

Lake County Regional Water Strategy Stakeholder Meeting
Wednesday, November 4, 2009
Lake Sumter Community College

The Honorable Welton Cadwell, Lake County Commissioner, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Lake County Stakeholders Meeting, not only in his role of County Commissioner, but also as a member of the *Congress of Regional Leaders*. This governing body of elected officials representing county, city and the school boards of the seven counties, who have been working to implement the Regional Growth Vision that citizens created two years ago, has identified the issue of water as a priority for the region.

He acknowledged all the elected officials in the room and introduced Commissioner Elaine Renick, member of the Regional Water Strategy Steering Committee, who coordinated this meeting. After a round of introductions of the elected officials and other water related officials in the audience, she introduced Dean Hybl, Project Consultant for *myregion.org* and Jim Sellen, Executive Vice President of MSCW, Inc., who also serves as Vice Chair of ULI Central Florida. They provided an overview of *myregion.org*, ULI and the process of developing a Regional Water Strategy for Central Florida.

Group Exercise:

Participants were broken up into ten groups with each group given one of four questions based around the following premise:

It's the year 2050 and Central Florida is recognized as international leaders managing its regional water supply in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.

Each group provided input into the big issues and what would have to be done to achieve the stated goal for 2050. After 20 minutes and a first round of reports, the groups traded notes and topics and were asked to look at one of the other topics and see if anything was missed while also providing barriers for reaching the preferred future.

Below are summaries of what came out of the entire exercise:

Question 1: What did the region do to provide for an economically and environmentally sustainable supply of ground water?

- Limit the issuance of Consumptive Use Permits by the Water Management Districts
- Create water bills that make consumption figures understandable
- Establish a reduced per capita water conservation strategy
- Establish conservation pricing that is effective
- Establish region-wide water conservation programs, including enforcement
- Regulate/monitor self-supply wells
- Establish education about water issues
- Utilize water from the lower Floridan aquifer
- Reduce growth
- Regulated water wells
 - Establishing a uniform set of groundwater rules
 - Make everyone pay for water
- Educating the public on importance of conservation
- Protect and encourage ground water recharge
- Better modeling to include DSS Portion
- Enforce the use of lower quality water for irrigation

Barriers for successful implementation:

- Intergovernmental cooperation

- Current practices
- Cost
- Mixing levels of water
- Pressure on Green Swamp
- Coordination issues among agencies
- Establishment of new regulations can be very political
- Belief that growth cannot be stopped/controlled
- Complexity of modeling
- Coordination of issues among various agencies

Question 2: What did the region do to provide for an environmentally and economically sustainable supply of surface water?

- Sustainability
 - Maximum and minimum lake levels and flows
 - Prioritize usage
 - Enforce current and future regulations
 - Protect headwaters
 - Control development
- Environmental
 - Buy and protect environmentally sensitive lands
 - Control development
 - Guard against contamination (examples – agricultural, developmental, industry, stormwater)
- Set the MFL's for the lakes and water ways
- Utilize excess for potable water
- Capture stormwater and use it for irrigation
- Based sustainable growth on water concurrency rules and standards, so we didn't need surface water.
- We got our water management districts to make conservation their first priority, rather than the issuance of CUP's

Barriers for successful implementation:

- Consistency in methodology needed statewide
- Establishing more credibility between regulators and public
- Elected officials buy-in
- Water Management Districts are not fulfilling their goals

Question 3: What did the region do to provide for an environmentally and economically sustainable supply of reuse water to reduce overall demand?

- All treatment facilities produce effluent suitable for use as reclaimed water and all reclaimed water is used in a beneficial way
- Storage facilities in the form of ASR, lined ponds, storage tanks, etc., to store reclaimed water during wet weather and off peak times.
- Reclaimed water is supplemented with stormwater and other low quality sources.
- Conservation, education and enforcement are optimized and effective
- Master irrigation systems to control usage
- Began an educational program with the public and in the schools (elementary) on conservation and reuse water
- Pursued sustainable growth through comprehensive plans
- Through building codes, required methods to capture and reuse water in new construction
- Provided incentives for retro-fitting existing homes
- Priced water to encourage water reuse

- Getting water from the Crystal River Power Plant and pipe it across Central Florida
- Wastewater treatment plants with regional facilities and mandatory connections to both re-use and waste water treatment
- No additional permits for septic systems; utilization and augmentation of stormwater
- Need to retrofit existing and older development to city sewer and reclaimed water use
- Eliminate the use of private wells within city limits

Barriers for successful implementation:

- Social attitudes and mindset
- Cost
- Regional connections to water systems
- Public buy in
- Elected officials
- Property owner right infringements
- No facilities available
- Cost of retrofitting
- DEP permitting of package plants tied to regional connection with wastewater system
- Cost to deliver reuse water to where it is needed
- Allocating cost share among users to finance improvements
- Permitting – needs to allow for sharing between producers
- Dependency on revenue from water sales
- Difficulty and cost of retrofitting older properties
- Making sure enough reuse water is available

Question 4: What did the region do to reduce demand for water in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner?

- Required that the PSC force Florida Power to sell the recycled water at Crystal River to the public and use the already right-of-ways for piping
- Continued conservation efforts reduced demand through education starting in elementary school
- Limited Grass Species (% coverage and prohibition on types)
- Use of Florida native plants to impact landscape design
- Use water saving devices in new construction and to retro-fit where possible
- Develop water bills that make per capita consumption understandable
- Create financial incentives for water retrofit
- Aggressive conservation in remodeled and new construction including low-flush toilets, high efficiency washing machines, low-flow shower heads
- Tiered water rate structure – extra surcharge for high volume users
- Horticulture – landscape ordinances that discourage St. Augustine grass
- Education to Builders/Home owners/Property owners/municipalities and governments
- Non-water usage in electrical generation/home energy
- Utilize re-use water for power generation
- Efficient use of reclaimed water
- Maximize use of reclaimed water
- Comprehensive plans to include controlled growth – adopted locally
- Higher code areas to protect recharge areas
- Water management districts refocus on their mission statement and permit for beneficial use
- Retrofit existing facilities – provide financial assistance/incentives
- Conservation
 - Make efficient technology improvements

- Education and marketing campaign to change behaviors and expectations regarding the use of water
- Increase costs to reflect the true value of the water
- Reduce demand by limiting growth
- Improve agricultural methods to reduce unnecessary water uses
- Establish CDR that restricts irrigation and requires water efficiency devices

Barriers for successful implementation:

- Changing thought process
- Regulations
- Conservation
- Getting information out to public
- Restructure to foster conservation
- Staffing/resources
- Public and political attitudes

Participants Feedback:

- Are there examples of governments that have rationed water? Land for agriculture is going to waste.
Answer: California and Washington
- The villages are not allowed to run water for irrigation but occasionally, due to the irrigation pipes being controlled by government. Not true. The Villages has a very ambitious conservation program.
- What is the possibility of not being able to reuse water in 10 years because of contaminants in our lakes?
- The region's water is been given to the industry and not to the people. The interests of developers and industry have been protected, not the people's.
- The fundamental problem is the process. We have a water crisis that has been in part created by the St. John's Water Management District. At some point, voters must be involved to ensure that there is a change on how to allocate water within the aquifer and to identify sources and how to get water from one place to another. Reuse water does not necessarily address the issue.
- There is one fundamental problem. The St. John's and the other Water Management Districts do not know for sure how much water we have, as they are relying on a mathematical methodology to determine how much water is available. These reports are not accurate and we could run out of water sooner than we think. Our water management district needs to fly a helicopter over the state and take a picture. We do not know for sure if we have enough water!
- St. John's Water Management District is using 5-6 models to analyze water. All water management districts should get together to analyze the aquifer and get more realistic answers. The oil industry has gotten together to monitor the oil reservoirs in the world; why can't we do this for our water?
- Water is a state issue and national issue – get legislators involved.
- Uniform and State-wide enforcement of the water restrictions must become part of the everyday plan. Enforcement will be much less costly than alternative water supply measures and should produce better and more acceptable results. A very small percentage of municipalities (and no privately owned companies) actually have an "active" enforcement program. To my knowledge only Clermont and Mt. Dora practice enforcement in Lake County. All municipal water suppliers have a "written" conservation plan, but it stays in a drawer until such time that a CUP must be applied for or renewed. The City of Clermont reduced consumption by over 50% and the main determining factor in this was "ENFORCEMENT".
- Too many municipalities are dependent on the revenue produced by water sales (and other utilities) as part of their financial survival. Private water companies are totally dependent on sales. I personally feel

that private water suppliers are uncontrollable, especially by our water management districts. Water for profit defeats conservation!

As we identify best practice examples of the key solutions identified, what are the county-specific issues that need to be addressed in Lake County?

- Taking water out of aquifer for commercial uses without having to pay for it (like Niagara is doing), is wrong.
- There is a differential in what users are paying compared to other industrial users. People are paying more comparably.
- Water usage proposed is 160 gallons a day per person, which seems to still be high.
- There are about 1,400 lakes in Lake County. What is in the bottom of those lakes? Have we done research to know if this water is safe to drink and not growing in contaminants?
- Water energy plant in the county is consuming water from the aquifer and there is a commercial recycle system that can be used.
- The state is making consumers irrigate lawns only once a week but Niagara taking 500,000 gallons a day to sell water for free. We have a crisis and government should get involved.
- Water Management Districts should address that they need to change rules on how to allocate water as they created the problem.
- We need a new business plan for permits.