increase (Decrease) in park visitors

Outcomes: Increase (Decrease) in park income

Explanatory: The Covid-19 pandemic caused a 20% spike in FY 2021 district park visitation and income. It is uncertain if this spike will continue or not.

Program 2: Flood Control

GOAL A: Maintain and improve flood protection/drainage in the Pascagoula River Basin from more frequent and severe hurricanes and storms.

OBJECTIVE A.1. Leverage district technical expertise with federal and state flood control/drainage grants.

Outcome: Projects completed (grants)

Outcome: Projects completed Emergency Works Projects (grants)

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Partner with willing member counties as the applicant for federal and state flood control/drainage grants.

Output: Funded projects (Grants)

Output: Funded Emergency Works Projects (Grants)

Efficiency: Funded projects (Average Cost).

Efficiency: Funded Emergency Projects (Average Cost)

Explanatory: Cost to fund our Works Projects Grants is based on a percentage of membership cost received from member counties, thereby giving this money back to the county in flood control/drainage grants. Eligibility for the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Protection Program grants depends on the number, severity and location of eligible storms/floods.

Program 3: Water Management

GOAL A: Implement water management programs/agreements to minimize drought impacts and protect water quality in the Pascagoula River and tributaries to benefit the State of Mississippi and member counties and communities.

OBJECTIVE A.1. Water management to protect water quality and mitigate droughts in the Pascagoula River and tributaries.

Outcome: Low flow Pascagoula & drought management water release program

Outcome: Water quality sampling

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Maintain the Pascagoula River and tributaries' water quality and provide drought management.

Output: Low flow Pascagoula River & drought management agreements.

Output: Water sampling

Efficiency: Low flow Pascagoula & drought management water release program.

Efficiency: Water quality sampling

Explanatory: Water releases from Okatibbee Reservoir is only needed during prolonged droughts and low flows on the Pascagoula River. The district has a licensed and certified employee who monitors, samples and tests the parks'

wastewater systems and discharges. The employee is available to rapidly respond to any wastewater emergency in a cost-effective manner.