

# Frequently Asked Questions About the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule and the South Florida Water Management District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program

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## **Q: What is the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program?**

**A:** In September 2008, the South Florida Water Management District adopted a Comprehensive Water Conservation Program to protect South Florida's water resources and help ensure sustainable water supplies by developing a lasting water conservation ethic throughout South Florida.

The program fosters a conservation culture with regulatory, voluntary and financial incentives, as well as education and marketing strategies. All of the components of the program are designed to build on and complement successful water conservation initiatives at the local, state and national levels. The dynamic and flexible program also is designed to evolve with any changes in Florida law and the District's progress in environmental restoration. The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule is one component of the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program.

## **Q: What irrigation limits will be established within the South Florida Water Management District by the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule?**

**A:** The South Florida Water Management District is promoting water conservation for its many benefits in meeting the growing demands on South Florida's limited water supply. The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule sets a two-day-a-week landscape watering schedule throughout the District, with a three-day-a-week provision for local governments in counties south of Lake Okeechobee. The rule was developed with input from water users across the region after more than two years and 30 public workshops, including several meetings of the District's Water Resources Advisory Commission work group. The rule will apply when the source of water for irrigation is a utility, lake, pond, canal or well.

### **2-Day-A-Week Watering for Charlotte, Highlands, Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola and Polk Counties**

The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule will limit lawn and landscape irrigation to two days per week:

- Residents and businesses with an **odd-numbered** street address may water lawns and landscapes on **Wednesdays** and/or **Saturdays**, only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**
- Residents and businesses with an **even-numbered** street address, **no street address** or those that **irrigate both even and odd addresses** within the same zones, including multi-family units and homeowners associations, may water lawns and landscapes on **Thursdays** and/or **Sundays**, only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**

**3-Day-A-Week Watering Option for Broward, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and St. Lucie Counties**

A three-day-a-week watering provision will be available to counties located wholly within SFWMD boundaries:

- Residents and businesses with an **odd-numbered** street address may water lawns and landscapes on **Mondays, Wednesdays** and/or **Saturdays**, only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**
- Residents and businesses with an **even-numbered** street address, **no street address** or those that **irrigate both even and odd addresses** within the same zones, including multi-family units and homeowners associations, may water lawns and landscapes on **Tuesdays, Thursdays** and/or **Sundays**, only **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**

**Q: Are there any types of irrigation methods that are exempt from the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule?**

**A:** Yes. Low-volume hand-watering, low-volume irrigation, micro-irrigation, and irrigation with water from a rain barrel, cistern or other rain-harvesting device is allowed at any time. However, a voluntary reduction in use is encouraged, and landscape irrigation conducted with such systems should not produce water runoff.

*Low-volume hand-watering* - using a hose with an attached automatic shut-off or trigger nozzle.

*Low-volume irrigation* - using equipment and devices specifically designed to deliver the smallest amount of water needed by the plant being irrigated and to put the water in the plant's root zone.

*Micro-irrigation* - delivering small amounts of water on or below the soil surface. Drops or tiny streams of water spray through emitters or applicators placed along a water delivery line. This includes bubbler, drip, trickle, mist or microspray, and subsurface irrigation methods.

*Rainwater harvesting* - the collection and storing of rainwater for irrigation or other non-potable uses. In typical residential applications, roof catchment systems channel rainwater into onsite storage (usually cisterns or rain barrels) via the home's system of gutters and pipes.

**Q: Will the rule allow additional watering days and times for irrigating newly planted lawns and landscaping?**

**A:** Yes. The rule will allow additional watering for up to 90 days following the installation of new lawns and landscaping:

- On the day the new landscaping is installed, the new planting and the soil could be irrigated once without regard to the normally allowable watering days and times. Irrigation of the soil is also allowed immediately prior to planting.
- New plantings that have been in place for **30 days or less** could be watered on **Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and/or Sundays**, only **before 10 a.m.** and/or **after 4 p.m.**
- New plantings that have been in place from **31 to 90 days** could be watered on **Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and/or Saturdays**, only **before 10 a.m.** and/or **after 4 p.m.**

Irrigation is limited to the areas containing new landscaping only. An entire zone may be watered only if new landscaping is planted on at least 50 percent of that zone. If new landscaping is planted on less than 50 percent of an irrigation zone, only the new plantings may be watered.

**Q: Will there be landscape irrigation limits for residents and businesses using reclaimed water and/or supplemented reclaimed water?**

**A:** No. Water from a reclaimed water system can be used anytime. To promote the most efficient use of this resource, the District encourages reclaimed users to irrigate lawns and landscapes **before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.**, and to apply no more than three-quarters to an inch of water per week and/or operate irrigation systems for no more than 30 minutes per zone.

*Reclaimed water* - is produced by thoroughly treating the liquids collected at waste water treatment plants.

*Supplemented reclaimed water* - is reclaimed water which has been augmented with groundwater, surface water, or utility water.

*Reclaimed and supplemented reclaimed water* - is not meant for drinking and is used almost exclusively for irrigation. Both types of water are usually transferred through purple pipes.

**Q: Can utilities apply for a variance?**

**A:** Yes. In response to utilities' concerns about water quality issues and utility system limitations, the rule will provide local governments with the flexibility to adopt ordinances implementing alternative conservation measures, as long as they do not allow for more irrigation days. If a utility has a specific issue that cannot be addressed through the local ordinance option, the appropriate entity may apply to the District for a variance.

**Q: Can businesses or individuals apply for a variance?**

**A:** Under certain conditions, businesses and/or residents may be able to apply for a variance. An application for a South Florida Water Management District variance will be made available online at [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov). Keep in mind that when a local ordinance is in effect with more stringent days or times for watering, requests for variances will need to be directed to that governmental authority for consideration.

**Q: Will the year-round watering limits be mandatory?**

**A:** Yes. Irrigation landscape limits will be mandatory and enforced by the South Florida Water Management District, local governments and law enforcement agencies. Residential fines are set by the local government and vary, but typically range from \$25 to \$125 for a first offense.

**Q: Why is the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule an important component of the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program?**

**A:** Measures in the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program, including year-round watering limits, are designed to accomplish a measurable change in water use. Consider that:

- Up to one-half of all potable water produced in our region goes to outdoor irrigation.
- More than 50 percent of the water applied to lawns may be lost to evaporation or run-off because of over-watering.
- Improved irrigation efficiency enhances landscape quality; helps to stretch local water supplies; and helps protect and sustain local water resources for area residents and the environment.

The potential water savings from the Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule is substantial. Regional water use when no restrictions were in place compared to water savings during the recent water shortage's two-day-a-week irrigation

restrictions show a total savings of 138.8 million gallons per day in seven counties alone over a six-month period.

**Q: Are there other components to the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program?**

**A:** Yes. Components and key strategies of the plan include:

- Goal-based conservation planning, implementation and improved reporting for large, permitted water users.
- Conservation-based rate structures for utilities designed to encourage water savings and discourage high-volume use.
- The retrofitting of outdated, water-guzzling plumbing devices. Adopting and incorporating Florida-friendly landscaping principles.
- Water conservation education strategies, including classroom education, social marketing and professional development.
- A call for governments and large users to lead by example.

**Q: Where can I learn more about the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program?**

**A:** More information about the program is available on the South Florida Water Management District's dedicated water conservation Web site at [www.savewaterfl.com](http://www.savewaterfl.com).

**Q: How much water does a lawn or landscape need?**

**A:** Proper irrigation is based on the amount of water each lawn needs. Lawns and landscapes typically need to receive only three-quarters to an inch of water each week. This usually means a maximum of 30 minutes per irrigation zone for each water application. The lawn may not need to be watered at all if it has rained during the week. Most shrubs and trees do not need any supplemental irrigation once they are established in the landscape.