

Osceola County Water Stakeholder Meeting November 5, 2009

Kissimmee Mayor Jim Swan welcomed participants and emphasized the value of this kind of community discussion over key regional issues.

Cheryl Grieb provided a welcome from the Congress of Regional Leaders. The CRL is looking to develop strategies for issues that impact the entire region. .

Shelley Lauten, President, *myregion.org* and John Prowell, Member ULI TAPS Committee, provided a brief overview of *myregion.org* and the Regional Water Strategy Project currently being undertaken under the leadership of the Central Florida Congress of Regional Leaders and the three water management districts in the region.

Initial Feedback Following Presentation:

No real choice about whether to move ahead with approaches like this because we have to have water.

Recommendation to add mention about agricultural and industrial demands in the last sentence of the problem statement.

House bill 697 looks at sustainability and could be an issue to pay attention to.

Group Exercise:

Participants were broken up into four groups with each group given a question 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?

- Conservation measures and education. (top issue)
- Have State Legislature pass laws to invalidate restrictive covenants to allow for landscapes consistent with Florida Friendly Landscape and that don't require lawns.
- Need for Engineering Controls:
 - Interconnectivity of utility
 - Pricing/regional cost-sharing
- Maintain and credit greenspace
- Maintaining water quality through land use controls and permitting
- Better ability to regulate wells that are within jurisdictions
- Mandatory dual systems for existing and new developments.
- Groundwater is used strictly for potable water with irrigation and other uses from different sources.
- Meter wells and have them follow the same watering schedule as city/county systems.

- Capture stormwater and other existing sources.
- Osceola is at the headwater and limited by legislation, consider downstream implications to other areas.
- Limit groundwater for drinking water only
- Groundwater recharge protection. Incentives for developers not to sprawl, but create more open space for groundwater recharge.
- Include landowner incentives to ensure key lands are not developed.
- Maximize treated water to offset aquifer loss.
- Development of irrigation standards.
- Preservation and protection of recharge areas from development.

Barriers:

- Getting people to think about to do things differently.
- Political boundaries.
- Education and acceptance.

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

- Development of surface water storage network.
- Development of extensive regional monitoring and data collection system for how much water is available for environment and consumption.
- Identified how much water was needed for protection of Florida Wildlife.
- Developed storage capacity to retain water when available.
- Built some reservoirs, but also recharged Floridan aquifer.
- Identified prime recharge areas and best reservoir locations.
- Reduce need/demand for surface water
- Commitment to reduce dependence on surface water.
- Key to groundwater is storage. Need to capture it in the wet seasons.
- Multi-faceted and sustained educational efforts regarding water quality and quantity for school children, consumers and businesses.
- Stormwater collection for irrigation (on personal property in rain barrels, maybe regional ponds for irrigation)
- Better development standards to lower water use impacts. Florida Friendly Landscapes, more natural space.
- Better building codes calling for low volume water flow.
- Off stream reservoir for surface water storage (above or underground).
- Public education “point of sale info” regarding preservation/contamination of water (ex: disposal of used motor oil).

Barriers:

- Lack of thorough data base for how water in region functions.
- Droughts. They drop surface water levels and there is little control.
- Convincing people to be cognizant of issues and willing to use conservation methods.
- Storing water uses a lot of land.
- Public opposition to using river water.
- Barrier for storage – must be treated to drinking water standards.
- Cost and maintenance of existing systems.

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

- Identify goals for use of reclaimed water.
- Identify most efficient users for reclaimed water. Use it for industrial uses and golf course and agriculture.
- Establish use of supplemental sources to reach 100% use.
- Make reclaimed water the same as regular water.
- Set attainable demand goals and establish a plan for implementation.
- Identify storage alternatives.
- Augment reuse to obtain 100% reuse efficiency.

Barriers:

- There is a surplus at certain times of the year, so there must be storage of reclaimed water.
- Conflicts of users wanting water.
- More water is conserved, the less reuse water is available.
- Cost compared to potable water.
- Publics lack of education of benefits and value of reclaimed water.

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

- Regionally consistent government restrictions and incentives to reduce demand.
- Incentives for items such as dual flush toilets, brackish water reuse to flush toilets, xeriscaping, drought tolerant landscape, rainwater collection systems (harvesting).
- Progressive rate systems for consumer use.
- Reward region leaders with lower costs contributions to shared investments.
- Require efficiency standards for both commercial and residential systems beyond SB 494.
- Importance of educating kids on conservation.
- Educating public on the lack of cheap water supply.
- Increase/improve water quality.

Barriers:

- Common sense
- Political will power
- Cost of retrofitting existing homes

Osceola Specific Issues and Other Final Comments:

- In the Okeechobee restoration basin and being impacted by many regulations that others are not.
- TMDL's will impact water quality.
- Water quality needs to be addressed when discussing demand and supply.
- Cost of retrofitting neighborhoods for reuse water. When roads are being torn up or redone, coordination could be done to try and coordinate retrofits.
- Toho partners with city and county to coordinate road and water improvements at the same time. Expense is usually from the utility.
- When we do house remodeling, the potential new owner needs to be aware of environmentally sustainable systems. There often are large costs that could need incentives to ensure actions are performed.
- By 2050 technology that we don't have any knowledge of today will be in existence. Which is why educating young people about water conservation is important.

- Water management districts show agriculture decline in use. Number of energy companies looking for large chunks of agriculture land for development of bio-fuel, which are very water intensive. So don't discount use for agriculture type uses.
- Balance between economy and environment.
- All sectors have impact on each other and need to be taken into account and held accountable.