



POLK
COUNTY

ARP Recovery Plan

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Polk County's American Rescue Plan

For more than a year and a half, the world has been battling a pandemic that created a health and economic crisis affecting millions of Americans. In March 2021, Congress signed into law the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act to deliver relief to families, businesses and government organizations impacted by the pandemic.

Polk County received a \$140.8 million appropriation to support urgent COVID-19 response efforts to control the spread of the virus, replace lost public sector revenue, support economic stabilization for the county, and to address necessary investments in water,



sewer, stormwater and broadband infrastructure. The Board, working with community stakeholders, nonprofit organizations and county staff, is in the process of finalizing a strategic spending program to determine the best use of the ARP funds. This plan, as published, will remain fluid as the Board works to allocate funding for community and public health programs and infrastructure projects.

Ongoing community engagement, Board oversight, allocations and evaluation will occur throughout the life of this federal funding. All funds must be allocated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026. Please visit our website often for updates as future decisions about funding allocations are made.

Polk County Board of County Commissioners

Government Infrastructure



Stormwater Infrastructure-Protecting Polk's Surface Water Resources

Priority Category: Infrastructure – Clean Water - Stormwater

Funding Amount: \$18,815,000

Managing Department: Parks & Natural Resources Division

Existing or New Project: Existing and new

Purpose: Implement water quality projects that improve stormwater infrastructure, establish wetland treatment areas and provide protection of water resources in Central Florida.

Description

The Stormwater Infrastructure-Protecting Polk's Surface Water Resources project is a multifaceted program that will allocate resources to create a network of stormwater wetland treatment areas by rehydrating/enhancing historic wetlands and/or creating new wetlands. The project also will construct strategic water quality structures to address existing water resource issues and expand partnership projects to address nutrient loading in local waterbodies.

Implementation of these projects will improve the water quality of local waterbodies. Many Polk County lakes and streams are impaired and have routine high concentrations of nutrients and E. coli. Establishing regional treatment wetlands have proven to be a good tool to reduce the pollutant loading in local waterbodies. This project protects public health, especially in disadvantaged and rural areas. Water quality in Florida is important for public health by reducing the amount of nutrients and limiting the number of harmful algal blooms (HAB). Some HAB produce harmful toxins that affect human health and have been attributed to illness in pets. These projects will address surface water quality in disproportionately impacted communities through bringing water quality management.

Peace River Watershed Water Quality Improvement

This project along the Peace Creek Canal would create a corridor of wetland treatment systems. The project provides surface water quality treatment, increases reliability of water in the Peace Creek Canal, provides increased flood protection of lands along the canal, improves drainage of the watershed and enhances water storage in the Peace Creek Canal.

Partnerships with Polk Regional Water Cooperative, local municipalities, state water management districts and others will implement projects that have the most potential for regional water quality improvement with side benefits of water storage and flood protection.

Implementing Small Scale Surface Water Enhancement/Treatment Projects

Polk County identified areas where small-scale surface water enhancements would be applicable and create a beneficial treatment to stormwater. Opportunities exist for developing small-scale surface water quality improvement projects that were identified in a series of feasibility studies, water quality management plans and alternate restoration plans.

The project enhances water quality treatment for stormwater entering local lakes.

Targeted priority service area:

- Peace River watershed
- Peace Creek Canal
- Various rural communities

Community Engagement

The Polk County Stormwater Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) was established and appointed by the Polk County Board of County Commissioners to provide guidance and assistance in matters dealing with stormwater runoff, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater permit requirements, maximizing best management practice treatment efficiencies and improving surface water quality. The advisory committee is a volunteer advisory group. The meetings are advertised and open to the public.

Stormwater education is an important part of the county's actions to address surface water pollution. Polk County participates in several outreach events annually and funds the maintenance of the Polk County Water Atlas, which provides the community with information on the water quality of our area and projects that improve the protection of our water resources.

Performance Measures

Output Measures

- Number of residents who benefit from cleaner water
- Number of residents who have access to improved managed public lands
- Number of residents who have access to outdoor spaces to recreate and improve personal health
- Demographic Information of residents within a 20-mile buffer of project

Outcome Measures

- Percent reduction of total phosphorous
- Percent reduction of total nitrogen
- Number of waterbodies treated with stormwater infrastructure implementation

Stormwater Infrastructure-Alleviate Flooding and Improve Water Quality

Priority Category: Infrastructure – Stormwater

Funding Amount: \$23,557,000

Managing Department: Roads & Drainage Division

Existing or New Project: New

Purpose: To mitigate stormwater flooding in areas of Polk County that continually flood during heavy rains as well as manage and treat groundwater.

Description

Polk County experiences frequent and unpredictable tropical systems most commonly from June 1 through November 30. The greatest risk is during August and September. These systems can drop tremendous amounts of rain in very short periods of time. Most casualties caused by hurricanes are the result of flooding.

About 46 percent of Polk County is designated as a Special Flood Hazard Area. Polk is also a rapidly urbanizing county, with new residential neighborhoods being developed near natural wetlands. According to newly released Census data, Polk County saw a 12.5 percent growth in its availability of housing units during the last decade. This growth will not slow and projections show the county will surpass 1 million residents by 2040.

The Roads and Drainage Division has identified 17 projects throughout the county to help mitigate stormwater flooding. These projects were selected based upon the greatest need for stormwater control, which would impact the most residents. Project design will begin in October 2021, with construction beginning in 2022.

Major projects that help with drainage, as well as helping to manage and treat groundwater, include:

- Imperial Lakes Phase 1 along Imperial Lakes Boulevard;
- Lake Victoria outfall drainage;
- Northwest Wahneta;
- South Lake Wales pipe upgrades and retention ponds; and
- Indian Woods Trail/North Campbell Road in north Lakeland.

Community Engagement

The stormwater projects identified are included in the Roads and Drainage Division's Fiscal Year 2021 – 2025 Community Investment Plan and presented during the county's annual CIP Presentation in August 2021. Community engagement will also be accomplished through social media and programming on PGTV and on the county website.

Performance Measures

- Complete design and permitting for 17 identified projects with one to two years of the funding award
- Complete construction of designed projects to eliminate stormwater flooding within two to five years of funding the projects

Water Utilities Infrastructure

Priority Category: Public Health – Water and Wastewater Treatment

Funding Amount: \$37,680,000

Managing Department: Polk County Utilities (PCU)

Existing or New Project: New and existing

Purpose: Necessary investments in water and sewer infrastructure

Description

Polk County Utilities projects funded with the county's ARP Act appropriation will be used to construct new infrastructure to replace failing collection and treatment systems, final design for alternative water supply projects, design and construct three new septage receiving facilities at each of three regional wastewater treatment facilities and pilot test reclaimed water treatment to potable water standards.

PRWC Southeast Wellfield

The project includes the final design of the Southeast wellfield, which is an alternative water supply project envisioned by the Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC), that will benefit Polk County and other participating members. The project will supply potable water needs for current and future residents and businesses of Polk County. Additionally, the work will protect groundwater supplies and surface features, such as wetlands, springs, rivers and other water bodies in an environmentally safe manner.

PRWC West Polk Wellfield

The project will supply potable water needs for current and future residents and businesses of Polk County. The project includes the final design of the West Polk Lower Floridan Wellfield and WTF which is an alternative water supply project envisioned by the Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC), benefitting Polk County and other participating members.

Crooked Lake Park Wastewater

Funds are proposed to construct new infrastructure to replace failing collection and treatment systems. The project includes upgrades to the existing collection system, which includes two new lift stations, replacement of the existing force main and repair/lining of manholes and gravity sewer. The project also includes the demolition of the existing facility and construction of a new lift station and force main to deliver the wastewater to an established facility. Progress to date includes point repairs of collection system, replacement of force main and cleaning of treatment system to restore capacity. Challenges include a lack of information on the existing system, such as mapping and customer base.

Briarwood Estates Lift and Force Main

The existing system frequently overflows untreated wastewater into public access areas. This project includes the construction of a new lift station and force main to deliver wastewater from the failing package plant serving Briarwood Estates to the county's Northwest Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility. The project includes the demolition of the existing facility and construction of a new lift station and force main to deliver the wastewater to an established facility. Challenges include lack of information on the existing system, such as mapping and customer base, the condition of the existing collection system, and adequate right-of-way along the proposed pipeline corridor.

Septage and FOG Receiving Facilities

Septage is currently spread on open fields, potentially leaching nutrient-rich product into groundwater nearby water bodies. Opportunities include treatment and disposal of septage in lieu of ground application. These funds will be used to design and construct three new septage receiving facilities at regional wastewater treatment facilities. The project also includes the construction of a receiving facility for fats, oils and greases (FOG) at one of the regional wastewater treatment facilities. Progress to date includes a preliminary investigation report from the county's consulting engineer.

Cherry Hill Alternative Water Supply

Polk County has a cooperative agreement with the Southwest Florida Water Management District to pilot test reclaimed water treatment to potable water standards at the new Cherry Hill Water processing facility. Potable reuse is a process that purifies water from wastewater treatment plants through advanced treatment methods to meet drinking water standards. The potable reuse study in Polk County will feature a Direct Potable Reuse (DPR) process, which is where purified wastewater is introduced into a drinking water treatment facility.

Polk/Lakeland/Bartow and Polk/Auburndale/Winter Haven Interconnects

These two interconnect projects include construction of a potable water interconnect to provide emergency potable water service among the water providers. These will provide emergency interconnects of potable water to insure safe drinking water and fire flow protection for the respective service areas. The projects may also serve as part of the AWS delivery system.

Cybersecurity Improvements

Polk County Utilities will purchase and implement software to monitor for unauthorized devices accessing the supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) control system for water and wastewater facilities.

Community Engagement

All projects will directly benefit economically disadvantaged communities. Polk Utilities will work with the Communications Division to provide educational materials and public forums for the public, especially in communities directly affected by system upgrades. Our partnerships with SWFWMD projects have extensive requirements for public education.

Performance Measures

- Design, permitting and construction of separate processes
- Completion of construction documents for completed projects
- Reduction in sanitary sewer overflows and compliance with regulatory permit requirements
- Percentage of growth in businesses receiving assistance

Government Infrastructure: Facilities

Priority Category: Capital Projects

Funding Amount: \$2,610,000

Managing Department: Facilities Management

Existing or New Project: New

Purpose: Support COVID-19 response efforts to continue to decrease spread of the virus and bring the pandemic under control.

Description

Polk County's Administration Building was constructed in 1989 and much of the HVAC system is more than 30 years old. The funding for this project will allow Polk County to provide facility repairs and improvements to enable operations of county government to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards. County Administration Building HVAC upgrades and Code Enforcement renovation will include engineering services, remodeling, inspections, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement and upgrade projects to improve the indoor air quality and better social distancing. Design will begin in January 2022 with construction beginning May 2022.

Performance Measures

- Provide a safe building environment for residents to conduct county business
- Provide a safe environment for more than 300 employees to work
- Complete design for this HVAC project
- Complete construction of this project

County Impacts & Mitigation



General County Impacts and Mitigation: Constitutional Officers and County Administration

Priority Category: Government Services

Funding Amount: \$46,200,000

Managing Department: Budget and Management Services Division

Existing or New Project: New and existing

Purpose: Efforts to decrease the spread of the virus, and provide and strengthen public services

Description

Local government stepped up in response to the COVID-19 crisis, when the State of Florida filed executive orders that shutdown all but the most essential services in March and April 2020. First responders from public safety and public health providers were overwhelmed with calls, the emergency management system scurried to locate and provide personal protection equipment, employees who could work remotely were sent home, laptops and portable technology became scarce and broadband was taxed to keep up with the increased demand. The list of changes, and challenges, continues.

County leaders will use ARP Act funds to replace lost revenue and make necessary investments in rebuilding their workforces and technology to bring the county back to pre-pandemic levels of service.

Board of County Commissioners

The Board will use funds for testing, PPE and other COVID-related costs, as well as hire outside agencies to administer programs within the U.S. Treasury guidelines for the expenditure of funds.

Polk County currently leverages the Accela Land Management application to manage permitting and land management for the Building, Codes, and Land Development divisions. This project will migrate the application from an on-premise implementation to a cloud-based solution within Accela's cloud environment. It will improve the existing permitting environment by facilitating the process of approving building and land permits and enforcing code violations. Once the application has been migrated, residents will be able to apply and access their permits directly through Accela's servers rather than through Information Technology. This will prevent local resource constraints (power outages, Internet outages, bandwidth congestion restrictions) from impacting the availability of the application.

Clerk of Courts

The Florida Supreme Court halted jury trials and other court services for several months at the beginning of the pandemic. Employees were laid off. In June 2021, the courts lifted the remaining COVID-19 restrictions, resuming pre-pandemic operations. The Clerk of Courts needs additional in-person staffing and struggles to recruit, hire and train a workforce that can help reduce the backlog of cases caused by closures during the pandemic. In addition to staffing, the Clerk must purchase technology for a larger workforce.

Property Appraiser

With more employees working remotely, the Property Appraiser requires more laptops and better technology to accommodate them. The Property Appraiser also requests funding for gloves, masks and other personal protective equipment for employees.

Sheriff

With courts closed to jury trials and other cases backlogged, the Sheriff has an increased jail population. Another challenge is maintaining CDC social distance protocols when transferring inmates from the jail to the courthouse for in-person hearings. The Sheriff requests funds for additional deputies to staff for the increase in inmates due to the court backlog. The Sheriff is also asking for funding for emergency communication booths in the South County Jail, so inmates can converse with legal staff and appear before judges virtually, rather than in person.

Supervisor of Elections

The Supervisor of Elections' requests ARP funds for an online election worker training platform to reduce the number of in-person training classes. The Supervisor of Elections also will need additional electronic poll books for precinct use and cleaning supplies and disinfectant materials.

Tax Collector

Due to staffing shortages, and the number of his employees who are working remotely, walk-in and telephone services at the Tax Collector's Office are experiencing extended wait-times. The Tax Collector is encouraging residents to use online and mail-in services whenever possible. The Tax Collector requests additional funding for technology and additional sheriff's deputies to maintain distancing requirements in his offices.

General County Impacts and Mitigation: Health Emergencies

Priority Category: Public Health

Funding Amount: \$1,000,000

Managing Department: Risk Management

Existing or New Project: Existing

Purpose: COVID-19-Related Health Costs

Description

Polk County government will reimburse its self-funded workers' compensation fund for COVID-19 related medical expenses incurred by the county's first responders. The county will also reimburse its self-funded health fund for COVID-19 related medical expenses incurred by employees, spouses and dependents who participate in the county-sponsored health insurance plan. Expenses for both categories are ongoing as the pandemic continues.

Performance Measures

- Reimbursement will strengthen the financial position of both funds
- Reimbursement will lessen the possibility of premium increases borne by employees for the county health fund
- Reimbursement to the workers' compensation fund will improve the loss history and positively affect underwriting and excess insurance premiums

General County Impacts and Mitigation: Information Technology

Priority Category: Broadband Infrastructure

Funding Amount: \$250,000

Managing Department: Information Technology

Existing or New Project: New

Purpose: Necessary investments in broadband infrastructure

Description

Broadband Study

The Board recommended that the county complete a broadband study that will identify if opportunities exist for funding broadband programs and services in underserved areas. Additionally, identified opportunities should include improved Internet access at the county's multiple locations, including fire stations, parks and community centers. The Information Technology Division does not have the ability to perform this study internally and has requested the assistance of Florida Polytechnic University to partner with the county on this project.

Performance Measures

- Broadband - Completed report provided by selected vendor

Community & Public Health

Community and Public Health

The American Rescue Plan Act authorizes the use of appropriated funds for Polk County to respond to public health emergencies caused by COVID-19, or its negative economic impacts. Community organizations and nonprofits have requested funding from the county to include:

- Continued testing and vaccines;
- Behavioral health programs and facility construction;
- Food security operations and facility purchase/remodeling;
- Nonprofit assistance to agencies providing services to residents;
- Homelessness prevention; and
- After-school programs for low income, at risk children.

Agencies representing these services will make presentations to the Board this fall. The Board will allocate resources from the county's ARP at that time.

Small Business Assistance



Small Business Assistance

Priority Category: Economic Stabilization

Funding Amount: To Be Determined

Managing Department: Central Florida Development Council (CFDC)

Existing or New Project: New

Purpose: Develop and manage new programs that will assist small businesses, along with women and minority owned businesses, in recuperating from pandemic impacts and provide business planning to insure their future growth.

Description

In 2020, the Central Florida Development Council was a key partner to the county in dispersing approximately \$20 million of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds. Thousands of businesses, which were forced to close or reduce services and deemed non-essential, received some relief to be able to stay open for business.

The Board of County Commissioners will give future guidance as to the final determination of the American Rescue Plan appropriation to Polk County for small business development. The CFDC will oversee three programs in fiscal years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 that will help small, women and minority-owned businesses expand as they recover from lost revenues due to the pandemic.

Matching Infrastructure Grants

Matching grants up to \$25,000 to small businesses with five to 100 employees will be awarded to invest in ways that will bring customers back to their businesses. These businesses must be in leased or owned commercial space, and be used for utilities, infrastructure improvements and/or industry certification costs.

Business Resiliency

The CFDC will work with Florida Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) to add one, possibly two, SBDC consultants to help businesses become more resilient to future adversities. Today, business owners wanting SBDC assistance must travel to Orlando or Tampa. Adding consultants would re-establish a SBDC presence in Polk.

Women and Minority-owned Small Business Assistance

The CFDC will work with Sylvia Blackmon-Roberts to develop a program for small, women and minority-owned businesses to get assistance with technology and back-office work that will help them thrive and grow in Polk County. There is an offer of a \$500,000 matching grant to help support this program.

Community Engagement

Through its website, chambers of commerce, social media and advertising, the CFDC will market these programs throughout Polk County. Business owners, most likely, will be able to apply for infrastructure grants through an online portal, similar to applications for CARES funds in 2020. The SBDC will follow their statewide procedures for marketing their program. The county's Supplier Diversity program will continue to partner with Blackmon-Roberts to reach women and minority-owned entrepreneurs.

Performance Measures

- Number of businesses assisted with matching infrastructure grants
- Number of new small businesses created
- Number of small businesses that expand/recover from the pandemic
- Percentage of growth in businesses receiving assistance