

Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council

Work Plan – 2026

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Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council

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Mission

To protect, preserve, manage and restore Florida's water resources by coordinating water resource monitoring among all levels of government, improving data quality and effectiveness, and sharing information widely.

Introduction

This work plan for the Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council outlines a strategy for improving the coordination among water quality monitoring and data management personnel to enhance the efficiency of data collection, analysis, and visualization. **The main efforts addressed in the work plan include ongoing efforts for maintaining the Water-Cat tool, continued support for developing minimum Quality Assurance (QA) standards, and lessons-sharing and expertise-building around eight potential training or collaboration seminars. Some sessions will be group-led discussions, while others will be traditional expert-delivered seminars on current issues related to Florida's water quality monitoring.**

Background

The Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council (Council) is a coordinating body of multiple stakeholder organizations from many disciplines that participate in water resource monitoring and management. Specifically, the Council is interested in marine, fresh, surface, and ground water resources in Florida. Members represent federal, state, and local agencies and organizations who collect, manage, compile, and disseminate information about hydrological, chemical, physical, and biological properties associated with Florida's waters. The current Council (restarted in 2011) has been broadened to inform, plan and ultimately coordinate Florida water resources monitoring efforts at the state, local, and federal levels. Council authority for statewide coordination and cooperation is described in Chapter 373.026(3), Florida Statutes.

The Council develops its projects and statewide structure with the expertise of its members, partners, and workgroups. New challenges and opportunities have arisen since the Council first convened and are being addressed by focusing on newly identified topics and challenges. The Council leverages efforts with concurrent and convergent projects of its members and partners, thereby conserving fiscal and human resources. The ultimate outcome is to improve the quality and efficiency of monitoring activities in Florida. This assures that water resource managers have the best scientific data available to make comprehensive decisions regarding the protection and preservation of Florida's water resources in the 21st century.

This Work Plan for 2026 lays out the Action Items for the coming year to help achieve the Council mission. The 2026 Council priorities were determined based on a fall 2025 meeting of the Council to brainstorm and discuss areas for collaboration or training needs. Staff turnover and the resulting needs for water quality training courses and refresher materials were identified as a key priority that relates to many of the topics listed below.

The following table lists the resulting group priorities, ordered from greatest to smallest in terms of how many “top 5” votes each topic was assigned by the Fall 2025 meeting participants.

Priorities	Count of top 5 ranks
QA process sharing, outlier treatment, using WIN flags, and more	14
Centralized bio/eco/species data repository*	11
Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs): data interpretation, SOP sharing*	8
LVI/SCI training: condensed training materials access*	8
Grant funding for water quality: different DEP programs/sources, dashboard access	8
DEP Water Quality Sample Course: availability, refresher course, inclusion of hydrologic data*	7
AI: how can it be used to inform monitoring, support data QA, other applications	6
Salinity Network: sharing isochlor thresholds	3
Aquifer Storage: data collection and interpretation impacts, well purging, more	3
Event Mean Concentration (EMC) model evaluation, improvement	2
Remote Sensing and in-situ data combinations; drones; vegetation mapping	2

** Indicates some short-term urgency for at least some portion of the priority item*

Action Items

Ongoing or Multi-year Action Items

Action Item O - 1: Centralized Bio/Eco/Species Data Repository

A. Timeframe

- January 2026 survey design and launch: to inquire on data types typically recorded
- March 2026: follow-up meeting online to collaborate/discuss possible next steps
- 2026 and beyond: depending on survey findings and discussion

B. Outcome(s)

- Figure out the “who” and “how” of a centralized data repository for biological, ecological, and species data collected as part of water quality monitoring.
- Long-term outcome: to provide shared, standardized bio/species data across agencies.

C. Tasks

TASK 1: Agency survey on current data collection and storage practices.

TASK 2: Council Members/Representatives from agencies collaborate for adopting standards on data collection, structure, maintenance, and updates for the repository.

TASK 3: Develop actions steps to create or contract for the development of a central repository accessible to and editable by agencies. NOTE: this is beyond the scope and funding of the Water Council – real action here will depend on members’ interests and potential partners for implementation.

Training and Collaboration Initiatives

Training and Discussion Seminars

As needed in 2026 and beyond – the list of topics below is sorted from highest priority to lowest according to Fall 2025 meeting participant input.

QA Process Sharing, Outlier Treatment, Using WIN Flags

This consists of two main areas of work:

- Collection and centralized web-hosting of agency data QA procedure documents. The Balmoral Group or DEP to facilitate documentation collection.
- Depending on group interest, a discussion meeting would follow to present the resources collected and provide a venue for participants to ask questions about specific data quality challenges or processes (examples: how outliers are treated, how WIN flags are used, and others).

HAB Data Interpretation and Statement of Purpose Sharing – This would be a discussion from Water Council members about their interpretation of data collected around Harmful Algal Bloom events, and brainstorm methods of sharing HAB related SOPs as they happen.

DEP Water Quality Sampling Course NOTE – existing resources available at <https://floridadep.gov/dear/quality-assurance/content/training-resources>

The priorities for Council members here relate to refresher materials, improved availability or awareness of trainings, and the inclusion of training on hydrologic data

The work of the Council here would be:

- Inventory the available, on-demand training resources: what is currently accessible for self-guided video or other web-based training courses from DEP? Identify training materials gaps or needs
- Assist with developing training resources to fill any identified gaps
- Assist with training meeting reminders

AI Applications in Monitoring and Analytics– the training info here would focus on how AI can inform monitoring, support data QA efforts, and other applications in water quality projects.

Salinity Network/ Sharing Isochlor Thresholds

- Part 1: Assess availability of a salinity metrics synthesis document/report relevant to Florida groundwater monitoring: is there an existing resource that has compiled the main salinity metrics used for groundwater salinity monitoring in Florida? If not, request volunteers from the Council to assemble this.
- Part 2: Schedule a discussion meeting to review the metrics and discuss merits and weaknesses of them.

Aquifer Storage – the training info here can be related to aquifer storage data collection and interpretation impacts on output, well purging, and other factors. Compile existing requirements or best practices for water quality sampling from or near aquifer storage wells.

Event Mean Concentration Model Evaluation and Improvement

- **Develop a summary report on EMC models to summarize the methods, source data, and applications (what agencies are using them and for what purposes?). Enlist volunteers from Council or The Balmoral Group to take this on.**
- **Share EMC summary findings to the Council. The goal of this effort – improve data transparency and model literacy related to EMC models that are sometimes used in nutrient loading models with major policy implications.**

Remote Sensing and In-Situ Data– the training info here would be related to remote sensing products to support water quality monitoring and/or how in-situ measurements are needed for the development of remote sensing algorithms or data products.

Outcome(s)

Prioritized topics for seminars or discussions are opportunities for lessons-learned sharing and training in areas of interest to the Water Council. The outcomes expected: improved collaboration and learning on topics relevant to Florida’s water quality.

Summary

This work plan for 2026 outlines the proposed efforts of the Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council, based on Council member input. There is flexibility in the training topics to allow for as-needed meetings on topics of importance. It is expected that some of the training topics or other work plan items will continue to be addressed into future years based on workloads and timing.

For more information and to stay up to date with the Water Council, visit the website:

<https://floridadep.gov/dear/watershed-monitoring-section/content/fwrmc>