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

Reclaimed Water

As demand on water sources grows, Florida increasingly relies on alternative water supplies such as reclaimed water to meet existing and future water needs. Florida began using reclaimed water in 1966 with the construction of the Tallahassee Reclaimed Water Farm. By 2008, reuse within Florida included 483 systems that reclaimed 667 million gallons of water per day – or about 42% of the state's total domestic wastewater flow – recycling more water than any other state in the U.S.

Decades of historical data demonstrate that reclaimed water is a safe and effective water supply for both urban and agricultural irrigation uses. Through proper design and efficient use, reclaimed water has become an important, safe and proven alternative water source in Florida.

What Is Reclaimed Water?

Reclaimed water is domestic wastewater that has received advanced treatment and is reused for beneficial, nonpotable purposes.

What Is Reclaimed Water Used For?

Reclaimed water is used for agricultural irrigation, groundwater recharge, industrial processes, and irrigation of lawns, landscapes, cemeteries, and golf courses. Reuse is an important part of managing and conserving Florida's limited water resources. Using reclaimed water lessens the demand for potable water. Reuse also reduces stress on environmental systems, delays the need for costly water system expansions, and decreases the need for wastewater disposal.

Can Reclaimed Water Be Used For Drinking Water?

Although the technology exists to treat reclaimed water to drinking water quality, reclaimed water is not used to make drinking water in Florida. One reason is that the extra treatment processes are very expensive. Another reason is the public's reluctance to accept highly treated reclaimed water as a drinking water source.

How Safe Is Reclaimed Water?

Strict requirements for the design, operation and monitoring of reclaimed water facilities ensure that reclaimed water can be safely used for irrigation and other non-potable purposes. Reuse facilities are monitored continuously to ensure that only high-quality reclaimed water goes into the reclaimed water distribution system.

Florida has been a leader in safety with no reclaimed water-related illnesses since the state began using reclaimed water more than 40 years ago.

How Can I Tell Which Pipes Contain Reclaimed Water?

In Florida, pipes containing reclaimed water are purple in color and are labeled as reclaimed water. Because reclaimed water is not treated to drinking water standards, it is important to remember:

- **DO NOT** interconnect the reclaimed water system with the potable water system serving your property.
- **DO NOT** use reclaimed water for showering, cooking or drinking, nor for filling swimming pools, wading pools, or hot tubs.

What Happens to Reclaimed Water or Wastewater that Is Not Reused?

Wastewater that is not beneficially reused has to be disposed of. In 2008, Florida disposed of 844 million gallons per day (mgd) of reclaimed water that had no user, and 137 mgd of treated wastewater. Up to 94% of this was disposed of by injecting it deep into the ground. The remaining amount was discharged into surface waters.

What Are the Benefits of Using Reclaimed Water?

- Reclaimed water helps lawns and golf courses thrive because it has traces of nitrogen and phosphorous that act as fertilizers, reducing the need to purchase and apply fertilizer.
- Reuse of reclaimed water preserves drinking water quality sources for potable uses.
- Reuse helps the environment, by reducing discharges into our rivers and streams.
- Reclaimed water helps to recharge aquifers.
- Reclaimed water often is subject to fewer irrigation restrictions.

How Can I Become Involved?

If you already have reclaimed water service, you can help by using this water source efficiently. If access to a reclaimed water system is available, you can contact your utility about hooking up and use this source for irrigation or other non-potable uses. If reclaimed water is not available, you can contact your utility about your desire to use this water source and support their efforts to provide reclaimed water service.

Where Can I Find More Information on Florida's Reclaimed Water Program?

Information for both reclaimed water providers and users can be found on the internet at: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/reuse/index.htm>.

