

LEHIGH ACRES MUNICIPAL  
SERVICES IMPROVEMENT  
DISTRICT

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

OCTOBER 1, 2023-SEPTEMBER 30, 2027

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
June 28, 2022



# LEHIGH ACRES MUNICIPAL SERVICES IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

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# Introduction from the Chair of the Board

Introduction from the Chair of the Board

June 28, 2022

Dear Fellow Residents and Assessment Payers:

I ran for this Board to help make a difference in the community. When I was elected, I hit the ground running; becoming active in professional associations on behalf of the District, earning the coveted Certified District Official credential, and building relationships to help the community we serve. I have spent countless hours learning the ins and outs of the District's operations to help inform my decisions and make a lasting impact. My colleagues and I have been working hard to achieve a lot of good for the District with the aid of our dedicated staff.



*Julie Camp, Chair*

Protecting the environment, resource management and innovative solutions to these issues are reasons I ran for the board and continue to serve.

During my time on the Board, we faced a pandemic, a changing economic climate, and through it all we saw more of an importance of building relationships and setting goals.

By remaining mission-driven and continuing to provide essential services the District, we will be able to navigate this crisis and evaluate short-term and long-term impacts. The District is striving to normalize services to the best of our ability while ensuring safety or our staff complying with state and federal policies as COVID continues to linger.

The District is monitoring the impacts the current economy will have on the budget. We are faced with combating a tough job market and the effects of COVID still linger. Despite the global pandemic, we have been able to continue stormwater storage and water quality improvement projects. We have kept momentum on regular services. Staff excels at innovative solutions and partnerships.

The District worked diligently with Lee County for the transfer of ownership of the old "Welcome to Lehigh Acres" sign at the corner of Homestead Road and Lee Blvd. This allows for a local government agency to help better maintain a central part of our community's aesthetic

We have made great strides in our Lee County partnerships on the West Marsh and GS-10 Projects.

And we have worked to secure a CREST \$6.060 million in funding for the Caloosahatchee River & Estuary Storage and Treatment (CREST) Project; \$2 million of this came from a Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) State Water-Quality Assistance Grant (SWAG Program) grant and the remainder from a budget

appropriations request. The Governor vetoed \$3.1 billion in projects, but ours wasn't one of them. The Board and counsel lobbied for the importance of this project.

The CREST project is a crucial step to meeting water quality and storage needs within the Lehigh Acres' system. The overall C.R.E.S.T. project is comprised of three phases: Phase I the design and replacement of a weir – a structure used to control the flow of water, along with land acquisition; Phase II: Design and permitting of a storm water facility that will provide protection for the Caloosahatchee River, Hendry County, Lehigh Acres, and the region.

The CREST project provides water quality benefit through nutrient removal to waterways that feed the Caloosahatchee River, which is impaired for total nitrogen and total phosphorus. Phase II of the project includes water quality components and water control structures to direct flows in such a way that it will reduce the pollution load.

My colleagues and I on the Board, along with our dedicated staff, are excited about the progress we have made and will continue to work for as we work to preserve, protect and restore our environment and resources in the most fiscally responsible manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Camp". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Julie Camp  
Chair, LAMSID Board of Commissioners

## Executive Summary

The Board of Commissioners and staff of the Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District (The Municipal District) are proud to present this 5-year “Strategic Plan” for October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2027.

Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District (LA-MSID), a Florida Statutes Chapter 189 Special District was created on June 10, 2015. The former East County Water Control District was created in 1958 to drain the land for development. ECWCD had since moved to a more balanced “water control” strategy as the demand for more flood control and aquifer recharge has increased over the years. The District has made incredible progress building the infrastructure needed to balance drainage, water storage, water quality and aquifer recharge.

In the early 2000s, ECWCD realized that it did not have the science available to make major stormwater infrastructure improvement decisions that could have an adverse financial impact on the whole community. During this time, ECWCD became involved in the South Florida Water Management District’s (SFWMD) Caloosahatchee River Partners in Restoration and Lehigh Headwaters Initiative. Subsequently, a joint review was conducted for ECWCD and SFWMD by ADA Engineering, which identified inadequacies within the ECWCD water control system that would be exacerbated by full build-out at more than 300,000 residents. Several potential future projects were identified to help mitigate the current system’s shortfalls and start planning for the future. Today, the economy is very strong and needs that were identified for future build out must still be addressed.

The “ADA Engineering Report” from 2007 indicated a potential failure of the Harns Marsh levies during a 100-year storm. Many of the projects listed in the 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Plan are directly related to the results of the ADA study. The report indicated that a shortage of stormwater storage exists and must be addressed soon.

In September of 2017, The Municipal District took a direct hit from Hurricane Irma with Category 2 force winds and very heavy rainfall. There was considerable damage inside of our borders and the surrounding communities. There was scattered high stormwater levels

that crested some canal banks and caused widespread road flooding. Several homes downstream of the District, built in designated flood plains with finished floor elevations below FEMA 100-year storm elevations reported interior flooding. This event emphasized the need for more stormwater projects all over Lee County, including in and around the Municipal District, thereby possibly creating some state and local funding opportunities in the near future.

The first five-year strategic plan was presented in fiscal year 2007/2008 and has been updated annually since then.

The goals, objectives and strategies outlined at the end of this report have reinforced our commitment to:

- ✓ provide the best level of general maintenance of our conveyance system
- ✓ continue to develop a high-quality, motivated and well-trained work force
- ✓ renew or replace substandard infrastructure
- ✓ plan and progress toward build-out goals
- ✓ secure low-cost financing and/or grant funding for our projects
- ✓ provide a consistent high level of services in a cost-effective and efficient manner

The Board of Commissioners have adopted revised prior Strategic Plans on these dates:

September 8, 2009	August 18, 2014	June 22, 2020
January 22, 2010	July 20, 2015	July 19, 2021
June 21, 2010	June 20, 2016	
July 18, 2011	June 19, 2017	
June 18, 2012	June 18, 2018	
June 17, 2013	August 19, 2019	

# Contributors

## **Board of Commissioners:**

Julie Camp, Chair, Seat 2  
Michael Bonacolta, Vice Chair, Seat 4  
Julie Hollingsworth, Treasurer, Seat 1  
Katy Hoover, Secretary, Seat 5  
Kenneth K. Thompson, Commissioner, Seat 3

## **Staff:**

David E. Lindsay, District Manager  
Michael S. Cook, Assistant District Manager  
Carla Brantley, Resource and Relations Director  
Alexis Nielson, Administrative Support Specialist  
Dana March, Finance Director  
William Walker, Field Operations Director

## **Consultants:**

Daniel Schroeder, District Engineer, Aim Engineering & Surveying, Inc.  
Seth Behn, General Counsel, Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A.  
Nik Joshi, Labor Counsel, Hultman & Joshi, P.A.

## **Mission, Vision & Values Statements**

### **Mission Statement**

*Adopted 7/20/2015*

Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District is dedicated to preserving and managing natural and community resources by providing: safe, reliable, and high-quality services to its constituents in an environmentally and financially responsible manner.

### **Vision Statement**

*Adopted 8/11/2015*

Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District, through the efforts of dedicated elected officials and employees, will deliver the highest quality services, provide a fair and orderly system of governance, and protect the area's environmental and community resources.



# Values Statement

January 11, 2007

## Diversity of our workforce

We want to maintain the diversity of our workforce to be consistent with the diversity of our community.

## Integrity

We take pride in our work and are accountable and trusted to carry out our responsibilities with honesty and integrity. *We believe highly skilled and ethical managers are the foundation of a solid team.*

## Service

Our ultimate responsibility to our assessment payers is our commitment to maintain District Property and Natural Resources at the highest possible level.

## Teamwork

We believe that the basis for an effective team is built with well-qualified, well-trained individuals that take the initiative to seek personal development. *Employees must feel free to show initiative, take leadership and make suggestions to solve problems.*

## Respect

We are committed to building an honest, fair and ethically sound relationship with both public and private organizations. *All individuals are unique and important, and will be treated with fairness, dignity and respect.*

## Innovation

We are committed to using innovation, technology and best management practices to provide excellent service to all our residents.

## Community Involvement

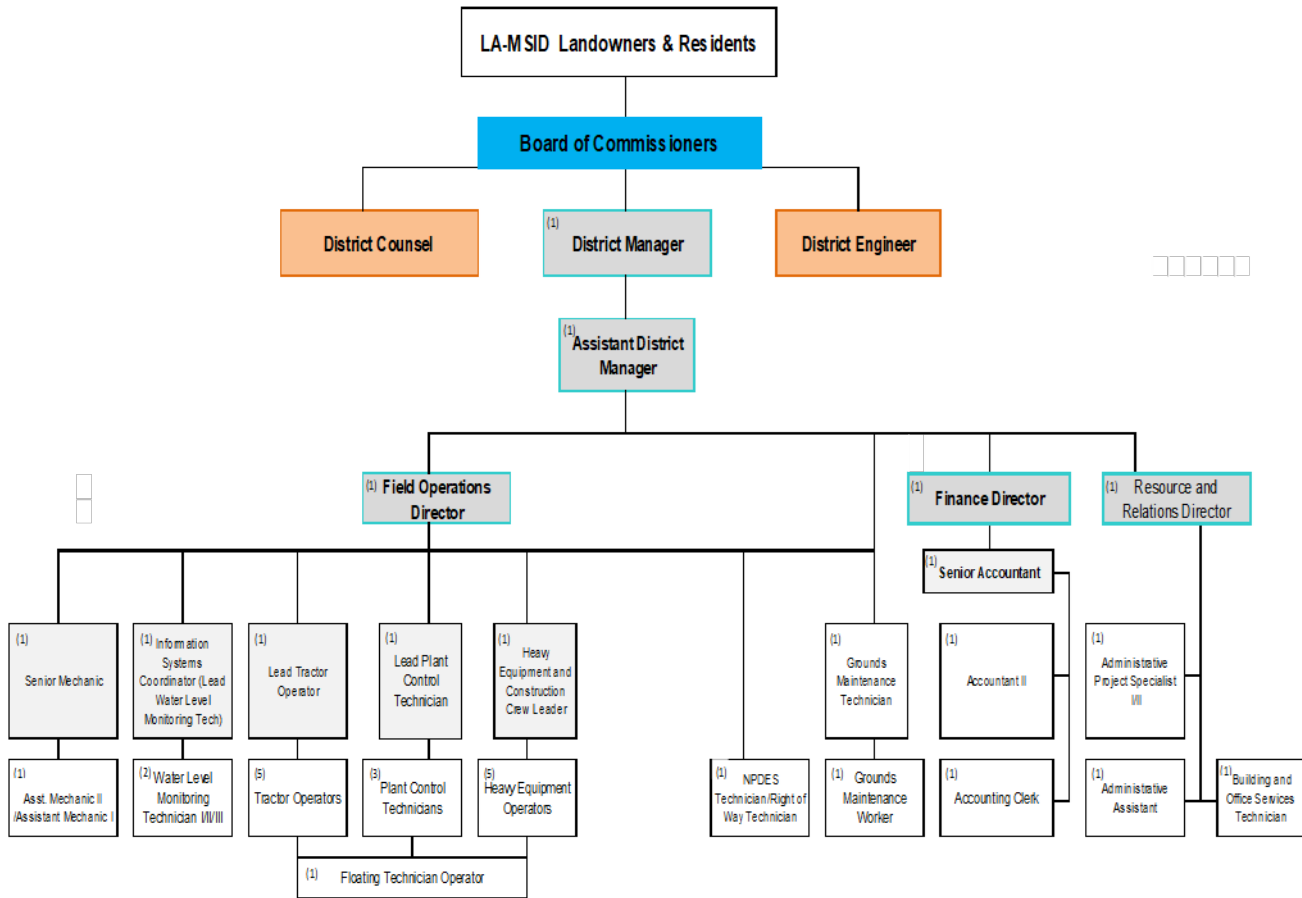
We strongly believe in community involvement and actively participate in various local civic organizations.

## Trust

We promote open communication, cooperation and teamwork which are shared responsibilities that are essential to the successful performance of our employees.

# Organizational Structure

Approved: 06/28/2022 Effective: 06/28/2022



The above chart depicts that the landowners and residents of Lehigh Acres MSID elect the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners establish policy and the District Manager administers those policies and day to day operations of the District. The District Engineer and District Counsel are contracted by the Board of Commissioners to act for the District and to advise the board. The chart depicts the individual positions which all report directly to the District Manager. Total number of 36 full-time, regular employee slots.

## **Organization Profile and History**

### **The Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District**

Prior to the 1940's, eastern Lee County and Western Hendry County was a sparsely populated, undeveloped and agricultural area comprised of virtually flat land dotted with pristine pine flat-woods and pocked with numerous wetland areas. This type of eco-system allowed the 110 square mile area (now known as Lehigh Acres) to provide a significant amount of sheet-flow, percolation and groundwater recharge. At times, severe rain-storms and subsequent sheet-flow would overwhelm the rivers and creeks to the north of Lehigh Acres that discharged into the Caloosahatchee River. State Road 82 was a ridge and an old cattle route used for bringing herds of cattle from Immokalee and Picayune Strand to Punta Rassa for shipment to market. During the period leading to the 1960s, water was seen as the common enemy of the State of Florida and the primary objective was to drain it and prepare the land for development.

Inspired by the ingenuity of Lee Ratner, one of Lehigh Acres' original developers, and the concerns of the state, Judge Archie M. Odom handed down an order on May 5, 1958 creating East County Water Control District (ECWCD) – a political sub-division of the State of Florida. At that time, the State of Florida allowed developers to create drainage districts that would operate under Chapter 298 of the Florida Statutes. Chapter 298 allowed ECWCD to sell bonds, develop drainage infrastructure, operate and maintain the infrastructure and assess non ad-valorem taxes to pay for the work, among

other powers. Enabling legislation was added that provided for five Supervisors to govern the new district.

As Lee Ratner and “Lee Land and Title” (Lehigh Corporation) developed roads and the other necessary infrastructure to prepare Lehigh Acres for development, East County Water Control District was engaged to implement the creation and maintenance of a drainage system. The area known as Section 10, which is on North Joel Blvd., was used to mine road base to build many of Lehigh’s copious roads. During this era, the method of electing the Board of Supervisors for ECWCD was by one-acre, one vote. Lehigh Corporation owned the vast majority of the land and, therefore, controlled ECWCD. The Board for Lehigh Corporation was also the Board for ECWCD. As the land was platted for development, the canals, lakes, and other infrastructure were dedicated to ECWCD (other canals and lakes that were owned by Lehigh Corporation were also deeded to ECWCD).

It was not until the mid-1970s that the State of Florida discovered damage due to the “over-draining” in Lehigh Acres and the overall negative effect that this was having on Florida’s water resources. In 1975, steps were taken to correct the situation when the State and Federal agencies performed a rapid investigation on the practice of wetland drainage. Their final report determined that there was extreme “over-draining” of stormwater from ECWCD lands. Governing agencies forced the ECWCD to install many “temporary” water control structures in their canal system to better manage the stormwater.

In 1979, ECWCD evolved from a drainage district to a water control district in order to preserve and protect water reserves using a combination of drainage, storage, and best water management practices. By 1988, as a majority of land was sold to residents, Lehigh Corporation began to lose control of the Board’s decision making power. Legislation was approved to change the election of ECWCD Board Members from one-acre/one vote to a general, popular vote. Lehigh Corporation completely lost control of ECWCD by the early 1990s.

ECWCD plays a crucial role in the community by preserving and protecting water resources in an area burdened with both intense drought and excessive rainy seasons. Lehigh Acres averages 52 inches of rain per year, with actual totals ranging between 36 and 80 inches per year. The rainfall is seasonal

with three to four months during the summer contributing the majority of rain, with tropical systems also contributing to the total (Scholl).

All of ECWCD's stormwater discharges through one of the four (4) existing outfalls to the Caloosahatchee River. From west to east they are: 1) Orange River 2) Hickey's Creek 3) Bedman Creek 4) Carlos Waterway. The Caloosahatchee River transitions into the Gulf of Mexico in areas known as estuaries. These estuaries are sensitive to a seasonal over-abundance of salinity and/or fresh water. ECWCD's stormwater may have contributed to the problem of too much freshwater during past rainy seasons.

Lehigh Acres developed rather slowly for many years, having only 33,000 residents as of the 2000 census. The area experienced a construction and real estate boom beginning in 2005 that preceded the boom nationwide. Real estate prices increased tremendously, the population swelled and ECWCD, along with all governments began revising their Capital Improvement Plans to reflect the rapid growth. Practically all delinquent ECWCD assessments were paid as the underlying land gained value and ECWCD revenues exceeded budget projections. ECWCD was also able to sell spoil (dirt) to support the construction boom. These factors and others helped ECWCD keep assessment rates low.

During the real estate boom, a modeling study was commissioned and performed by ADA Engineering, to analyze population growth and future flooding potential. This report was completed in 2007 and indicated that ECWCD will be approximately 15,000 acre-feet short of needed storage when Lehigh Acres is completely built-out. Following the completion of this study, the ECWCD Board immediately began to look for solutions to the District's stormwater storage problem. ECWCD had been striving for affordability and effectiveness as it pursues innovative solutions to issues that were identified in the modeling report. Beginning in 2007, signs of a recession began to become apparent and by the summer of 2008, the nation was in a full-blown recession.

In May of 2008, the Lee County 20/20 Program agreed to purchase 200 acres adjacent to Harns Marsh (known as the West Marsh). Lee County had allowed ECWCD to create a stormwater system on this parcel to provide better water quality in the Orange River and provide additional storage for high-

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flow rain events. The District signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners for dividing maintenance responsibilities in the West Marsh on 12/11/2008 and preliminary design of this project was completed in 2010. The census of 2010 marked the population at 86,000. Construction of the “West Marsh, Phase I” began simultaneously and provided fill for the State Road 82 Widening Segment I in the Summer of 2017. Phase II of excavation of the West Marsh and Segment II of the State Road 82 Widening was completed in December 2020. Phase III, including construction of the operating water control structures and the planting of thousands of native trees and plants, was completed in March 2021. The widening of Hendry Extension Canal began in January 2019 and provided fill for the Segment III and IV of the State Road 82 widening.

In April 2012, funds became available from the South Florida Water Management District to design and construct a pump station at Halfway Pond, also known as “Moving Water South, Phase I”. This project was identified in the 2007 ADA report as part of the storage solution. The construction for this project was completed in October 2012 and has contributed at least 1,000 acre-feet annually towards reducing the District’s storage deficit, along with providing freshwater relief to the estuaries in the Caloosahatchee River and groundwater recharge in Lehigh Acres.

By 2014, the recession had run its course. Existing abandoned homes were being bought, new homes were being built again, home prices were on the rise and the State of Florida was realizing a substantial revenue increase. The Board and staff were as determined as ever to accomplish their mission, while being sensitive to the current economic pressures that were still facing our residents and the world around us. The projected population of Lehigh Acres as of January 2015 was 115,000 (BEBR Dept. of the University of Florida).

On June 10, 2015, Governor Rick Scott signed Chapter 2015-202 into law. With this action, ECWCD was dissolved and the Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District (Lehigh Acres MSID) was created. All acts, property, obligations, and liabilities of the former ECWCD were transferred to the newly created Lehigh Acres MSID.

What this change in law and the creation of the Chapter 189 special district helps achieve, is a more clearly defined scope of our services – which remain what they have always been: drainage and flood control; conservation and mitigation; irrigation; navigation; roads/bridges; and limited parks powers. The new law was significant as it provided the potential to oversee streetlights, sidewalks, community signage, local planning, and water and sewer for the Lehigh Acres community.

As part of this change, legislators provided language that would allow Lehigh Acres MSID to study these new powers. However, these are not automatic powers. If the results of the study are favorable, the Lehigh Acres MSID must first enter into an agreement with Lee County and present our community with a referendum vote in a regular general election.

Great consideration was given to the powers added into Lehigh Acres MSID's legislation; consequentially, with the passage of this bill it is clear legislators felt these powers could be appropriately governed by the expertise of our board and staff. On November 6, 2018, the District brought its first referendum before the people of Lehigh Acre for a vote. An overwhelming 70.12% of the voters cast their ballot in favor of the referendum and community signage became the first added power since Lehigh Acres MSID was created in 2015. The District unveiled the first of five planned welcome signs on January 13, 2021.

The five-member, publicly elected Board of Commissioners of ECWCD will continue to serve as the Lehigh Acres MSID Board of Commissioners and their terms of office will remain the same. ECWCD was funded previously through non-ad valorem assessments – an annual flat-rate tax that is based on the size of a parcel, not its value— and this will continue to be the same manner in which Lehigh Acres MSID is funded.

LA-MSID recently completed the third and final phase of the West Marsh project. Aided by many grant sources and FDOT fees, the \$13,200,000 project was completed in March 2021 with less than 5% of the total being covered by taxpayers. The District has been awarded a \$1 million water quality grant from FDEP to start construction on CREST, Phase I. Other projects that are gaining steam are the Dog to Hendry Connection (Cooks Crossing) and GS-10 (Section 10).

## Understanding This Strategic Plan

This strategic plan utilizes a traditional **SWOT**-style analysis. The acronym *SWOT* stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats.

***Strengths*** are internal and are assets, resources or conditions of our District that the Commissioners or staff can control and give us an advantage over others; they can be budgetary, controls, activities or policy driven, etc.

***Weaknesses*** are internal and are assets, resources or conditions that the Commissioners or staff can control and improve upon; they can be budgetary, controls, activities or policy driven, etc.

***Opportunities*** are external and are factors or conditions that the Commissioners or staff can achieve and provides an advantage such as: things that are controlled by other agencies, private entities or the public, that is or can be a benefit for LA-MSID. They can be county or state policy, commodity pricing, the economy or public attitudes, etc.

***Threats*** are external and are factors or conditions that the Commissioners or staff have little control of; or things that are controlled by other agencies, private entities or the public, that is or can be a detriment to LA-MSID. They can be county or state policy, commodity pricing, the economy or public attitudes, etc.

***Program Objectives, Strategies and Goals (OSG)*** make up the final section. Each of these OSGs are directly derived from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats listed herein. These OSGs will guide the District to become stronger over the next five years.



## SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Leadership, Staff and Performance Technology Facilities Financial Position Operations</p>	<p>Facilities Management and Growth Plan Perceived Identity/Messaging Technology Succession Planning Financial Limits</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Bank, State and Agency Funding Political and Resident Support Cooperative Efforts with Entities Increases in Technology Additional Powers The Economy</p>	<p>Labor Relation Issues Regulations/Unfunded Mandates Financial Changes Changes to District Makeup Environmental Concerns: Natural or Man-Made</p>

## Critical Issues and Strategies

### SWOT ANALYSIS

#### **S**TRENGTHS (Internal)

##### **1. LEADERSHIP, STAFF AND PERFORMANCE**

- A. Open and Progressive Board of Commissioners** – The Board realizes that they must always look to the future population growth and to employ long-range planning efforts. They have commissioned several studies that will provide the science and facts needed to make the most prudent decisions, even though the decisions made may not be popular to all. The Commissioners also act on issues based on the state of the economy and the understanding of how assessment increases affect the residents of the District.

*LA-MSID strives to increase the community education effort, so that the public can continue to support the work of the Board. The District will listen to the pulse of the community to determine the direction LA-MSID should take, whether it is to increase infrastructure, maintenance or to enact the powers afforded to them from the Florida Legislature. The Board members take an active role in formulating community partnerships.*

**B. Training and Safety of Staff**

LA-MSID staff members are highly-trained in their field. The list below highlights some of LA-MSID's in-house skills. Our employees bring with them a variety of additional skills that have been a great help in special projects:

- Five operators with skills on many types of heavy equipment: track excavator, long stick excavator, loader, bulldozer, skid steer, rubber-tire back hoe, forklift, water tanker, offset hallow disc, hydro-seeder, brush chipper, vibratory plate compactor, TRUXOR amphibious machine, dump truck, off-road dump truck, low boy semi and trailer
- Seven CDL Class "A" Licensed Drivers able to transport all LA-MSID equipment
- Seven skilled slope and flat mower operators
- Three licensed pesticide applicators
- Three experienced telemetry technicians
- Five welders and fabricators
- Two mechanics with back-up
- Highly skilled and educated administrative and other staff with members holding eight bachelor's degrees in: Accounting, Business Management, Engineering Technology in Construction,

Engineering Technology, Management and Supervision, Political Science, Communications and Public Relations, etc. or master's degrees in Public Administration, Business, and Communications.

- Four with varying levels of accounting experience
- Very knowledgeable and active public relations personnel

*Although the private market and wages paid are considerably higher than our wages, LA-MSID strives and succeeds in hiring quality employees and “training our own operators” by providing the proper level of training, while also striving to maintain a motivated workforce with positive attitudes.*

## **2. TECHNOLOGY**

The Commissioners and staff believe in the “do more with less” philosophy. LA-MSID is an organization that prides itself in regularly using technology to be more efficient and/or save money as indicated in the following areas:

- The District’s new website was launched in April 2022. It is more user-friendly and ADA-compliant than the previous one.
- Software: Accufund Accounting Suite, on-line banking with positive pay which eliminates check writing fraud, Excel, Access, Archive Social, Municode, OpenGov, telemetry, GIS, RTA vehicle maintenance software, Actsoft GPS Tracking, Time and Attendance Management, Microsoft Project, newly developed LA-MSID-specific databases and Outlook.
- Herbicide chemicals: selection, testing, invert spray rig, and many staff innovations.
- Heavy equipment: modernized upon replacement, increased fuel efficiency, skid steer with many attachments, AQUA-BARRIERS, TRUXOR amphibious vehicle and attachments, off-road dump truck and converted military vehicle to water truck/swamp buggy.
- GIS: budgeting, mail outs, mapping, tax roll certification, reporting, permits, and facility inventory.
- Databases: complaints, maintenance records, fuel use, parcels, permits, agenda item sheets, and publicly available database use.
- Telemetry: water control structures, weather stations, and video
- Communication: website, community outreach events/education, news releases, weather station, and satellite redundancy for internet and phone.
- Information Technology - wireless laptops and GPS tracking systems on vehicles and equipment
- Procurement Card Program: Makes transactions simpler, accounts payable processing more efficient; reduces bank fees, reduces check stock and postage expense and can provide a return of funds based on spending. The program also allows the District to monitor credit card usage and easily change individual credit levels on an as needed basis.

- Paperless processes and reporting: Board meetings, financial reporting, scanning archives and web site.
- Mobile Management and rights-of-way inspections: The Field Operations Manager is much more efficient and can access the Lee County Property Appraiser website etc., to allow them to “Manage on the Move”.
- Time-clock using new technology: provides the District with a method of tracking employee time and attendance, complimented by auto entry into our accounting software, and eliminates exhausting and error-filled paper methods while enhancing security along with saving staff’s precious time.
- Construction: Staff has completed five culvert replacement projects, with one more planned, using a slip-lining method that will save time and money. Staff is utilizing “aqua-barrier” technology to quickly and efficiently coffer-dam our projects. We have been utilizing the Florida Department of Forestry’s surplus equipment to bring free, used parts and vehicles back to the District.

*LA-MSID strives to stay on the cutting edge of technology, specifically when LA-MSID can save valuable time and money or provide a superior service. Staff needs to stay current with changing technology and only recommend purchases to the Board that make fiscal and practical sense, under all economic conditions. Highly-trained staff, at proper operating levels, must be retained to ensure the efficiency of data entry and the overall accuracy and location of our data. Staff needs to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the technology as replacement of equipment becomes necessary.*

### 3. FACILITIES

**A. Central Location and Modern Facilities** – LA-MSID’s campus sits on an 8.7 +/- acre parcel that is very centrally located. The District’s campus is comprised of three modern buildings which are home to all of the District’s administrative and field staff. They include an administration building that, in addition to office space, houses a multi-purpose room that is used for public board meetings and a polling place; a fleet maintenance facility which includes a fuel station and wash-bay; and a renovated chemical storage facility, providing staff with a very efficient work site. The District’s facility upgrades have allowed staff to complete projects as quickly as possible, and in turn helps to keep assessments low. A future additional equipment storage area is planned. Another office space in the administration building was completed. Shipping containers were ordered for more storage.

*The campus is fully serving our current needs. There is also undeveloped land for two additional buildings on our site for future growth, if needed. The site work that is in place provides for all stormwater, sanitary sewer, potable water and space for parking needs of any additional buildings. The Board and staff should continue planning over the next several years to anticipate any necessary growth, such as an intergovernmental emergency and operations center or needs based on adding a new power.*

**B. Great Backbone Drainage System** – Construction of LA-MSID’s drainage system began in the 1950’s when water was considered the “common enemy” of the State of Florida. The State determined that following the construction and operation of the canal system, LA-MSID’s system over-drained the land, forcing LA-MSID to build a weir system. In the 1990’s LA-MSID changed its philosophy to water control, rather than stormwater drainage only. Our goal is for all LA-MSID weirs to operate at a lower elevation to provide flood protection in the wet season. In the dry

season, our goal is for all weirs to operate at a higher elevation in an attempt to hold more water in our system and to recharge the surficial and sandstone aquifers, as well as provide adequate aquaculture for native flora and fauna. Several of our current (GS 10, Moving Water South, Phase III and the C.R.E.S.T. (Dog-Hendry Connection) will benefit all of these goals.

*LA-MSID's system will continue to be maintained and improved when practicable, to provide the maximum storage, flood control, aquifer recharge, aqua culture and water quality for the assessment payers and the environment. District staff operates under a maintenance plan (updated every year) and a facility operations manual. The District is always looking for opportunities to expand its capabilities.*

#### **4. FINANCIAL POSITION**

LA-MSID has enjoyed an unmodified audit for many years and has received “no management comments” for the last eight year. T.Y. Lin completed a bridge study and LA-MSID started the bridge fund in 2018.

*The District's mission is to preserve and protect water resources. As the needs of the community, environment and staff change, the Board must acknowledge those needs by evaluating crucial projects and assessment rates. LA-MSID will strive to keep assessment rates affordable for the foreseeable future.*

**A. Ability to Raise Revenue** – LA-MSID is a multi-county, Chapter 189 Special District, and as such has the power to levy non-ad valorem assessments. The Board weighs necessary improvements to our system to the assessment rate needed to achieve these actions. The Board of Commissioners is always very conservative when determining the assessment rate for the property owners. 2019 was the first time in eight years that the assessment rate was increased. Rates have remained the same since. Due to LA-MSID's independent special district status, there is very little budgetary oversight from local government agencies. Should LA-MSID have a crisis, we have the ability to identify the needs as well as the means by which revenue can be raised.

*The 2019 rate increase was minor at \$10/acre. Most Lehigh Acres residents own ¼ acre, so the increase was \$2.50. LA-MSID's legislative language should remain intact so as not to disturb the ability to levy non-ad-valorem assessment the district has an intermediate-term goal of operating without any debt service by 2030. This goal is made possible by opportunities for partnership with other agencies and private sources. The State of Florida has been flush with revenue since the arrival of COVID. Tourism has increased taxes significantly, creating a better opportunity for landing grants.*

**B. Steady Revenue Stream** – Whereas other agencies (that depend on ad-valorem taxes as their main source of revenue) experienced a ballooning of their revenue during the economic and real estate boom and a collapse of revenue during the bust, LA-MSID's revenues have been steady. By relying on non-ad valorem assessments (based on lot size) as our main revenue source, LA-MSID has remained at a reasonable and healthy revenue level. The legislature has not limited the LA-MSID's ability to raise revenues if necessary to maintain its infrastructure, operations and future projects to preserve and protect water resources.

*LA-MSID will continue to be active with the Florida Association of Special Districts (FASD) and be willing to participate and/or support actions by the FASD that will protect LA-MSID, its objectives and goals. We must work with our local delegation members to educate them*

*about LA-MSID's public benefit and increase their awareness of the steps we take to keep our assessments affordable while providing necessary services.*

- C. Necessary Capital Projects and Purchases** – LA-MSID has been very diligent for more than a decade, constantly rebuilding ailing infrastructure and replacing capital equipment. We have replaced or constructed 107 water control structures (weirs). We have replaced 107 of 375 culvert crossings. Our capital equipment is replaced on a revolving plan and is kept up to date. We have sought out and cemented partnerships with peer organizations/agencies to secure funding for crucial capital projects without the need to increase assessments.

*LA-MSID will continue its program of a 4-Year Facilities Inventory (inspecting one-quarter of our infrastructure, every year), 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (updated every year), Strategic Planning (updated every year), District modeling (updated as necessary) and a 5-Year Capital Purchase Plan (updated every year). The District is also completing its eleventh year of in-house culvert replacements (total of 32 culverts replaced in 5 years). The District will strive to meet our Rain-Gauge based storage goals. Staff is constantly looking for alternatives to lower costs or increase efficiencies.*

- D. Equipment and Infrastructure** – LA-MSID owns and maintains its own fleet of heavy equipment, mowing tractors, spray equipment, vehicles, and smaller mowing equipment. LA-MSID has the responsibility and ability to maintain 311 miles of canals, 25 lakes, 375+ culvert crossings, 22 bridges, 100+ water control structures and 1298 acres of preserves in a manner that the community can be proud of. We are always looking for ways to further enhance our maintenance practices.

*LA-MSID strives to retain highly skilled employees. We strive to preserve the necessary institutional knowledge and to provide needed services in an efficient manner. The District continually reviews needed projects. Management evaluates both cost benefits and reviews staff's advanced skills to try and bring projects in-house when possible. Currently, the District is able to replace failing culverts with in-house staff. The in-house replacement of culvert crossings saves the District approximately \$50,000 per culvert. LA-MSID needs to continue this in-house replacement process. LA-MSID's staff also has the skills necessary to perform many of the maintenance and repair activities needed to maintain our fleet of vehicles and heavy equipment. This enables LA-MSID to maintain the District's infrastructure and virtually eliminate outside costs.*

## **5. OPERATIONS**

- A. Additional and Improved Policies** – LA-MSID has an extensive list of policies and procedures in place and is constantly updating them to stay current. There has been a lot of discussion at the Board table about additional policies.

*Staff should pursue drafting new or updated policies with vigor, as the need arises. Section 1 of the Policies and Procedures manual was revamped and approved by the board at the May 2021 meeting. Section 4 is under review at this time.*

- B. Potential of New Powers** - In 2015, the potential to oversee streetlights, sidewalks, community signage, local planning, and water and sewer for the Lehigh Acres community was added to law. As part of this change, legislators provided language that would allow LA-MSID to study these new powers. However, these are not automatic powers. If the results of the study are favorable,

the LA-MSID must first enter into an agreement with Lee County and present our community with a referendum vote in a regular general election. In 2018, LA-MSID successfully completed all of the steps to add community signage to our permanent powers. The referendum was successful at a margin of 70% voting in favor to 30% voting against.

*The Commissioners can weigh-out the need for, available facts and the mood of the District's residents if they should decide to consider adding any of these new powers. In January 2021, LA-MSID unveiled their first welcome sign as part of the newly acquired community signage power.*

- C. Sense of Community** – While the Board of Commissioners and staff have always put F.S. Chapter 189 and 298 powers prescribed by the state and its special acts at the forefront, they are also very much in tune with community organizations and their activities. If there is any way to provide a win-win situation for LA-MSID and the local community, the Board will seriously consider the action.

*The Board and staff attempt to always be in-tune with the community's needs. LA-MSID needs to continue its collaboration with all related planning organizations to ensure the best potential outcome for our residents, as it relates to our powers. The Resource and Relations Director has implemented several community-based, educational events that have been widely applauded and well attended.*

## WEAKNESSES (Internal)

### 1. FACILITIES MANAGEMENT AND GROWTH PLAN

#### A. Lack of Stormwater Storage

In 2007 and with updates, LA-MSID has charged AIM Engineering and ADA Engineering with the task of modeling LA-MSID's stormwater system. The main goal of the model is to simulate build-out in Lehigh Acres, along with simulating various 25 to 100-year storm events to determine what will happen within LA-MSID's borders as well as the impact to areas downstream of LA-MSID. The model results indicate that LA-MSID was approximately 15,000 acre-feet short of storage at full build-out of Lehigh Acres. That is equivalent to a lake that covers six-square miles, four feet deep. In November 2016, an extensive update to our District-wide model was completed.

*LA-MSID should continue modeling efforts to become more precise. In addition, we need to evaluate various project options and take the most responsible course of action to alleviate the storage shortfall and any other concerns. The Board and staff are working diligently to find, design and build the proper infrastructure to stay ahead of this shortfall, while being sensitive to the economic conditions. The Harns Marsh, Phase I & II projects, Southwest Lehigh Structures, West Marsh, Halfway Pond/Moving Water South Phases I & II, Hendry Canal Widening, Section 10 and our Water Control Structure rehabilitation projects are great evidence of this effort.*

- B. Vulnerability of Aging/Failing Infrastructure** - While the District has done a good job in repairing or replacing failing culverts and water control structures (weirs), there is an abundance of culverts and bridges in our system that could fail over the next 20 years. The cost of replacing each one of our 22 bridges could range between \$2 million to \$4 million, when you factor in both the design and construction cost. In addition, we have approximately 225 metal culverts in our system that could start to fail at a rate of 10-15 per year. Currently, they are failing at a rate of 5-6 per year.

*Staff must continue its infrastructure inspection efforts by inspecting one-quarter of the District's infrastructure each year. The Board needs to stay apprised of all developments related to failing structures. The Board will need adequate lead time to make preparations for funding and replacement. Staff should continue its efforts to repair and upgrade water control structures each year. Talks should continue with Lee County with an emphasis toward their ownership of the roadways over the culverts and their participation in the culvert replacement projects. Bridge repair and replacement was a hot topic in 2019 and provided a new revenue stream in 2020. The District should look at setting up a fund to management growing needs, emergency needs, and growth of staff and office space. Debt Service is set to fall off in 2030 and a strong goal would be to have a healthy fund established by this time to address future needs.*



**C. Lack of Adequate Maintenance Space on Right-of-Ways** – When LA-MSID and Lehigh Corporation dug our canal system in the 1950s through the early 1990s, attention was not given to ensure that canals were dug in the centers of the rights-of-ways. In some isolated cases, just enough land was secured for the width of the canal, rendering maintenance nearly impossible with conventional methods. The end result is that the District has approximately 100 miles of canals with little or no room for District equipment to access and maintain the canals. The District purchased a TRUXOR amphibious vehicle with mowing attachments in 2015 and a remote controlled slope mower in 2020, that staff expects will be a valuable tool in helping to maintain the 12.5-mile weed eating circuit.

*Staff must continue to develop new and innovative ways to achieve more efficient maintenance methods, while eliminating existing inefficient maintenance areas using “outside of the box” solutions.*

**D. Administrative Storage Space Growing Short** - Our administrative building is six years young, but we have run out of storage and office space. Storage items include: hard-copy paper records which we must maintain to satisfy public records laws; events equipment and materials; safety and hurricane supplies; electronic equipment, chairs and tables. The Barrett Room is growing in popularity and we often need to temporarily store excess items while the room is in use. Staff continues to rent a 200 Sq. ft. storage area for mostly event supplies and documents. In FY20-21, a new office space was built-out in the copy room to meet staffing needs. Shipping containers are being purchased for new, on-site storage space.

*Staff will continue to monitor the situation and will notify the Board should LA-MSID should implement an additional onsite storage option.*

## **2. PERCIEVED IDENTITY/MESSAGING**

While this item has not transitioned to a District strength, we are making great strides in our efforts to raise awareness of the District. The agency has been in operations for 63 years and until the mid-2000’s public education was not an objective of the District. We understand educating a diverse and growing population with limited resources/budget will take time. Staff has created and maintains a website, puts out news releases, creates and delivers community presentations and educational programs to help identify LA-MSID. In 2015, we were faced with an entity name change and took great efforts to educate the community about ECWCD’s services and the transition to LA-MSID. The Resource and Relations Director works with community partners to create educational opportunities for residents and key target audiences. We have developed a District mascot, Able Otter, to help brand LA-MSID and educate residents and he is a hit! LA-MSID’s Resource and Relations Director has been very active in a strong attempt to make this a District strength.

*With increased and improved news releases, we have seen progress in community awareness, but a majority of the public is still not responding significantly and accurately to LA-MSID’s identity and mission. News releases are regularly sent to the news media whenever possible. District activities usually get good coverage. Staff needs to brainstorm about new methodologies to clarify and improve our recognition. Staff has organized many successful special events, secured grants, received awards and prepared multiple public relations plans and grants but, perhaps, suffers somewhat by the lack of funding for District-wide outreach activities. Staff had provided a small outreach budget, but a majority of funding comes from grants and community sponsors to implement outreach programs.*

*LA-MSID educational, public, and internal programs have received regional and state awards and recognition. In 2016, LA-MSID earned several local and state honors/awards for its public relations programs – Weather Station. The annual “WOW Festival” makes large strides toward increasing the public’s ability to discover Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District! The Supervisor of Election’s use of our facility as a voting precinct has made an impact on the public in that zone of where and who we are. Other local government agencies and community organizations have displayed a growing interest in hosting meetings and events in the Barrett Room.*

### **3. TECHNOLOGIES**

**A. Deficient Data Collection for Select Maintenance Activities** – LA-MSID has reliable computer programs to collect data for accounting, time-keeping and vehicle maintenance. For many years, LA-MSID has relied in staff-developed Microsoft Access databases and Excel spreadsheets to collect data, from mowing, spraying, canal clean-out, water quality, etc. These databases began to fail and become unreliable. Staff turnover also contributed to this data-collecting deficiency. Staff has continued to provide on-paper records for daily maintenance activities. Staff has begun the process of looking for inclusive replacements for some databases.

*Staff has been working with an independent database developer for some time now. We now have a workable spray database and are working on the mowing database. Staff should continue to engage the database developer to develop all needed customized databases and continue with a long-term relationship for maintenance of those databases.*

- 4. Succession Planning** - Succession planning is a process for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key business leadership positions in the company. Succession planning increases the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume these roles as they become available.

*Staff has received succession plan training and we plan to use the training in the coming year to provide yet another internally-driven plan to the many that we already have. We will opt for more training as it becomes available.*

### **5. FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS**

**A. Insufficient funding for future Bridge Failure and Maintenance**

The District owns 22 bridges that were built between 1958 and 1992. To date, there has been only minor maintenance performed based on findings of State bridge inspections. The time is coming when LA-MSID may have an expensive repair or even a failure.

*The District should continue to address the potential short-coming of funding in 2022-2023. The fund currently has \$703, 000, less any maintenance expenditures for the rest of the year. This is not enough to replace an entire bridge yet. The funding should have the ability to fund (1) yearly maintenance, (2) minor or major repairs, (3) replacement design & permitting and replacement construction, (4) Additional Community Signage.*

## OPPORTUNITIES (External)

### 1. BANK, STATE AND AGENCY FUNDING

During the economic downturn in the 2008 – 2012 period, this was perceived as a threat over the last 5 years, bank funding availability had vastly improved, though interest rates are increasing. It appears that we may be headed for a recession in 2022, staff will be monitoring the situation. Regardless of that fact, SFWMD, FDEP and state appropriation grant programs have been created. The State of Florida has created funding sources for stormwater projects through changes in the constitution and other means. The District will receive funding for the CREST project from the legislature, pending the Governor’s ability to veto. The District applied for Federal grant in FY21-22 and plan to apply for more as they become available.

*LA-MSID staff must stay in compliance with its existing loan and grant agreements and should also attend any educational opportunities offered by the funding sources in order to stay current. The Board and staff will continue efforts into improving our budgeting format to satisfy lenders changing requirements. The District has secured a low-cost loan in 2018 to refinance our campus construction. Cooperative grant opportunities from other agencies are becoming available because of forced planning efforts due to the poor economy and “out of the box” thinking by District staff.*

### 2. POLITICAL AND RESIDENT SUPPORT

LA-MSID enjoys an era of very favorable status with Representatives and Senators in the Florida Legislature. We also have experienced a rather long period of smooth operations due to system improvements and a Board that has worked very well together for a long time. This provides an overall favorable opinion of the District. However in 2022, redistricting has created new House District 77 that currently is vacant one representative.

*Although LA-MSID has a very advanced and celebrated public information program, the District needs to continue to step it up another notch in the use of the media information program and also continue to educate the public through the use of brochures, PowerPoint presentations, etc. This may include increasing funds available for outreach for ads, events and materials, etc. Additionally, there will be an increase in networking to build relationships with key community organizations and leaders. Information can also be disseminated through the school system and other suitable public forums. LA-MSID has produced a professionally-made educational video and has plans to update it frequently for use as a marketing tool.*

### 3. COOPERATIVE EFFORTS WITH ENTITIES

There are several entities that need LA-MSID’s support or cooperation to help cut the cost of their respective projects. FDOT and LDOT often need fill dirt and stormwater storage ponds for road projects. LA-MSID can help them in their endeavors by thinking “outside of the box”. Developers need access to our water control system in order to provide a positive drainage outfall; Lee County Parks Department needs additional land for park projects, etc. Offering our assistance to these different entities can also pave the way to strengthening our professional relationships. Cooperation through memberships, awards; assistance with grants; working with Cathy Olson and the Bird Patrols at Harns Marsh; Lehigh Community

Initiative in community trash removal events; and other projects can benefit LA-MSID and our assessment payers. SFWMD has always been a great partner with LA-MSID through the Caloosahatchee River Watershed Program and the Lehigh Headwaters Initiative. Continued efforts with FDOT with their road-widening efforts can vastly benefit both agencies.

*As entities contact LA-MSID for assistance with permitting, easements, etc., negotiations should ensure that will also facilitate the entity helping LA-MSID meet District goals.*

#### **4. INCREASES IN TECHNOLOGY**

Technological breakthroughs can allow LA-MSID to complete tasks more efficiently, lower costs and use less manpower. Our automated TRUXOR Amphibious Tool Carrier, Actsoft GPS Tracking software, and our remote controlled slope mower are all good examples of this.

*Technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace. We must continue to keep our eye to the horizon through publications and organizations that stay current with new technology. The District will evaluate tools we already have – for instance using GPS software to identify improvements in time management and work assignments to help reduce costs. The District should study available products and programs and training to help improve operations.*

#### **5. GAINING ADDITIONAL POWERS**

LA-MSID always keeps the needs of the residents within our District in the forefront to determine when help is needed. In 2015, Representative Matthew Caldwell championed House Bill 1255 in order to change East County Water Control District (ECWCD) from a Florida Statutes Chapter 298 drainage and water control district to a Florida Statutes Chapter 189 improvement district to provide a more clearly defined scope of services. On June 10, 2015 Governor Rick Scott signed House Bill 1225 into law dissolving ECWCD and transferring all of its acts, property, obligations, and liabilities to the newly created Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District (Lehigh Acres MSID). As part of this change, legislators provided language that would allow Lehigh Acres MSID to study new powers in limited areas such as: sidewalks, street lights, community signage, local planning, and water and sewer services.

*LA-MSID must continue to consider the needs of the District and the assessment payers to determine if adding powers will meet their needs. The Board determined that there was not enough support to pursue powers for the November 2022 General Election. The Board will study the need for other powers and make necessary connections with the County ahead of the 2024 Election and strive to present a referendum for a new power to the voters during this election cycle.*

#### **6. THE ECONOMY**

The nation and the residents inside of our District had been decimated by the housing slump from 2007 to 2012. This led to many foreclosures and up to 6% of uncollected assessments. Some residents experienced higher property taxes and all faced higher fuel prices, and moderate inflation. From 2014 to 2018, the economic outlook has greatly improved. The vast majority of delinquent assessments have been paid, housing prices have increased significantly and unemployment has decreased. Construction is on the rise and our population is at 135,000. There are some experts that believe that there will be a recession in the near future. According to the Lee County Community Development Office, during March 2022, contractors pulled 191 permits to build single-family houses collectively valued at about \$33.5 million in Lehigh Acres. That compares to 131 permits issued in March 2021 and 83 issued in March 2020, according to the Lee County Department of Community Development.

*LA-MSID has reduced its percentage for uncollectable assessments in the 2020/2021 taxes and has a surplus of revenue from 2020/2021 that can be designated to future needs, i.e.: Construction, land purchase, etc. The recent economic downturn in 2022 has staff concerned about construction costs, labor costs, and fuel costs, to name a few.*

## 1. LABOR RELATION ISSUES

### A. Union-Management Conflicts

LA-MSID Board and staff have worked hard to provide a fair labor contract for the employees and the assessment payers. A delicate balance must be maintained in the future. The District negotiated a new 3-year contract in FY20-21.

*The Board and staff must maintain open communication with union representatives and shop stewards while staying in compliance with the current Union Contract. Maintenance of a well-trained, educated, content and hard-working workforce is essential to LA-MSID, while providing salaries and benefits comparable to other agencies with the same general mission and/or activities.*

## 2. REGULATIONS/UNFUNDED MANDATES

### A. COVID-19 Pay and Programs

The District may find itself in a position without staff due to illness or child care needs – this could present a slowdown in services and require higher workloads for other employees. Since no one knows how long this situation will last, there will be both short-term and long-term consequences. The Governor has lifted all COVID-19 mandates effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 and COVID vaccines are more widely available. COVID is still a threat to staffing, but less so. In 2022, the COVID crisis seems to be lightening up, stay tuned for more to come.

*COVID-19 has changed the way the world works. As businesses return to regular operations, the District will continue to follow the CDC's recommendations by making hand-sanitizing products available and maintaining social distancing. Should remote work become more prevalent even after the virus has subsided, the District will need to become well-versed in measuring productivity. The budget may feel small impacts from additional PPE purchases. The District will continue to actively encourage sick employees to stay home.*

### B. Loss of Chemical Labels or Availability/New Non-Native or Invasive Plants

There are several EPA approved chemicals that LA-MSID currently uses to combat undesirable vegetation in our canal system. Chemical companies must spend big budgets to maintain the testing needed to continue to sell their products. Sometimes they determine that it is not worth their efforts or they realize that they are a sole-source provider and raise their price to a point that LA-MSID cannot afford the chemical. Currently the EPA is requiring chemical manufacturers to change their safety labeling programs. This changes the National system of MSDS sheets to a Global Harmonized System (GHS) known worldwide as SDS sheets. These changes alone will have a negative impact on the cost of chemicals in the future. Southwest Florida's climate is ideal to support new plants as they are introduced to the area. Several species have been running rampant for years. Glyphosate and its potential link to cancer and its ability to convert into an environmentally damaging form of phosphorus is still a concern. If the EPA label was revoked for Glyphosate, staff would have to find new method to keep evasive vegetation in check.

*LA-MSID must adapt as needed, in order to utilize the least expensive chemicals available, to maintain the canals. Staff will use the three quote process to obtain the lowest chemical price available. Chemical pricing has become so volatile over the past 5 years that manufacturers are pulling chemicals off of active bid sheets. Staff also looks at application rates and the duration of plant control of all chemicals. This helps to determine which will provide the most cost effective and efficient means of plant management available. The chemical manufacturers will hopefully continue to develop products that will be safe and effective to combat the need to control these new non-native or invasive species.*

### **C. Changes in Legislation**

Special districts and their issues periodically come within the sites of legislators that wish to slash the overall tax burden for tax payers. Other types of governments have been forced to limit their revenues by new legislation. The legislature has not limited the Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District's ability to raise revenues and to pay its bills. Other, potentially unfunded mandates, may be enacted by the Florida Legislature or the Federal Government and may fiscally or otherwise impact the District, either intentionally or as an unintentional consequence.

*Staff and the Board need to monitor the bills that are presented during the legislative session in an attempt to impact the outcome for the residents of the District. We can do this by staying engaged with the Florida Association of Special Districts, the Florida Stormwater Association and through our District Counsel.*

## **3. FINANCIAL CHANGES**

- A. The Bond Market** –If the economy continues to improve, the bond market will continue to improve. In 2022, should the economy continue to tank, the bond and continue on whereas loans have been the tool of choice for LA-MSID, bonds should be considered in the future.

*The Board of Commissioners and staff should perform a cost-benefit analysis before authorizing capital projects. They should consider all avenues for funding. LA-MSID should examine the Bond market, bank loans, and push hard for grants and budget requests from the legislature to help fund the projects.*

- B. Fuel Costs** – LA-MSID can be affected by fluctuating fuel costs as much or more than other entities, because the heavy equipment and vehicles used in our daily operations consume large amounts of fuel. COVID-19, unusually cold weather in Texas, and pipeline technology hacks have increased the price of fuel as the country starts to re-open. Fuel prices are at their highest levels since the pandemic started. LA-MSID needs to maintain its current fuel capacity or more in the future in order to maintain its current level of service. The District invested in a new fuel monitoring system in FY 21-22.

*LA-MSID considers fuel efficiency when purchasing new vehicles and equipment. Alternative fuel options will be purchased when practical. LA-MSID is maintaining a fuel station on site that has made the staff even more efficient. Budgeting practices should allow for more than modest increases in fuel costs. New reporting requirements are requiring more fuel pumping accuracy.*

- C. Rising Construction Costs** – Due to various pandemic, geopolitical, and supply and demand issues, construction costs have skyrocketed. What you could have built two years ago for \$100,000 would cost you today from \$150,000 to \$175,000. Obviously, LA-MSID will not be able to complete the volume or complexity of projects in the future, unless some of these effects are reversible.

*The District's General and design engineering companies, led by AIM Engineering, have an increasingly difficult job in projecting project costs. AIM Engineering and LA-MSID staff will be very conservative when planning projects until the rising costs de-escalate.*

#### **4. CHANGES TO DISTRICT MAKEUP**

##### **A. Population Growth**

The population within LA-MSID's borders was approximately 87,500 in 2010 and has increased. Lehigh Acres' population has been estimated by BEBR of the University of Florida for the year 2018 at 135,000. The actual census from 2020 reported a population of 115,000, which is highly skeptical. Certain segments of the population may be unwilling to be counted. Existing real estate prices are at real value and there are many new construction starts. If the population continues to grow, the workload for employees will increase.

*LA-MSID has considered a "built-out" scenario to determine storage priorities. Land acquisition priorities must be established. Design and construction can occur subsequently as our population increases. LA-MSID could make necessary land purchases while land prices are low and the population is not experiencing large growth. If LA-MSID delays land acquisition, LA-MSID may have higher land costs in the future. LA-MSID's Capital Improvement Plan can slow the planning for its immediate stormwater storage needs, while closing the need for storage for a current 100-year storm. The staff and Board must continue to plan for its future needs, while taking advantage of opportunities.*

##### **B. Loss of Access to Maintain ROWs**

As Lehigh Acres "builds out", LA-MSID will lose access to some of its rights-of-way. Currently, District staff can access waterways and easements through adjacent vacant lots. Maintenance areas with limited access will cost LA-MSID more to maintain.

*Staff must continue to perform a District wide assessment to determine areas that will have no maintenance access and what the best solutions are for providing service. The District should study the District Map and identify areas where we have no, or limited easements/right-of-ways and establish a plan to gain access. Annual reviews of canal ROWs will identify encroachments.*

##### **C. Annexation into District Borders**

The City of Fort Myers borders a large portion of LA-MSID's western boundaries. Lehigh Acres' Industrial Park is in LA-MSID's boundaries and is a possible target of annexation.

*LA-MSID must be aware of any attempts by the City of Fort Myers to annex inside LA-MSID and to become active in dialogues to determine the best course of action. HB 1255 by Matthew Caldwell has a non-annexation provision to protect LA-MSID in this regard.*

##### **D. Creation of a Stormwater Utility**

In the past, Lee County has proposed a stormwater utility for the unincorporated area of the County that could nullify Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District's authority and would potentially dissolve LA-MSID.

*LA-MSID must stay involved in any discussions that Lee County may have involving the creation of a stormwater utility in Lehigh Acres and to help determine the best outcome for Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District and the residents of Lehigh Acres.*



## **E. Incorporation**

There has been in the past and will be future attempts to incorporate the Lehigh Acres area. The creation of a city may include the absorption and dissolution of the Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District, if a public works department is established.

*LA-MSID must keep a vigilant eye open for attempts to incorporate Lehigh to make sure that the new charter does not include the immediate and/or total absorption and dissolution of the Lehigh Acres Municipal Services Improvement District. The Lee County Legislative Delegation and LA-MSID's Commissioners have stated in a Resolution that the road to incorporation runs through LA-MSID. The District will be considering that option over future years.*

## **F. Community Development Districts**

Community Development Districts (CDDs) can hold almost as many powers as a city and have been reasonably easy to create. They can be created by Lee County Government inside of LA-MSID's boundaries, if they are under a certain acreage threshold or otherwise created by the state. CDDs can erode LA-MSID's powers.

*LA-MSID must stay in contact with Lee County (creator of most CDDs) and local legislation for attempts by developers to create CDDs in Lehigh Acres and to do what is necessary to guarantee that they do not conflict with the powers of the District.*

## **5. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS: NATURAL OR MAN-MADE**

### **A. Water Quality Issues**

Different components from the Clean Water Act of 1964 are moving ahead simultaneously. Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL's), Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) and the Numeric Nutrient Criteria (NNC) for Water Quality will be imposing standards for sampling and/or an impetus for capital projects in the future. The District water quality is very good, but the standards may be set so low that we can't meet them. The Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) may be so rigid that we may have to improve our water quality, even if we meet the water quality standards. The potential unfunded mandate may require that capital dollars be spent, which can severely affect our assessment rates and the ability for our residents to pay them.

*LA-MSID will stay involved in the process of rulemaking by EPA and FDEP to both lessen requirements while ensuring that water quality standards are fair and obtainable. Future budgets may have to be adjusted to reflect the addition of water quality projects, if very strict standards are adopted. Currently, the District has met the BMAP requirements for the first five year period on the estuarine portion of the Caloosahatchee River. Future requirements will have to be met for the Freshwater portion of the Caloosahatchee River and any NNC requirements on state-wide waterbodies. Community outreach and education efforts are necessary parts of meeting these requirements.*

## **B. Natural Disasters**

As evidenced by Hurricane Irma, the region could have been better prepared. The staff's internal disaster plan contemplated the vast majority of issues and situations that a hurricane can cause by having immediate available data on the operational status of our many water control structures in an easy to read, consolidated form. We also have redundancy in communication capability. Finally, we do have emergency backup power in a ready to use form with automatic switchover capability. Satellite internet, satellite phones, and a manual full of contact information are readily available in an emergency.

*Staff will research the possible solutions for these and other minor issues. The Hurricane Manual needs to be updated yearly to include procedures based on our experiences.*

## **C. Pandemic, Epidemics and Other Outbreaks**

Local emergency preparedness plans at the Municipal District have traditionally focused on response to natural disasters, such as hurricanes. Yet historically, the most significant threat to the world's populations has not been natural disasters, nor war, but disease. Because influenza pandemics are recurring events, it is not a question of whether there will be another pandemic; it is only a question of when the next one will occur and how severe it will be. As we learned at the start of 2020, when a pandemic strikes the trajectory is everchanging and rapid.

*The District needs to create a Pandemic, Epidemic and Other Health Outbreaks Incident Plan to define the non-medical issues and challenges associated with a crisis of this nature. The Plan will help the District ensure essential services can be maintained, the best degree possible, in the event of a pandemic or other such health event. This plan supplements the Municipal District's Policy and Procedures Manual and Emergency Support Functions already in effect.*

## **D. Insurance Liability Issues**

With a 100-square mile District, it is hard to monitor activity on all district lands. We do not have enforcement powers, and if someone is "caught in the act" of doing prohibited activities, they have usually left the scene before police arrive – if the police are even available to come. Despite the District's best efforts to partner with agencies to curtail the use of ATVs – they are still running amuck. The District has seen a spike in insurance claims by individuals using atvs on district lands- an illegal act. To curtail this, the District may one day in the future need to put in thousands of signs throughout the District at structures and along ROWS. There are several walk bridges within the District that cross canals – some of these are lacking records of ownership and should be removed. The District is working to research this and is in communication with Lee County to see removal or remediation process. Also some issues to examine with developments near District bridges that have changed traffic patterns.

*The District should continue to monitor ATV activity on District land and assist officers who do catch individuals (officers usually need a District employee to trespass an offender). Efforts should be made to fight the ATV claims through our insurance company, if possible. Walk bridges should be researched if the ownership is in question. If they belong to the District, they should be maintained or removed for safety. Bridges and traffic patterns should be reviewed and documented for the future replacement and subsequent traffic pattern change that could occur at that time.*

## Program Objectives, Strategies and Goals

**Goals:** are statements needed for every key result that LA-MSID deems necessary for success.

**Objectives:** are strong, target ends for stated goals or final results of a strategy.

**Strategies:** are a pattern of measurable actions and resource allocations designed to achieve the objectives of the LA-MSID.

**Tactics:** are the tools or the action items of the plan

## ADMINISTRATIVE GOALS

**Goal A1:** To provide administrative staff the resources necessary to complete the mission of the Board of Commissioners.

### OBJECTIVES:

**A.1.A: The District must create or modify policies to ensure that the District is in compliance with the changing times.**

Current, accurate, fully encompassing policies are essential to provide staff with the tools to operate, regulate and implement the Board's intended approach when dealing with the public and employees.

*Strategy: Staff needs to either create, review and/or update at least three policies, Collective Bargaining Agreement or Employee Manual for Non-Bargaining Unit in this fiscal year.*

*Strategy: Staff should create internal SOPs form and three SOPs to help streamline efforts in this fiscal year.*

**A.1.B.: Recruit, develop, and retain a highly trained and safe workforce with the budget available.**

LA-MSID will provide necessary training to all District employees in Administration, Finance and Field positions. LA-MSID continues to invest in employee professional growth and development through continuous training, certifications, education, and professional accreditation. LA-MSID strives to cultivate employees' understanding of District operations and their role in the agency's success. Management should continue their professional growth and development and receive accounting, human resources, management, record keeping and public relations training, and other such trainings, on an annual basis. Due to the current economic situation, the workforce shortage and the impending \$15 minimum wage is a few years out, there is already a push for increased wages.

*Strategy: All employees will receive at least one training session during this fiscal year. LA-MSID will provide a fair and current collective bargaining agreement. The District will continue to provide annual harassment training, spill response and health and wellness presentations/training.*

*Strategy: LA-MSID will strive to provide competitive pay and benefits that retains and recruits top talent within the available budget and will review job descriptions in FY 2022/2023 to ensure they are up-to-date for the evolving market. Bi-annual Salary Surveys/Job Description Audits to ensure we are remaining competitive.*

*Strategy: LA-MSID will strive to expand employee diversity and inclusion. HR is working with community assistance organization to help connect with local candidates, in addition to tradition job placement methods.*

### **A.1.C: Strive to maintain low personnel expenses.**

The District can save money by not allowing employees who have been discharged for “just cause” collect unemployment.

*Strategy: The District will have no more than one new paid unemployment claim in fiscal year 2022-2023.*

### **A.1.D. District Staff will use the campus to be as efficient and effective as possible.**

The Commissioners have provided a modern campus that provides utilitarian administration space, a multi-purpose room, up-to-date maintenance facilities, and a fuel station. However, the site is not conducive to keeping our equipment out of the weather.

*Strategy: Management and support must correct any damage to campus facilities immediately. Regular maintenance must be performed to ensure that the campus retains its “new” appearance and workability. Staff will find proactive solutions for lack of space for equipment storage and staffing.*

- *Restructuring of field positions. The Board approved sunsetting the Facilities Maintenance Technician position to create two grounds maintenance positions – a technician and a worker- to ensure necessary maintenance is performed.*
- *The District will rehab the internal storage space in the Serrano Building as a in-house project to allow for more on site storage for equipment needs.*
- *Staff will audit historical files to scan files, properly dispose of obsolete files and utilize secure, off-site, air conditioned storage.*

**Goal A2:** Provide for the lowest possible assessment rates, while providing the necessary services for the residents inside and downstream of the LA-MSID borders.

**Objectives:**

**A.2.A: Strive to increase revenue for capital projects and/or maintenance.**

The District has been very creative in finding new revenue sources in the past for capital projects and/or maintenance. We need to look for new sources such as cellular towers, tree and mulch sales companies or fees for discharges from outside of our borders. The District will continue working with the legislature for design funds for Section 10. LA-MSID has worked with Lee County 20/20 for the purchase of Section 10. Grants were secured from FDEP and fees were secured from FDOT for West Marsh project, Phase III and for CREST.

*Strategy: Staff will identify one additional alternative revenue source in FY 2022/2023. Staff will hold strategy meetings and may attend seminars relating to alternative revenue strategies.*

**A.2.B Projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan should continue to progress forward and projects that are designed and permitted should find a revenue source to fund construction.**

Projects such as Section 10, CREST and Hendry Canal Widening are either under or nearing construction and need to continue that process. Other projects should move forward in the queue into design and permitting to be included in the next wave of “shovel ready” projects. Several projects have been outlined in the Post-Irma report paid for by Lee County and many will be incorporated into our plans.

*Strategy: Staff will continue the construction process on all projects funded by outside sources. Section 10 did not make the cut for Lee County’s CDBG grant application. Hendry Canal Widening is closing out. LA-MSID should continue to source funding for CREST and also will be in a design phase this year for all other projects.*

**A.2.C Pursuit of Additional Powers/Authorities**

On June 10, 2015, ECWCD was dissolved and LA-MSID was created. The powers of sidewalks, lighting, planning and water and water and sewer can be exercised through an agreement with Lee County and a majority vote from the voters in a referendum. If LA-MSID acquires new powers and needs to use assessments for a new revenue source, the District would have to amend its Water Control Plan. This would then be an ideal time to pursue some of the additional powers, as the cost for a Water Control Plan would not be required solely for those powers. In 2018, the District added Community Signage to the active powers. Due to COVID-19 the installation of the monument on Lee Blvd. was delayed. The Board authorized a feasibility study on the water and sewer powers. Prior to COVID-19, the Board began drafting a request to Lee County for formal consideration.

*Strategy: The District will observe conditions within its borders and the opinions of the residents to determine the optimal time to begin the process to pursue additional powers. This could make the willingness to gain new powers more palatable. The District will continue to study and work with the County to move forward on one new power in the 2024 Election.*

*Strategy: LA-MSID should work with the Attorney General and/or legislators to see if we can be exempted from mail-out costs in the water control plan process.*

#### **A.2.D: Financial staff has to remain diligent in their analysis of the District's financial records and the ever-changing rules of accounting.**

*Strategy: Maintain an unqualified audit opinion with zero management letter comments for our FY 2021-2022 Annual Financial Audit.*

#### **A.2.E: LA-MSID will remain to be a viable, independent, proactive, and pertinent agency in Lehigh Acres.**

As the population continues to grow: (1) more impervious surface is created and a greater need for stormwater management will exist, requiring proactive planning today for a safe and secure future for tomorrow (2) a potential increase in the restructure of existing government agencies may arise.

*Strategy: LA-MSID should stay strong, stay connected to all surrounding and related agencies and continue to support FASD and their lobbying efforts.*

#### **A.2.F: Create a Sucession Plan**

Staff skill-sets have improved vastly over the last 10 years. Consequently, when a staff member is lost, there is a substantial learning curve for the new employee, hired from the inside or outside. Staff should make all efforts to have an understudy cross-trained to eliminate or lessen the impact of losing a key employee.

*Strategy: LA-MSID will continue to review the current key roles as part of the Succession Plan in the fiscal year.*

**A.2.G: Automate routine reporting functions.** Operational Financial & Human Resources reporting functions for the most part have been done manually and automated reports had some of the necessary components missing. Staff has corrected some of these reports but there remain a number of reports that need to be revised to better suit reporting needs.

*Strategy: LA-MSID should review and/or program three report functions in the fiscal year.*

#### **A.2.H Evaluate Growth Solutions**

LA-MSID has become self-sufficient when it comes to providing for outside events and flexibility in the multi-purpose room. Staff has been creative when storing the addition

materials needed for those events. Should the District procure additional items or hire additional administrative staff, office space will become an issue. All conceivable air conditioned space is being used and all consolidation options have already been exhausted. Staff has secured off-site, air conditioned storage. However, additional space is still needed.

*Strategy: Staff should explore all storage space expansion options in this fiscal year.*

### **A.2.I LA-MSID should use the time management system to its capacity.**

Staff can now track time worked on culvert projects by using TMS to clock into specific projects and hours worked can be tracked. This has cut down time spent transferring hours into the payroll system.

*Strategy: Continually implement updates to the TMS to include better reporting functions and mobile use.*

## **Goal A3: Expand and Enhance Community Outreach and Engagement**

The Municipal District should be a visible and recognizable with stakeholders statewide and locally – within Lee and Hendry Counties and especially with the residents of Lehigh Acres.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

#### **A.3.A: Build External Customer Relationships & Awareness**

**Strategy:** *Communicate with and engage our community on the importance of the District's services through informative articles, social media, newspaper, events, and other avenues.*

*Strategy: LA-MSID will hold one public relations event for students, one community event, and will make presentations at five organizational meetings and/or be actively involved in the community in FY 2022-2023.*

#### **A.3.B: Maintain a strong reputation in the community by expanding presence in the community, both in-person and virtually, to ensure residents have accessibility to their local government.**

*Strategy: Assess and create opportunities for stakeholder awareness/engagement. An opportunity to conduct targeted outreach to citizens who may be impacted by the Municipal District construction projects.*

- *Meet educational water efficiency Best Management Practices (BMP) through school educational initiatives*
- *Continue to host the annual Wings Over Water Festival community event.*

*Strategy: Assess opportunities to increase constituent awareness. Staff should maintain membership and stay active in local civic and professional organizations/groups; apply for industry awards in this fiscal year.*



## STORMWATER OPERATIONS

**GOAL F1:** Operational Optimization - Ensures ongoing, timely, cost-effective, reliable, and sustainable performance improvements in all facets of its operations.

### OBJECTIVES:

**F.1.A. LA-MSID will adhere to the latest Five-Year Capital Replacement Plan.**

Adherence to this plan is necessary to ensure that the District's maintenance can be performed in the least amount of time with current staffing levels.

*Strategy: The District will purchase all items identified in the 2022/2023 Capital Replacement Plan. Fuel efficiency shall be a strong consideration when specifying new vehicles or equipment for purchase.*

**Goal F2:** Provide the infrastructure and programs necessary to deliver optimum flood protection, aquifer recharge, water quality enhancements and habitat for the current and built-out scenarios.

### OBJECTIVES:

**F.2.A - The District should continue the process for design of GS 10 and CREST, in FY 2021/2022.**

The preliminary design for GS 10 and the design of CREST are in progress. The District will proceed with the project when design is finished.

*Strategy: During FY2022-2023, the District should proceed with design for GS 10 and CREST. The legislative bill for funding brought by the District in FY2021-2022 passed, so CREST should be funded as long as the Governor signs off. Any applicable grants should be*

*applied for. The District applied for a Federal grant to cover culvert replacement costs for five culverts.*

*Strategy: Partner with local governments and the state to identify multipurpose project partnerships that reduce flooding, while increasing natural or augmented recharge to the aquifer, as well as saving time and resources.*

### **F.2.B : LA-MSID should alleviate intermittent flooding on Bedman Creek.**

The District needs a conveyance diversion from Dog Canal to Hendry Canal and Carlos Waterway, when Bedman Creek is at full capacity.

*Strategy: The District has purchased 105 acres in an excellent location for the Caloosahatchee River & Estuary Storage and Treatment (Dog-to-Hendry Connection). The site will provide ancillary benefits such as 400 acre-ft of storage and additional water quality treatment. The District began the design process in FY 2019/2020 and is nearly complete. The Dog to Hendry connection should be available for use by the summer of 2022.*

*The district should adopt the Dog to Carlos Waterway Project that will provide extra protection from flooding or extra flows in the dry season.*

**Goal F3:** District Field staff will strive to provide the highest necessary maintenance levels on District Lands as prescribed by the Board, the economic conditions and requested by the public.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

### **F.3.A A mowing and weed-eating strategy for District lands must be adhered to.**

The mowing crews shall mow the flat areas and the slopes where LA-MSID has adequate maintenance access, District wide. This is necessary to 1) provide stability for slopes, 2) maintain stormwater conveyance, 3). Provide visibility for herbicide treatments; 4) safety; 5) water quality and 6) community pride. The weed-eating crew shall maintain slopes with little to no maintenance access that have been identified by management. The Field management staff shall continue to do their best to eliminate “down time” and keep the mowing crews operating for a large percentage of the growing season. Special projects should not cut into the mowing crew’s time.

*Strategy: LA-MSID will complete three mows and three weed-eating circuits per year.*

*Tactics: A remote controlled mower was purchased in FY 2020/2021. This greatly increases the speed of the weed eating circuit. The District should secure a second radio controlled mower to ensure threat down-time is reduced.*

### **F.3.B: Herbicides should be used at label strength to control exotic and/or nuisance aquatic vegetation to compliment mechanical cleaning.**

The plant control staff should maintain LA-MSID canal and lake systems for existing and new emergent, and submersed, plants that are invasive or non-native or nuisances. Staff should provide chemical mowing and broad-leaf control on slopes and flat areas, yearly.

*Strategy: LA-MSID will conduct at least two complete plant control treatments, as needed and where needed, to maintain conveyance. The Field management staff should make sure the canal inspections will be ongoing and that each canal will be assessed and treated for its individual vegetation needs. The District will stay in tune with organizations that promote the use of herbicides and manufacturers of herbicides to help to insure that effective and cost-effective herbicides are available in the future.*

### **F.3.C Mechanical cleaning should be used to clean decomposed, exotic or nuisance vegetation to compliment the herbicide program.**

The canal cleaning process involving the track hoes and the bulldozer clean-up, shall make the rounds through LA-MSID's entire canal and lake systems approximately every seven years, as prescribed by the NPDES Permit.

*Strategy: LA-MSID will mechanically clean or inspect to determine the lack of need to clean 1/7 (approximately 14.3% or 44.43 miles) of all canals per year. We should mechanically clean or inspect to determine the lack of need to clean 5/7 of the District canals in the next five years. The Field management staff shall do their best to keep the track-hoe and dozer crews operating on canal clean out for a large percentage of the year. Special projects should not significantly cut into canal cleaning time.*

### **F.3.D; Narrow or non-existent vehicle-accessible maintenance area on Lakes or Canals.**

Staff has been able to master the use of the tracked zero-turn mower performance through training and in-house modifications of the machine. That should not terminate staff's quest to find a better method to maintain these areas.

*Strategy: Staff has purchased a tracked zero-turn mower to eliminate the vast majority of weed-eating on District canals and lakes.*

### **F.3.E: Staff had gotten behind in preserve maintenance and needs to catch up.**

The District needs to allocate more staff that may include temporary workers to reach this goal.

*Strategy: LA-MSID will remove exotics on 10 non-maintained acres this year and for the next five years, while not losing control of existing acres cleared since 2008. One-more plant control employee should be hired in FY 2022-2023.*

**F.3.F: LA-MSID will continue the culvert replacement program. Corrugated metal pipe culverts are failing at 5 to 6 per year and should fail at an increasing rate over the next 15 years.**

These “rebuild” projects must be completed to “keep up” with the potential growing amount of failing culverts District-wide.

*Strategy: Field staff will replace five or six more culverts “in house” each year, for the next five years.*

**F.3.G: The District will fully understand and comply with the current and future requirements from State and Federal authorities on water quality law and issues.**

The District has had 6 out of 7 years in a row without comments on our annual NPDES Report. There was one comment last year due to a formatting error.

*Strategy: Strive to have zero comments on our Annual NPDES Report, and be the most compliant and diligent co-permittee on the Lee County NPDES Permit.*

**F.3.H: LA-MSID shall maintain the integrity of our field data and will keep our telemetry sites operating at their full capacity.**

The telemetry employees will fully test each site and will comply with all FCC regulations. Data will be secured in newly-developed maintenance and work order software. In 2017, our chemical inventory and record database was successfully created.

*Strategy: Staff shall work with an outside contractor to secure additional maintenance and work order software that is user-friendly, efficient and comprehensive in 2022/2023.*

**F.3.I: The District’s bridges need to be maintained in the highest possible condition.**

Our 22 bridges were built from 1963 to 1992. Every two years, the State (FDOT) hires an engineering firm to inspect our bridges. We now have the latest report that identifies and needed work or deficiencies. The good news is that we have no serious problems with our bridges. All identified items in the latest report can be repaired with in-house staff.

*Strategy: The District shall make repairs as needed. LA-MSID secured a funding source to not only self-insure our bridges, but to also provide funding for minor & major repairs, replacement and design services with an assessment increase in FY 2019/2020.*

**F.3.J: The District will continue to clear its rights-of-ways.**

The District has identified all uncleared right of ways. With the advent of GIS and the Lee County Property Appraiser Site, we can easily identify our rights-of-ways.

*Strategy: The District will clear one (1) mile of right-of-way this year.*

**F.3.K LA-MSID must continue to service our vehicles and or equipment at recommended hours or mileage intervals.**

*Strategy: The mechanics will service all vehicles when scheduled within a 1,000 mile window prior to and after the due date.*

**F.3.L: The District shall provide easier and safer maintenance access roads along our infrastructure.**

The District's access roads are often blocked by a Lee County road ditch. That may force staff to back up their equipment and find an alternative route to continue their work. A considerable amount of time is lost because of this. For many years, staff had been installing ADS pipe across the ROW, to provide safe crossing for our vehicles and equipment. Because of Hurricane Irma, staff has not been able to provide this service for the last few years.

*Strategy: The District will install 30 pipes in Lee County outfall ditches and Lee County will provide a match of 30, this year.*

**F.3.M: LA-MSID's infrastructure (culverts, weirs, buildings, etc.) needs to be inspected on a regular basis.**

The District needs to inspect the assessment payer's infrastructure to protect their investment, their properties and the water resources of the District. Our NPDES permit also requires regular inspections.

*Strategy: District staff will inspect at least 25% of the culverts, water control structures, parks and buildings annually.*

**F.3.N: Providing good resident service is essential for the District's image.**

Resident issues are called in on almost a daily basis. These issues are logged in a database by issue and resolution to ensure that all issues are resolved.

*Strategy: The staff shall resolve all known resident issues prior to a resident coming to a Board Meeting, if it is within staff's power.*

**F.3.O: The District's water control structures (weirs) need to be kept in the highest operation readiness condition.**

Staff needs to look at items such as structural integrity, painting (where necessary) and reconditioning of all moving parts.

*Strategy: Staff will recondition two water control structures per year, for the next five years.*

### **F.3.P: Trash on District lands continues to be a big problem and must be kept under control.**

Because of remoteness and the fact that water bodies are at a lower elevation than surrounding lands, our infrastructure is a collection point for illegal dumping along with windblown garbage and floating trash.

*Strategy: The District will remove at least 50,000 pounds of trash in FY 2022/2023.*

### **F.3.Q Wash-outs in our canal system must be corrected within a very narrow window because of their ability to disrupt conveyance and increase our liability.**

Washouts are generally caused by the loss of bank stabilization (usually vegetation). Vegetation can be destroyed by poor mowing techniques, ATV and four-wheeler traffic, misuse of chemicals and general debris on the canal banks. The resulting wash-outs can become rather large, allowing for poor drainage along with being a vehicle and pedestrian hazard. Hurricane Irma has exacerbated this situation and has created 150 additional wash-outs.

*Strategy: There will be no reported accidents, injuries or flooding due to washouts.*

### **F.3.R Special Projects Must be Completed Yearly.**

During the dry season each year, the District staff re-gears itself to complete necessary special projects. The projects are identified by October prior to dry season.

*Strategy: Staff shall complete at least 90% of special projects identified in the October Gantt chart. Special projects should not cut into mowing, spraying or mechanical clean-out goals.*

### **F.3.R Streamlining of Reporting**

The District has decades of paper logs that need to be made digital. The district hired a professional to create a database to manage field data – RFA, Spray and Mowing Reports, but the creation of the databases it has been moving slowly.

*Strategy: Work with designer to fix the identified issues in the first database and begin design of additional databases.*

## **Goal F4: Improved Emergency Response Preparedness**

### **F.4.A: Improved Hurricane Preparedness.**

Actual Hurricane experience learned from the direct hit from Hurricane Irma has caused staff to revise our methodologies in preparation and our actions during and following an event.

*Strategy: Staff will annually review the Hurricane Manual prior to Hurricane Season; will host a Hurricane Training exercise and will ensure safety supplies are in stock to the best of the District's ability.*

#### **F.4.B: Preparing for Health Emergencies**

The COVID-19 pandemic caught many agencies off-guard. It has been 100 years since a pandemic has occurred, and guidance changes depending on what type of disease/virus is spreading. The District worked with Labor Counsel and District Attorney to formulate understanding of best practices. The District Attorney steered staff away from creating policies to navigate health crises.

*Strategy: Maintain a list of PPE that would be multipurposed for any type of crisis and prepare/maintain emergency kits that can be placed in storage and accessed when needed in 2022/2023.*