

Staff Report

Subject: Approval of the submission of the WaterFirst Community application

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Department: Procurement, Engineering

Meeting Date: 10/20/2026

Item Description: Consideration to approve the submission of the application to certify Effingham County as a WaterFirst Community

Summary Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of this submission.

Executive Summary / Background:

The WaterFirst Program is a voluntary partnership between local governments, state agencies, and other organizations working together to increase the quality of life in communities through the wise management and protection of valuable water resources. Achieving the certification requires local governments to pursue environmental excellence beyond what is required by law, and focuses on exemplary water safety and management practices across nine categories.

Effingham County has a current and documented record of enacting these higher standards and would be able to submit an extremely strong application. If approved, the county would be designated as a WaterFirst Community with two road signs and a certificate recognizing the accomplishment. Effingham County would also become eligible for other benefits, including reduced GEFA interest rates for water-related projects, priority status for the 319(h) grant, and annual eligibility for the CDBG program. Staff recommends Alternative 1.

Alternatives for Commission to Consider:

1. Approve Change Order No. 1.
2. Do not approve.
3. Provide staff with direction.

Recommended Alternative: 1

Other Alternatives: 2, 3

Department Review: Engineering

Funding Source: None

Attachments: WaterFirst application