

Century Commission
Third Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature

Recommendations from 2008 Water Congress

In September of 2008, delegates from government, industry and non-governmental sectors from around the state convened in Orlando for a Water Congress to address issues related to water conservation, re-use, ground and surface water supply, desalination and water policy administration. A total of 18 consensus recommendations were identified by the delegates, with four recommended priorities voted on with majority consent. The Century Commission believes that the four priorities should be acted upon without delay. The four consensus priority recommendations offered by the delegates of the 2008 Water Congress are as follows:

1. Reinstate the annual state funding for alternative water supply development and water quality improvement (i.e., SB 444 (2005) funding to be matched by Water Management Districts and local governments/ utilities). Make SB 444 funding a recurring source of annual state funding for alternative water supply development and reinstate original funding levels at a minimum.

2. Support regional partnerships, incentives and cooperative approaches to addressing long-term water sustainability for Florida. The Water Management Districts, the FDEP and local governments should aggressively identify opportunities and develop incentives for establishing multi-jurisdictional utility arrangements or water supply authorities and engage in other areas where partnerships should be beneficial and cost effective to the public.

3. Amend, as necessary, any statute, rule or policy so that quantifiable water conservation best management practices are considered an “alternative water supply” and are equally as eligible for funding as capital facility expansion proposals.

4. Set a per capita target or goal for water use and quantifiable best management water practices and provide a stable funding base for the Conserve Florida program directed by Sect. 373.227, F.S., including the statewide water conservation clearinghouse for public water supply.

After careful review and discussion of all eighteen recommendations, the Century Commission has determined that the following recommendation related to reclaimed water should also be acted upon and added as the fifth consensus priority.

5. While protecting water quality, maximize the beneficial use of reclaimed water and improve upon the capture and storage of excess water. Recruit and connect large industrial users to reclaimed water systems to reduce demand on existing and future potable systems. It is recommended that a goal of 100% beneficial and cost effective reuse of wastewater from publicly owned wastewater treatment facilities be established

for the year 2030. The management of wastewater needs to continue to evolve from a disposal problem to a valuable water supply opportunity.

The product of the two day Water Congress was the creation of eighteen consensus recommendations. The remaining thirteen recommendations are listed below.

1. Achieve dramatic improvements in landscape irrigation efficiency by requiring use of the recommendations found in the report, *Landscape Irrigation and Florida Friendly Design Standards*, (where applicable) as a condition of

- Consumptive Use Permits issued by Water Management Districts,
- Development orders issued by local governments,
- Development orders for Developments of Regional Impact as reviewed by Regional Planning Councils,
- Land use amendments reviewed by the Department of Community Affairs,
- Changes to land development regulations,
- Environmental Resources Permits issued by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

2. Coordinate public information efforts statewide regarding water conservation, water quality, sustainability and energy using the most effective methods of conveying the messages and measuring the efficacy of the public information campaigns. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Landscape water conservation must be underscored by science based, practical and easily understood recommendations for homeowners and do it yourself gardeners to follow;
- Establish public and stakeholder outreach programs regarding costs, environmental advantages and effectiveness of water saving technologies;
- Educate all sectors regarding the interdependency of upland and wetland systems.

3. Amend Florida law to prohibit neighborhood organization and local ordinances from restricting the use of Florida friendly landscaping.

4. Support the development of robust incentive based cooperative funding programs by the Water Management Districts to encourage the development of alternative water supplies and implementation of conservation measures, including the maximum use of reclaimed water that will require seeking state and federal funding to complement water management district funding initiatives.

5. Amend the Florida Constitution to raise the millage cap for the Northwest Florida Water Management District.

6. Regulatory agencies should require a high level of use efficiency as a condition to incentives and long term permitting assurances.

7. Create incentives for private land owners to capture and store water.

8. Optimize the use of alternative water supplies which take and store peak surface water flows and also restores the natural system.

9. Minimum flows and levels (MFLs) must be set for all surface water bodies where consumptive use permits are sought; natural groundwater levels should not be ignored to the detriment and loss of the dependent natural ecological systems (wetlands and spring systems for example). Natural system ecological needs must not be compromised to meet the public water supply needs. (If MFLs are not achieved a recovery strategy should be implemented.)

10. Support Florida specific research on climate change and water management inter-relationship to better understand the state's water vulnerabilities and make appropriate and effective adaptations to water planning regulatory and financial programs. This research should include consideration of:

- Energy and greenhouse emission consequences of water supply activities
- Increased water use efficiencies to reduce carbon footprints
- The Protection of drinking water and wastewater infrastructure against the threat of rising sea level.

FDEP, Water Management Districts, the Florida Energy and Climate Commission and water managers should fully incorporate climate change implications into their water planning, regulatory, and financial assistance programs and should fully consider the energy and greenhouse gas emissions consequences of water resource and supply activities.

11. Make creation of new water storage (including new reservoirs, ASR, and wet season storage) a statewide priority by prioritizing funding, land acquisition, and needed regulatory reforms (for ASR).

12. Manage stormwater runoff that is discharged into municipal stormwater systems as a valuable water source to be used or reused for conservation purposes such as community irrigation, not as a waste product requiring quick disposal.

13. Encourage Low Impact Development practices as well as other source control measures to enhance ambient water quality in receiving water