



Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

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Governor

Jennifer Carroll
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Herschel T. Vinyard Jr.
Secretary

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THROUGH: Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. *HV*
Secretary

FROM: Greg Munson *GM*
Deputy Secretary for Water Policy and Ecosystem Restoration

DATE: March 23, 2012

SUBJECT: Guidance for Improved Linkage between Regional Water Supply
Plans and the Consumptive Use Permitting Process

Regional Water Supply Planning is a critical tool for ensuring that existing and future water needs of the state are met while also protecting our valuable natural systems. Regional Water Supply Plans are developed through collaboration among the Water Management Districts (Districts), water providers, water users and other stakeholders when future projected demands are estimated to exceed existing water supplies. The resulting plan provides a blueprint for the development of sustainable water sources by identifying water supply project options, from which local water suppliers can choose, that will be more than sufficient to meet future needs while protecting the water resources of an area.

The Department recently conducted stakeholder sessions around the state with water users and environmental interests seeking input on ways to improve the consistency and effectiveness of the consumptive use permitting program. One of the issues raised

by the stakeholders is that better coordination is needed between the District staff who identify water supply projects for inclusion in the regional water supply plan, and the District permitting staff who may eventually be responsible for reviewing an application for those projects.

Water suppliers are not required to choose a water supply development project identified in a regional water supply plan. However, by doing so, permit applicants should have confidence that the project has undergone initial screening for feasibility and has a likelihood of being permittable. The applicant should be assured that time and money spent in more detailed project development will not be wasted. To accomplish this, coordination between the staff who develop the regional water supply plan and the staff who are responsible for water use permitting is critical. Planning staff must know the criteria for permit issuance in order to incorporate conceptual level analysis and screening into plan development.

Similarly, the Districts need to ensure that permitting staff are knowledgeable about the projects in the plans, and the data and the analysis that supports those projects. While it is not required that projects identified in the plan be analyzed to the level of detail required to determine if they meet all the conditions for issuance of a consumptive use permit, an applicant who selects a project identified in the plan should have some assurances that 1) District staff are not only familiar with the project but will have access to and will apply the existing data available from the planning process when reviewing the application, and 2) permitting staff will facilitate, consistent with statute and District permitting rules, the successful permitting of the project.

Successful coordination, as outlined above, will promote the selection of sustainable water supply projects identified in the plans by improving the efficiency and timeliness of the consumptive use permitting process for those applicants who select them.

HTV/GM/as

cc: Ann B. Shortelle, Ph.D., Director, Office of Water Policy, FDEP