



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Randy Smith

South Florida Water Management District

Office: (561) 682-2800 or Cellular: (561) 389-3386

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SFWMD Observes Water Conservation Month

Statewide emphasis on water conservation coincides with South Florida's record-low rainfall



Small actions help make every drop count.

West Palm Beach, FL — Statewide designation of April as Water Conservation Month takes on added significance this year for the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), where less than half of normal rainfall was received during the last six months.

“South Florida’s 7.7 million residents, economy and unique environment all depend on a limited water supply,” said SFWMD Executive Director Carol Ann Wehle. “When water needs are at their most acute, Water Conservation Month reminds us that small, commonsense measures taken throughout the year can add up to help protect our finite resources.”

For 13 consecutive years, Florida has recognized Water Conservation Month in April, the height of the South Florida dry season. This is the time when limited rainfall and peak water demand puts stress on regional water supplies.

Conservation is essential year-round to buffer the impacts of weather extremes, such as the current drought. Water conservation habits include installing an aerator on your sink, watering the lawn by hand or installing low-flow appliances, such as a showerhead or energy-efficient washing machine.

Throughout April, the District is sponsoring and participating in a broad range of events to raise awareness and promote wise water use:

- The Florida Automated Weather Network (FAWN) irrigation tools workshop on April 7 in Belle Glade is a cooperative effort between the District and the University of Florida to demonstrate advanced irrigation tools to agricultural users and other large irrigators.
- The District and the Florida Section of the American Water Works Association will hold the 3rd annual Water Conservation Expo and Vendor Fair on April 8 in West Palm Beach. The event focuses on helping large irrigation water users such as parks, golf courses and homeowners associations identify ways to reduce their outdoor water use.
- The District in partnership with the Florida Nursery Growers & Landscape Association (FNGLA) will host the 4th annual Landscape Challenge on Friday, April 22, at Halpatiokee Regional Park (Pavilion 12) in Stuart. Participants will be challenged on the best management practices.
- Other local events include:
 - April 8 – Keys-wide Sustainability Program Workshop in Marathon, Monroe County
 - April 16 – Earth Day at Okeeheelee Park in Palm Beach County
 - April 16 – Sustainability Summit in West Palm Beach
 - April 16 – Earth Day Event at Bahia Honda State Park on Bahia Honda Key, Monroe County
 - April 21 – Lunch and Learn at Reedy Creek Improvement District in Orange County

Continued dry conditions in March further stressed South Florida's water resources. Lake Okeechobee, which is the backup water supply for the region, is more than 2 feet below normal and reached its water shortage management zone on Friday, March 18. This follows the driest October-to-February period in 80 years and a dry season rainfall deficit that reached nearly 8 inches.

When water shortage conditions do not require specific watering restrictions, all residents of the District should follow Year-Round Water Conservation Measures that target outdoor irrigation, which accounts for up to half of the estimated 179 gallons of water used per person per day. The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule is just one

initiative implemented under the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program. In addition to the conservation efforts, the District is currently under a water shortage order that requires further limitation.

The Comprehensive Water Conservation Program was approved by the SFWMD Governing Board in September 2008 to encourage more responsible use of water resources throughout South Florida. Numerous stakeholders worked with the District to define specific regulatory, voluntary and incentive-based programs and in-depth education and marketing plans that will help foster a year-round conservation ethic.

There are many ways to use reclaimed water or create water-friendly landscapes to better protect the water supply. For more information on ways to save water, visit www.savewaterfl.com. For more information on water use restrictions implemented to conserve the supply, visit www.sfwmd.gov/waterwatch.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.