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Reclaimed water will recharge aquifer, improve lake levels at White Lake



LIVE OAK, FL, May 18, 2012 – Reclaimed water has been increasingly used over the last several years to offset groundwater withdrawals within the Suwannee River Water Management District (District). Now, it will be used to recharge the aquifer and improve lake levels at White Lake at Camp Weed & Cerveny Conference Center in Live Oak.

Construction of a lagoon at Camp Weed, which is owned by the Episcopal Diocese of Florida.

Camp Weed, a popular spot for summer camps, weddings, and conferences, was built around the lake. Children enjoyed fishing tournaments, canoeing, kayaking, raft racing, and other water activities. Nature lovers took photographs of flora and fauna surrounding the lake. Visitors could peer out over the water from expansive windows from the cafeteria and chapel and enjoy the views.

However, the camp’s connection with the water has been scarce over the last few years.

Camp Weed Executive Director Joe Chamberlain said the portion of the lake on the Camp Weed property has been dry for more than three years.

With the use of reclaimed water, Chamberlain hopes someday that connection will return. Over the last few years, Chamberlain has worked with the City of Live Oak, the

District, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to make that dream a reality.

Here's the plan: Camp Weed will receive up to 450,000 gallons of reclaimed water per day from the City of Live Oak. That water will be deposited into a percolation pond. From there, the water will naturally seep into the ground and recharge the aquifer. A well will be installed to pump the equivalent of 90 percent of the amount of reclaimed water recharged from the ground into a lagoon. When the lagoon fills it will overflow into the lake to replenish lake levels.

Chamberlain noted that rainfall will be essential in order to fill up the lake.

"This project will aid in the restoration of lake levels while replenishing the aquifer," said Jon Dinges, District director of Water Supply and Resource Management. "Because 90 percent of the reclaimed water that is recharged will be pumped from the ground, there's a net benefit to the resource of 10 percent."

Chamberlain said construction of the project is underway and he hopes to have the project completed within a few months.

"After nearly four years of working in cooperation with the City of Live Oak, the District, and DEP we're excited about the moment when water starts flowing to the lake again," Chamberlain said.

The District provided the City of Live Oak about \$3 million to fund renovations to its wastewater treatment plant to produce reclaimed water. Camp Weed will be one of the City's first customers to receive reclaimed water.

The District is working with wastewater utilities within its 15-county region to develop the capacity to produce reclaimed water. To date the District has assisted Lake City, Live Oak, Monticello, Alachua and Cedar Key. These projects collectively have the potential to save about 6.7 million gallons of fresh water per day.

Reclaimed water is wastewater that is treated to a higher standard and reused for irrigation, toilet flushing, clothes washing, and other non-potable uses. According to DEP, Florida is the national leader in water reuse. Florida currently reuses more than 240 billion gallons of reclaimed water each year statewide.

Florida Governor Rick Scott has issued a proclamation declaring May 20-26 as Florida Water Reuse Week to spread awareness and highlight the importance of reclaimed water. The District joins the State in promoting the benefits of this important alternative water resource.

“Reclaimed water is an effective tool to help solve water supply issues and meet water demands over the next 20 years,” Dinges said. “The District hopes to expand its reuse program to other areas within its region when funding becomes available.”

The Governor’s proclamation is available at
<http://www.srwmd.state.fl.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/6695>

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