

Year-round water conservation rules are now in effect

Though water shortage restrictions imposed by the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) have expired, year-round water conservation rules are now in effect.

After a pattern of heavy rainfall this summer, the restrictions were allowed to expire on Sept. 30. The District declared a water shortage order in June to ease drought conditions. Conditions have improved considerably since that time.

“Groundwater levels have recovered to normal or above normal in most areas and river levels have not been this high since 2010,” said Megan Wetherington, District senior professional engineer.

In August, the District received an average of more than 9 inches of rainfall, with accumulations of up to 16 inches in localized areas. On Aug. 26, the Santa Fe River near Fort White experienced minor flooding after it crested at 0.3 feet above flood stage, and the Waccasassa River saw its third highest stage in 10 years. The

Ichetucknee River had sustained flows not seen since 2006.

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center is predicting a weak to moderate El Niño, which typically means cooler and wetter conditions in the fall and winter.

The water shortage restrictions mostly restricted outdoor watering, particularly lawn and landscape irrigation. Under the order, lawn and landscape irrigation was limited to once per week.

Since the order expired, residents and others fall under mandatory, year-round water conservation rules. The rules limit lawn and landscape irrigation to twice per week for this time of year, and apply to residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public

YEAR-ROUND WATER CONSERVATION RULES

- Rules apply to lawn and landscape watering of residential landscaping, public or commercial recreation areas, and public and commercial businesses
- Watering may take place twice-per-week
- Watering is prohibited between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

and commercial businesses. In addition, watering is prohibited between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Farmers are required to follow conservation measures included in their water use permit.

“Though the District does not feel it is necessary to prolong water restrictions at this time, we ask that all water users conserve water and help us sustain our water resources,” said District Executive Director Ann Shortelle.

SRWMD seeks to adopt monitoring requirements for largest water users

The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board has moved forward with a water use monitoring rule for its largest users and to assist agricultural water users with the required monitoring.

The program will monitor 75 percent of the total water allocated in the District.

“The District needs actual water use data to accurately forecast sustainable, future water supply needs and to develop water supply plans,” said District Assistant Executive Director Jon Dinges.

The water use monitoring requirements have been developed with statewide consumptive use permitting consistency (CUPcon) in mind. CUPcon is a statewide effort led by the Department of Environmental Protection to improve consistency in water use permitting to

All stakeholders will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed rule at a public workshop on Oct. 11 at 5:30 p.m. at District headquarters, 9225 CR 49, Live Oak, FL 32060.

ensure less confusion for the applicant; treat applicants equally; protect the environment; streamline the process; and incentivize behavior that protects the environment.

In the District, agricultural producers hold the greatest number of water use permits. The District has collaborated with the agricultural community to provide incentives that should entice farmers to put in place a monitoring system before regulatory requirements kick in.

The new rule will require automated monitoring and reporting of withdrawals on a daily basis as a condition for new, renewed, and modified water use permits. The rule will apply to all groundwater wells with an inside diameter 8 inches or greater and to surfacewater withdrawals that have an outside diameter 6 inches or greater.

The Governing Board took the extra step that provides agricultural users a voluntary, convenient, no-cost method of measuring water use by calculating electric consumption. In cooperation with their electric utilities, producers would authorize the sharing of their power use data with the District. If electrical consumption data is not available, other run time monitoring methods may be used.

Donald Quincey reappointed to Governing Board



Quincey

Governor Rick Scott recently announced the reappointment of Donald J. Quincey Jr. to the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board.

Quincey is reappointed for a term beginning August 16, 2012, and ending March 1, 2016. He represents the Lower Suwannee Basin.

Quincey, 56, of Chiefland, is the president of Quincey Cattle Company. Quincey currently serves as the chairman of the District's Governing Board and he is the past president of the Florida Cattleman's Association.

White Springs dive will provide benefits for MFLs program

Two cave divers from Karst Environmental Services entered the cave system at White Sulphur Springs recently to assess the condition of the cave as a first step toward understanding the source aquifer(s) of the spring.

John Good, District chief professional engineer, said the exploratory dive will, among other things, help the District better understand why the spring isn't flowing consistently. This information is important in the District's efforts to establish an MFL and model for White Sulphur Springs, which has not flowed reliably for more than 20 years.

FY 2012-13 budget will fund resource protection initiatives and reduce taxes

On Sept. 25, the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) Governing Board adopted a Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget of \$16.1 million. Maintaining the same millage rate of 0.4143 as last year means that a homeowner with a property value of \$150,000 with a \$50,000 homestead exemption would pay \$41.43 in property taxes to the District. With taxable property values declining by 2 percent, the District's millage rate will reduce taxpayers' burden by approximately \$280,000.

"The District is pleased to present a budget that enables the District to protect our water resources for the benefit of our citizens and natural systems while lessening the burden on taxpayers and establishing a high level of public service," said District Executive Director Ann Shortelle. "The final budget documents our dedication to implement cost efficiencies and enhance existing programs."

The District budget establishes two cost-share programs totaling \$3 million. One cost-share program will set aside \$1.5 million to partner with farmers to reduce groundwater use and to put in place best management practices to reduce nutrient loading to water resources. The other cost-share program will establish \$1.5 million to partner with public water suppliers to develop alternative water supply projects to offset groundwater withdrawals, protect springs, build flood protection projects, improve water quality, and to enhance our natural systems.

The budget is fiscally responsible and supports the agency's core mission of water supply, water quality, flood protection, and natural systems.

Key core mission projects in the budget include:

- More than \$2.2 million to establish **Minimum Flows and Levels** on the Upper and Middle Suwannee River and three Bradford County Lakes (Sampson, Crosby, and Rowell).
- **Santa Fe River Nutrient Reduction and Irrigation Retrofit Project** is a partnership with \$900,000 from DEP, \$180,000 from the District, and \$50,000 from the Department of Agriculture and

Consumer Services. The project will enhance water supplies through water conservation and protect natural systems by reducing nitrogen loading to streams and aquifers by up to 1 million pounds per year and save 670 million gallons of water per year.

• **Upper Floridan Aquifer Recharge Project** is a \$265,000 partnership project between the SRWMD and SJRWMD, through the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership to develop concepts for recharging the Upper Floridan Aquifer.

• **Alligator Creek Restoration Project** located in Bradford County is a partnership with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to construct a sediment control structure and reconnect a portion of the creek to its historic floodplain. The project will protect natural systems, Lake Rowell in particular, by capturing 169 tons per year of sediment, provide flood control benefits by directing water into the historic floodplain, and restore 31 acres of wetlands. The project invests \$250,000 from FWC and up to \$350,000 from the District.

• **Bell Springs Restoration Project** located in Columbia County is a partnership with the FWC to remove dams within a spring run on District lands. FWC is investing \$55,000 through a grant to the District to improve natural systems by restoring natural flows of water through the spring run and downstream to the adjacent Suwannee River.

• **Steinhatchee Rise Dispersed Water Storage Project** located in Dixie County is an environmental restoration project enhancing natural systems and flood control by placing water diversion structures in a canal on District lands that is currently draining wetlands directly to the Steinhatchee River. This is a \$20,000 project that will disperse 8.3 million gallons of water, providing hydrologic restoration to approximately 50 acres of wetlands.

"The Governing Board is proud to adopt a fiscally sound budget that efficiently and effectively implements our core mission," said District Board Chairman Don Quincey. "The budget ensures the Board's commitment to an exceptional level of customer service while reducing the tax burden on the taxpayer."