



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **South Florida Adopts One-Day-a-Week Watering *Regional Water Levels Begin Seasonal Decline; Water Shortage Order Provides “Watering Windows” for Landscape Irrigation***

**West Palm Beach, FL** – For the first time in the agency’s history, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) today declared an extreme District-wide water shortage, directly affecting more than five million South Florida residents and thousands of farms and businesses. At its monthly meeting, the District’s nine-member Governing Board adopted a groundbreaking water shortage order, instituting a one-day-a-week watering schedule for residential landscape irrigation to conserve regional water supplies. Landscape irrigation accounts for up to half of all household water consumption in Florida and totals more than seven billion gallons per day nationwide.

“Today’s order represents the most stringent landscape irrigation measures that this agency has ever had to impose, but we believe it will significantly help to protect and stretch our regional water supplies,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann. “We appreciate the public’s understanding and compliance with these necessary restrictions that will result in measurable water savings.”

Highlights of the Modified Phase III water shortage order, which will be enforced beginning **January 15, 2008**, include:

- Residents and businesses of Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin, Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Hendry and Glades counties are limited to a one-day-per-week landscape irrigation schedule with two “watering windows.”
  - **Odd** street addresses may irrigate lawns and landscapes on **Mondays** between **4:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. or 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.**
  - **Even** street addresses may irrigate lawns and landscapes on **Thursdays** between **4:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. or 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.**
- Residents and businesses with more than five acres have expanded irrigation hours, between **12:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. or 4:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.** on their designated irrigation day.

- Residents and businesses in Lee and Collier counties are limited to one-day-a-week watering during specific four-hour “watering windows” directly associated with their unique street addresses.
- Hand-watering with one hose fitted with an automatic shut-off nozzle is allowed for 10 minutes per day for landscape stress relief and to prevent plant die-off.
- Low-volume irrigation, including the use of drip and microjet systems that apply water directly to plant root zones, is not restricted but should be voluntarily reduced.
- Additional watering days and times will be allocated for the establishment of new lawns and landscapes.
- No restrictions apply to other outside water uses, such as for car and boat washing, pressure cleaning of paved surfaces, decorative fountains and water-based recreation (e.g. swimming pools, water slides).
- Golf courses must reduce their allocated water use by 45 percent.

“Our lawns do not need to be watered more than once a week during the dry season, and with seasonal rainfall to help, it should be more than enough to maintain a healthy lawn,” added Buermann.

The new, mandatory restrictions apply to all water from traditional sources, including water from public utilities, private wells, canals, ponds and lakes. Users of 100-percent reclaimed water are exempt from the restrictions but are encouraged to conserve water voluntarily.

Because jurisdiction in certain counties is shared with other water management districts, the SFWMD has coordinated with these agencies to simplify implementation and enforcement. Residents of Orange and Osceola counties should adhere to any water restrictions set by the St. Johns River Water Management District. Residents of Polk, Highlands, and Charlotte Counties should adhere to the water restrictions set by the Southwest Florida Water Management District. However, golf courses, nurseries, and agricultural users District-wide should follow SFWMD water use restrictions.

### **Restrictions Make a Difference**

Implementing water use restrictions has already proved effective during the continued regional water shortage. Based on data reported by 46 public water utilities in Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Collier, Lee and Miami-Dade counties, an estimated 11.7 billion gallons of potable water was saved since March 22, when restrictions first went into effect, through June 30. Savings were most pronounced on non-watering days. For example, one day per week landscape irrigation restrictions instituted in Broward and Palm Beach counties saved an estimated 130 million gallons a day of potable water.

### **Current Conditions**

Surface water and groundwater levels across much of the District remain unseasonably low and already are showing signs of decline with the start of the dry season in November. The water level in Lake Okeechobee, the source of water for the Florida Everglades and the primary back-up water supply for five million South Floridians, is at

its lowest elevation ever recorded for the month of December. At 10.16 feet above sea level this morning, the lake level already is so low that water from the lake cannot be used to replenish the regional supply. Even with average dry season rainfall, water managers expect the lake level to drop over the coming months below its all-time low of 8.82 feet above sea level, recorded on July 2, 2007.

“Our water resources are all interconnected and our goal is to ensure we have sufficient water to meet regional demands during the dry season,” said Carol Ann Wehle, executive director of the SFWMD. “With a full six months of dry season weather ahead of us and the subsequent water level declines that are typical of South Florida’s winter and spring, we are heading into uncharted territory.”

For additional information on the water shortage, irrigation restrictions or water conservation, call the SFWMD’s toll-free Water Conservation Hotline at 1-800-662-8876, visit [www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov) or contact a regional SFWMD service center. Helpful water conservation tips also are available at [www.savewaterfl.com](http://www.savewaterfl.com).

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***About the South Florida Water Management District***

*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.*