



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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South Florida Adopts Year-Round Water Conservation Rule

Conservation measures to limit landscape irrigation across 16 counties, reduce water use by up to 10 percent



(Click on picture for larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — Recognizing the need to conserve water and increase protection for South Florida's water resources, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board unanimously approved sweeping year-round water conservation measures that place permanent limits on landscape irrigation throughout the region.

Developed with input from water users across the region after more than two years and 30 public workshops, the rule limits irrigation of existing landscapes to two days per week. A provision in the rule allows for three-day-a-week irrigation in counties south of Lake Okeechobee, including Broward, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties.

“The year-round rule reflects the broad consensus among a wide range of stakeholders that we must act now to ensure a sustainable supply of water for South Florida’s communities and environment well into the future,” said SFWMD Governing Board member Michael Collins, who facilitated the development of the rule through the District’s Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC). “The conservation measures outlined in the rule will provide meaningful returns and significantly reduce the amount of water devoted to landscape irrigation, which is the single largest use of household water in South Florida.”

The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule is designed to curb water use in South Florida – the highest in the state at an estimated 179 gallons per person per day. Outdoor irrigation accounts for up to half of all potable water produced within the region. Up to 50 percent of the water applied to lawns is lost to evaporation and runoff with no benefit to the landscape.

Highlights of the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule include:

- 2-Day-A-Week Watering in Charlotte, Highlands, Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola and Polk counties.
- Options for 3-Day-A-Week Watering in Broward, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties.
- No irrigation allowed on any day between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Irrigation using reclaimed water, rain harvesting systems and various low-volume methods – such as micro-irrigation, container watering and hand watering with a hose and automatic shut-off nozzle – is not subject to restrictions.
- Additional watering is allowed following the installation of new lawns and landscaping for up to 90 days.
- The District may grant variances for “smart” irrigation technologies described in Senate Bill 2080, passed by the Florida Legislature this year.
- Local governments may adopt more stringent landscape irrigation ordinances at their discretion, based on local water demands, system limitations or resource availability, such as the two-day-a-week ordinances implemented by Lee and Miami-Dade counties in 2005 and 2009, respectively, and being proposed by Broward County.

By reducing landscape irrigation, the District estimates implementation of the year-round rule may reduce overall potable water demand by 5 to 10 percent, based on a recent SFWMD study of regional demand reductions experienced during the 2007-2009 water shortage. Under Modified Phase II water restrictions – or a two-day-a-week watering schedule – the 44 largest utilities in the District saved an estimated 138 million gallons of water per day over a six month period during the emergency water shortage compared to usage before the water shortage.

“South Florida residents and businesses have repeatedly demonstrated a commitment to water conservation and reduced their water use to cope with short-term adversity,” said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. “The year-round rule calls upon South Florida to make a long-term change that will help protect our water resources and provide water to sustain our environment and economy for future generations.”

Water conservation remains the best strategy to stretch available supplies amid the extremes of South Florida’s weather. The District has entered the 2009-2010 dry season with a cautious outlook as water levels have begun falling after average wet-season rains. South Florida received 1.16 inches of rain in October, the fourth-driest total for the month in the region according to District records dating back to 1932.

Among its many benefits, water conservation may save taxpayers money by reducing demand for water and allowing utilities and local governments to defer or possibly avoid costs associated with construction of new public water supply facilities, including development of expensive alternative water supplies. In addition, less frequent watering helps condition lawns to develop deeper, stronger roots, creating a healthier, more drought-tolerant lawn that can better respond to dry times.

The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule is a component of the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program, approved by the Governing Board in September 2008 to encourage more responsible use of water resources throughout South Florida. Numerous stakeholders worked with the District to define specific regulatory, voluntary and incentive-based programs and in-depth education and marketing plans that will help foster a year-round conservation ethic.

For details on the Comprehensive Water Conservation Program and water conservation tips, please visit www.savewaterfl.com. More information about the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule is available at www.sfwmd.gov/2days.

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About the South Florida Water Management District – [Celebrating 60 Years \(1949-2009\)](#)

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.