

# FY2024

## Water Conservation Summary Report

Southwest Florida  
*Water Management District*





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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

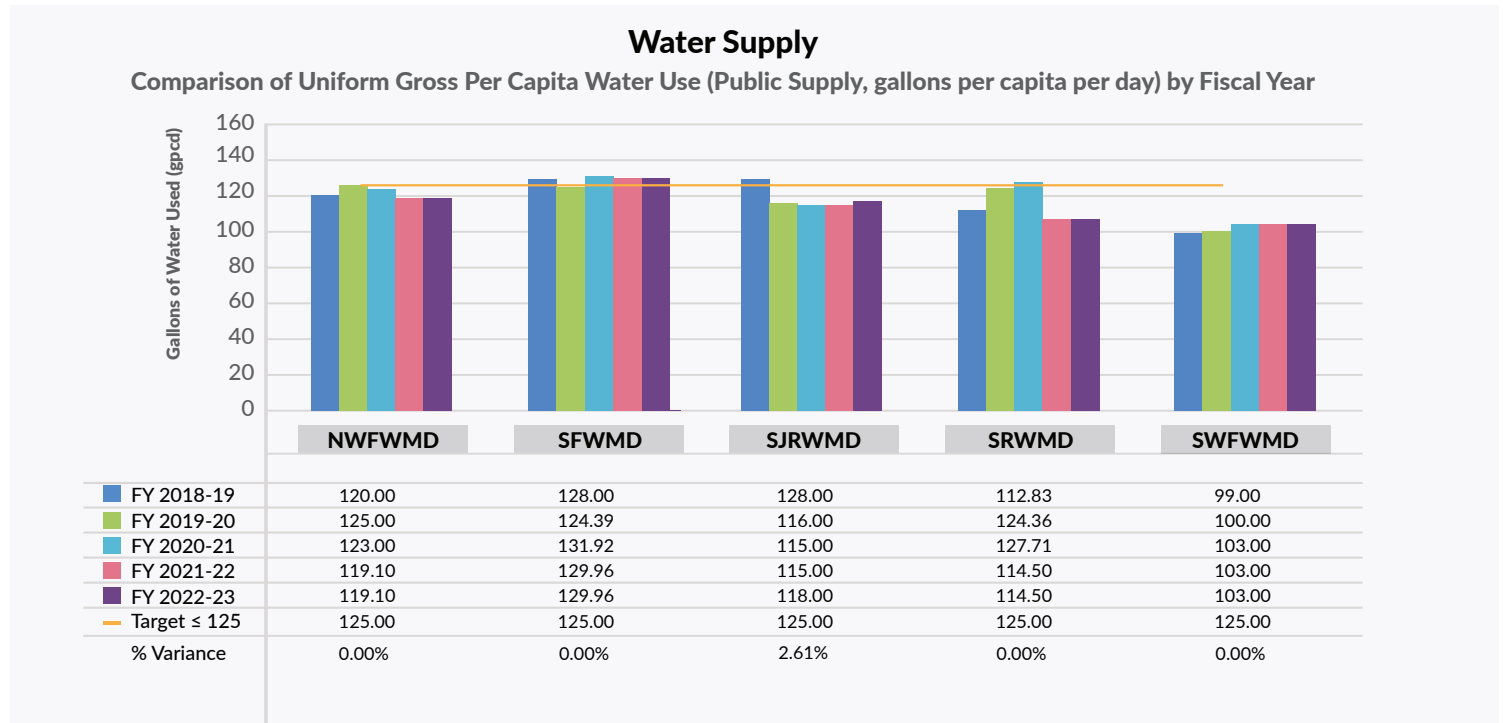
Water conservation is a key component of the District’s mission to ensure the public’s water needs are met and is one of the 12 Strategic Initiatives outlined in the District’s 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. Within the Conservation Strategic Initiative, the District’s goal is to enhance efficiencies in all water-use sectors to ensure beneficial use.

Water use data provides evidence of the District’s continued commitment to water conservation. The District is a leader in conservation and has regularly ranked as the lowest public supply per capita rate in the state (see Figure 1). While the population in the District has grown 141% over a 41-year period from 1982–2023, total water use has decreased by 21% due to increased conservation and the development of alternative water supplies. Conservation is generally one of the most cost-effective tools of water supply planning for population growth, allowing the deferral of development of more expensive traditional or alternative water supply projects.

This report summarizes the District’s water conservation efforts, including annual accomplishments and measurable water savings, for Fiscal Year 2024 (October 2023–September 2024). Information on reclaimed water or source substitution can be found in the District’s Annual Reuse Report.

The following report covers conservation efforts throughout the District, including cost-share funding, technical assistance, the Water Conservation Initiative, education and outreach, research and regulation.

*Figure 1. Comparison of Uniform Gross Per Capita Water Use by Fiscal Year (Source: Water Management District Performance Metrics for the fourth quarter of FY2022-23 by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection)*



**NFWWMD** = Northwest Florida Water Management District  
**SFWMD** = South Florida Water Management District  
**SJRWMD** = St. Johns River Water Management District  
**SRWMD** = Suwannee River Water Management District  
**SWFWMD** = Southwest Florida Water Management District

## II. COOPERATIVE FUNDING INITIATIVE

The Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) is a key program for building partnerships with external stakeholders, including local governments and regional water supply authorities. The CFI generally covers 50% of the costs of projects that help create sustainable water resources, enhance conservation efforts, improve water quality, restore natural systems and provide flood protection.

The District has provided CFI funding assistance since 1988, with the first water conservation program funded in 1991. Conservation projects are generally more cost-effective in comparison to other types of CFI projects related to water supply. The District's Water Incentives Supporting Efficiency (WISE) program, discussed later in this report, also supports smaller utility-led conservation projects.

Common indoor conservation programs include toilet rebates for converting to high-efficiency models and conservation kits that include low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators. Common outdoor water conservation programs include irrigation system evaluations, landscape and irrigation enhancements and irrigation smart controllers. Additional program types eligible for CFI funding are line looping, advanced metering analytics, Florida Water Star<sup>SM</sup> builder rebates, golf course irrigation enhancements and industrial/commercial-related water efficiency improvements.

Table 1. FY2024 CFI Conservation Projects

County	Project #	Cooperator	Title	Budgeted Total Costs	Budgeted District Share	Estimated Savings (gpd*)
Polk	Q371	Polk County	Polk County Irrigation System Evaluation Program, Phase 8	\$178,750	\$72,500	53,672
Pinellas	Q387	City of St. Petersburg	St. Petersburg Sensible Sprinkling Program, Phase 11	\$100,000	\$50,000	54,900
Total				\$278,750	\$122,500	108,572

\* Gallons per day



St. Petersburg's Sensible Sprinkling Program helps customers get the most out of their sprinkler system and use water more efficiently with the help of a local expert.



### III. AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

#### Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems Program

The Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems (FARMS) Program is an agricultural cost-share reimbursement program that reduces groundwater withdrawals from the Upper Floridan aquifer through conservation and alternative water supply best management practices (BMPs). The program is designed to serve as an incentive to the agricultural community to conserve groundwater use and promote resource sustainability. FARMS reimbursement can amount to 50–75% of total project costs for eligible BMPs.

FARMS is a public/private partnership developed by the District and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). FARMS includes both conservation and alternative water supply projects. Within FARMS is also the Mini-FARMS Program. Mini-FARMS provides cost-share funding for agricultural operations with smaller projects. Mini-FARMS reimbursement is 75% of total project costs not to exceed a reimbursement of \$10,000.

In FY2024, FARMS approved three water conservation related projects with a total estimated savings of 115,000 gpd (see Table 2). Mini-FARMS approved 44 conservation-related projects with a total estimated savings greater than 366,065 gpd (see Table 3). More information on the FARMS program can be found in the FARMS Status Report.

Table 2. FARMS Conservation Projects Approved in FY2024

Project # / Name	County	Budgeted District Share Reimbursement	Estimated Water Savings (gpd)
H823 – McClure Properties, LTD	Manatee	\$215,162	45,000
H826 – FD Berries USA LLC – Twitty Rd South	Highlands	\$119,129	25,000
H830 – McClure Properties, LTD– Phase 2	Manatee	\$195,706	45,000
Total		\$529,997	115,000



The District’s FARMS program funds water-saving technologies, such as butterfly valves, to allow more efficient irrigation practices.

Table 3. Mini-FARMS Conservation Projects Approved in FY2024

Project Name/#	County	Budgeted District Share Reimbursement
A Reverance for Roses, Inc WMD 443	Citrus	\$2,460.00
Astin Farms, Inc WMD 394	Hillsborough	\$6,750.00
Astin Ranch, Inc WMD 395	Hillsborough	\$3,375.00
Bay Grove Block 1 WMD 447	DeSoto	\$10,000.00
Bay Grove Block 3 WMD 448	DeSoto	\$10,000.00
Bell Farms WMD 419	Polk	\$10,000.00
Berry Red Farms WMD 397	Manatee	\$3,375.00
Bethlehem Berries Ph 1 WMD 454	Polk	\$10,000.00
Bethlehem Berries Ph 2 WMD 455	Polk	\$10,000.00
Blackman WMD 428	Hardee	\$3,375.00
Blueberry Hill WMD 456	Lake	\$10,000.00
Blueberry Hill WMD 457	Lake	\$5,869.04
Carlton Farms WMD 439	Hardee	\$3,525.00
DeSoto 293 Pump Automation WMD 420	DeSoto	\$10,000.00
DeSoto 293 Valve Automation WMD 421	DeSoto	\$10,000.00
Etheridge Cattle Co Automation WMD 435	Levy	\$9,337.20
Fancy Farms WMD 396	Hillsborough	\$6,750.00
Gator Creek Berry Farms	Hillsborough	\$3,525.00
Green Acres WMD 434	Pasco	\$3,400.49
Gutierrez Family Farms WMD 430	Hillsborough	\$7,050.00
J&L Triple B Ranch WMD 451	DeSoto	\$3,525.00
Jeff Starnes WMD 440	Levy	\$3,525.00
Juliana Plantation, LLC WMD 449	Polk	\$9,862.50
Juliana Plantation, LLC WMD 450	Polk	\$8,760.03
KW Estates Automation WMD 446	DeSoto	\$10,000.00
KW Estates SWSWS WMD 445	DeSoto	\$10,000.00
M Chavez Farms	Hillsborough	\$5,287.50
M Chavez Farms WMD 425	Hillsborough	\$3,525.00
Mark Schneider WMD 442	Levy	\$3,525.00
Mathis Farms - Plant City WMD 416	Hillsborough	\$10,000.00
Mathis Farms - Plant City WMD 426	Hillsborough	\$6,750.00
Mathis Farms WMD 393	Hillsborough	\$8,437.50
Mathis Farms WMD 431	Hillsborough	\$1,725.00
Norris - 77 Acre Bamboo WMD 444	Polk	\$10,000.00
Norris - Barlow 2 Hamlin WMD 400	Hardee	\$7,110.50
Packing House Pump Automation WMD 422	DeSoto	\$10,000.00
Packing House Valve Automation WMD 423	DeSoto	\$10,000.00
Polkdale Farms, LLC North WMD 453	Polk	\$10,000.00
Polkdale Farms, LLC South Block WMD 452	Polk	\$10,000.00
Riverview Flower Farm WMD 432	Hillsborough	\$9,122.47
Riverview Flower Farm WMD 433	Hillsborough	\$9,231.97
Sweet Roots Family Farms WMD 424	Polk	\$10,000.00
Sweetwater Preserve WMD 390	Hardee	\$9,959.57
Whitehurst Cattle Co WMD 437	Levy	\$10,000.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$329,138.77</b>



### Mobile Irrigation Laboratory

The Mobile Irrigation Laboratory (MIL) is a cooperative project that is funded and managed by the District and operated by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS-MIL evaluates agricultural irrigation system efficiencies on a voluntary and confidential basis and provides help with new technology awareness. The District uses the MIL program to assist growers in reducing water use, which in turn provides cost savings to the grower. The water savings realized from implementing system improvements identified by the MIL evaluations can be significant per project and regionally benefits groundwater supply, while also helping to improve water quality.

The MIL has assisted with more than 1,700 systems since the project began and the agricultural community has provided a great deal of positive feedback concerning its value. The MIL project contract has been in place since the mid-1980s. Contracts are approved for five-year terms with funding at \$50,000 per year, and a renewal contract is anticipated in FY2025.

Table 4. FY2024 Mobile Irrigation Laboratory Activity

Site Visits*	Total Acres Served	Potential Water Savings**
95	2,538	43 million gallons

\*Site visits include, but are not limited to, system evaluations, catch can tests, pressure tests and new equipment installation and training.

\*\*Potential Water Savings are the annual savings that could be obtained if all improvements are implemented as recommended.



An irrigation test performed through the MIL to check the uniformity of water delivery and identify irrigation system deficiencies.



## IV. UTILITY SERVICES

### Utilities Services Group

The District's Utilities Services Group assists public water utilities in increasing system efficiency and reducing system losses. It includes the following services:

- Leak detection surveys
- Water audit guidance and evaluation

Since inception of the program in 1990, the leak detection team has conducted 165 leak detection surveys throughout the District, locating 1,648 leaks of various sizes, with an estimated 5.9 million gallons per day (mgd) of potential water savings. In FY2024, three leak detection surveys were completed with a potential estimated water savings of 63,360 gpd.

There were no technical water audits completed with utilities in FY2024 due to District staffing changes. However, utilities with a water loss of over 10% were required to submit remedial action plans to address water loss. A total of 37 utilities submitted remedial action plans in FY2024, which were reviewed by District staff.

### Water Conservation Project Cost Effectiveness Calculator

The District's CFI water conservation calculator illustrates the potential cost effectiveness of various water conservation programs and can help estimate the water saving potential of various indoor and outdoor water conservation projects. The tool calculates cost effectiveness in cost per thousand gallons saved by using estimated water savings, project costs and project component service life. This information assists utilities in choosing projects that will provide the greatest benefits for the least cost. The calculator is available on the District's CFI webpage.

### Water-Conserving Rate Structures

The District works with utilities to adopt water-conserving rate structures to reduce per capita water use. These efforts assist utilities in achieving a compliance per capita rate of 150 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) or less as identified in the District's Strategic Plan and Rule<sup>1</sup>. As the pricing of water can signal that potable water is an increasingly scarce and valuable resource, rate structures are one way to motivate customers to conserve. To estimate the effectiveness of a water-conserving rate structure, the District has a free water rate simulation model, WATERATE2008, available for utility use upon request. WATERATE2008 is a planning tool that simulates how changes in water and sewer rate structures impact water revenues and water demand. As part of the projection, the model allows a revenue neutral evaluation. This takes into account the decrease in water demand that results from an increase in price.

### Local Government Comprehensive Plan Amendment Reviews

The District reviews local government comprehensive plan amendments pursuant to Chapter 163, Part II, F.S., and Section 373.711, F.S. Conservation is promoted through technical assistance comments and recommendations that focus on proposed policy language and updates to Ten-Year Water Supply Facilities Work Plans. In addition, consideration of Florida Water Star<sup>SM</sup>, Florida-Friendly Landscaping<sup>TM</sup> and other water-conservation programs, methods and techniques are encouraged for land use changes that involve increases in residential density.

<sup>1</sup> Rule 40D-3.091 (a) which references the Water Use Permit Applicant's Handbook Part B (section 2.3.7.2)

## V. WATER CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

The Water Conservation Initiative (WCI) is an ongoing effort designed to maximize assistance to public suppliers and promote the implementation of best management practices to achieve conservation objectives within the District's Strategic Plan. The WCI objectives include the following:

- Assist utilities in the District to reduce regional per capita, as identified in the Strategic Plan.
- Identify public supply Water Use Permits (WUPs) expiring on a two-year basis to ensure internal and external coordination occurs prior to and during permitting to comprehensively evaluate potential conservation measures.
- Take feedback received from utilities and develop recommendations to improve the District's conservation efforts.

Divisions within the District with representatives on the Water Conservation Initiative Team include Regulation, Resource Management, Employee, Outreach and General Services, and the Office of General Counsel.

Table 5. Water Conservation Initiative Activities and Accomplishments for FY2024

County	Activity	Outcome
Inter-District	The WCI team held several planning meetings to coordinate and keep up to date on various conservation efforts.	Enhanced coordination of the District's water conservation activities across multiple bureaus and divisions.
Districtwide	Continued the Water Use Evaluations for Non-Agricultural Users pilot project.	Met with the City of Tampa to review preliminary data analysis results.
Inter-District	District Regulation and Water Supply staff coordinated on the review and discussion of Public Supply WUPs exceeding 150 gpcd.	Non-compliance letters were sent to four utilities with a compliance per capita above 150 gpcd.
Inter-District	District Regulation and Water Supply staff coordinated on the review of water conservation plans and population projection calculations.	Coordinated review for seven public supply WUP applications.
Polk County	District Communications staff worked with Government and Community Affairs and Office of General Counsel staff on Florida Water Star <sup>SM</sup> (FWS) codes and ordinances.	Wrote FWS into Polk and Hardee counties' building ordinances.
Districtwide	District staff helped coordinate an inter-district water conservation coordinator meeting at Toho Water Authority in Kissimmee.	Districtwide utility staff attended the workshop to hear about and discuss conservation trends in Florida.



District staff, utilities and water conservation coordinators meet at the Toho Water Authority.



## Water Incentives Supporting Efficiency Program

The Water Incentives Supporting Efficiency (WISE) program is a cost-share program aimed to financially incentivize water conservation projects with nonagricultural water users. WISE was initiated under the WCI based on the District's recognition for the need to offer an alternative funding opportunity for smaller projects that may not be supported through the CFI. This includes projects implemented by utilities, apartment complexes, schools, prisons, homeowners associations, golf courses, hotels, manufacturers, food processing facilities and other commercial users.

In FY2024, the WISE program allocated \$73,959 across nine projects with a total estimated water savings of 57,207 gpd. At a cost share of up to 50%, approved applicants were eligible to receive up to \$20,000 per project in District funds.

*Table 6. WISE Projects Approved in FY2024*

Project #	Project Name	County	Budgeted District Share Reimbursement	Estimated Water Savings (gpd)
63	City of Lakeland Golf Course Weather Station	Polk	\$2,679.34	1,800
64	City of Palmetto Toilet Rebate Program	Manatee	\$5,000.00	2,012
65	Lakeland Lodge, LLC Toilet Replacement	Polk	\$6,676.92	1,296
66	Villas at Lake Smart, LLC Toilet Replacement	Polk	\$20,000.00	3,252
67	Castle Pines Village HOA Irrigation Controller Upgrade	Hernando	\$492.50	4,023
68	Southfork East CDD Irrigation Enhancement and Controller	Hillsborough	\$1,660.50	970
71	Bellevue Place Property Irrigation Enhancements and Controllers	Pinellas	\$12,475.36	5,023
72	Wellington at Seven Hills HOA Irrigation System Enhancements	Hernando	\$4,974.65	2,263
73	Tampa Bay Water Plumbing Fixture Rebates	Multiple	\$20,000.00	36,568
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$73,959.27</b>	<b>57,207</b>



Evapotranspiration sensors were installed with smart irrigation controllers and other system enhancements as part of Bellevue Place Property's WISE project to reduce outdoor water use.

Conservation Education Program

The Conservation Education Program (CEP) provides utilities, Extension offices and homeowners associations with support for educational projects that enhance existing efforts to increase residents’ knowledge and behaviors that lead to water conservation. The CEP was developed through the WCI in response to utility feedback that residential education is needed to help reduce water use. Through the CEP, the District works with project partners to promote, develop, implement and evaluate approved projects.

The District implemented the fifth year of the CEP in FY2024. The program allocated \$23,822 across six projects in FY2024 to enhance conservation outreach efforts (see Table 7).



The Rainfall Signage Project informed residents about local rainfall amounts and turf water needs to encourage outdoor water conservation.

Table 7. CEP Projects FY2024

Project Partner	Main Project Type	Project Components
Town of Belleair	Social Media Graphics and Social Norms Based Water Use Mail Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developed 15 graphics to support the town’s water conservation social media campaign.</li><li>• Developed and sent three water use mail outs to high water users.</li></ul>
UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County	Micro-Irrigation Kits and Hose Timers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Purchased 60 micro-irrigation kits and hose timers to support workshops hosted by the Extension.</li></ul>
Citrus County Utilities	Educational Billboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funded a billboard advertisement to support the county's "Be a Smart Irrigator" campaign and assisted with billboard artwork.</li></ul>
Polk County Utilities	Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) Demonstration Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Installed an FFL demonstration site with educational signage at the Cherry Hill Direct Potable Reuse Pilot Facility. (Installation occurred in FY2025.)</li></ul>
UF/IFAS Extension Marion County	FFL Demonstration Site Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Designed and purchased eight plant ID signs to support updates to a previously funded FFL demonstration site at the Stone Creek Community.</li></ul>
Hillsborough County	Rainfall Signage Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Installed a digital sign in the Ayersworth Glen neighborhood that informed residents on recent rainfall levels to encourage water conservation.</li></ul>



## VI. EDUCATION & OUTREACH

### Water Conservation Programs

#### Florida Water Star<sup>SM</sup>

The Florida Water Star<sup>SM</sup> (FWS) program is a water conservation certification program for new residential and commercial construction and existing home renovation. The program encourages water efficiency in appliances, plumbing fixtures, irrigation systems and landscapes, as well as water quality benefits from best management practices in landscapes. The program was developed by the St. Johns River Water Management District in 2006 and became a statewide program in 2012.

Through the CFI, the District currently offers FWS rebates in select communities in partnership with local utilities. New homes and commercial buildings receiving FWS certification are eligible for the rebates. The following rebates were offered to builders within the District in FY2024:

- Tampa Bay Water offered rebates in the amount of \$1,000 per home. During FY2024, District staff promoted the rebates through the Tampa Bay Builders Association and conducted an FWS Accredited Professionals training at Tampa Bay Water.

In addition to rebates, during FY2024 the District worked with Polk and Hardee counties to incorporate FWS certification and criteria into local building codes. At the close of FY2024, there were a total of 16 municipalities that incorporated FWS into local building codes. While most cities allow for affidavits to be signed for official FWS certification, the cities of Lake Wales and Zephyrhills require FWS certification for the builder to obtain their Certificate of Occupancy. In addition, Bay Laurel Utilities requires official FWS certification for transference of water service from builder to homebuyer. District staff also attended approximately 40 builder, landscape and irrigation meetings to promote the FWS program.

An average FWS homeowner with outdoor irrigation can save up to 48,000 gallons of water each year. Since 2006, over 5,300 properties have been certified by the District. In combination with those certified by the District, additional properties have or will meet FWS criteria based on local codes and ordinances. At build-out, more than 66,000 properties will be required to meet FWS criteria, saving approximately 3 billion gallons of water each year.



*An FWS certified home at the On Top of the World community in Marion County.*

## Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) is also part of the District's educational programs. It was created by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) to educate residents about landscape and irrigation principles that save water and protect water quality. The District promotes the use of FFL to members of the building industry, managers of community development districts and boards, homeowners associations, residents, and landscape and irrigation professionals during presentation events and through development and distribution of program publications and materials. The District has supported this program since 2001.

## Community Awareness Campaigns

The District has many community-wide outreach programs and awareness campaigns that focus on water conservation, watersheds and water quality. These include:

- **“Skip a Week” Campaign**—To encourage reduced irrigation during the winter months of January and February.
- **Water Conservation Month**—Throughout the month of April, the District works with local government partners to share the importance of water conservation and increase efforts to conserve water.
- **“Watch the Weather, Wait to Water”**—To encourage residents to watch the weather during the summer months of June, July, August and September to offset irrigation with rainfall.
- **“Water 101” Campaign**—To educate new and existing residents, as well as community managers, about how they can help conserve and protect water resources.

## Publications and Materials

Free publications are available to download or order via [WaterMatters.org](http://WaterMatters.org) for residents within the District. These publications include posters, student worksheets, teacher guides, bookmarks, recreation guides, informational brochures, tip cards and more on a variety of topics related to the District's mission, including conservation.

The District also supplies water-conserving items, such as leak detection tablets, sink aerators, low-flow showerheads and water-efficient spray nozzles at public events, presentations, workshops and to partner organizations. Education materials are provided concurrently to reinforce water conservation.

## Youth Education

The District provides funding to school districts within our region to help support water conservation education both in and out of the classroom. These programs allow students to gain the background knowledge to make informed decisions about water resources in the future. They include field trips, teacher trainings, classroom project supplies and Splash! school grants. Many free resources also are available to teachers, including free publications and materials, water education videos, virtual watershed excursions and the Classroom Conservation Challenge.



## Social Media

The District uses social media to promote conservation through regular posts, including tips to residents on how to conserve water through infographics, videos and promotion of free publications and additional resources.

## News Releases

The District issues news releases to inform the media and the public about District-initiated news and events, including those involving water conservation, such as water restrictions and conservation campaigns.

## Speaking Engagements

Through the Speakers Bureau, District staff share their expertise with a wide variety of audiences. Frequently requested topics include water resources and water conservation. The latter focuses on the limitations of our water supply and how residents can help conserve water both in the home and in the yard. Learning about leak detection, rain sensors and other conservation measures helps to ensure that residents are well-informed and can act to conserve water.

## Decision-Maker Water Schools

The District provides small grants for decision-maker water schools, which have a large focus on conservation. These programs provide elected officials, community leaders and other decision makers with factual information about their county's water resources and encourages improved public policy and decision making regarding water resource issues.



*Students install micro-irrigation to plant beds as part of a District-funded Splash! School Grant project exploring outdoor water conservation practices.*



# VII. RESEARCH

## Water Conservation Research

The District provides annual funding to the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) primarily for research projects involving agricultural best management practices, including those targeting water conservation. Additionally, funds have been awarded to research that relates to public supply conservation. UF/IFAS is a federal-state-county partnership that provides research and development for Florida’s agricultural, human and natural resources, as well as related food industries.

From FY2005 through FY2024, the District has provided a total of \$11.7 million in funding toward 60 UF/IFAS research projects. In FY2024, the District provided \$293,000 in support of research projects, all of which involved water conservation.

Table 8. Current Governing Board-Approved Conservation Research Projects

Project #	Project Name	Crop Type/ Use	Funding Years	Total Project Cost	FY24 District Funding Allocation
B136	Florida Automated Weather Network Data Dissemination and Education	General Agriculture	FY2020-2024	\$500,000	\$100,000
B424	Water-Nutrient Smart Production Systems with Compact Bed Geometry Technology: Water, Production, Economics	Tomato	FY2020-2024	\$299,000	\$170,000
B425	Top Dressing Lawns for Reduced Irrigation	Urban Landscape	FY2023-2024	\$58,000	\$23,000
Total				\$857,000	\$293,000



A compost topdressing application completed as part of a research study with the University of Florida to explore if topdressing can reduce lawn irrigation.



## VIII. REGULATION

### Water Use Permit Conditions

A Water Use Permit (WUP) allows the withdrawal of a specified amount of water, either from the ground (i.e. aquifers), surface (i.e. lakes, rivers or ponds) or alternative water supplies (i.e. reclaimed water or tailwater recovery). Upon submittal of a WUP application, the District's WUP Bureau evaluation staff determine if the use of water is reasonable and beneficial, does not interfere with any presently existing legal use of water, is consistent with the public interest and does not impact any sensitive environmental features. WUPs issued by the District contain standard and special conditions that mandate efficient use of water and conservation measures. Requirements include use of best management practices, leak detection and repair, inspections, water audits, water-conserving rate structures, a compliance per capita rate no greater than 150 gpcd and implementation of a Water Conservation Plan.

Additional special conditions are added for WUPs located within the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) planning area dependent on the location, quantity and predominant use of the permit. The CFWI is a collaborative process between the Department of Environmental Protection, St. Johns River Water Management District, South Florida Water Management District, Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), regional public water supply utilities, and other stakeholders to address the current and long-term water supply needs of Central Florida without causing harm to the water resources and associated natural systems. The CFWI encompasses five counties, including Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole and southern Lake.

### Water Conservation Plans

As part of the WUP process, all applicants for annual average quantities of 100,000 gallons per day or greater are required to implement a Water Conservation Plan. The plan must demonstrate that environmentally, technically and economically feasible water conservation measures applicable to the proposed use have been or will be employed. Water conservation measures that have been approved by the Governing Board by rule or water shortage order must be implemented. Where specific water conservation elements have been developed for specific use types, such as public supply or agriculture, these elements are incorporated into the permit.

For WUPs located in the CFWI planning area, all applicants are required to develop and implement an Annual Conservation Goal Implementation Plan (ACGIP) and submit a compliance progress report to the District as indicated by the reporting frequency on their WUP. Agricultural users with a total allocation less than 100,000 gpd may enroll in an adopted FDACS Best Management Practices (BMPs) program and utilize the FDACS BMPs as their annual conservation goal if the documentation supporting the enrollment and implementation of selected BMPs is maintained annually. Public Supply users with an annual average of 100,000 gpd or greater, and whose commercial water use is less than 30% of its total water use, are required to meet the annual conservation goal by demonstrating yearly progress toward a gross per capita daily water use rate of no greater than 115 gpd or a functional per capita daily water use rate of no greater than 100 gpd.

## **Year-Round Water Conservation Measures**

Year-round water conservation measures are part of District rules (Chapter 40D-22, Florida Administrative Code). The rule primarily focuses on allowable irrigation practices, including lawn and landscape watering, that are in place when there is no drought or other declared water shortage. The District generally uses the term “measures” instead of “restrictions” to distinguish the year-round practices from stricter watering limitations that can be imposed during a water shortage. These practices are meant to reduce wasteful irrigation habits and to help condition lawns for drought survival. The District’s year-round water conservation measures are in effect except where stricter measures have been imposed by local governments.

## **Water Shortage Plan/Orders**

Water shortage orders are temporary water use restrictions and other requirements that are declared in accordance with a state-mandated water shortage plan. This plan is included in a District rule (Chapter 40D-21, Florida Administrative Code) that describes how the agency will monitor hydrologic conditions and make decisions to manage the impact of droughts and other water shortages. Management strategies include four phases of response and additional actions that can be implemented in emergency situations.

During FY2024, the District enacted a Modified Phase I Water Shortage Order in November 2023 that required one-day-per-week watering for Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties. This water shortage order was rescinded in October 2024.





VISAV 02-25

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) does not discriminate on the basis of disability. This nondiscrimination policy involves every aspect of the District's functions, including access to and participation in the District's programs, services and activities. Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation, or who would like information as to the existence and location of accessible services, activities, and facilities, as provided for in the Americans with Disabilities Act, should contact the Human Resources Office Chief, at 2379 Broad St., Brooksville, FL 34604-6899; telephone (352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476 (FL only); or email [ADACoordinator@WaterMatters.org](mailto:ADACoordinator@WaterMatters.org). If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service, 1-800-955-8771 (TDD) or 1-800-955-8770 (Voice). If requested, appropriate auxiliary aids and services will be provided at any public meeting, forum, or event of the District. In the event of a complaint, please follow the grievance procedure located at [WaterMatters.org/ADA](http://WaterMatters.org/ADA).

