



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Two Habitat for Humanity Homes Certified by Florida Water Star
Stuart houses are the first in Martin County to receive the water-saving program's highest recognition



Stuart, FL – Two East Stuart families are settling into new homes for the holidays – and saving water in the process.

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has recognized both families' houses, built by Habitat for Humanity of Martin County, as the first Florida Water Star Gold-certified homes in Martin County. The two houses are also the organization's first to receive certification from the Florida Green Building Coalition.

"Habitat for Humanity has a long, proud history in Martin County of working with families in need to achieve the dream of homeownership," said SFWMD Governing Board member Kevin Powers. "With Florida Water Star Gold certification for its first two green homes, Habitat has clearly demonstrated that dream can be reached while helping to protect our state's limited water resources."

Created by the St. Johns River Water Management District and now being implemented in both South and Southwest Florida, Florida Water Star is a points-based certification program that saves water in homes through the use of water-efficient household appliances, plumbing fixtures, irrigation systems and landscapes.

Like other conservation-minded builders and homeowners who sign up for the program, Habitat for Humanity agreed to meet water-efficiency criteria in three categories: landscaping, irrigation and indoor features. Once the upgrades were completed, a SFWMD-trained certifier verified that each house had achieved enough points in each category to qualify for Florida Water Star certification.

Both homes met the criteria for the program's highest recognition, Florida Water Star Gold certification, which recognizes rigorous implementation of water conservation measures in new residential buildings. Specifically, both homes use high-efficiency toilets and clothes washers; have been fitted with low-flow faucets and showerheads; and have no permanent in-ground irrigation system, utilizing rain barrels instead to collect rainwater for hand-watering.

New homeowners Okeland and Sheila Shirley were presented with a Florida Water Star plaque at their home this week during a dedication ceremony held by Habitat for Humanity. The District has also given a plaque to Leo Rodriguez, who moved into his home in mid-November.

"We are honored to once again be a part of Martin County history," said Margot Graff, Executive Director at Habitat for Humanity of Martin County. "Habitat for Humanity of Martin County is proud to be a leader in green building in this area, and we are thrilled to be a part of the initial Florida Water Star program in South Florida."

Florida Water Star can be effectively integrated into building projects along with other programs, such as the Florida Green Building Coalition's green standards and the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program. While many of these programs provide general guidelines for water efficiency, Florida Water Star specifically addresses uses relevant to Florida, further enhancing effectiveness of the other programs.

As part of the program, SFWMD water conservation staff is offering free training for prospective Florida Water Star certifiers. The next Florida Water Star Residential Certifier Training in South Florida will be held February 24 and 25 at the SFWMD Lower West Coast Service Center in Fort Myers. Attendees should be familiar with other green building programs or have basic knowledge of irrigation systems, landscape design and/or indoor water use.

Introduction of Florida Water Star to South Florida is a component of the SFWMD Comprehensive Water Conservation Program, which encourages more responsible use of water resources throughout the region. 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 on Florida Water Star is available at www.floridawaterstar.com. Anyone interested in registering for the upcoming [certifier training workshop](#) should contact Jesus Rodriguez, SFWMD senior water conservation analyst, at jerodrig@sfwmd.gov or 561-682-6060.

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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.