

WATER

Matters

Winter 2007

A drop in drops – gauging the rain



GET TO KNOW US!

Stay informed with this quarterly update from the South Florida Water Management District, protector of the region's water resources.



■ **Wet Season that Wasn't**
Why conserving water helps ensure adequate water supplies

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Protecting our water resources is a shared responsibility

INSIDE



THE WET SEASON THAT WASN'T

brings calls for continued water conservation



Did you know that rainfall is Florida's number one source for replenishing our limited water supply? Usually, the South Florida Water Management District's 16-county region from Orlando to the

Keys gets an abundance of rain. The average is 52 inches a year with about 70 percent falling mostly in the wet season (June through October) and just 30 percent falling in the dry season (November through May) when water demands are highest. All that rain helps provide fresh water for more than 7 million residents, millions of tourists, a thriving agricultural industry and the natural environment. However, last year, those demands came on the heels of a lackluster wet season that dropped below average rainfalls in most regions of the South Florida Water Management District.

RECORD DRY TIMES

From January through November 2006, the region received only about 38.3 inches of rain, leaving a deficit of nearly a foot District-wide - the driest on record since 1938. Some areas of the District were even drier, such as the Upper Kissimmee region north of Lake Okeechobee, which received only about 29 inches - more than 1.5 feet below average rainfall!

In November, following the wet season that wasn't and below-average Lake Okeechobee levels, the District's Governing Board declared a water shortage order. This action put in place mandatory water use restrictions for towns, businesses and farms that get their water supply from Lake Okeechobee or other surface water sources that are recharged by the lake. At the same time, a water shortage warning was issued for Florida's highly populated southeastern coastal counties that rely on Lake Okeechobee as a backup water supply source, encouraging aggressive voluntary water conservation activities in the hopes of staving off mandatory restrictions.

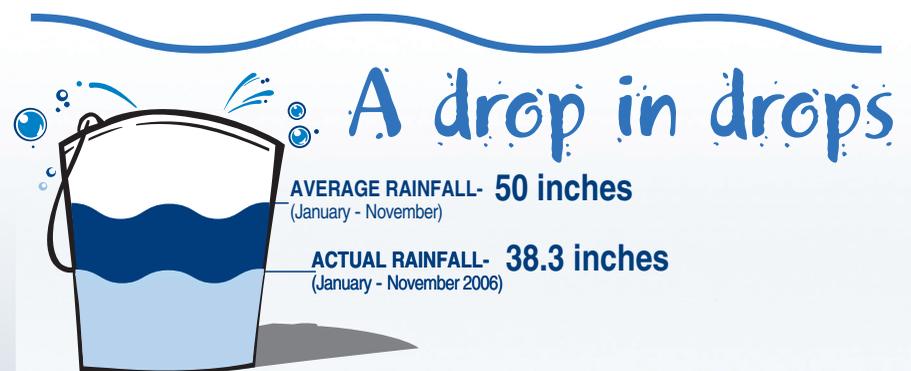
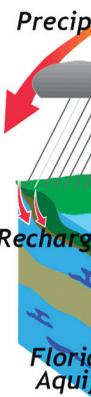
Year-round municipal- and county-level water restrictions are already in effect in some areas throughout the District, making it critical that residents also check with their local governments for limits on activities including lawn irrigation and car washing.

Scientists and meteorologists anticipate that even a wetter-than-normal dry season may not prevent the District from implementing mandatory water restrictions in many parts of central and southern Florida.

SAVING WATER AS A WAY OF LIFE

Water conservation is critical now through May to protect our water resources and help ensure that adequate freshwater supplies are available for people, businesses, farms and the environment. The South Florida Water Management District is asking everyone from the Keys to southern Orange County, and east coast to west coast, to voluntarily limit water use now - and all year long - and make water conservation a way of life.

If you're not already saving water, you can start today by following the 10 easy tips on the opposite page.

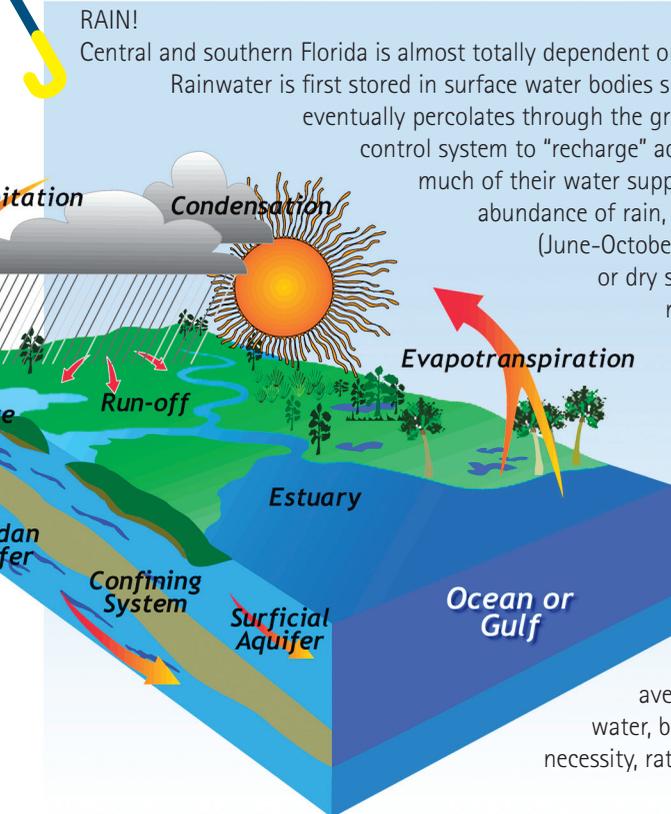


When water demand is highest, during the cooler months of the dry season (November - May), rainfall is scarcest. The first 11 months of 2006 including the wet season (June-October) were the driest since 1938, so the current dry season is likely to have a greater impact on our water supply. In some areas, water shortages have already occurred! Continued water conservation will help stave off mandatory or more severe water restrictions and protect our natural resources.



Our region's major surface water sources are the Upper Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee, Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers, water conservation areas and the Everglades - plus associated lakes, ponds, wetlands and canals. Lake Okeechobee is the primary water source for cities, towns and farms in counties surrounding the lake and a backup water supply source for people, business and agriculture in Florida's heavily populated southeast coastal counties.

Where does our DRINKING WATER come from?



RAIN!
Central and southern Florida is almost totally dependent on RAINFALL for most of our fresh water supply. Rainwater is first stored in surface water bodies such as lakes, rivers, canals and wetlands but it eventually percolates through the ground or is moved by water managers through the water control system to "recharge" aquifers. Cities and towns, businesses and agriculture draw much of their water supplies from these aquifers. Our region usually gets an abundance of rain, about 52 inches a year, falling mostly in the summer/fall (June–October or wet season) months. Winter/spring (November–May or dry season) are typically warm with much less rain. Still, no matter how much rain we receive, most of it isn't available for consumptive use. As much as 45 inches of rain is lost each year through evapotranspiration – a combination of evaporation and transpiration (when plants absorb water through their roots and pass it back into the atmosphere as water vapor from leaves). What's more, during heavy rains millions of gallons of water are discharged through the regional water control system to the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Mexico to control flooding. There aren't enough water storage areas to absorb Florida's rainfalls even during the dry season. When we experience years with below-average rainfall, it doesn't mean that we will run out of water, but it does mean that water conservation becomes a necessity, rather than just a goal.

So Our Wells Don't Run Dry

Innovative projects turn unused water into a usable resource

South Florida residents – we now number more than 7 million – put a huge demand on the region's water resources. Despite excellent freshwater sources, central and southern Florida's water supply is limited.

One way to be sure our fresh water will meet future needs is to put unused water to work with Alternative Water Supply, or AWS, projects. By treating, storing or moving unused water, it remains available to meet our growing demand.

Alternative water supply projects such as use of saline water sources, aquifer storage and recovery wells, and reuse of reclaimed water, help create new sources to meet long-term needs, while water conservation stretches our existing supply.

These projects are more than good ideas – they are now encouraged by law. The Florida Legislature passed a bill in 2005 requiring all communities in the state to identify specific water-resource projects to meet their future water needs. Alternative Water Supply is a primary way to achieve this, and many projects are now under way, thanks to state funds and AWS grants from the South Florida Water Management District.

This year, \$40.5 million was granted by the District to



▲ Alternative water supply projects help create new water sources to meet our long-term needs, while water conservation stretches our existing supply.

fund 62 different AWS projects from Orange County to the Keys. When completed, these projects will collectively provide 238.5 million gallons of additional water per day.

OTHER LONG-RANGE PLANS

The District and its local, state and federal partners are also implementing the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). This monumental plan includes many projects that will work together to create a more efficient system for capturing and storing water that is now lost to the sea. Overall, CERP will help to restore the Everglades while meeting the water needs for the environment and a growing population.

The District has already jump-started eight CERP projects under its *Acceler8* Everglades restoration initiative, including three key storage reservoirs.

10 Easy Ways you can save water

In Florida, each person uses an average of 175 gallons of water every day! About half of that water is used outside the home, often wastefully, over-watering lawns and gardens. Here are some easy ways you can help conserve water:

1. Simply turn off your sprinklers! Lawn irrigation counts for 50 percent or more of drinking water used in South Florida.
2. Water only when your lawn shows signs of wilt (stress) and only when it has not rained.
3. Water the lawn before sunrise so less water evaporates.
4. Keep lawn mower blades sharp, and cut the grass on the highest setting.
5. Landscape with water thrifty native plants.
6. A short shower using an ultra low flow showerhead can use one-half the water of the average 40-gallon bath.
7. Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. One drop per second wastes 2,700 gallons per year.
8. Less water is wasted when dishwashers and washing machines are run with full loads.
9. Turn off the water when brushing your teeth and shaving.
10. Do not use the toilet as a garbage can; reduce excessive flushing by disposing facial tissues and insects in the waste can.

There are many more ways you can conserve water by making small changes in the way you use water. Visit www.sfwmd.gov/conserv or call our Water Conservation Hotline at (800) 662-8876 to request more water conservation information.



Service Centers: Your Direct Link

The South Florida Water Management District's nine Service Centers are the critical links between the regional agency – headquartered in West Palm Beach – and the local communities we serve throughout our 16-county jurisdiction, highlighted in yellow on the map.

HEADQUARTERS

- West Palm Beach
(561) 686-8800 or
(800) 432-2045 (Florida Only)

SERVICE CENTERS

- Big Cypress Basin/Naples
(239) 597-1505
- Broward
(954) 713-3200
- Florida Keys (Plantation Key)
(305) 853-3219 or (800) 464-5067
- Lower West Coast (office in Fort Myers)
(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) 682-2283

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional agency of the state of Florida and is charged with managing and protecting water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. Our boundaries extend from central Florida to Lake Okeechobee, and from coast to coast, from Fort Myers to Fort Pierce, south through the sprawling Everglades to the Florida Keys and Florida Bay.

WANT TO HEAR MORE?

It would be our pleasure to meet with your organization and answer your water management questions.

If interested, please call
(800) 432-2045 or
(561) 686-8800, ext. 6202.

Florida's Water
It's Worth Saving

YOUR GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS

Appointed by the Governor, the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board sets policy and provides overall direction for the agency:

KEVIN McCARTY, *CHAIRMAN*
DELRAY BEACH

IRELA M. BAGUÉ, *VICE-CHAIR*
MIAMI

MIYA BURT-STEWART
HOLLYWOOD

ALICE J. CARLSON
NAPLES

MICHAEL COLLINS
ISLAMORADA

NICOLÁS GUTIÉRREZ, JR., ESQ.
MIAMI

LENNART E. LINDAHL, P.E.
PALM CITY

HARKLEY R. THORNTON
ORLANDO

MALCOLM S. WADE, JR.
CLEWISTON

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

We can't protect our water resources and ecosystems alone. You can help by supporting our joint efforts.

FEDERAL

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (904) 232-2234 or (800) 291-9405
- U.S. Department of the Interior (202) 208-3100
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (202) 272-0167

STATE

- South Florida Water Management District (see map above)
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (850) 245-2118
- Florida Department of Community Affairs (850) 488-8466
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (850) 488-4676
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services . . (850) 488-3731

LOCAL

The South Florida Water Management District partners with local city and county governments, including water utility departments, as well as environmental, tribal, agricultural, business and community groups across our 16-county jurisdiction to implement ecosystem protection and restoration, enhance flood protection and protect water supplies. Check your telephone directory for a list of your local city or county offices, or contact your nearest Service Center for assistance



South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road • West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
561-686-8800 • FL WATS 1-800-432-2045 • www.sfwmd.gov

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

sfwmd.gov