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Water Resource Fact Sheet Series

Available Fact Sheets

- *Florida's Water Resource Management System*
- *Minimum Flows and Levels*
- *Water Use Trends in Florida*
- *Water Conservation*
- *Alternative Water Supplies*
- *Regional Water Supply Planning*
- *Water Reservations*
- *Drought and Water Management*
- *Climate Change/Water Management Connections*
- *Local Sources First*
- *Per Capita Water Use*
- *Desalination*
- *Reclaimed Water*

For More Information

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Alternative Water Supplies

In Florida, traditional sources of fresh water (usually groundwater) are becoming increasingly limited. From 2005 to 2025, the state's water demand is forecast to grow by about 2 billion gallons per day. Public water supply use is expected to account for the majority of the growth in demand. Agricultural irrigation and the other water use categories show small increasing trends as well. In many parts of the state, traditional water sources will not be able to meet these increased demands. As a result, water managers are developing alternative water supplies to help meet Florida's future fresh water needs.

What Are Alternative Water Supplies?

Alternative water supplies include sources such as seawater, brackish groundwater, surface water, stormwater, and reclaimed water. These sources are frequently expensive to develop and operate than traditional sources. Water conservation, which can be considered another type of alternative supply, is a "source" that is both inexpensive and plentiful.

Development of alternative water sources has benefits beyond supplementing traditional water supplies. Diversification of water sources is an important tool in building drought resilience, increasing water supply reliability, and protecting Florida's natural environment.

Are Alternative Water Supplies Already Being Used In Florida?

Yes. During the past 20 years, Florida has been recognized as a national leader (along with California) in water reuse. In 2009, Florida used about 673 million gallons per day of reclaimed water for beneficial purposes. Florida leads the nation in the use of desalination technology. Florida's seawater desalination plant in the Tampa Bay area is the largest such facility in North America. Construction of another seawater desalination facility is under consideration in Flagler County. In addition to the use of seawater, more than 140 facilities use desalination technology to treat brackish water. Florida also is increasing use of surface and stormwater as fresh water sources.

Still, these ongoing efforts alone will not meet the projected 2025 demand. More alternative supplies and conservation are needed to meet our future water needs.

How Is Florida Planning to Meet Future Water Needs?

Because it takes several years to build water facilities, planning is extremely important. Every five years, Florida's water management districts assess the ability to meet future water needs for 20 years. In areas where the water sources are deemed inadequate to meet future needs, the districts must prepare regional water supply plans that identify sufficient sources to meet

future demands. These plans describe specific water supply development projects, including many alternative water supply projects, for utility consideration to meet projected demands.

Who Pays for Alternative Water Supply Projects? How Much Water Will They Provide?

The 2005 Florida Legislature concluded that incentive funding would hasten the needed development of alternative water supplies. Between 2005 and 2008, the Legislature appropriated over \$217 million dollars for construction of these projects. These funds, along with matching funds from the water management districts, were awarded as grants to local water suppliers. Local grant recipients pay over 60% of the project costs. State funds from the Legislature represent only about 15% of the total construction costs for more than 300 projects. Since 2009, due to state funding difficulties, funding for alternative water supply projects has come only from the water management districts and local water providers.

The districts estimate that, when construction of all currently planned alternative water supply projects is complete, they will provide approximately 38% of the additional water needed by 2025.

Where Can I Get More Information?

Information on water supply planning and alternative water supplies can be found in DEP's Annual Report on Regional Water Supply Planning at:

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/waterpolicy/docs/sustaining-our-water-resources.pdf>

Information about the alternative water supply development and water conservation efforts of the water management districts can be accessed through the links at:

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/waterpolicy/districts.htm>