



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Year-Round Water Conservation Begins Today In South Florida
Permanent landscape irrigation measures help foster a lasting conservation ethic



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West Palm Beach, FL – Year-round water conservation measures to better protect South Florida’s water resources begin today, with the start of permanent limits on landscape irrigation throughout the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

“The move from emergency landscape irrigation restrictions to year-round water conservation measures marks a historic turning point for South Florida,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann. “Water conservation in our region can no longer be a reaction to short-term adversity. Conservation has become a proactive strategy to protect water resources for the long-term benefit of our environment and our communities.”

Developed with input from water users across the region after more than two years and 30 public workshops, the conservation measures limit irrigation of existing landscapes to two days per week. A provision in the measures allows for three-day-a-week irrigation in counties south of Lake Okeechobee.

Under the conservation measures, local governments across the region have the flexibility to adopt alternative landscape irrigation ordinances at their discretion, based on local water demands, system limitations or resource availability. Because several counties and cities have exercised this option, residents should always check local ordinances for watering days and times in their area.

Residents and businesses in many areas will notice no change in irrigation schedules following the transition from emergency restrictions to the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures. Highlights of the year-round measures include:

2-Day-a-Week Watering

- Unless local ordinances are enacted, in Charlotte*, Highlands*, Okeechobee, Orange*, Osceola and Polk* counties. (See below for exceptions created by local ordinances.)
- Residents and businesses with an **odd-numbered** street address may water lawns and landscapes on **Wednesdays** and/or **Saturdays**, only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**
- Residents and businesses with an **even-numbered** street address, no street address or those that irrigate both even and odd addresses within the same zones, which may include multi-family units and homeowners associations, may water lawns and landscapes on **Thursdays** and/or **Sundays**, only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**
- Exceptions by local ordinances (for more details, check local ordinances or visit www.sfwmd.gov/2days):
 - * In Charlotte, Highlands and Polk counties, residents and businesses should follow the Southwest Florida Water Management District's (SWFWMD) landscape irrigation measures. SWFWMD water shortage orders are currently in effect limiting landscape irrigation to one day a week in these counties.
 - * In unincorporated Orange County, residents and businesses should follow the St. Johns River Water Management District's landscape irrigation measures. Landscape irrigation is currently limited to two days a week during Daylight Saving Time but goes to one day a week after Daylight Saving Time ends.

Option for 3-Day-a-Week Watering

- Unless local ordinances are enacted, in Broward*, Collier*, Glades, Hendry, Lee*, Martin, Miami-Dade*, Monroe, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties. (See below for exceptions created by local ordinances.)
- Residents and businesses with an **odd-numbered** street address may water lawns and landscapes on **Mondays, Wednesdays** and/or **Saturdays**, only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**
- Residents and businesses with an **even-numbered** street address **no street address** or those that **irrigate both even and odd addresses** within the same zones, which may include multi-family units and homeowners associations, may water lawns and landscapes on **Tuesdays, Thursdays** and/or **Sundays**, only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**
- Exceptions by local ordinances (for more details, check local ordinances or visit www.sfwmd.gov/2days):
 - * In Miami-Dade and Broward counties, residents and businesses should follow the counties' two-day-a-week schedule.
 - * Unincorporated Lee County and the City of Cape Coral have their own local ordinances that limit landscape irrigation to two days a week.

- * Collier County has its own local ordinance that limits landscape irrigation to three days a week during fewer hours.
- Exceptions by water shortage orders (for more details, visit www.sfwmd.gov/2days):
 - * Hallandale Beach and Lake Worth remain under emergency water shortage orders that restrict landscape irrigation to one day a week.

Applies to All

- No irrigation, except as noted below, 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 – may be conducted at any time.
- Additional watering days are provided following the installation of new lawns and landscaping for up to 90 days.
- The District may grant variances for users of “smart” irrigation technologies described in Senate Bill 494, passed by the Florida Legislature in 2009.
- Residents should check with their city and county governments to determine if any local ordinances for water restrictions are in place.

Emergency Restrictions Rescinded March 15

The decision by the SFWMD Governing Board to end emergency landscape irrigation restrictions on March 15 reflects improved water conditions since the end of the record 2008-2009 dry season. The El Niño weather pattern has brought above average rainfall during the current dry season, and groundwater levels throughout most of the District are normal or above normal for this time of year.

During the 2009-2010 dry season, the District has already received more than double the rainfall compared to last year’s dry season, which was the driest six-month period in South Florida history based on records dating back to 1932. The water level in Lake Okeechobee is nearly a foot higher than it was at this time last year.

Although some residents and businesses may irrigate three days a week under the new measures, two-day-a-week irrigation is often more than enough for South Florida lawns and landscapes, which typically need only three-quarters to an inch of water a week. Irrigation may not even be necessary if sufficient rain falls during the week. In addition, less frequent watering helps condition grass to develop deeper, stronger roots, creating a healthier, more drought-tolerant lawn that can better respond to dry times.

Background

The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures are 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.

The District estimates implementation of the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures 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 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.

The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures are 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-saving tips, please visit www.savewaterfl.com. More information about the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures, including which days of the week irrigation is allowed, is available in the Frequently Asked Questions at www.sfwmd.gov/2days.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

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.