

TAYLOR COASTAL WATER & SEWER DISTRICT HISTORY & BUSINESS SUMMARY

Due to various antiquated, inadequate water systems that could not accommodate existing and prospective users with adequate water pressure and water quality, Taylor Beaches Water, Inc. (a non-profit corporation) was formed around 1985 for the Keaton Beach/Ezell Beach area with approximately 130 customers. Selma Guthrie donated a parcel of land on Highway 361 for a well and a water treatment plant. Joint efforts by Selma Guthrie, Jim and Vonnie Grimes, Louise and Butch Hendricks, Verilyn Mason, and Travis Beach resulted in the provision of quality water to beach residents.

When it was determined that it was not feasible to repair an aged system at Dekle Beach, Taylor Beaches Water, Inc. extended lines to incorporate that area. This construction phase, which also included the Boggy Bay area, was completed in April 1990 at an approximate cost of \$105,000.

Suffering devastating losses from the March 13, 1993 surprise “Storm of the Century”, our beaches found themselves with a lack of planning and design direction as well as delayed funding and a limited economic base. Under the guidance of several concerned residents, Taylor Coastal Utilities, Inc. (a non-profit corporation) was formed in July of 1993 and purchased Taylor Beaches Water, Inc. Annual meetings were held each February to solicit input from customers. In efforts to help the beach communities rebuild after the storm, the College of Architecture from the University of Florida in Gainesville offered assistance by including Keaton Beach in a grant funded program to develop a “vision” in the form of conceptual plans.

In 1996, the corporation offered quality water to portions of Cedar Island, Dark Island and Cedar Island East and in January of 2002, new lines were cleared for use in the Sandpiper Subdivision of Cedar Island. Sawgrass Bay Estates, the Oak Ridge Subdivision, and a few parcels on Jody Morgan grade were also added to the system in 2002.

As the list of clientele grew, concerned citizens realized that our Beaches also needed to address pollution by establishing a goal to connect all existing residences to a centralized wastewater system and abandon existing septic systems which often flood and contaminate drinking water, canals and dirt during hurricanes and storms. As a non-profit corporation, Taylor Coastal Utilities, Inc. was not able to fund such an endeavor. Therefore, in October 2000, the Board of County Commissioners of Taylor County, Florida (TCBCC) created a Special Water and Sewer District (Taylor Coastal Water and Sewer District) with defined boundaries and provision for issuing revenue bonds or certificates and making application for State and Federal grants. The objective and purpose of the District is to acquire, purchase, lease, construct, improve, extend, operate, maintain and finance a water system and a wastewater collection system to serve the coastal communities of Taylor County, Florida. The District’s governing body consists of seven (7) board members that are appointed by the TCBCC. District Commissioners must own real property in the District’s coverage area and be registered voters in Florida.

The assets and liabilities of Taylor Coastal Utilities, Inc. were transferred to the District in a special members meeting on May 23, 2004 and on January 26, 2005, the Taylor Coastal Utilities, Inc. was officially dissolved.

The District currently serves over 450 homes and businesses in the Taylor County’s coastal communities including, but not limited to, Dekle Beach, Boggy Bay, Ezell Beach, Keaton Beach, Cedar Island, East Cedar Island, Dark Island and Fish Creek.

The SRWMD entered into an agreement with TCWSD to purchase approximately 90 acres to be used as a wastewater spray field and, after continued and concerted efforts by TCW&SD, funding in excess of 4.8 million dollars was obtained from various Local, State, and Federal agencies to construct a new centralized wastewater collection system. This 4.8 million includes a USDA-RD loan of \$675,000. A contract was signed with Quality Plus Services on August 17, 2004 for Phase I of the Wastewater Treatment System, serving the coastal communities of Ezell Beach, Keaton Beach, and Cedar Island. Groundbreaking of the new facility located on Sandhill Road was held on September 8, 2004. The project start date was September 1, 2004 with substantial completion due by July 12, 2005. Final completion of Phase I occurred in December 2005 with approximately 300 grinder pump installations with septic tanks abandoned, as well as, infrastructure to accommodate an additional 180 hook-ups as platted property is developed.

Funding for Phase II construction has been obtained (approximately \$1.9 million) to extend the wastewater collection system to the communities of Dekle Beach, Boggy Bay, and Dark Island during calendar year 2010. This will eliminate over 100 additional septic tanks located along the immediate coast of Taylor County. The soils along the coast are poorly suited for septic tank systems because of the high groundwater levels. Also, the areas are subject to coastal flooding. Many septic tanks were constructed decades ago and do not meet current regulatory standards. Consequently, septic systems frequently fail, leading to bacterial contamination of the Gulf waters. Fecal coliform and enterococci bacterial contamination has become a serious problem as identified by the State of Florida "Healthy Beaches" Program. Additional funding is being sought for a future phase which will extend the wastewater collection lines to Fish Creek and incorporate other homes in our service area into the wastewater system.

When the wastewater system is completed, over 450 septic tanks will have been removed from the coastlines making this one of the largest "pollution abatement programs" in the history of Taylor County.

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