

Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration



DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT AND RESTORATION
Florida Department of
Environmental Protection

Business Plan FY 2023-24

Executive Summary

The **Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration** (DEAR) is responsible for monitoring and assessing Florida's surface water and groundwater quality; identifying, verifying, and prioritizing pollution problems; developing strategies to resolve pollution problems; and partnering with local stakeholders to implement comprehensive restoration strategies. The department's laboratory is housed in DEAR and is integral to fulfilling the division's responsibilities and supporting other department programs and objectives. In summary, DEAR:

- Develops and adopts Florida's surface water quality standards.
- Monitors and reports on surface water and groundwater quality.
- Assesses rivers, lakes, streams, canals, estuaries, and springs to identify pollution problems.
- Adopts scientific water quality restoration targets, known as total maximum daily loads (TMDLs).
- Develops and implements basin management action plans (BMAPs) in concert with local stakeholders to achieve water quality restoration targets.
- Promotes stakeholder-driven reasonable assurance plans and other straight-to-implementation approaches.
- Provides the department and other resource agencies with the highest quality laboratory services available.
- Manages water quality data repositories and related geospatial data for storage and use by the department, other agencies, and the public.
- Provides technical support to the department and the public regarding appropriate methods for water quality analysis and data quality assurance (QA).

The following programs work in concert to meet DEAR's responsibilities for assessment and restoration of Florida's water resources:

- Water Quality Monitoring.
- Water Quality Evaluation and TMDLs.
- Water Quality Restoration.
- Water Quality Standards.
- Watershed Services.
- Chemistry, Biology, and Scientific Support Programs.

DEAR is budgeted at \$64.9 million in the state fiscal year (FY) 2023-24 General Appropriations Act, which reflects a continued significant increase in fixed capital outlay (FCO) TMDL funding. As a result, the division's FY 2023-24 budget is supported by trust funds (99.99%) and general revenue (0.01%). The budget funds 199 full-time equivalent (FTE) and 52 other personnel services (OPS) positions.

DEAR has established 24 milestone-based goals along with 14 performance-related targets for its programs to accomplish during FY 2023-24. All the division's goals support one or more of the department's strategic goals and objectives, and all are critical to water quality restoration. The division holds itself accountable to:

- Update Florida's water quality standards to better protect human health and aquatic life.

- Complete or draft comprehensive water quality assessments for Florida's basins as part of its continuous assessment cycle.
- Report annually to the Florida Legislature and biennially to EPA on the status of Florida's water quality.
- Draft and propose water quality restoration targets as part of TMDLs or alternative restoration plans.
- Adopt and advance BMAPs to protect and restore impaired waters, and to implement special Legislative protections for South Florida waters and Outstanding Florida Springs.
- Add and refine cutting-edge laboratory techniques to analyze pollutants, assess environmental conditions, and identify pollutant sources, all while continuing to minimize costs and provide optimal support to department programs.
- Successfully implement the division's comprehensive water quality database — offering training and support to data providers, enabling public access to water quality data, and planning for inclusion of continuous monitoring (CM) data.

DEAR has established an array of performance metrics to measure the progress of water quality restoration across Florida. These metrics include monitoring statewide water quality status and trends as well as the outcomes of DEAR's water quality assessment process. The division also tracks the adoption of all TMDLs and alternative restoration plans, which may establish site-specific water quality targets for those impaired waters that do not meet standards. Other metrics illustrate the expanding coverage of BMAPs and the water quality improvements associated with their implementation. Finally, the division measures the timeliness and quality of laboratory services critical to the department and our external clients.

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Mission, Vision, and Values

The fundamental **mission** of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is to protect, conserve, and manage the state's natural resources and enforce its environmental laws. The department's **vision** is to advance Florida's position as a world leader in protecting natural resources while growing the state's economy.

In pursuing its mission and vision, the department adheres to the following **values**:

- **Leadership.** Serve as an example of how to protect natural resources and economic vitality while adhering to the integrity of our shared vision.
- **Integrity.** Operate ethically, honorably, and respectfully.
- **Accountability.** Accept personal ownership for our actions and responsibilities.
- **Communication.** Operate transparently, sharing information frequently and honestly.
- **Innovation.** Seek innovative ways to improve operations and scientific achievements.
- **Service.** Serve Florida, its environment, the public, stakeholders, and each other.

DEP's executive leadership team has established five **strategic goals** to achieve the department's vision:

- **Coastal Resiliency.** Florida has the most advanced coastal resiliency program in the nation — our communities are prepared for sea-level rise; we have the most advanced coral management system; and our beaches flourish, protect local communities, and allow the public to experience the most iconic beaches in the world.
- **Everglades Restoration.** Florida has the largest and most successful restoration program on the planet to restore America's Everglades and its estuaries.
- **Prized Properties.** Florida is a national leader for conservation stewardship through strategic acquisitions and recreational networks.
- **Water Sustainability.** Florida has the most advanced water protection program in the nation. Quality — Florida is the best at preventing pollution from entering waters; Florida has the best tools to restore impacted waterways. Quantity — Florida has the best tools to ensure future water supply needs to sustain our communities and ecosystems.
- **OneDEP.** The department ensures solutions, resources, and ideas are shared to advance its mission to protect, conserve, and manage Florida's natural resources.

Water and natural resources are the foundation of Florida's communities, economy, and way of life. The department is committed to **achieve more, now** — to work together with all to protect, conserve, and restore Florida's waters. The division fully supports this effort and has established priorities, goals, and targets to achieve **cleaner water, faster**.

Client Services

The **Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration** is charged with protecting, maintaining, and improving the quality of state waters for domestic, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and other beneficial uses, such as providing high-quality supplies of potable water and an environment conducive to the propagation of fish and wildlife.

In executing its responsibilities, DEAR serves three primary clients:

The Public. The public expects DEAR to use every resource at its disposal to safeguard the state's water resources. The public is entitled to responsiveness, respect, professional treatment, and reliable information. Services provided include:

- Easily accessible information on issues important to the public such as [algal bloom status updates](#); [reporting of new algal blooms](#); [impaired waters, TMDLs, and BMAPs](#); [springs restoration](#); surface and groundwater monitoring watershed management ([DEAR Water Quality Monitoring Events](#)); and [water quality standards](#).
- Water quality data through the department's interactive water quality data portal and the division's [Watershed Information Network \(WIN\) data repository](#).
- [Interactive report cards](#) for the status and trend monitoring networks, which characterize the overall quality of Florida's waters.
- Periodic review and revision of the state's water quality standards as part of the Clean Water Act's triennial review process.
- Technical assistance to stakeholders on the development and implementation of site-specific alternative criteria (SSAC).
- Laboratory services, including information on sampling and analytical methods, laboratory analyses, QA protocols, laboratory data management, and laboratory certification processes (all of which are available on the [DEP Laboratory's website](#), along with a directory of certified laboratories.)

Basin Stakeholders. DEAR has a responsibility to serve those affected by its decisions and actions, which are made and performed to protect and restore regional basins and watersheds. Stakeholders include local governments, businesses, industrial and agricultural interests, all Florida residents, and the many tourists that visit our state each year. Each individual basin has unique water quality problems that affect varied and often competing stakeholder interests. The demands for responsiveness, professional treatment, reliable information, Sound science, responsible public policy, and a level playing field must be managed according to the unique circumstances that exist from basin to basin. Services provided include:

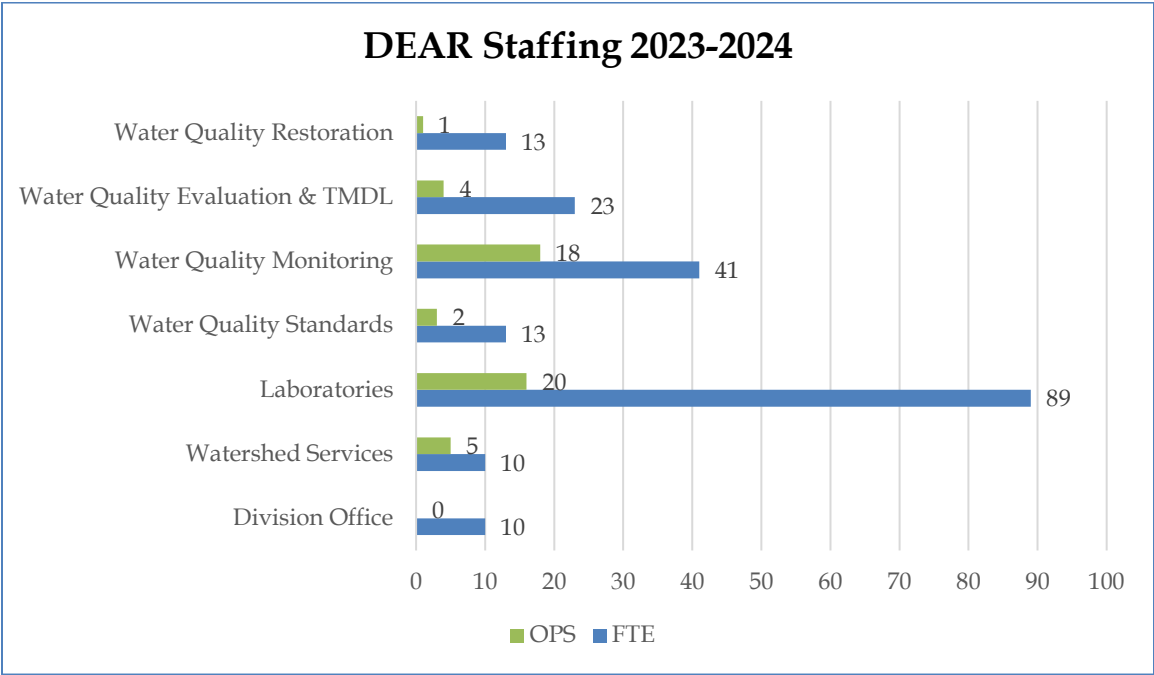
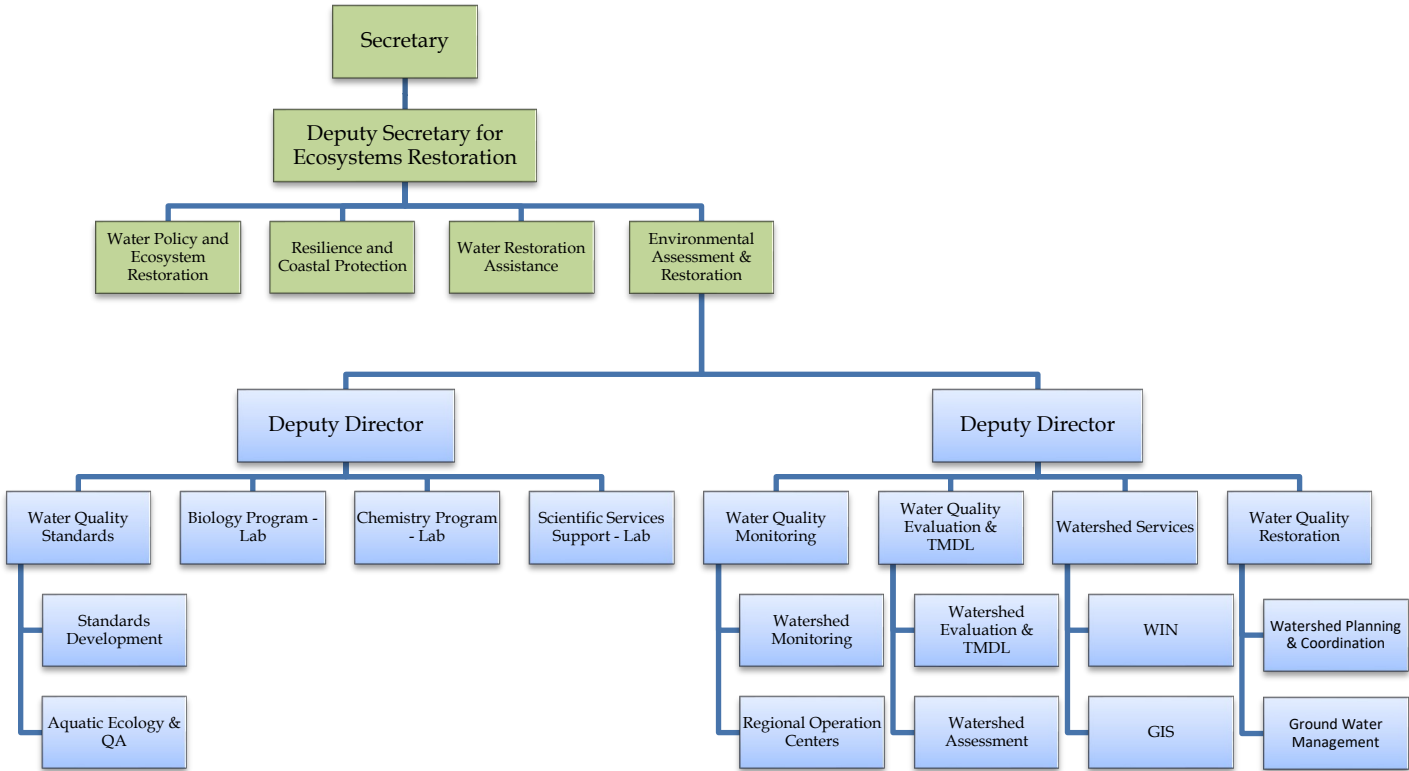
- Water quality data through [WIN](#) Reports & Extracts, the Storage and Retrieval (STORET) database application, and the STORET Public Access ([SPA](#)) website.
- Information on [impaired waters](#), including the biennial assessment process, current and historical lists of impairment decisions, annual strategic monitoring plans, and access to the data used in the assessment and listing processes.
- Draft and final [TMDL](#) documents and other related information detailing water quality restoration targets for impaired waterbodies.
- Review of water quality-based effluent limitations (WQBELs) and mixing zones for entities discharging wastewater to state surface waters.

- Review submitted alternative restoration plans and provide technical review and guidance to stakeholders on the development of these plans.
- [Restoration](#) plans, notices, and documents, including an [annual statewide report](#) detailing the projects, actions, schedules, and costs associated with restoring impaired waterbodies.
- Technical assistance regarding [data QA](#) – including training on environmental sampling and data evaluation, maintenance of field [standard operating procedures](#) (SOPs), and approval of [alternative and modified methods](#) – so that data collected by basin stakeholders can be used by the department.
- In coordination with the Division of Water Restoration Assistance, information on [financial assistance](#) for local governments and others to build water quality restoration projects and to implement management strategies in priority watersheds.

Public Officials. Whether in response to the Governor or Cabinet, members of the Florida Legislature, other state agencies, local governments, the U.S. Congress, or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), DEAR must respond promptly and professionally with reliable information and wise public policy recommendations based on high-quality science. Services provided include:

- Water quality data through [WIN](#) and [SPA](#).
- Laboratory services, including information on sampling and analytical methods, laboratory analyses, QA protocols, data management strategies, and laboratory certification processes.
- Water quality reports, including the biennial "[Integrated Water Quality Assessment for Florida](#)."
- Periodic reports to the Governor and Legislature on the status of activities the division undertakes to protect Florida's waters, including an annual statewide report ([STAR](#)) detailing the projects, actions, schedules, and costs associated with restoring impaired waterbodies.

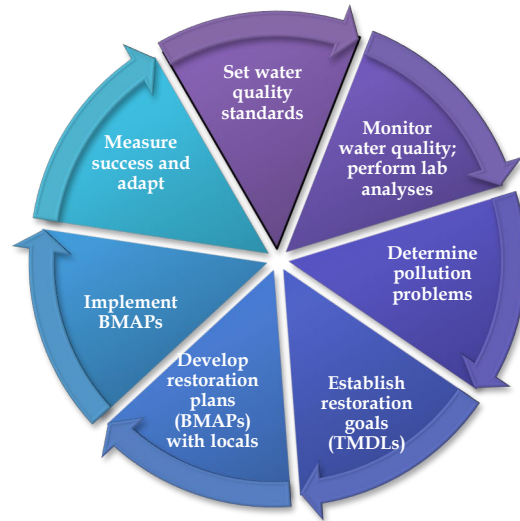
Organizational Structure



Based on the 2023-24 General Appropriations Act, DEAR has 199 FTE and a budget that supports 52 OPS positions.

Program Descriptions

The watershed management cycle illustrates how DEAR's programs work together through a continuous, adaptive process of evaluation and management of Florida's water resources – building an increasingly sophisticated understanding of surface water and groundwater resources. It also illustrates how this understanding leads to meaningful actions focused on protecting and restoring the state's waters.



Water Quality Standards Program

- Develops, adopts, and updates Florida's water quality standards (i.e., criteria, classifications, antidegradation policy, and moderating provisions);
- Evaluates petitions for reclassifications, designation of Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW), water quality standards variances, and SSAC;
- Trains staff and outside parties on environmental sampling methods and provides technical support on the design of biological studies to petitioners for reclassification, OFW designation, and SSAC;
- Coordinates the department's bioassessment program through developing methods, providing training, conducting bioassessment proficiency evaluations, and writing implementation guidance;
- Provides technical support for the review of Level I and II WQBELs and stream NNC exclusions;
- Conducts water quality and bioassessment studies to support water quality criteria development;
- Provides technical review for QA plans for contracts and grants departmentwide; and
- Manages the department's QA program, which includes assisting other programs with the implementation of the department's QA directive, reviewing alternative method requests, conducting audits, and coordinating the department's quality management plan.

Water Quality Monitoring Program

- Monitors and collects water quality and bioassessment data for the determination of statewide surface and groundwater quality through status and trend networks, basin-wide assessments for restoration efforts, and site-specific monitoring for the determination of impairment;
- Responds to algal blooms, wastewater spills, and other events affecting water quality and public health, which require accurate sampling data and scientific evaluation;

- Provides annual statewide assessments of surface and groundwater quality by utilizing data collected from the Status and Trend Networks;
- Coordinates with state and local agencies, municipalities, counties, and water management districts to improve efficiency of monitoring and with the collection of water quality data; and
- Collaborates with watershed partners to establish and maintain a monitoring coordination group (the [Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council](#)).

Water Quality Evaluation and TMDL Program

- Develops annual Strategic Monitoring Plans to assist in assessing the health of surface waters by identifying priority waters that require additional surface water quality monitoring, hydrological and biological watershed-based monitoring activities, and waters that need additional data for TMDL development;
- Provides technical review and coordination for stream NNC exclusions;
- Assesses water quality and reports to EPA Region 4 and the public on the health of Florida's waters that are impaired (i.e., do not meet water quality standards) and those waters requiring additional data or further evaluation, including pollutant source tracking;
- Develops a biennial priority list of waters for the development of TMDLs (water quality restoration targets); Develops a schedule and workplan for TMDL development;
- Use and evaluate water quality pollutant models to support DEAR decision-making and department related regulatory processes;
- Develops and adopts by rule TMDL targets for impaired waterbodies, and establishes nutrient TMDLs as site-specific interpretations of the narrative nutrient criteria; and
- Coordinates with and provides technical expertise to stakeholders to support the development of reasonable assurance plans and other pollution control mechanisms in lieu of TMDLs and BMAPs.
- Reassesses previously impaired waters with TMDLs or alternative restoration plans to determine attainment of applicable water quality standards, including evaluating reasonable progress towards meeting TMDL targets, project completion, and the identification of success stories (i.e., restored waters).

Water Quality Restoration Program

- Develops, adopts, and implements BMAPs (water quality restoration plans) for surface waters including freshwater springs;
- Conducts regular reviews of BMAP implementation progress; adaptively manages and updates BMAP requirements;
- Annually reports on all adopted BMAPs via the Statewide Annual Report (STAR), and BMAP Story Maps,
- Supports local water quality initiatives through collaboration and technical assistance; and
- Assists the Division of Water Restoration Assistance with reviewing and prioritizing water quality restoration projects.

Watershed Services Program

- Secures and manages non-regulatory water quality data for the state through [WIN](#) and [SPA](#) ;

- Transmits ambient water quality data from WIN and the Statewide Biological Database (SBIO) to the U.S. EPA Water Quality Exchange (WQX) data repository;
- Manages the analysis, design, construction, and implementation of the planned phases of WIN;
- Manages, edits, analyzes, and depicts geospatial data for use by DEAR, other divisions, other agencies and the public;
- Serves as Florida's steward of the U.S. Geological Survey (3D Hydrography Program (3DHP));
- Manages, edits and updates the Florida Hydrography Dataset (FHD), the geospatial dataset which provides hydrography data for surface waters across the state for purposes of mapping, modeling, and assessment processes and applications;
- Manages, edits and updates the Land Use Land Cover (LULC) layers for the areas of the Northwest Florida Water Management District and Suwanee River Water Management District;
- Coordinates the division's data management initiatives; and
- Manages the searchable database of Florida monitoring activities ([Water-CAT](#)).

DEP Laboratory

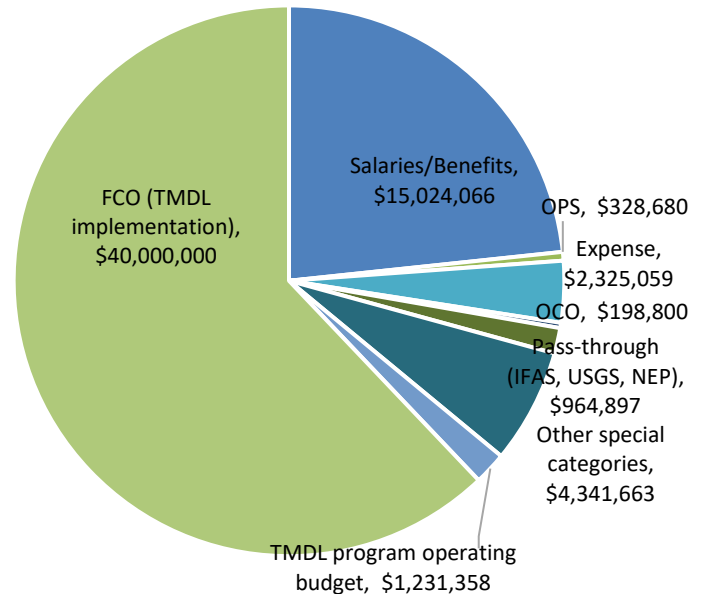
- Performs chemical and biological analyses for the department, water management districts (WMDs), and other state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security;
- Develops and validates analytical methods to support regulatory and resource management decisions and policy development;
- Performs scientific study design, technical document development and review, and statistical and narrative interpretation of environmental data;
- Performs field sampling for various department initiatives;
- In conjunction with the water quality monitoring program, provides accurate data analysis and scientific assessment of algal blooms, wastewater spills, and other events affecting water quality and public health; and
- Implements actions associated with the national Environmental Response Laboratory Network.

Budget Overview FY 2023-24

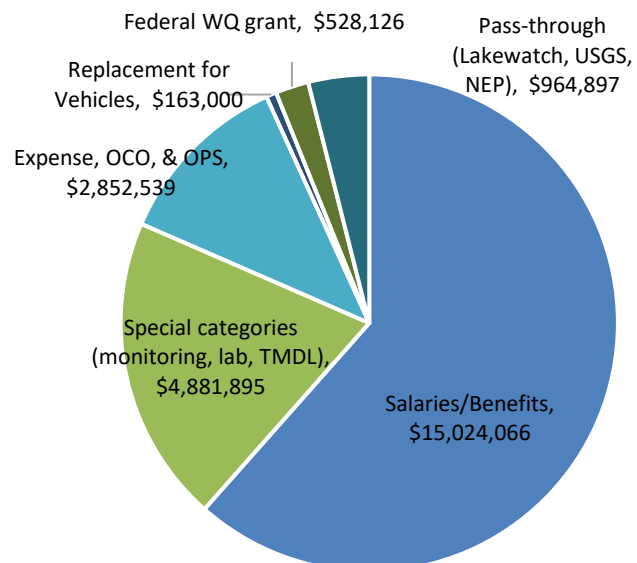
DEAR's operating budget varies from year to year. The operating budget for FY 2023-24 is similar to the last fiscal year. DEAR's total budget for 2023-24 includes Fixed Capital Outlay TMDL funding, appropriated from Land Acquisition Trust Fund. Approximately half the division's total budget comes from Land Acquisition Trust Fund for FY 2023-24.

- The total budget for DEAR is \$64.4 million.
- Salaries and benefits represent 23% of DEAR's total budget and 62% of the operating budget.
- DEAR's operating budget includes nearly \$1 million directly transferred to other entities.
- DEAR's operating budget also includes \$5 million in special category funds, much of which supports laboratory services for other divisions and outside entities.
- DEAR manages \$156 million in grant funding to restore impaired waters by monitoring and assessing water quality, setting scientific water quality restoration goals, and guiding the implementation of the projects and actions set forth in adopted Basin Management Action Plans.
- The budget comprises 68% FCO and 32% operating funds.
- 99.99% of DEAR's total budget comes from Trust Funds and 0.003% from General Revenue.

DEAR 2023-2024 Total Budget



DEAR 2023-2024 Operating Budget Appropriations



Division Objectives, Measures, and Key Performance Indicators

Division Objective—What is to be achieved or measured by this division goal?

Division Measure—What are the specific actions to be done to achieve the objective?

Key performance indicator (KPI)—What is the metric or indicator used to evaluate the success of the measure?

Target—What is the performance target for the KPI, and how frequently is progress measured against it—annually (A), quarterly (Q), or quarterly year-to-date (Q, YTD)?

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
Division					
DEAR1	Complete milestones from the division's business plan to further its mission of assessment and restoration	Business plan milestones met	Percent of milestones met	90% (Q, YTD)	Quarterly and 6/30/2024
DEAR2	Training and Leadership Development	Evaluate and expand the division training plan to include training that maintains core competencies across programs, professional development opportunities for top performers, implements training program for staff and investing in leadership training for your personnel with the most potential as future leaders.	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
DEP Laboratory					
LABS1	Maintain 95% of sample analyses completed timely	Complete sample analyses per SOP	Percent of sample analyses completed timely	95% (Q)	Quarterly measure
LABS2	Maintain 95% of event reports completed timely	Prepare event reports per SOP	Percent of event reports transmitted	95% (Q)	Quarterly measure

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
LABS3	Minimize the costs associated with providing laboratory services to department programs	Conduct business analysis to determine which laboratory services are best procured from the private sector and which are best retained in-house; consider both the cost and the level of service needed to support program objectives; establish overflow services with private sector laboratories optimized for those analyses where there are cost savings to the department and where the level of service is appropriate to serve program objectives; document costs saved by establishing overflow services	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
LABS4	Expand services as necessary to provide optimal support to department programs	Expand and optimize in-house analytical capabilities and procure additional services through overflow contracts where that option is more cost-effective; document number of new or enhanced analyses available to customers	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
LABS5-1	Achieve an excellent level of performance on the annual customer satisfaction survey	Perform lab duties at an excellent level of service; send lab customers an annual satisfaction survey rating lab performance as excellent, good, or poor; achieve excellent or good ratings	Percent excellent or good ratings on customer survey	97% (A)	6/30/2024

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
LABS5-2	Achieve an excellent level of performance on the annual customer satisfaction survey	Respond to requests for additional support by named customer satisfaction survey respondents	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
Water Quality Monitoring Program					
WQMP1	Implement the status and trend monitoring networks	Monitor, assess, and report on the water quality of water resources, meeting milestones outlined in the monitoring design document	Percent of monitoring completed	95% (Q)	Quarterly measure
WQMP2	Submit biennial Integrated Water Quality Assessment for Florida report	Coordinate with division programs to receive draft input from programs by 10/30/2023	Timely completion	Milestone	10/30/2023
WQMP3	Track annual progress of impaired waters assessments	Collect data necessary to meet data sufficiency requirements specified in the Impaired Waters Rule via the SMP	Percent of monitoring completed (for the calendar year 2023)	Water quality samples: 80% completion; Bioassessment samples: 50% completion (A)	6/30/2024
Water Quality Evaluation and TMDL Program					
WQETP1	Implement Statewide Biennial Assessment	Develop statewide final assessment lists, respond to public comments, and develop a list adoption package with supporting documentation for secretarial approval	Timely completion	Milestone	5/31/2024

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
WQETP2	Plan and develop the strategic monitoring plans	Identify waterbodies in the SMP to monitor to support impaired waters assessments. Post final SMP to website.	Timely Completion	Milestone	January 31, 2024
WQETP3	Develop TMDLs, write TMDL not needed documents, set restoration targets, or provide support for alternative restoration plans	Present Notice of Proposed Rule packages to Secretary consistent with implementing the current 2-year TMDL workplan; provide a briefing on the final status of TMDL alternatives; or develop documentation that TMDLs not needed.	Timely Completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
WQETP4 -1	Develop bacteria TMDLs	Work to resolve EPA Region IV comments on the draft regional consolidated bacteria TMDL document.	Timely completion Schedule meeting with EPA by end of Quarter 1 Develop bacteria TMDL path forward by November 1, 2023	Milestone	9/31/2023 11/1/23
WQETP4 -2	Develop bacteria TMDLs	Contingent upon successful resolution of EPA's concerns, complete draft regional Consolidated Bacteria TMDL document for at least one pilot study area (e.g., the Everglades West Coast basin or Lower St. Johns basin) and hold a public meeting(s) for TMDLs for bacteria impairments consistent with the 2-year TMDL workplan.	Timely completion Draft Report Quarter 2 Notice Public Meetings by end of Quarter 3	Milestone	12/31/2023 3/30/24

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
WQETP5	Provide technical guidance on the elements needed to develop alternative restoration plans; coordinate with stakeholders on reasonable progress towards achieving water quality standards	Provide routine updates to division office and program staff on the status of ARPs in development and already existing. Maintain outreach plan and track progress on ARP implementation and development.	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
Water Quality Restoration Program					
WQRP1-1	Update basin management action plans (BMAPs)	Update outreach and engagement schedule refining the plan for staff efforts to meet with BMAP stakeholders and present draft interim milestones associated with 2025 deadlines; keep the division office informed of progress through routine updates	Timely Completion	Milestone	10/15/2023
WQRP1-2	Update basin management action plans (BMAPs)	Refine areas identified for updates and revisions to the BMAPs (i.e., incorporation of wastewater and OSTDS plans, process for identifying areas for project prioritization, implementation of HB1379 requirements, water quality analyses, etc.).	Timely Completion	Milestone	12/1/2023

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
WQRP1-3	Update basin management action plans (BMAPs)	Develop draft BMAP language for updates and complete draft updates timely based on established schedules.	Timely Completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
WQRP2	Revise reporting and outreach tools	Review and propose improvements to BMAP Story Maps.	Timely completion -	Milestone -	10/20/2023
WQRP3	FSESCI reporting	Complete a summary report on previous training and auditing efforts for the Florida Stormwater, Erosion, and Sedimentation Control Inspector (FSESCI) Qualification Program. Include total individuals trained, the number of training events, audit information, and other pertinent information.	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
WQRP4	Propose methodology for water quality analyses	Develop a draft methodology for water quality analyses to aid in the determination of progress and project prioritization.	Timely completion	Milestone	12/31/2023
Water Quality Standards Program					
WQSP1	Complete Triennial Review rulemaking	Continue to evaluate changes needed to 62-302 and 62-303. When ERC is full, prepare revised Notice of Proposed Rule and supporting information, brief Secretary on the rulemaking package, and present TR to the ERC	Timely completion	Milestone	06/30/2024

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
WQSP2	Review WQBELs, stream exclusion "petitions," mixing zone submittals, and submittals demonstrating attainment of the stream numeric nutrient standard	Coordinate with applicant and district; provide review comments within 3 weeks of submittal from district or permit applicant, unless additional time is specifically agreed upon by division management	Percent of submittals that are timely reviewed	90% (A)	06/30/2024
WQSP3	Review SSAC and Variance Submittals	Coordinate with applicant and district; provide review comments within 6 weeks of submittal from district or permit applicant, unless additional time is specifically agreed upon by division management	Percent of submittals that are timely reviewed	90% (A)	06/30/2024
WQSP4	Conduct HHC rulemaking pursuant to EPA Determination	Provide requested information to EPA in support of their HHC proposal for Florida. Conduct administrative process for fast-track or other incorporation of promulgated criteria into 62-302, F.A.C.	Timely completion	Milestone	06/30/2024
WQSP5-1	Conduct lab and field audits in response to program requests, and provide bioassessment proficiency audits as required under SOPs	Coordinate with the entity to be audited, conduct audits, and provide preliminary audit reports within 3 months of audit and receipt of audited records	Percent of preliminary audit reports prepared by the deadline	90% (A)	06/30/2024

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
WQSP5-2	Conduct lab and field audits in response to program requests, and provide bioassessment proficiency audits as required under SOPs	Work with audited parties on corrective actions, and prepare final audit report within 3 months of complete response from the audited party	Percent of final audit reports prepared by the deadline	90% (A)	06/30/2024
WQSP5-3	Conduct lab and field audits in response to program requests	Conduct 5 or more audits per year	Number of audits performed	5 (A)	06/30/2024
WQSP6	Provide Quality Assurance (QA) training to department staff and stakeholders	Conduct 10 or more training events on statewide standard operating procedures (SOPs), surface and groundwater sampling methods, bioassessment methods; and other QA topics	Number of training events conducted	10 (A)	06/30/2024
WQSP7	Assess the implementation of the department's QA policy (DEP 972)	Survey department QA officers on the status and quality of their program's QA activities; work with department programs to document and improve their quality systems, and draft annual QA report and submit it to the Division Office	Timely completion	Milestone	5/31/2024
WQSP8	Maintain Bioassessment Proficiency Program	Offer audit opportunities for first-time Stream Condition Index (SCI) samplers 4 times/year, establish new habitat assessment testing sites, and respond to requests for SCI refresher audits, HA testing, and online test-taking.	Number of first-time SCI audit opportunities	4 (A)	06/30/2024

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
WQSP9	Conduct rulemaking for QA Rule, 62-160, FAC.	Complete technical work for proposed revisions to 62-160, F.A.C, rules and incorporated documents. Prepare Notice of Rule Development and hold public meetings as technical progress allows.	Timely completion	Milestone	06/30/2024
WQSP10	Develop policy and guidance on data usability for continuous monitoring probes that are not currently approved by DEP SOPs for use in ambient water assessments.	Draft a process to use probe data in place of or in addition to lab data in waterbody assessments or other DEAR uses. This process will include: 1) Information required from a data provider requesting that DEAR use their data, 2) DEAR process for evaluation of that submittal, and 3) criteria by which the department will approve or disapprove such requests.	Timely completion	Milestone	06/30/2024
Watershed Services Program					
WSP1	Improve the Florida Hydrography Dataset (FHD)	Edit and provide the latest edited FHD layer to OTIS for uploading to the Spatial Data Engine (ArcSDE) library (Fall and Spring updates)	Timely completion	Semi-annual	11/15/2023 5/16/2024
WSP2	Improve the Florida Land Use Land Cover (LULC) spatial data for the area of NFWFMD	Complete editing of the LULC layer for the area of the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD)	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024

Goal Number	Division Objective	Division Measure	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target	Due Date
WSP3	Manage the Watershed Information Network (WIN) Phase 1	Provide quarterly updates to DEAR Program Administrators on WIN Management status of data providers	Timely Completion	Quarterly	7/31/2023 10/31/2023 1/31/2024 4/30/2024
WSP4	Provide ambient water quality data to EPA	Transmit ambient water quality data from WIN and SBIO to the EPA Water Quality Exchange (WQX) data repository in fulfillment of 106 grant funding requirements; submit a status report to EPA	Timely completion	Milestone	3/31/2024
WSP5-1	Initiate the WIN Continuous Monitoring (CM) analysis, design and construction project	Continue and complete development of project scope, charter and solicitation with OTIS.	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
WSP5-2	Manage the WIN CM analysis, design and construction project	Manage the approved IT project according to established project/contract milestones.	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024
WSP6	Implement division data management priorities	Implement FY23/24 additional division data management priorities as established through DEAR data management strategy activities	Timely completion	Milestone	6/30/2024

Mid- and Long-term Goals

The goals and objectives tables above contain the mid-and long-term goals from prior business plans that are now actionable items for the division in FY 2023-24. Some goals cross DEAR programs, but they are listed under the presumed primary or lead program.

Mid-term Goals (two to three years out)

Water Quality Monitoring Program (WQMP)

- Coordinate with the Laboratory to phase out the sampling tracking by monitoring staff. Provide recommendations for LIMS enhancement or better use of the current features in LIMS.
- Develop strategies that could be used to assess estuaries for 305(b) reporting and include estuaries in the 2026 Integrated Report.
- Improve and make the data management process consistent throughout the program, including the tracking and flow of how documents are archived and data entered into departmental databases.
- Provide leadership and management training to all regional operation center team leads and the WMS data analysis team lead.

Water Quality Evaluation & TMDL Program (WQETP)

- Develop strategies and approaches to derive stream and estuary nutrient TMDLs, including H1.
- Integrate communication with stakeholders about biennial assessment listing process with the two-year priority list of waters for the development of TMDLs.
- Evaluate alternatives to the current Impaired Waters Rule Assessment Database, currently a Microsoft Access database, including any necessary revisions to data management procedures and output applications that use the assessment information. Document general process for running IWR code and producing output.
- Develop data handling processes and computational approaches to assess continuous monitoring data under the IWR.
- Develop long-term strategy for retaining internal institutional knowledge from senior staff with new staff.

Water Quality Restoration Program (WQRP)

- Integrate Bacteria TMDL approach with revised restoration approaches for bacteria impaired waters and implement a streamlined approach to restoring bacteria-impaired waters, adopting rules if necessary.
- Incorporate projects and policies from onsite sewage treatment and disposal system (OSTDS) and domestic wastewater treatment facilities remediation plans in nutrient BMAPs.
- Conduct 5-year evaluations of BMAPs, update/include OSTDS remediation plans, ~~and~~ identify additional management strategies and restoration projects where needed.
- Create “success story” list of areas where projects have been implemented and water quality improvements have been observed.
- Develop and propose revised methodology for education project crediting.
- Update BMAP models.
- Update all BMAPs to incorporate HB 1379 requirements.

Watershed Services Program (WSP)

- Examine the USGS 3D Hydrography Program (3DHP) for potential use by Florida/DEP when it is available
 - Compare the 3DHP (LiDAR- based) with the Florida Hydrography Dataset (FHD) (aerial imagery-based)
 - Consult with DEAR and with OTIS GIS on relative merits
 - If determined necessary, develop and implement a new process for Florida that includes use of 3DHP.
- Implement DEAR Data Management Priorities as they are established, mid-term examples of which include:
 - Construct and implement the approved design for a Continuous Monitoring data system for DEAR (DEAR CM)
 - Expand WIN to include storage and extraction of biological data (WIN Bio)
 - Initiate analysis of the merits and approach for consolidating GWIS with WIN
- Implement the redesign of WIN search and list screens as a proactive measure to enhance performance as the repository grows.
- Continue and complete an expanded data cleanup identification and resolution process to ensure data quality adheres to WIN minimum data quality standards following removal of autonomous transactions.
- Re-examine and refine or re-design Project Intended Use in WIN.

Water Quality Standards Program (WQSP)

- Complete the analysis and drafting of revisions to the list of OFW "managed areas," which include state and federal parks, aquatic preserves, and other managed areas. Once an ERC is active, go through the rulemaking process to update the OFW list for all managed areas within 62-302.700, FAC. List and make edits to the OFW GIS layer that constitute clarifications (not changes) to the rule.
- Determine and initiate applications for the use of technical work conducted to revise the freshwater specific conductance criterion. Potential applications include proposals of Type I SSACs to protect waters with low specific conductance, and incorporation of regional targets into SCI stressor identification process.
- Improve implementation and quality system for bioassessment methods – Evaluate results of a contracted data analysis for the Lake Vegetation Index (LVI), determine whether to make index changes, and conduct BioCondition Gradient workshops and other steps to determine thresholds for health if changes will be made. Determine if/how to restrict application of the Rapid Periphyton Survey to “wadeable” streams. Evaluate and implement changes to the Stream and River Habitat Assessment proficiency evaluation process. Provide recommendations on which bioassessment tools are most appropriate in springs runs and spring vents.
- Evaluate estuary numeric nutrient criteria (NNC) developed with <20 data points, calculate revised criteria if applicable.
- Evaluate potential use of marine multimetric index for benthic invertebrate evaluation. Create an internal workgroup to evaluate the effectiveness of EPA’s recommended multimetric index using Florida’s existing benthic macroinvertebrate data. Provide monitoring recommendations for point-source impact evaluations.
- Provide increased QA support services, including prioritizing Quality of Science Reviews for programs with out-of-date quality plans (≥ 4 years) and establishing a rotating schedule for DEP SOP trainings within the districts.
- Develop guidance for CM of non-traditional parameters, including nitrate, phosphorous, and chlorophyll *a*, and add continuous monitoring minimum QA requirements to DEP SOPs.

Chemistry Program

- Continue to update methods and instrumentation to improve the range of services, accuracy and sensitivity of results, and cost-efficiency.

- Work in coordination with the DEP Drinking Water Program to design, construct, outfit, and staff new laboratory space for the purpose of testing finish public drinking water and public drinking water supplies for emerging contaminants, including PFAS.
- Develop strategies to stabilize staffing.

Biology Program

- Continue to update methods and instrumentation to improve the range of services, accuracy and sensitivity of results, and cost-efficiency.
- Develop strategies to stabilize staffing.
- Develop biovolume calculations for taxonomic phytoplankton data.
- Complete Microbiological Hold Time Study to evaluate the feasibility of increasing the current 8-hour holding time from collection to incubation for *Escherichia coli* bacteria samples analyzed using the Quanti-Tray method.

Scientific Support Services Program (SSSP)

- Maintain and, where possible, improve laboratory infrastructure in coordination with the DMS. Mid-Term projects include:
 - Upgrade of halon fire suppression system - 3rd-floor labs (\$130,000)
 - Replacement of old DI water pipes and fittings
 - Replacement of vacuum pump system and expand vacuum connections to the C214 lab

Long-term Goals (four to five years out)

Water Quality Monitoring Program (WQMP)

- Evaluate the organization of the management of the Regional Operation Centers and, if appropriate, develop a thoroughly documented recommendation for the legislature to consider a reorganization.

Water Quality Evaluation & TMDL Program (WQETP)

- Develop an assessment methodology for narrative nutrient standard to develop a consistent method to place chlorophyll *a* into category 2 with or without a bioassessment.
- Coordinate with WQSP to identify Class IV waters and then assess these waters where appropriate.
- Coordinate with WQMP to evaluate if there is a nexus between water quality and the impacts of climate change, such as the changes in precipitation and temperature (i.e. measured through long-term trends in water quality temperature and/or dissolved oxygen) that requires immediate attention in the impaired waters listing process and/or TMDL development.
- Create a short training course on TMDL management (how to allocate workloads, create two-year work plans, and outline process for hiring and training new and existing staff.

Water Quality Restoration Program (WQRP)

- Develop and implement a Golf Course Recognition Program.
- Develop voluntary “protection plans” templates for unimpaired areas.

Watershed Services Program (WSP)

- Implement DEAR Data Management Priorities as they are established, examples of which may include:
 - Evaluate the scope of DEAR data uses vs. data loading to WIN; determine if there are additional non-regulatory data needed to be entered into WIN.
 - Explore/develop a LIMS to WIN primary key linkage to assist DEAR data searches between the two databases.

Water Quality Standards Program (WQSP)

- Develop numeric nutrient criteria for waterbody segments that are not currently covered by Estuary Nutrient Region (ENR) criteria

Chemistry Program

- Implement strategies to stabilize staffing.
- Periodically review scientific literature to determine potential future chemical analysis needs of DEP Programs.

Biology Program

- Implement strategies to stabilize staffing.
- Periodically review scientific literature to determine potential future biological analysis needs of DEP Programs.

Successes, Achievements, and Process Improvements

- Implemented a new protocol to determine if a dilution is needed and when conductivity should be measured, resulting in an 80% reduction in samples requiring conductivity readings.
- Streamlined the protocol for determining precision criteria for Quanti-Tray controls to save time and reagents while maintaining proper quality control and data quality.
- Streamlined recording of thermometer calibrations and created documentation for the new process.
- Developed a list of organic names broken down into categories (herbicides, pesticides, food, pharmaceutical) and subcategories as a resource to summarize organic results.
- Developed a comprehensive training for new analysts including calibrations and verifications of meters, data entry in LIMs, culturing, making dilution water, etc.
- Validated 13 new flame retardants to expand the suite GC tracer test analytes (Dechlorane 602, Dechlorane 603, Hexabromobenzene, PBB-153, Pentabromotoluene, Tris(2-chloroethyl) phosphate (TCEP), Tris(1-chloro-2-propyl) phosphate (TCPP), Tris(1,3-dichloro-2-propyl) phosphate (TDCPP), Tetradecachloro-m-terphenyl, BDE-47, PBDE-99, tri-o-cresyl phosphate and 2-ethylhexyl 2,3,4,5-tetrabromobenzoate).
- Optimized the efficiency of instrument helium use by researching and installing helium conservation modules on select instruments to reduce helium use by up to 40%.
- Validated new Mercury Analyzers to double the capacity and significantly decrease the run time of samples.
- Validated and received TNI certification for a new Direct Total Nitrogen Analysis.
- Created an excel tool to automate calculations for the turbidimeter calibration form.
- Implemented a process to overlay custom maps of an LVI area onto ArcGIS or Google Earth to better visualize transects and mark potential navigation hazards before a site visit, and to use as guidelines when performing HA/LVS/RPS in the field.
- Translated the NEEPP Water Quality Trend analysis from ForTran to R.
- Developed a template to standardize the development of Nitrogen Source Loading Tools (NSILTs).
- Automated an extract, transform, and loading tool for Microbial Source Tracking data that streamlines the process for evaluating the data with conditional formatting to highlight anomalies.
- Implemented a process in WIN to allow users to search and extract data from stations by BMAP area, significantly improving the existing process which required a manual review of individual stations to determine fitness based on geographic context.
- Implemented a process in WIN to allow users to search and extract data from stations by BMAP sub-basin to further refine the search tool.
- Redesigned the Survey 123 application for collection of HAB data to streamline the sample submission process and centralize the digital storage of data including the full field sheet and chain of custody form received by the laboratory.

- Improved the Loading Package from WIN to the US EPA Water Quality Exchange (WQX) to automatically remove defaulted values when associated conditionally required values are missing.
- Created new tools in ArcPro and implemented new processes to replicate the USGS NHD editing tools and processes which are no longer available.
- Created an Oracle table in WIN to document when a record for a rule or report should not be fixed.
- Developed a script to automate the process of excluding records in WIN that should be ignored for a variety of issues based on a new Oracle table.
- Developed an ArcPro Python tool to summarize acres of multiple parcel polygons to evaluate Land Use.
- Automated a "G" qualifier check to automatically compare the sample to the associated Field QC blank in the WIN Minimum Data Quality Standards (MDQS) Validation process.
- Developed ~150 SQL scripts to duplicate WIN Staging (front-end) MDQS checks to evaluate data in the WIN Warehouse (back-end), since front-end MDQS rules evolve over time. Developed a comprehensive scope request for WIN Developers to implement any remaining rules/reports (~30) that could not be coded using the WIN Warehouse data and the output is provided to WIN Staff monthly.
- In coordination with the NE District and DWRM, finalized the nutrient water quality based effluent limits (WQBELs) for Gainesville Regional Utilities facilities and Sweetwater Branch in Gainesville.
- Coordinated two meetings with DEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection and EPA about potential approaches to turbidity numeric criteria to protect corals.
- Completed a report of four years of monitoring the Fenholloway River for recovery after Georgia Pacific's Foley Cellulose mill removed its effluent from the river.
- Initiated a study of the effects of a local dam removal project on stream macroinvertebrates.
- Conducted a study of the effectiveness of various sample collection equipment on recovery of select extractable organics analytes.
- Developed checklists to streamline the audit and alternative method approval procedures.
- Planned and conducted an internal Water Quality Standards Academy for DEAR staff.
- Made numerous corrections to the publicly available GIS layer of OFW boundaries.
- Improved the process for responding to OFW inquiries by cataloging common scenarios and agency responses, to ensure present and future consistency.
- In coordination with SJRWMD, conducted numerous field sampling events and data analysis to evaluate potential methods for evaluating algal and plant health in springs.
- Documented the process by which new numeric nutrient criteria could be calculated for additional estuary nutrient regions.

- Created a new detailed and instructive checklist for WQSP rulemaking activities.
- Drafted the first petition document for a Type III SSAC for nutrients and nutrient response variables for a lake.
- Completed technical work toward a revised conductivity standard for Florida. While we will not pursue revision of the standard at this time, the draft proposal represents a significant amount of excellent technical work and will support our current SCI Stressor ID process and other efforts.
- Worked with contractors to develop proposed new regions and metrics for LVI.
- Worked with EPA and its contractor to develop a list of minimally disturbed tidal creek sites to evaluate toward potential numeric nutrient criteria for tidal creeks.
- Recorded introductory presentations about core DEAR functions and processes. These recordings will serve as valuable training tools for new staff.
- Developed an automated template to be used for the updates of the Nitrogen Source Inventory and Loading Tool (NSILT) helping standardize and streamline the NSILT update process for all springs BMAPs.
- Created an Experience Builder format to house the Statewide Annual Report (STAR) incorporating changes and improvements based on feedback from management. A full SOP was also developed on how to connect all the data elements required, as well as how to build out the platform.

Appendix A – Acronym List

— 3DHP	3D Hydrography Program
— A	Annual
— ATTAINS	Assessment, TMDL Tracking and Implementation System
— BMAP	Basin management action plan
— BMP	Best management practice
— CM	Continuous Monitoring
— DEAR	Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration
— DEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
— EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
— FCO	Fixed capital outlay
— FHD	Florida Hydrography Dataset
— FTE	Full-time equivalent
— FY	State fiscal year (July 1 through June 30)
— GIS	Geographic information system
— KPI	Key performance indicator
— LIMS	Laboratory Information Management System
— LULC	Land use/land cover
— NHD	National Hydrography Dataset
— NNC	Numeric Nutrient Criteria
— OFW	Outstanding Florida Water
— OPS	Other personnel services
— OSTDS	Onsite sewage treatment and disposal system
— OTIS	Office of Technology and Information Systems
— Q	Quarterly
— Q1	Quarter 1, state fiscal year (July through September)
— Q2	Quarter 2, state fiscal year (October through December)
— Q3	Quarter 3, state fiscal year (January through March)
— Q4	Quarter 4, state fiscal year (April through June)
— QA	Quality assurance

— RCP	Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection
— SBIO	Statewide biological database
— SCI	Stream characterization index
— SERC	Statement of estimated regulatory cost
— SOP	Standard operating procedure
— SPA	STORET public access
— SSAC	Site-specific alternative criteria
— STAR	Statewide annual report
— STORET	Storage and Retrieval database
— TMDL	Total maximum daily load
— USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
— WBID	Waterbody Identification (number)
— WIN	Watershed Information Network
— WMD	Water Management District
— WQMP	Water Quality Monitoring Program
— WQBEL	Water quality based effluent limitation
— WQETP	Water Quality Evaluation and TMDL Program
— WQRP	Water Quality Restoration Program
— WQSP	Water Quality Standards Program
— WSP	Watershed Services Program
— WQX	Water Quality Exchange
— YTD	Year-to-date

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