

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Governing Board

FROM: Matthew Cantrell, Project Manager, Office of Agriculture and Environmental Projects

THRU: Steve Minnis, Deputy Executive Director, Business and Community Services

DATE: July 31, 2020

RE: Contract to Provide Cost-Share Funding to Tillis Farms, LLC, Levy County

**RECOMMENDATION**

Authorize Executive Director to enter into contract with Tillis Farms, LLC in the amount not to exceed \$38,000

**BACKGROUND**

The District has provided agricultural cost-share funds along with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) as part of the Suwannee River Partnership (SRP) to help agricultural producers implement Best Management Practices (BMPs). These BMPs help farmers conserve water and improve water quality in the District.

The District's Agricultural Cost-Share Program has been supported through funding from the District, FDEP, and FDACS over time. In Fiscal Year 2011-2012 (FY 2012), the Governing Board allocated \$6 million dollars to the program. Since FY 2012, approximately 71% of District funds have been spent and obligated through contracts with agricultural producers. In conjunction with Agricultural related FDEP Springs Grants this has resulted in approximately 13.47 million gallons per day of water conserved and 775,680 pounds of Nitrogen reduced.

This cost share project is with Tillis Farms located in Levy County. The producer proposes to purchase 19 soil moisture probes. The probes will allow the producer to monitor soil moisture, temperature, and electric conductivity remotely through software. The service agreement covers the annual data plan, access to online software, and education and training. This will allow producers to get an in-depth look into the soil profile to ensure they are irrigating the correct amount.

The probes are expected to reduce water use by approximately 640,000 gallons per day at a cost to the District of \$0.16 per thousand gallons over the life of the equipment. This project is located within the Suwannee River Basin Management Action Plan area and the Eastern and Western Water Supply Planning Area.

The total project cost is estimated to be \$42,222.22. The District will contribute \$38,000 or approximately 90% of the project cost. The applicants' portion of these items will be \$4,222.22 or 10% of the equipment cost. Exhibit A is a list of the cost share items, funding amount, and water conservation tools. Funding for this project is included in the FY 2020 Amended Budget under account code 51-2586-7-2400-06-07.

MC/tm  
Attachments