



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Need for Water Conservation Continues After Water Shortage Ends
Water shortage warning is in place as region transitions to year-round landscape irrigation measures



What You Can Do – Water Conservation Tips

- Use a rain barrel or cistern to capture rain, then water by hand
- Lawns do not need to be watered after it rains
- Only do a full load of laundry
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth
- Install low-flow shower heads and sink aerators

West Palm Beach, FL – With water shortage restrictions from the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) officially expired, water conservation remains critical to safeguard regional water supplies during what is expected to be another below-average dry season.

“The end of the water shortage signals the beginning of a renewed focus on year-round water conservation,” said SFWMD Executive Director Melissa Meeker. “As the last few months have clearly demonstrated, South Florida is a place of weather extremes.

Conservation is one of the best strategies for protecting water resources, not only from dry conditions but also for long-term benefits to communities and the environment.”

In addition to taking voluntary steps to conserve water, residents and businesses are now placed under year-round measures that set a permanent schedule on landscape irrigation. For many areas, watering schedules remain the same under year-round measures as they were under this year’s water shortage restrictions.

Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule

Adopted by the SFWMD Governing Board in November 2009, the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule established a permanent two-day-a-week landscape watering schedule throughout the region, with a three-day-a-week provision for some counties. Utilizing the rule’s flexibility, some city and county governments have adopted alternative landscape irrigation ordinances or emergency actions based on local water demands or system limitations.

Customers of the West Palm Beach and Lake Worth utilities remain under local orders that limit landscape irrigation to one day per week.

Details on landscape irrigation limits are available by contacting your local government or by visiting www.sfwmd.gov/2days.

After months of cutbacks as directed by the water shortage orders, permitted water users – such as agriculture, nurseries, golf courses and utilities – will now resume following the water use conditions in their permits. In addition to the conservation measures already required by permits, permitted users are strongly encouraged to practice voluntary water conservation to help stretch water supplies through the coming months.

Conditions Improve with October Rains; Long-Term Forecast Remains Dry

On Nov. 10, the SFWMD Governing Board voted to rescind all water shortage orders for South Florida in response to improved regional water resource conditions. The Governing Board also declared a water shortage warning to encourage continued vigilance and voluntary conservation during the coming months.

Largely as a result of three significant storms, October 2011 brought nearly 10 inches of rain District-wide, ranking as the fourth-wettest October in 80 years of recordkeeping. The rainfall resulted in localized flooding but also dramatically improved ground and surface water levels from Orlando to the Florida Keys. The District is storing as much water as possible while providing flood control when needed.

Lake Okeechobee, a key natural resource and source of water supply for South Florida, stood at 13.83 feet NGVD today, more than 2.5 feet higher than on September 30. The current lake level is also 0.70 feet higher than this time last year.

Despite last month's storms, long-term forecasts are calling for below-average rainfall during the 2011-2012 dry season as a result of the La Niña weather pattern. Although the chances have been reduced, a return to water shortage conditions is possible in the spring.

Links to information about current weather and water conditions are available at www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch. For information about water conservation, visit www.savewaterfl.com.

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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.