



PAT HARRISON WATERWAY DISTRICT

July 1, 2026

John Read, House Appropriations Committee Chairman
W. Briggs Hopson III, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman

Board of Directors

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Joe Warren
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Rick Hux
District-at-Large

Billy Jay
District-at-Large

Mike Smith
District-at-Large

Dear Chairmen,

Enclosed for your review is the Pat Harrison Waterway District's (PHWD) Five-Year Plan for Fiscal Years 2028–2032. This plan identifies the District's prioritized capital improvement projects and outlines the purposes, goals, and projected costs associated with each initiative.

The enclosed document was prepared for inclusion in the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration's Capital Needs and Project Request Database and also serves to satisfy the District's statutory planning requirements. Specifically, Mississippi Code Annotated Section 51-15-119(2) provides that:

"The board of directors shall annually prepare a five-year plan containing a prioritized list detailing the purposes, goals and projected costs of projects which it intends to implement or is in the process of implementing and shall file such plans with the clerk of the board of supervisors of each member county, with the clerk of each member municipality, and with the Chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees on or before July 15 of each year."

The District remains committed to transparency, accountability, and long-range planning. This annual report is intended to provide member counties, municipalities, state leaders, and other stakeholders with a comprehensive overview of the District's capital needs and planned investments. Many of the projects identified in this plan are designed to enhance public recreation opportunities, preserve and improve critical infrastructure, support economic development, and ensure the continued safe operation of District facilities and water resources.

Additionally, the January 2023 report issued by the Mississippi Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER), *A Review of the Pat Harrison Waterway District's Current Financial Status and Its Efforts to Plan for Capital Outlay Needs (Report No. 684)*, recommended continued compliance with this statutory planning requirement. The District remains committed to meeting that recommendation and providing annual updates regarding its project priorities and capital improvement needs.

We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions regarding this plan. The continued partnership and support of our member counties and municipalities are essential to the District's ability to improve recreational assets, maintain critical infrastructure, and serve the citizens of Southeast Mississippi. We appreciate your ongoing cooperation and look forward to working together to advance projects that benefit the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Danny Box".

Danny Box
Executive Director
Pat Harrison Waterway District

PAT HARRISON WATERWAY DISTRICT

5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR FISCAL YEARS 2028–2032

1. COMPREHENSIVE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Pat Harrison Waterway District (hereinafter referred to as the “District”), a Mississippi special fund agency, is to develop and manage the Pascagoula River and its tributaries for:

1. **Recreation;** and
2. **Flood Control/Water Management**

for the benefit of the general welfare of the residents of the State of Mississippi.

The Pascagoula River Basin includes more than 15,000 miles of rivers and streams across fifteen (15) counties in Southeast Mississippi. The District carries out its mission primarily through the operation and maintenance of:

1. nine (9) multi-purpose reservoirs and dams;
 2. ten (10) recreational parks;
 3. sixty-five (65) flood control structures; and
 4. technical and financial assistance provided to member counties, largely through Works Projects.
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2. AGENCY PHILOSOPHY

The District, its Board of Directors, and its staff are committed to the responsible and sustainable development and management of the recreational and water resources of the Pascagoula River Basin. The District’s philosophy is to operate in accordance with the highest professional standards, provide exemplary public service, and demonstrate respect for the rights, interests, and values of the citizens and communities it serves.

3. RELEVANT STATEWIDE GOALS AND BENCHMARKS

The District administers two (2) primary programs within the Pascagoula River Basin:

1. **Recreation**
2. **Flood Control/Water Management**

These programs fall within Mississippi's statewide **Natural Resources Policy Area**.

The statewide Natural Resources Policy goal is as follows:

“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.”

Program 1 – Recreation

Goal: To meet or exceed the expectations of Mississippi residents and visitors for outdoor recreation opportunities at District parks and facilities.

Benchmarks

1. Condition of park infrastructure.
2. Condition of park acreage and grounds.
3. Number of visitors to District parks.

Program 2 – Flood Control/Water Management

Goal: To maintain and improve flood control in the Pascagoula River Basin and to implement water management initiatives designed to minimize drought impacts and protect water quality.

Benchmarks

1. Number of District dams included in the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (“MDEQ”) inventory.
2. Percentage of dams under enforcement orders, by hazard category.
3. Percentage of flood hazard acreage updated with current or recent data.
4. Annual frequency and severity of flood events.
5. Maintenance of surface water quantities.
6. Miles of impaired streams.
7. Acres of impaired lakes.
8. Waters meeting State Water Quality Standards.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE AGENCY 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

The District is committed to carrying out its mission in a responsible, efficient, and fiscally sound manner by providing services that are valuable to the State of Mississippi, its member counties, and the public.

The District maintains regular communication and engagement with legislators, local elected officials, regulatory agencies, member counties and municipalities, prospective member counties, and the general public through Board meetings, committee meetings, legislative coordination, and other public communications.

An overview of the District’s strategic priorities for Fiscal Years 2028 through 2032 is set forth below.

A. Recreation

The District will prepare and submit a detailed Capital Needs and Project Request Plan for Fiscal Years 2028–2032 to the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (“DFA”).

The plan will include annual projects designed to add, repair, and refurbish park facilities and infrastructure, including, but not limited to, roads, bathhouses, cabins, lodges, pavilions, campsites, and related recreational improvements. Continued investment in park infrastructure and amenities is expected to improve visitor satisfaction, increase visitation, and strengthen park-generated revenue.

The District anticipates that the private lease of the campgrounds at Little Black Creek Park will continue to generate approximately \$8,500 in net monthly revenue.

The District will also continue pursuing federal, state, and grant funding opportunities to support the repair of Archusa Creek Dam and the full reopening of Archusa Water Park.

B. Flood Control/Water Management

The District will continue to administer and support flood control and watershed management initiatives, including:

1. **Works Projects;** and
2. **Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”) Emergency Watershed Protection (“EWP”) projects.**

In cooperation with Jones County, the District will continue efforts to advance the Tallahala and Tallahoma Creek Flood Control Project, including planning, engineering coordination, and potential implementation activities during the FY 2028–2032 planning period.

The District will also continue its efforts to review and renegotiate the Okatibbee Water Contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

5. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

A number of external factors may affect the District’s ability to achieve its performance goals and strategic objectives. These factors include, but are not limited to:

1. reduced park visitation or storm-related damage to District facilities and infrastructure;

2. changes in county membership affecting revenues and service demands; and
3. inflation and other economic conditions that increase operational, maintenance, and capital improvement costs.

District membership has fluctuated in recent years. As of 2026, five counties had withdrawn from, or were in the process of withdrawing from, the District: Forrest, Jasper, Lamar, Jackson, and Perry. One county, Kemper County, joined the District. Perry County subsequently rejoined the District, resulting in a total of twelve (12) member counties.

Park visitation increased during the COVID-19 period but has since declined due to factors including increased refund rates, water and septic system issues, and deteriorating infrastructure at certain facilities. The District continues to address these issues through capital planning and facility improvements, subject to available funding and budget constraints.

Revenue at Archusa Water Park declined significantly following the failure of Archusa Creek Dam in July 2023. Restoration of that facility remains a significant operational and financial priority for the District.

5.1 Internal Management Systems

The District evaluates performance and monitors progress toward strategic goals through the following internal management systems and oversight practices:

1. monthly committee and Board meetings;
2. internal accounting and audit procedures;
3. coordination with external auditors and other oversight entities; and
4. compliance monitoring associated with MDEQ Dam Safety inspections and related regulatory requirements.

6. AGENCY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND MEASURES FOR FY 2028–2032

PROGRAM 1 – RECREATION

Goal A

To meet or exceed public expectations for outdoor recreation opportunities at District parks and facilities.

Objective A.1

Increase the number of visitors to District parks.

Outcome: Increased park visitation.

Strategy A.1.1: Improve and modernize park facilities and infrastructure.

Output: Improved park facilities, amenities, and supporting infrastructure.

Efficiency Measure: Increased visitation associated with capital improvements and facility enhancements.

Explanatory Information / Performance Assumptions

- FY 2025: 310,000 visitors
- FY 2026: 350,000 visitors (estimated)
- FY 2027: 375,000 visitors (projected)
- FY 2028–2032: Gradual growth in visitation is anticipated as capital improvements are completed and additional park facilities are modernized.

Objective A.2

Increase park-generated income on a per-park basis.

Outcome: Increased park-generated revenue.

Strategy A.2.1: Make strategic capital expenditures and operational improvements intended to enhance revenue and reduce avoidable operating costs.

Output: Improved facilities, reduced inefficiencies, and strengthened revenue-generating capacity.

Efficiency Measure: Improved operating margins and revenue performance.

Explanatory Information / Performance Assumptions

Revenue declined by approximately 9% from FY 2024 to FY 2025. Revenue recovery is expected through continued infrastructure improvements, operational adjustments, and, where appropriate, rate modifications.

PROGRAM 2 – FLOOD CONTROL/WATER MANAGEMENT

Goal A

Maintain and improve flood control within the Pascagoula River Basin.

Objective A.1

Protect lives and property through flood control and drainage improvement projects.

Outcome: Reduced flood risk to residents, private property, and public infrastructure.

Strategy A.1.1: Continue administering and funding Works Projects in member counties.

Output: Drainage improvements, flood control work, and related infrastructure projects.
Efficiency Measure: Number of projects completed and average cost per project.

Explanatory Information / Performance Assumptions

- FY 2025: 25 projects (\$19,222 average cost per project)
- FY 2026: 40 projects (\$12,500 average cost per project)
- FY 2027: 25 projects (\$20,000 average cost per project)
- FY 2028–2032: 25 to 35 projects annually, depending on need, weather events, and available funding.

Objective A.2

Administer NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection projects as eligible opportunities arise.

Outcome: Timely implementation of eligible watershed protection and recovery projects.

Strategy A.2.1: Apply for, administer, and coordinate cost-share projects under the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program.

Output: Completed EWP projects in participating counties and watersheds.

Efficiency Measure: Number of projects completed and effective use of 75/25 cost-share funding.

Explanatory Information / Performance Assumptions

- FY 2026: 4 projects
- FY 2027: 4 projects
- FY 2028–2032: 2 to 5 projects annually, depending on declared events, project eligibility, and funding availability.

Goal B

Protect water quality and minimize drought impacts through sound water management practices.

Objective B.1

Minimize drought impacts through continued review and improvement of available water management tools.

Outcome: Improved water management readiness and contractual flexibility.

Strategy B.1.1: Continue efforts to review and renegotiate the Okatibbee Water Contract.

Output: Revised or updated contractual agreement, if successfully negotiated.

Efficiency Measure: Progress toward contract review, revision, and implementation.

Explanatory Information / Performance Assumptions

The Okatibbee Water Contract has been used infrequently in recent years. The District will continue to evaluate the contract and its practical utility during FY 2028–2032 and will pursue revisions as appropriate.

Objective B.2

Maintain water quality testing and regulatory compliance activities.

Outcome: Continued compliance with applicable water quality monitoring and reporting requirements.

Strategy B.2.1: Utilize contracted compliance and testing services, as needed, to support water quality monitoring and reporting.

Output: Water quality monitoring, testing, reporting, and related compliance services.

Efficiency Measure: Cost-effective compliance with applicable state and federal water quality requirements.

Explanatory Information / Performance Assumptions

Ongoing monitoring, testing, reporting, and emergency response support services will continue throughout the FY 2028–2032 planning period.

7. CONCLUSION

The Pat Harrison Waterway District’s FY 2028–2032 Strategic Plan establishes a framework for the continued advancement of the District’s two core program areas: **Recreation** and **Flood Control/Water Management**. Through targeted capital investment, continued support of county flood control initiatives, responsible stewardship of District water resources, and sustained efforts to improve and modernize park infrastructure, the District intends to strengthen service delivery to its member counties and the public.

The District will continue to monitor changing operational, financial, environmental, and regulatory conditions and will adjust implementation priorities as necessary to fulfill its statutory mission in an efficient, responsible, and fiscally prudent manner.

The Student Worksheet
 Answer Key
 Student Booklet
 Student Booklet
 Student Booklet

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