

# **PAT HARRISON WATERWAY DISTRICT**

## **5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **FOR THE FISCAL YEARS 2027-2031**

#### **1. Comprehensive Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Pat Harrison Waterway District (hereinafter referred to as “District”), a Mississippi special fund agency, is to develop and manage the Pascagoula River and its tributaries for; a) recreation b) flood control, and c) water management, to benefit the general welfare of Mississippi residents. The basin includes more than 15,000 miles of rivers and streams across fifteen (15) counties in Southeast Mississippi. The District accomplishes its mission mainly by operating and maintaining: a) nine (9) multi-purpose/multi-use reservoirs/dams, b) ten (10) recreational parks, c) sixty-five (65) flood control structures and d) providing member counties technical and financial assistance largely through Works Projects.

#### **2. Agency Philosophy**

The District, its Board of Directors and staff are committed to sustainably developing and managing the Pascagoula Basin’s recreational and water 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**

The District’s three (3) programs in the Pascagoula River Basin; 1) Recreation, 2) Flood Control, and 3) Water Management are included in Mississippi’s statewide Natural Resources Policy Area. The statewide Natural Resources Policy goal is, “To ensure that current and future generations have access to the state’s abundant natural resources through restoration, protection, conservation and the wise development of those resources.” The relevant statewide benchmarks for these three (3) programs are:

**Program #1-Recreation:** Meet or exceed Mississippi resident and tourist expectations for outdoor recreation at the District’s parks.

##### **Benchmarks**

1. Measure condition of Park infrastructure;
2. Measure condition of Park acreage; and,
3. Number of visitors to parks.

**Program #2- Flood Control:** Maintain and improve flood control in the Pascagoula River Basin.

**Benchmarks**

1. Number of dams in the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) inventory;
2. Percentage of dams in MDEQ's inventory are under an enforcement order to drain or repair, by category of dam (high, medium, or low hazard); and,
3. Percentage of flood hazard acreage updated to reflect most recent available flood data. Annual frequency and severity of floods in PHWD member counties.

**Program #3-Water Management:** Implement water management programs/agreements to minimize drought impacts and protect water quality in the Pascagoula River and tributaries.

**Benchmarks**

1. Maintenance of adequate quantity of surface waters, by region;
2. Miles of impaired rivers and streams (total and as a percentage of total river and stream mileage assessed);
3. Acres of impaired lake water (total and as a percentage of total lake water assessed); and,
4. Mississippi waters that meet or exceed State Water Quality Standards.

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

The District is committed to accomplishing its mission in a responsible, efficient manner by providing services that the state of Mississippi, its member counties and residents will support. The District has a robust communication and engagement effort with legislators, local elected officials, regulatory agencies, current and potential member counties and cities, and Mississippi residents and park visitors at monthly board meetings and periodic Legislative Update Meetings such as the one held in Hattiesburg on Dec. 5, 2024. The District committed to continue these efforts under a new Executive Director hired on March 24, 2025. An overview of the FY 2027-2031 5-year strategic plan for the three (3) program is:

- A. **Recreation**-the District completed and submitted a detailed Study of Capital Needs, Project Request Database Form for FY27-31 to the Dept of Finance and Administration (DFA). This 5-Year Plan, herein incorporated by reference, included detailed annual plans for FY 2027-2031 to add, repair, and/or refurbish park facilities (including, but not limited to, roads, bath houses, cabins, lodge halls, and pavilions). The Plan includes cost estimates for each proposed project. An investment in modern facilities and infrastructure should help increase park visitation and revenue. The District's private lease to operate the Little Black Creek Park campgrounds continues to generate a \$8,500 monthly net revenue. Finally, the 2024 Mississippi Legislature appropriated \$2,000,000 for Archusa Creek Dam Repairs (2024

Regular Session, Senate Bill No. 2468). Efforts continue to secure federal and grant funding to repair the dam and fully reopen Archusa Creek Park.

- B. **Flood Control**-The District's Works Projects and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Emergency Watershed (EWP) projects are reported below. In addition, the District, in cooperation with the Jones County Board of Supervisors completed an NRCS Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report for a Tallahala and Tallahoma Creek Flood Control project in 2024. The District anticipates starting a 100% federally funded planning effort for that project in the Summer of 2025.
- C. **Water Management**-The District is continuing efforts to renegotiate the Okatibbee Water Contract and associated fees with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

## 5. External/Internal Assessment

Certain unavoidable, outside factors may occur that could potentially negatively impact the District's ability to achieve its targeted performance goals. These factors include, but may not be limited to:

1. A reduction of park visitation or revenue damage from floods/storms.
2. Changes in county membership causing significant revenue changes.
3. Inflation causing a reduction in park visitation or increasing park operation and maintenance costs.

District membership has fluctuated over the last several years. As of 2025, five (5) counties have or are in the process of withdrawing from the District (Forest, Jasper, Lamar, Jackson, and Perry), one (1) county has joined the District (Kemper).

Park visitation and revenue increased during the Covid pandemic but has declined since. Some of this decline may be attributed to high visitor cancellation and refund rates due to periodic park water and septic issues. Similarly, the deterioration of park roads contributes lower park visitation. However, as detailed in the referenced DFA Plan, subject to budgetary constraints the District is aggressively repairing, upgrading, and expanding parks' amenities, facilities, and infrastructure.

Visitation and revenue at Archusa Water Park declined significantly since the failure of the Archusa dam in July 2023. Since 2022, Archusa's annual gross revenue was; 2022 - \$349,821, 2023 - \$388,661, 2024 - \$166,958, 2025 Year to Date- \$147,137

### 5.1 Internal Management Systems Used to Evaluate Agency's Performance

The District evaluates performance and responds to external challenges by staying in constant

communication at monthly committee and Board meetings. Open communication enables the District to promptly identify and correct administrative, personnel, or management deficiencies that may arise. Committee Meetings are held at the District office in Hattiesburg and Board Meetings rotate between District parks. An Internal Audit Committee meets with an external accounting firm during the District's annual financial audit prior to the audit being presented to the Board for approval. The District has an internal program to comply with MDEQ's Dam Safety Office on inspecting District dams, outfall structures, and spillways.

## **6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Measures by Program for FY 2027 through FY 2031:**

### **PROGRAM 1- RECREATION**

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

**Objective A.1:** Increase number of park visitors.

*Outcome:* More park visitors.

**A.1.1 Strategy:** Repair/renovate and expand park facilities and infrastructure.

*Output:* Modernized camp facilities and infrastructure.

*Efficiency:* Modern facilities and infrastructure should encourage more visitation and longer stays.

*Explanatory:* The District's FY 25 visitation was 310,000, FY 26 is estimated at 500,000, and FY 27 is projected conservatively at 350,000.

**Objective A.2:** Increase per Park income.

*Outcome:* More revenue per park.

**A.2.1 Strategy:** Increase Park income.

*Output:* Make strategic capital expenditures to lower personnel and other costs.

*Efficiency:* New or rehabilitated facilities and infrastructure should reduce personnel costs and other costs per visitor.

*Explanatory:* The District recently raised rates at the Parks. However, from FY24 to 25 the District's year-to year revenue fell 9%.

### **PROGRAM 2- FLOOD CONTROL**

**GOAL A:** Maintain and improve flood control in the Pascagoula River Basin.

**Objective A.1:** Protect lives and property from floods in the Pascagoula River Basin and its tributaries.

*Outcome:* Lives saved, injuries prevented and reduced property damage from floods.

**A.1.1 Strategy:** Continue Works Projects for Member Counties/Cities.

*Output:* Works Projects targeting flood control and drainage.

*Efficiency:* Modern facilities and infrastructure should encourage more visitation and longer stays.

*Explanatory:* In FY 25, the District had 25 Works Projects with an average per project cost of \$19,222 and completed 29 projects (projects can cross fiscal years). For FY 26 the District estimates, 40 new projects, at an average per project cost of \$12,500 and to complete 25 projects. For FY 27 the District projects 25 projects at an average of \$20,000 per project and to complete 25 projects.

**Objective A.2: Continue assisting Member Counties/Cities apply for and administer federal NRCS EWP projects.**

*Outcome:* Save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce property damage from floods.

**A.2.1 Strategy: Assist Member Counties/Cities to apply for, administer and cost-share NRCS EWP Projects.**

*Output:* Leverage local funds on flood control projects after an eligible flood/storm events.

*Efficiency:* This is a 75/25 federal cost share program, the District splits the 25% local cost share with the member county/city to leverage local funds' flood control benefits.

*Explanatory:* The District did not have any EWP projects in FY25 but estimates 4 projects in FY26 and 4 projects in FY27. The estimated average District cost per EWP in FY26 is estimated at \$12,500 and projected to be \$20,000 in FY 27. The District completed 1 EWP project in FY 25, estimates completing 2 in FY 26 and 2 in FY27.

**PROGRAM 3- Water Management**

**Goal A:** Protect Water Quality and implement water management programs/agreements to minimize droughts in the Pascagoula River and Tributaries to benefit the State of Mississippi and member counties and cities.

**Objective A.1:** Minimize droughts in the Pascagoula River Basin and its tributaries.

*Outcome:* A reliable surface water supply for communities and industries in the Pascagoula River watershed.

**A.1.1 Strategy:** Renegotiate Okatibbee Water Supply Contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE).

*Output:* Revised water supply contract.

*Efficiency:* A revised water supply contract should lower or eliminate the

District's annual water supply payments to the COE.

*Explanatory:* The water supply contract has only been used once since 1965 for drought mitigation on the Pascagoula River. There is no foreseeable drought management demand for Okatibbee water.

**Objective A.2: Water quality testing.**

*Outcome:* Comply with MDEQ and MS Dept. of Health regulations.

**A.2.1 Strategy: Assist Member Counties/Cities to apply for, administer and cost-share NRCS EWP Projects.**

*Output:* Required MDEQ and MS Dept. of Health reports

*Efficiency:* An external licensed and certified contractor is the most cost-effective way for the District to comply with changing MDEQ and MS Dept. of Health regulations.

*Explanatory:* The District's contractor monitors, samples, and tests the District's parks' wastewater systems and discharges and is available to rapidly respond to any wastewater emergency.