

Frequently Asked Questions About the Water Shortage Order for the Northeastern Portion of Cape Coral and the Water Shortage Warning for Collier and Lee Counties

Q: What are the water shortage restrictions implemented by the South Florida Water Management District?

A: In order to protect groundwater in the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) declared a water shortage on Nov. 28, 2023, and issued mandatory irrigation restrictions for portions of Cape Coral and unincorporated Lee County. Landscape irrigation is limited to one day a week in the designated area for irrigation water supplied by private wells.

Q: Why were water shortage restrictions only implemented for northeastern Cape Coral?

A: The Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer that supplies water to many private wells in the area for drinking water and irrigation is at a record low level due to a significant deficit in rainfall this year. The Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer in northeastern Cape Coral is at its shallowest point in the area, making it more susceptible to low water levels.

Q: Why isn't the entire City of Cape Coral under water shortage restrictions?

A: Water shortage orders are based on specific water resource concerns. In the case of northeast Cape Coral, the water resource of concern is the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer, located 125-150 feet below land surface. This aquifer is used by most of the homes in that area for drinking water and irrigation. The SFWMD uses specialized monitoring wells that measure water levels within the aquifer. The impacted area is experiencing the lowest water levels recorded in that area. As a result of the deficient rainfall this past summer (rainy season), the current water elevation is approximately 15 feet lower compared to each of the last four years and is projected to decline to a level that will be harmful to the mid-Hawthorn Aquifer. By reducing irrigation from the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer, we are hopeful this will decrease the amount of projected decline in the aquifer and protect the Mid-Hawthorn from permanent damage.

Q: Is the City of Cape Coral going to run out of drinking water?

A: No, the City of Cape Coral's drinking water originates from the Floridan Aquifer, about a 1,000 feet below land surface. This groundwater source is brackish & requires reverse osmosis to allow it to be used for drinking water. There is no connection between the Floridan Aquifer and the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer. The city also provides irrigation water which is made up of reclaimed water (treated wastewater) and surface water from the local canal system. These sources were not impacted by the deficit rainfall this summer and are not of concern of being impacted in the future. In addition, there is no connection between these sources & the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer. As such, there is not a resource concern from these sources of water or the need to restrict their use.

Q: We've received rainfall recently. Will the watering restriction be lifted soon?

A: Due in part to the recent rainfall and the expanded watering restrictions, the decline in the Mid-Hawthorne Aquifer has slowed and stabilized somewhat. However, the aquifer is projected to continue to decline through the remainder of the dry season as the demand for household water use and irrigation continues. The Water Shortage Order and one day a week landscape irrigation restrictions are expected to remain in effect until aquifer water levels recover sufficiently to minimize the potential for harm to the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer.

Q: Why are declining water levels a problem?

A: Private water wells used by homeowners for drinking and irrigation may become inoperable if water levels within the aquifer continue to decline at the current rate. If water levels get too low, parts of the aquifer may collapse and cause irreversible damage to the aquifer.

Q: Where are the water shortage restrictions being enforced?

A: The map shows the area of Cape Coral and unincorporated Lee County where watering restrictions are being enforced.



For residents within the designated area in the City of Cape Coral, the irrigation requirements are:

- Addresses that end in 0 can irrigate on Mondays, 12-4 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 1 can irrigate on Fridays, 4-8 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 2 can irrigate on Thursdays, 12-4 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 3 can irrigate on Wednesdays, 12-4 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 4 can irrigate on Sundays, 12-4 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 5 can irrigate on Saturdays, 12-4 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 6 can irrigate on Thursdays, 4-8 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 7 can irrigate on Wednesdays, 4-8 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 8 can irrigate on Sundays, 4-8 a.m.
- Addresses that end in 9 can irrigate on Saturdays, 4-8 a.m.

For residents within the designated area in unincorporated Lee County, the irrigation requirements are:

- Addresses that end in 0 can irrigate on Sundays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 1 can irrigate on Saturdays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 2 can irrigate on Sundays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 3 can irrigate on Saturdays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 4 can irrigate on Sundays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 5 can irrigate on Saturdays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 6 can irrigate on Sundays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 7 can irrigate on Saturdays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 8 can irrigate on Sundays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.
- Addresses that end in 9 can irrigate on Saturdays, Midnight-9 a.m. & 5 p.m.-Midnight.

Q: Why are watering restrictions necessary to protect water supply?

A: Most homes in northeastern Cape Coral depend on the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer, located approximately 125 feet underground for drinking water and irrigation. Water levels within this aquifer are at record low levels due to a significant deficit in rainfall this year which substantially reduced recharge to the aquifer. The U.S. Drought Monitor indicates that the Southwest Florida region is in an Abnormally Dry to Moderate Drought.

The irrigation restrictions in place today are expected to reduce the decline in the water levels. Compared to each of the last four years, the current elevation is approximately 15 feet lower. The aquifer is generally recharged by seasonal rainfall each year, and water levels increase as the region receives rain.

Q: What happens if the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer drops too low?

A: If water levels in the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer continue to drop, the aquifer might become permanently damaged. This damage could permanently impede the aquifer's

ability to meet water supply demand for users in the future.

Q: Why is lawn watering being restricted?

A: In situations of extreme dry conditions such as the one currently facing the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer, more significant watering restrictions are necessary to limit watering to reduce demand on the aquifer and give it a chance to recover.

More than 50 percent of the water used by South Florida residents is for landscape irrigation. With billions of gallons of water used every day and projections for continued population growth, we all need to do our part to conserve water and ensure there is enough for people and the environment.

Q: How long will lawn watering restrictions be in place?

A: Watering restrictions are expected until the region receives enough rainfall to restore the Mid-Hawthorn Aquifer.

Q: Will watering restrictions become permanent?

A: Water shortage declared irrigation restrictions are intended as a short-term solution to address the declining aquifer levels. The long-term solution is continuing to conserve water and expanding the City of Cape Coral's utility system to provide water to residents from an alternative water source.

Q: What is the penalty for violating the watering restrictions?

A: The City of Cape Coral and Lee County will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with irrigation restrictions and will issue any warnings and fines to property owners found violating the restrictions.

Q: What about residents of Lee and Collier County outside of the water shortage restriction area?

A: On Nov. 21, 2023, SFWMD issued a Water Shortage Warning to all residents of Lee and Collier County asking all residents in both counties to voluntarily limit their lawn watering and take steps to conserve water.

Q: In addition to reducing my irrigation, what other measures can I do to reduce my water use?

A: See below for simple tips to save water both inside and outside your home.

· All landscape irrigation should comply with the allowed days and times as established in your local government's year-round landscape irrigation ordinance. Visit [SFWMD.gov/WaterConservation](https://www.sfwmd.gov/WaterConservation) and click on Lawn Watering Restrictions. Type in your county and city to find out the days and times of the week when you can water. During the cooler winter months, lawns do not need to be irrigated as frequently as summer

months. Most of the time, one day of irrigation per week is sufficient to maintain a healthy landscape.

- Check irrigation timers to ensure settings are correct and rain sensors are working properly. Check irrigation systems to ensure they are working properly and test and repair broken pipes and damaged sprinkler heads.
- Fix leaks. Finding and fixing water leaks conserves water, saves money and protects your home from damage.
- Avoid washing or cleaning streets, sidewalks, driveways, or other impervious areas with water.
- When utilizing water indoors, reduce shower durations, minimize loads of laundry, and only run dishwashers when full.

Q: What is SFWMD doing to ensure adequate water supply for Central and Southern Florida?

A: SFWMD proactively develops long-term water supply plans to monitor, evaluate and identify water sources and projects to meet the future water needs throughout its 16-county region. As part of its mission, the SFWMD plans for sufficient water supplies to meet the needs of the region's residents, visitors, and the environment – now and in the future. Water supply planning, water conservation and the use of alternative water supplies are essential to meet the growing demand on limited water resources.

SFWMD staff works with our partners, stakeholders, and members of the public to develop regional water supply plans for five planning areas to evaluate current and future water demands and identify water sources for all of the region's needs while protecting water resources and the environment. Water supply plans look at least 20 years into the future and are updated every five years to stay current with growth trends.

The long-term water supply plan for the Lower West Coast which includes Lee and Collier counties was last updated in 2022 and is updated every five years. Learn more about the [Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan](#).

SFWMD also works with its partners including local governments and water utilities to develop alternative water supplies, increase the use of reclaimed water for irrigation and fund programs that increase water conservation.