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quick facts on...

Outdoor Irrigation Retrofitting

MARCH 2010

The South Florida Water Management District *is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.*

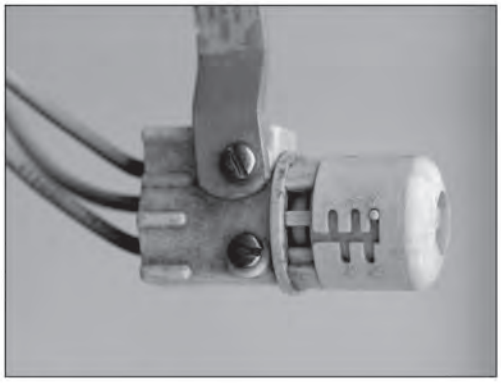
Our Mission *is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.*

When it comes to conserving water in a landscape irrigation system, there are many conservation options, and the right option will depend on many factors. The most important factors in landscape water use efficiency are selection and design of plant material and the arrangement of the irrigation system.

Are the plants grouped according to their irrigation and/or shade requirements? Are the plants in the design adapted to this environment? After plant material has been selected and arranged, the design of the irrigation system is crucial to ensuring water use efficiency. Do the emitters match the irrigated area? Does the volume of water delivered during each watering event meet or exceed the requirements for the plants? Does the system cover the entire landscape?

A variety of hardware devices can help ensure that a landscape receives all the water it requires and no more. Below is a list of some of the more common devices that can help meet this objective:

- Rain sensors
- Soil moisture sensors
- Efficient rotor and sprinkler heads
- Programmable multi-zone irrigation control systems
- Evapotranspiration or satellite regulated control sensors



Water Savings

Outdoor irrigation accounts for as much as 50 percent of the average South Florida home's total water consumption. Much of this use is in excess of what is required to sustain a healthy residential landscape. Therefore, outdoor irrigation represents an area of great potential for water savings. Florida Water Star, a water use efficiency standards and certification program operating in the St. Johns River, Southwest Florida and South Florida Water Management Districts, estimates that efficient irrigation systems can reduce a home's outdoor water use by 40 percent or more. These savings can reach tens of thousands of gallons per year for an individual residence and hundreds of thousands for a homeowners association.

Installation and Maintenance Costs

Purchase and installation of irrigation retrofit hardware will vary greatly in cost, depending on which technology is employed and the size of the irrigated area. However, these retrofits often pay for themselves in one to three years.

How the South Florida Water Management District Can Help

Through the Water Savings Incentive Program (WaterSIP), the South Florida Water Management District provides matching funds up to $50,000 to water providers and users for installing water-saving technologies, such as high-efficiency plumbing fixtures, rain and soil moisture sensors and fire hydrant flushing devices. Potential applicants include cities, public utilities and water providers, homeowners associations, schools, hospitals and industrial/commercial facilities. Individual residences are not eligible.

Since its inception in 2003, WaterSIP has allocated more than $3.8 million to dozens of public and private entities across the District's 16 counties, resulting in an estimated water savings of more than 2.3 billion gallons per year. The program is based on cost-sharing. Entities seeking funding must be able to match at least 50 percent of the total costs for the project, either with matching funds or in-kind services. Up to 100 percent funding is available to Rural Economic Development Initiative communities.

In addition, to those mentioned above, other outdoor and indoor water conservation items will be considered for funding support under the WaterSIP program.

Applications for WaterSIP are posted annually in March. Check the WaterSIP Web site for details on the program and application process. To learn more about WaterSIP, please contact Robert Wanvestraut, SFWMD Senior Conservation Officer, at rwanvest@sfwmd.gov or 561-682-2054. You may also visit us online at www.sfwmd.gov/watersip.

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South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
561-686-8800 • 800-432-2045
www.sfwmd.gov

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 24680
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

SERVICE CENTERS

Big Cypress Basin/Naples
239-263-7615
Broward
954-713-3200
Florida Keys
305-453-1275
Lower West Coast
239-338-2929 or 800-248-1201
Martin/St. Lucie
772-223-2600 or 800-250-4100
Miami-Dade
305-377-7274 or 800-250-4300
Okeechobee
863-462-5260 or 800-250-4200
Orlando
407-858-6100 or 800-250-4250
Palm Beach County
561-682-6000 or 800-432-2045