



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

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SFWMD Water Experts Volunteer to Help Haiti

Two years after an earthquake devastates Haiti, a volunteer crew returns to repair wells that supply drinking water for an orphanage, school



The crew tests water quality at various rudimentary wells in Haiti. (Click on picture for a larger version)

West Palm Beach, FL — Water managers at the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) are using their expertise to help provide clean drinking water to struggling areas of Haiti.

Hydrogeologist Steve Krupa and technical supervisor Rick Miessau have been on three volunteer missions to Haiti together and are returning next month to improve the water supply at a school and an orphanage, and conduct additional tests on nearby wells.

“It is humbling to see the condition adults and children in Haiti are living with and it serves as a reminder how important the clean water is that we enjoy every day,” said

Miessau. “Water is a critical resource in South Florida and throughout the world. Parts of Haiti don’t have the infrastructure to provide basic drinking water and people are getting sick as a result.”

A 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010. The District’s extensive network of groundwater monitors in South Florida picked up the underground tremors from more than 600 miles away.

Health officials in Haiti responded to an increase in illnesses following the earthquake – including a devastating and deadly cholera outbreak – attributed to contaminated water. The earthquake exacerbated poor water quality that includes high salinity levels and bacterial contamination, which sicken people on a daily basis in Haiti.

“In some of the poorest places of Haiti, much of the day is spent collecting water for basic needs and often that water is contaminated,” said Miessau. “Clean water is essential to the region’s recovery, just as it is a basic necessity to maintain our lives.”

Hydrogeologists at the District have decades of experience in water supply development. Impoverished regions of Haiti do not have access to clean water and simple technology such as a working hand pump has the potential to provide significant improvements to the quality of life.

On their upcoming trip that begins Jan. 14, Krupa and Miessau are installing equipment at a school in Verrettes, Haiti, that will eventually provide the only running water for 5 miles around. They will also repair the back-up hand pump at an orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which is needed so that water can be retrieved during frequent power outages.

Krupa and Miessau use their vacation time organizing these relief efforts for Haiti. The work is not funded or sponsored by the District, but their efforts show the kind of dedication many employees have to the cause of clean, sustainable water. During a recent bake sale to raise money for their efforts, \$2,000 in donations were collected from District staff.

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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.