



WITHLACOOCHEE REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITY

News Articles

for

**September 18, 2013
Board Meeting**

**Room 166
Lecanto Government Building
Lecanto, Florida**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 4, 2013

CONTACT: DEP Press Office, 850.245.2112, DEPNews@dep.state.fl.us

GOVERNOR SCOTT ANNOUNCES NEARLY \$37 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR SPRINGS PROJECTS

ORLANDO – Today, Governor Rick Scott announced ten water quality and water quantity springs improvement projects. Funding for the spring projects was leveraged from a \$10 million investment from the Florida Families First Budget, more than \$1 million from Department of Environmental Protection funding, and investments from local partners, for a total of nearly \$37 million for springs projects. The Governor made the announcement at Wekiwa Springs State Park, where he was joined by water management officials, and state and local leaders. The announcement comes on the heels of last weeks' commitment of more than \$130 million to restore estuaries in South Florida.

Governor Scott said, "Today, we're announcing important steps we're taking to protect and restore springs throughout the Sunshine State. Florida's springs are important to animal and plant life, and help support Florida's booming tourism industry. This \$10 million investment from the Florida Families First Budget will enable state and local partners to protect the quality and quantity of water that flows from our springs. Our commitment to Florida families means doing our part in supporting these natural treasures."

"These projects will illustrate what can be accomplished when the state invests wisely to support and supplement department and water management district restoration programs," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "Much more needs to be done, but these projects can pave the way to restoring some of our most iconic springs."

Springs that will receive funding for projects include Silver, Wekiwa, Rock, Ichetucknee, Rainbow, Chassahowitzka, Homosassa, Weeki Wachee, Jackson Blue, Williford, and springs along the Santa Fe and Suwannee Rivers and Kings Bay.

"The Northwest Florida Water Management District is grateful to Governor Scott, the Florida Legislature and Secretary Vinyard for recognizing that the protection of Florida's springs is vital to ensuring a clean and sustainable supply of water for our natural systems and our residents," said Jon Steverson, Executive Director of the Northwest Florida Water Management District. "We look forward to an ongoing partnership as we continue to improve water quality and protect water resources across Northwest Florida."

"We would like to thank the Governor and Legislature for supporting the important springs restoration work within the northern portion of our District," said Robert Beltran, assistant executive director for the Southwest Florida Water Management District. "The state's funding together with the district's funding commitment will help ensure we continue the important task of restoring our springs."

"The project dollars demonstrate the state's commitment to achieving meaningful springs protection," said St. Johns River Water Management District Executive Director Hans G. Tanzler III. "We appreciate the work of Governor Scott and the Legislature to allocate the funds. We also appreciate the opportunity to partner with DEP and local governments to move these projects forward and begin to improve the health of our springs and their ecosystems."

"We are appreciative to Governor Scott and the Legislature for their leadership appropriating springs funding which has successfully leveraged local funds resulting in profound and lasting water quantity and quality protection for our springs," said Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board Chair Donald Quincey, Jr. "We are also grateful to our local partners for their funding participation that helped to bring funding to improve our springs."

Silver Springs – Ocala

Nearly \$2 million of state funding will be leveraged to fund a \$12 million water quality improvement project that will result in an estimated reduction of 663,000 pounds of nitrogen pollution per year (the equivalent of about 442,000 bags of common fertilizer) going into Silver Springs. These reductions will be achieved by upgrading the City of Ocala Wastewater Facility #2, located near Silver Springs, to advanced treatment, significantly improving the quality of the effluent discharge of the facility.

Another approximated \$1.5 million in state funding will be directed to Phase II of a more than \$8 million water quality improvement and water quantity project that will relocate a wastewater discharge from the Marion County Utilities Silver Springs Shores facility, which is located near Silver Springs, and redirect it for beneficial reuse at area golf courses, further away from the spring. The relocation of the discharge will eliminate a nutrient source near the head of the spring, and result in an estimated reduction of more than 40,000 pounds of nitrogen entering the aquifer per year. It will also result in reduced water consumption at area golf courses and improve the flow of Silver Springs.

Ichetucknee Springs – Lake City

Nearly \$4 million in state funding will be invested to leverage \$4.6 million water quality improvement project that will improve the treatment of wastewater currently routed to a sprayfield (south of Lake City) being used for disposal and treatment by the City of Lake City's wastewater treatment facility. This will result in beneficial recharge to the aquifer with higher quality water. It is estimated that this project will achieve a nitrogen reduction of 85 percent, or an estimated reduction of 77,000 pounds of nitrogen per year from going into the aquifer feeding the Ichetucknee Springs System.

Wekiwa Springs Group – Orlando Region

Approximately \$700,000 in state funding will be leveraged for a more than \$3.5 million project to benefit Wekiwa Springs to construct a reclaimed water transmission main to expand the City of Apopka's reclaimed water service into a high recharge area for Wekiwa and Rock Spring, which feeds the Wekiva River. Utilizing this reclaimed water reduces and eliminates discharges to the Wekiva River system which resulting in an estimated reduction of 66,400 pounds of nitrogen pollution per year to the Wekiva River while also providing spring flow benefits through aquifer recharge.

Kings Bay- Crystal River

Another investment of nearly \$500,000 will be leveraged for a nearly \$1 million living shoreline project to benefit Kings Bay in Hunters Cove. This project will establish emergent vegetation and restore submerged grasses providing for a 15 percent reduction of nitrogen and 42 percent of phosphorus pollution. In addition, a Three Sisters shoreline stabilization project will also be constructed to prevent further sedimentation from the shoreline and surrounding areas into the springs.

An additional \$500,000 in state funding will be leverages for a \$2 million project that will connect several plants, and upgrade waste water infrastructure, to tie into the municipal waste water system that will result in an estimated load reduction of 6,272 pounds of nitrogen per year. This project will generate approximately 90,000 gallons per day of reclaimed water that will be used by an area golf course, reducing their consumptive use and groundwater withdrawals.

Rainbow, Kings Bay, Homosassa, Chassahowitzka, Weeki Wachee Springs

Group – The Springs Coast

This estimated \$875,000 water quality improvement and water quantity project will receive \$375,000 in state funding. This project is a cost-share initiative to work with area farmers to implement agricultural best management practices (BMPs) within the Springs Coast region that will reduce groundwater withdrawal quantities and/or nutrient loading to the Upper Floridan Aquifer system, ultimately benefiting the springs systems. Agricultural operations in the Springs Coast region include citrus groves, row crops, blueberries, grains, field and container nurseries, and animal operations (cow/calf, equine, poultry). This wide range of agricultural activities presents the opportunity for a variety of technologies that can be used to reduce groundwater use, such as weather stations, soil moisture sensors, automatic timers and pumps, tailwater recovery ponds, and irrigation retrofits using more efficient low-volume systems.

Suwannee River Springs – Dixie County

More than \$1.5 million in state funding will be invested to leverage \$2 million for a water quantity improvement project that will restore natural flows of water enabling an estimated 3 billion gallons per year of surface water storage to be recharged into the aquifer improving spring flows along the middle Suwannee River basin. The aquifer recharge benefits of this project will improve flow and water quantity in many springs and supplement other efforts to ensure future minimum flows and levels (MFLs) set for the Middle Suwannee River and associated springs will be sustained.

Jackson Blue Spring - Marianna

More than \$750,000 in state funding will be leveraged for a more than \$1.2 million project to improve water quality and reduce water use demands in and around Jackson Blue Spring. The project will enhance irrigation systems to reduce water use by an estimated 7.5 million gallons per day. In addition, improve fertilizer application technologies resulting in an estimated reduction of 11,800 lbs/year of nitrogen fertilizer application for the average farm will lead to a reduction of nutrients entering the groundwater.

Williford Spring – Youngstown

This nearly \$1.4 million restoration and water quality project will receive more than \$377,000 in state funding. This project will focus on sediment removal, erosion control, spring bank and riparian restoration of Williford Spring. The Northwest Florida Water Management District will improve water quality and clarity in the spring by removing 200 cubic yards of sediment from the spring pool, restoring native vegetation along the springbank that helps capture run-off and sediment, and constructing areas to capture and treat stormwater to improve water quality before it enters the spring. This will result in a 50-60 percent reduction of sediment and other stormwater pollutants from entering the spring. This restoration project will also help protect the spring for future generations and at the same time improve public access to the spring.

Additional Spring Investments

Along with investing in projects, the Department set the very first basin management action plan, or restoration plan, for springs in the Santa Fe River watershed in 2012 and has provided \$1.4 million to improve the nutrient controls for agricultural practices in the area in addition to the \$5.5 million for springs projects within the Suwannee River Water Management District in the Florida Families First budget.

Under Governor Scott's oversight, Florida's water management districts are also making progress in establishing minimum flows and levels for Florida's springs. These are designed to protect and restore spring flows and the natural systems they support. The districts have set minimum flows and levels for 22 springs to date and expect to set them for 49 more springs over the next two years, which will more than double the cumulative efforts of the last decade.

For a map of the projects, click [HERE](#).

From: Diane Salz
<salz.govconsultant@gmail.com>
To: WRWSA <richardowen@wrwsa.org>
Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmithnhs@aol.com>
Subject: FL Friendly Landscaping Program
Date: Tue, Sep 3, 2013 9:43 am

The Florida Friendly Landscaping program, which helps homeowners save on monthly water bills, will continue another year despite cuts that threatened to end the program.

The conservation effort had won accolades for helping consumers and saving millions of gallons of water yearly, but it fell victim to budget cuts when the Southwest Florida Water Management District voted in late July to end its \$500,000 annual subsidy.

The cuts would have shut down the program in the 16 counties where it operates, including the Tampa Bay area, by Oct. 1. Now it seems the water-saving effort will live another year, at least in Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough and Hernando.

Related News/Archive

Tampa Bay Water has agreed to pick up the \$161,000 tab for salaries and benefits for the program coordinators in Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas.

In Hernando, officials opted to subsidize the position and expand the coordinator's duties to include recycling education.

"It just has a lot of value," said Susan Goebel-Canning, Hernando's director of environmental services. "It's a great environmentally friendly program, as far as trying to reduce the amount of fertilizers, control stormwater runoff, reduce contaminants."

The district, known as Swiftmud, said it ended the funding because the coordinators' water-saving tips were already online or known to homeowners. Instead, it said it will focus on an in-house effort called Water Star to persuade builders to construct water-saving buildings.

Counties and county extension services, which administer the program, were floored that Swiftmud was cutting funding.

"There's a difference when people are shown through an outreach effort what can be saved, and if they continue to utilize that information there can be an even greater impact," said Stephen Gran, director of Hillsborough's extension service. "People don't always seek that information, and many times you have to assist them."

Tens of millions of gallons have been saved regionally through the effort, he said. In Pasco, about 3 million gallons are saved monthly, community services director Elizabeth Goodwin Harris said. In Pinellas, the program has saved 13.5 million gallons since 2008.

Word of the cuts came as a shock at Pinellas' extension service where the program's coordinator meets regularly with condo and homeowner associations to find ways to save money, reduce fertilizer use and select plants adapted to Florida's climate.

"Everybody is supportive of the work she provides, so this definitely wasn't good news to us," said Mary Campbell, the extension service's director. "Right away we began looking for opportunities to fund this position."

Tampa Bay Water was already subsidizing conservation programs in Pasco, Pinellas and Hills-borough when its board voted unanimously this month to up its contribution by \$161,000.

The board will need to vote again next year to continue the subsidy, which gives the extension services time to seek other funding sources.

"When you realize that almost half of residential water use is in your yard, anything you can do to lower overall usage is a huge benefit," Tampa Bay Water spokesman Brandon Moore said.

Rich Shopes can be reached at rshopes@tampabay.com or (727) 869-6236.

Central Florida Water: Danger Zone In View

The use of underground water in the Central Florida area around Orlando, including Polk County, is nearing its maximum. "This should come as no surprise." So says Hal Wilkening about a new in-depth analysis of Central Florida's water needs throughout the next two decades.

That the remark comes from Wilkening is significant, because he is the chief water supply planner for the St. Johns River Water Management District.

The study Wilkening refers to was just completed by the Central Florida Water Initiative. It is considered the most scientifically exhaustive and accurate assessment of the region's water needs. The findings are, indeed, no surprise, but rather confirm what many have known for a long time: The greater Orlando area has just about tapped out the Floridan aquifer as its sole supply of water. The study says the CFWI territory is using about 800 million gallons of water per day for residential, business and agricultural uses. It further shows there is just 6 percent more aquifer capacity before it becomes an official environmental danger. The aquifer is an underground series of rivers essentially.

THE LIMIT

Once consumption in the region hits 850 million gallons per day, which is expected before 2020, the CFWI says further pumping of the aquifer will result in "significant" environmental damage to springs, wetlands and other water bodies.

The study also says the region will need 1.1 billion gallons per day by 2035 and needs to begin figuring out where to find that extra water.

The CFWI is a consortium of three water-management districts — St. Johns, South Florida and Southwest Florida — as well as large utilities from Orange, Lake, Seminole, Polk and Osceola counties. The group spent more than a year reaching its conclusions.

Next is the solutions phase. Among the recommendations is "identifying viable alternative supplies." Over the decades, proposals have been to go to less-populated, water-rich portions of the state and raid those supplies. That approach was never appropriate, although it seemed simple to some. Florida has grown too far. It must treat its water needs and supplies not only from a regional perspective, but from a statewide perspective.

Serious conservation plans, desalination technology that will spare, or certainly slow, the destruction of Florida's and other approaches that have the potential of protecting Florida's freshwater resources while meeting the needs of those who live and work in the state are needed.

The focus must be on solutions that are fair, protective and effective.

Editorial: Sadly, we're not surprised at all

"This should come as no surprise."

So says Hal Wilkening about a new in-depth analysis of Central Florida's water needs throughout the next two decades. That the remark comes from Wilkening is significant, because he is the chief water supply planner for the St. Johns River Water Management District.

The study Wilkening refers to was just completed by the Central Florida Water Initiative and is considered to be the most scientifically exhaustive and accurate assessment of the region's water needs ever. The findings are, indeed, no surprise, but rather confirm what most of us have known for a long time: The greater Orlando area has just about tapped out the Floridan aquifer as its sole supply of water.

The study says the CFWI territory is currently using about 800 million gallons of water a day for residential, business and agricultural uses. It further shows there is just 6 percent more aquifer capacity before it becomes an official environmental danger, as opposed to the unofficial one most Floridians have long known about and acknowledged. Once consumption in the region hits 850 mgd, which will be before 2020, the CFWI concedes further pumping of the aquifer will result in "significant" environmental damage to springs, wetlands and other water bodies. The study, incidentally, says the region will need 1.1 billion gallons a day by 2035 and needs to begin figuring out where that extra water will come from now.

The CFWI is a consortium of three water management districts — St. Johns, South Florida and Southwest Florida — as well as large utilities from Orange, Lake, Seminole, Polk and Osceola counties. The group spent more than a year reaching its conclusions. What is not stated in the study is that other regions, importantly Marion County, will inevitably be impacted by whatever the CFWI participants do, short and long term.

We remember well when St. Johns proposed an \$800 million plan to build a pumping plant on the Ocklawaha River and 500 miles of pipeline to quench greater Orlando's future thirst. The backlash from across the state, and especially here in Marion County, was vociferous and unyielding, leading St. Johns to shelve the plan — but not toss it out.

So what is the next step for CFWI? The "solutions phase." And among the recommended solutions is "identifying viable alternative supplies." We have heard that term before — right before St. Johns officials started trying to ram the Ocklawaha pumping plan down our throats.

Here in Marion County we get water and the brutal, self-serving politics surrounding it. We know that when Orlando overpumps, it affects groundwater levels here. We also know if Orlando comes to raid our water, when we need our own alternative supplies they will be taken or, heaven forbid, gone.

No, we should not be surprised by the CFWI findings, or even the water management districts' suggestion that new water raids for cheap water, no matter the long-term environmental cost, are the answer. But we are disappointed the water districts have been so irresponsible and slow moving in implementing serious conservation plans and developing desalination technology that will spare, or certainly slow, the destruction of Florida's fresh water resources.

From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>

To: Richard Owen <richardowen@wrwsa.org>

Cc: Nancy Smith <nsmithnhs@aol.com>

Subject: Fwd: INFORMATION REGARDING SINKHOLES FROM THE FLORIDA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Date: Mon, Aug 12, 2013 10:44 am

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Florida Department of Environmental Protection" <FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com>

Date: August 12, 2013, 10:41:42 AM EDT

To: disalz@yahoo.com

Subject: INFORMATION REGARDING SINKHOLES FROM THE FLORIDA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Reply-To: FloridaDEP@public.govdelivery.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Aug. 12, 2013

CONTACT: DEP Press Office, 850.245.2112, DEPNews@dep.state.fl.us

INFORMATION REGARDING SINKHOLES FROM THE FLORIDA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

~Facts and information about encountering sinkholes in the state of Florida~

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Florida Geological Survey has compiled the following information to provide a single point source for general knowledge about the nature of sinkholes in the state of Florida and additional information about proper protocol should you ever encounter a sinkhole in an urban area.

Facts about sinkholes in Florida:

-The entire state of Florida sits on top of several thousand feet of limestone. Limestone is a rock that can form with natural void spaces called porosity. In limestone where the void spaces are connected, the rock is permeable. Porous and permeable limestone makes great aquifers and provide millions of gallons

of fresh drinking water for residents and agriculture. The most significant factor in the development of sinkholes is the dissolution of the limestone underlying Florida by naturally acidic groundwater.

-Sinkholes are a natural and common feature of Florida's landscape. They are only one of many kinds of karst landforms, which include depressions, caves (both air and water filled), disappearing streams, springs and underground aquifer systems, all

of which occur in Florida. Thousands of naturally occurring sinkholes can be seen throughout the state of Florida including many that connect underground to springs, rivers and lakes.

-Sinkholes form in karst terrain from the collapse of surface sediments into underground voids. In Florida one may see solution sinkholes, cover-subsidence sinkholes or cover-collapse sinkholes. The first two types will show very little topographical disturbance to the naked eye, while the third is the type which shows a abrupt change in topography and is most associated with the thought of sinkholes.

Questions about sinkholes in urban and suburban environments:

-My yard is settling... Do I have a sinkhole? Maybe. But a number of other factors can cause holes, depressions or subsidence of the ground surface. Expansive clay layers in the earth may shrink upon drying, buried organic material, poorly-compacted soil after excavation work, buried trash or logs and broken pipes all may cause depressions to form at the ground surface. These settling events, when not verified as true sinkholes by professionals, are collectively called "subsidence incidents." If the settling is affecting a dwelling, further testing by a licensed engineer with a licensed geologist on staff or a licensed geology firm may be in order. Property insurance may pay for testing, but in many cases insurance may not cover damage from settling due to causes other than sinkholes.

-A sinkhole opened in my neighborhood... should I be concerned? Although sinkholes in Florida sometimes occur in sets, most are isolated events. The bedrock underlying the state is honeycombed with cavities of varying size, most of which will not collapse in our lifetimes. A quick inspection of your property for any sinking or soft areas might be prudent. Unless the sinkhole is very large, and extends to your property, there's likely to be little reason for concern.

Should a sinkhole open in an area near you the hole should be immediately cordoned off and clearly marked to protect traffic. Contact local law enforcement to report the hazard and call your city or county road department to initiate repair work. If the road is private, repair of the hole is usually the responsibility of the landowner or property owners' association.

-Is there a safe area of Florida where there is no chance of sinkholes? Technically, no. Since the entire state is underlain by carbonate rocks, sinkholes could theoretically form anywhere. However, there are definite regions where sinkhole risk is considerably higher. In general, areas of the state where limestone is close to surface, or areas with deeper limestone but with a conducive configuration of water table elevation, stratigraphy, and aquifer characteristics have increased sinkhole activity.

Additionally, the Department announced Friday that the Florida Geological Survey, in conjunction with the Florida Division of Emergency Management, has received a \$1.1 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to address sinkhole vulnerability. Find more information [here](#).

About the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is the state's principal environmental agency, created to protect, conserve and manage Florida's environment and natural resources. The Department

Options considered for continuing Hernando's Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program



Barbara Behrendt, Times Staff Writer

Friday, July 26, 2013 6:06pm

BROOKSVILLE — From teaching people about the drought-resistant plants that do best in Central Florida to educating residents on the upside of using a rain barrel, Sylvia Durell's job is to make the best of Hernando's landscape while also protecting precious water resources.

Durell is the Hernando coordinator for the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program, but now her work is in jeopardy. Several weeks ago, the Southwest Florida Water Management District told local governments that it was pulling the plug on funding the programs.

Districtwide, that will save the agency about \$500,000, allowing it to focus on other programs such as its Florida Water Star program. In Hernando, the cut will be approximately \$40,000, leaving local officials scrambling to find a new way to fund portions of the program.

Susan Goebel-Canning, Hernando County's director of environmental services, said she is trying to keep the program intact because it has value for the community, but she has not yet settled on a plan.

Some of what Durell does touches on the measures that residents can take to conserve water and protect groundwater quality through their landscaping choices.

Also under Goebel-Canning's direction is the county's water conservation coordinator, Alys Brockway, whose duties include overseeing the incentive programs for utility customers who switch to more water-efficient, low-flow toilets or who use sensors to turn off irrigation systems when it rains.

Goebel-Canning is considering tweaking both job descriptions by possibly adding outreach chores to the water conservation coordinator position and expanding the landscaping program to include another earth-friendly endeavor — promoting the county's recycling efforts.

Finding a funding mechanism that works will be key to any changes that are made, she said.

Just last week, the Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority announced that Hernando County will receive a \$48,400 grant for water conservation efforts. More than half of that goes into the incentive program Brockway oversees and the rest for education, Goebel-Canning said.

These programs work, she said. Since Hernando's peak water use in 2006, the county has realized a 20 percent reduction in water use. That is important as the county strives to keep its water usage at or below 150 gallons per person per day, a goal Brockway said the county reached about three years ago.

Goebel-Canning is considering funding a portion of the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program out of the county utilities budget, as it is now, and a portion out of the solid waste program.

That would mean that some of outreach time now spent promoting wise landscaping could be used to tell residents about the benefits of recycling. Curbside recycling became available countywide in January 2012, when Republic Services took over garbage collection in the county.

Goebel-Canning said she could see the value of an education program that would explain the reasons why people should recycle. One of the biggest benefits is that it will extend the lifetime of the county's landfill by removing items from the trash stream that could have another life.

The county has been considering switching to single-stream recycling, which would allow residents to put all of their recyclable items into a single covered rolling bin. Goebel-Canning said she expected to talk to the County Commission about the issue in the coming months.



Times (2012)

Education on rain barrel use and other Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program tips have helped Hernando reduce water use, which peaked in 2006, by 20 percent.

Hernando Today

Water conservation efforts net county \$48,400

BROOKSVILLE

Hernando County is in line for a share of grant money for its water conservation program.

The Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority's board of directors has awarded about \$130,000 in matching grants to three member local governments it represents.

Hernando County will receive \$48,400 for its water conservation program, which authority members said has served as a model for the region since 2001. Citrus County receives \$40,250 and Marion County \$38,600, also for each county's water conservation program.

Diane Salz, the authority's governmental and legislative affairs consultant, said Hernando County was the first in the region to enact a water conservation program and praised Alys Brockway, the county's water conservation coordinator for her efforts in leading the way. "Alice was a trailblazer and she really learned how to best administer the water conservation program," Salz said. "She's taken full advantage of all the available resources."

Specifically, the authority awarded the grant because of Hernando County's education and outreach efforts on water conservation, including the Florida Friendly Landscaping Program and toilet rebate program. The authority also cited the county's checks on irrigation systems, rain sensors, school programs and media releases.

"Competing grant applications once again focus on supporting water conservation activities, and these three projects have proven effective programs," Authority Chairman Dennis Damato said in a press release.

Since 1999, the Authority has provided assistance to local governments for water supply projects located within its jurisdiction. The projects must relate to water conservation and be approved by the local government's elected body. Each year, the grant application period opens on May 1st and closes on the last working day of June. Authority Executive Director Richard Owen said "our efforts in recent years have focused on achieving the Southwest Florida Water Management District's per capita requirement of 150 gallons per capita per day and the conservation requirements of the St. Johns River Water Management District."

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Tampa Bay Times

Editorial: Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program is worth the green

-

Thursday, July 25, 2013 5:18pm

Regional water managers say the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program promoting conservation, environmental protection and lower monthly water bills for homeowners is a worthwhile effort that should be continued — as long as somebody else pays for it. That is shirking responsibility.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District should put a higher value on this initiative. County governments facing their own tight budgets should not have to find the money to save a valuable program. If the landscaping program can save 25 million gallons of water annually in Pasco County, for instance, that amounts to \$100,000 worth of water.

The district said it has reimbursed 11 counties about \$4.4 million over the past decade to maintain program coordinators employed by the local governments. Those coordinators formerly worked with neighborhood associations to educate residents about drought-tolerant plants, rain barrel construction and other conservation tips. The focus changed this year, at the direction of the water district, to what it dubbed measurable water savings — one-on-one visits to heavy water users.

The water district now plans to allocate the coordinators' salaries to a separate water conservation program aimed at new home construction. Targeting home builders to save water via selection of appliances, plumbing, construction materials and outdoor landscaping should be encouraged. But it is unacceptable to largely ignore the existing audience — homeowners already paying property taxes to the district — just because the current program is time consuming.

The water management district's governing board meets next week to set its preliminary tax rate for its \$169 million budget for the coming fiscal year. The board should ensure that the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program remains intact.

Editorial: Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program is worth the green 07/25/13 [*Last modified: Thursday, July 25, 2013 5:33pm*]

Swiftmud Pulls Funding on Florida Friendly Landscaping Program

By RICH SHOPE
TAMPA BAY TIMES

Published: Thursday, July 25, 2013 at 12:51 p.m.

NEW PORT RICHEY | The Southwest Florida Water Management District is pulling funding from a program that helps homeowners save on their water bills while also offering other conservation tips.

The district, commonly known as Swiftmud, says the push to cut funding to the Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program is meant to save money and bring more resources in-house. Much of the program's information is already available online, Swiftmud says.

But the move has surprised local officials and left many wondering why the district would withdraw its support when millions of gallons of water are being conserved yearly.

Just in Hillsborough, the program is saving about 45 million gallons a year, said Stephen Gran, who heads Hillsborough County's extension service. In Pasco, the program saves millions yearly, as well, though officials there haven't tallied the precise numbers.

"My goal is to save 25 million gallons a year," said Chris Dewey, Pasco's coordinator.

Extension services rely on grants from a combination of agencies, including Tampa Bay Water, to run the conservation effort. Under the program, experts visit homeowners and neighborhood associations to show strategies to cut their water usage and help them save money. The program operates in 11 counties, including Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco.

Swiftmud is just one agency that provides funding, but the extension services say its support is critical to keep the program coordinators in the field meeting with homeowners.

Dewey meets with homeowners and associations about 20 to 25 times a month, said B.J. Jarvis, director of the Pasco extension service. In addition to water-saving tips, he teaches them about drought-tolerant species and fertilizer and pesticide use.

Without the Swiftmud funding, she said, the extension service and others like it would be left scrambling to keep the program afloat.

Swiftmud said it doesn't dispute the program's importance and says that many of its water-saving tips are already available on its website. Eliminating support to the 11 Florida-Friendly programs would save Swiftmud about \$500,000 a year. It also would allow it to pour more resources into its own water-saving program called Florida Water Star.

[LETTER]

Protect Water, Wetlands

Published: Thursday, July 25, 2013 at 12:02 a.m.

In the July 15 editorial ["Water Management: Supply and Demand"], we learned the Southwest Florida Water Management District is encouraging a regional approach to public water supply.

In July 21 article, "Mosaic's Water Dilution Within State Regulations," we learned that Mosaic recently received a permit to pump 70 million gallons of water a day for the next 20 years, and that the aquifer from which we receive our water supply is overtapped.

The truth is that Polk County's water resources, including lakes and rivers, have suffered from historical well-pumping of the aquifer from mostly agriculture, mining and coastal communities. We are at the headwaters of the aquifer and, as such, our lakes and rivers feel the impacts more than anyone.

Yet Swiftmud is encouraging a "regional approach" to public water supply so that everyday people such as you and I have to pay for problems we did not cause. Water bills will soar with the cost of pumping and improving the low-grade water from the lower aquifer Southeast Wellfield.

The other truth is that if Polk County residents are forced to pay for a regional water supply that will cause additional water problems for Polk County.

The development being supplied by projects like the Southeast Wellfield will cause additional harm to local lakes, wetlands and rivers unless local citizens cough up even more money in the future. Items such as flood control and water quality protection will cost more for future generations. It is a never-ending, unsustainable situation.

A wiser investment would seem to be a long-term, sustainable approach that stores more water in lakes and wetlands, and keeps less water from flowing out of our watersheds.

JEAN REED

Winter Haven

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From: Diane Salz <disalz@yahoo.com>
To: Nancy Smith <nsmithnhs@aol.com>
Subject: Fwd: NEWS RELEASE: District Launches Instagram Contest on Social Media to Raise Springs Awareness
Date: Fri, Jul 19, 2013 5:46 pm

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Chris Zajac <Chris.Zajac@swfwmd.state.fl.us>
Date: July 19, 2013, 11:39:51 AM EDT
Subject: NEWS RELEASE: District Launches Instagram Contest on Social Media to Raise Springs Awareness

July 18, 2013

District Launches Instagram Contest on Social Media to Raise Springs Awareness

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) has launched a contest on the social media site Instagram to raise awareness of springs throughout the District.

Springs sites are a popular hot spot with both local residents and tourists during the summer months and especially holiday weekends. This summer, whether you are tubing, kayaking, swimming or just relaxing near one of the many springs in our District, you can share those experiences for a chance to win a springs prize pack that includes tickets to Weeki Wachee Springs State Park. To enter, shoot a photo or video while visiting any spring. Then, upload your photo or video to Instagram and tag it #RenewOurSprings through September 2, 2013. Users earn one contest entry for every photo or video tagged.

To learn more about the area's five major springs systems in Citrus, Hernando and Marion counties, and what the District is doing to monitor and restore them, members of the public can visit the District's redesigned springs website WaterMatters.org/Springs. This site has information on our major springs systems, which include Chassahowitzka River, Crystal River/Kings Bay, Homosassa River, Rainbow River and the Weeki Wachee River.

Members of the public can hear firsthand from the District's team of springs experts about ongoing and future restoration projects at Chassahowitzka Springs, Kings Bay and Three Sisters Springs. Users will find regular project updates, photo galleries and videos. Website visitors can find out about recreational opportunities, what they can do to protect the springs and how to get involved in upcoming volunteer events.

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IN OUR OPINION

Editorial: Ignoring the water reality

Published: Monday, July 22, 2013 at 6:30 a.m.

The Adena Spring Ranch water permit application is not only a concern to Marion County and its residents. Just listen to Chris Bird.

Bird is Alachua County's director of environmental protection. He recently compared the use of groundwater in the North Central Florida to withdrawals from a bank.

According to Bird — and we agree — checks are starting to bounce. Yet, they continue to be written.

Despite recent wet weather, Bird and numerous other experts say that signs indicate that water use in the region is already exceeding the capacity of the groundwater supply. The reduced flow and increased algae growth in springs such as Silver, Rainbow and, in Alachua County, Poe and Ginnie, provide ample evidence that things are not right.

Yet water management districts continue to permit the pumping of massive amounts of groundwater. The permit application raising the most local concern, of course, is Adena Springs Ranch's request to siphon an average of 5.3 million gallons per day from the aquifer. The request, while down significantly from the nearly 14 million originally sought, is merely smoke and mirrors, because Adena officials simply acquired land in surrounding counties to pursue their plans. The water will still be pumped out of the Floridan Aquifer.

Of such concern is the Adena permit, that Alachua County's Environmental Protection Advisory Committee asked its County Commission to recommend the Adena Springs permit be denied.

As North Floridians who have watched their springs and rivers, lakes and wells drop lower and lower know, groundwater doesn't follow county boundaries. Decisions being made to benefit a cattle operation in northern Marion County and municipal water users of Orlando can harm groundwater levels across North Central Florida affect residents across the state, especially North Florida.

There are things that Marion County and its neighbors can do to protect the aquifer. Land-use regulations are an important way to discourage sprawl and landscaping that requires regular watering. It's also important to encourage water conservation.

But those steps only go so far as long as water management districts keep issuing permits, even though they haven't finished the minimum flows and levels process meant to gauge whether pumping is causing significant harm to the supply and environment — a process that is more than two decades, yes, decades behind schedule.

Even Adena Springs, which has gone through a more arduous permitting process than most applicants, is so confident its permit will be approved — because they all

are — that they have their operation nearing completion. They are just awaiting their water permit.

That is a clear indication about how much of a priority protecting our groundwater supply is to sitting elected and appointed officials. Keep the water flowing, they insist. Problem is, if we keep issuing permits while the water table continues to fall, there won't be any water left to flow.

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