



Drought Talking Points

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Basic Points

- The water shortage order has been extended because the region is still impacted by the three-year drought and portions of the District did not receive enough rain during the annual wet season.
- All of our water resources, such as rivers and lakes, have declined rapidly since the start of the dry season.
- The District is asking for everyone's help to continue conserving water.
- One way residents can help is to only water their lawn on their watering day and only if it needs it. Using less water will encourage deeper grass and plant roots, which makes them more drought-tolerant.
- More tips are available on our web site at WaterMatters.org/drought/.

Current Hydrologic Conditions

- Throughout 2006 and 2007, the District experienced below-average rainfall.
- Despite some better rainfall in 2008, we have not seen recovery to pre-drought conditions.
- Lakes, rivers and streams started their seasonal declines in August, several months earlier than expected.
- Over the last three years, the District's rainfall deficit is 30.68 inches.
- Lake levels still remain severely impacted and continue to be one to five feet below normal levels.



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Phase II Restriction Information

- The District declared a water shortage order in January 2007, which restricts lawn watering throughout the District to one day per week. The order was extended through June 30, 2009. (*Tightened Restrictions for the Tampa Bay area and Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties — see pages 3 and 4.*)
- The order includes restrictions that apply to the use of water from public and private water utilities as well as the use of all wells and surface water sources (ponds, rivers, etc.).
- Irrigation with 100 percent reclaimed water is not restricted to certain days or times by the District. However, we do ask that reclaimed water users only irrigate if necessary.
- Unless your city or county has a different once-per-week schedule or more stringent restrictions, follow the schedule of restrictions below:

Addresses with "house numbers" ...

Ending in 0 or 1
Ending in 2 or 3
Ending in 4 or 5
Ending in 6 or 7
Ending in 8 or 9

May only irrigate on...

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

- Unless your city or county already has stricter hours in effect, properties under two acres in size may only water **before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.**
- Variances are available if a property proposes an alternative irrigation plan (such as splitting a large property into two pieces and assigning a different day to each piece).
- Hand watering or micro-irrigation of nonlawn landscape is allowed.
- Certain exemptions are available, such as allowances for new plant material.



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Tightened Phase III Restrictions for Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties

- The Governing Board voted on October 28, 2008, to tighten the one-day-per-week water restrictions for all of Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties until June 30, 2009, moving from a “severe” to an “extreme” status.
- The Governing Board enacted these additional measures at the request of Tampa Bay Water, the region’s wholesale water supplier. Tampa Bay Water requested the District’s assistance because its water supplies have not returned to pre-drought conditions.
- The Hillsborough River reservoir, the main water supply for the city of Tampa, is near historic record lows for this time of year. The Alafia River is so low that it is no longer able to provide water to meet public supply needs.
- Tampa Bay Water’s 15-billion-gallon C.W. Bill Young Regional Reservoir is expected to run dry this month.
- On February 24, 2009, the District Governing Board voted to tighten water restrictions for all of Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota counties through June 30, 2009.
- In addition to continuing to restrict lawn watering to one-day-per-week, the Phase III restrictions include:
 - Reducing the new construction and turfgrass replacement establishment period to 30 days total.
 - Reducing the 60-day allowance for new plant establishment.
 - Restricting the time for handwatering or micro-irrigation for non-lawn landscaping to before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.
 - Reducing the time aesthetic fountains and waterfalls may operate from eight hours to four hours per day.
 - Requiring water utilities and other local enforcement officials to increase their enforcement efforts, including requirements to respond to citizen complaints and issue citations without having first issued a warning.
 - Restaurants shall only serve water upon request.



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Other Water Utility Responsibilities

- Utilities must contact and strive to significantly reduce water use among their high-use single-family customers (those using 15,000 gallons per month or more).
- Utilities must consider implementing a drought surcharge to address their high-use single-family customers.
- Utilities must consider implementing a reclaimed water availability fee (to encourage customers with access to reclaimed water to use it for irrigation, instead of using drinking-quality water).
- Utilities must manage water system pressure (reduce to the extent practicable).
- Utilities must minimize unattended line flushing.
- Utilities must continue implementing Phase II water conservation efforts, including customer education about the current water shortage and ways to conserve water.
- Tampa Bay Water and the Peace River/Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority must each hold a drought summit, in conjunction with the utilities they serve, to explore additional conservation options.

For More Information

For more information about water restrictions or conservation, please visit the District's web site at WaterMatters.org/drought or call 1-800-423-1476, ext. 4498.

Questions & Answers

1. **Q:** What is the District doing to ensure that we have water for future generations?

A: We develop regional water supply plans that project future water needs and identify potential sources of water to meet those needs. This information can be used by local utilities and water supply authorities.

We also promote conservation, which means not wasting water, through a variety of education programs, regulatory programs and rebate programs.

We help fund alternative water sources such as capturing high flows from rivers, seawater desalination and reclaimed water. Another important component is storage. You need to be able to capture the water and store it when you have



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excess so you can use it later when it's dry. We help fund the costs of treatment and storage facilities.

We believe the most sustainable water supply is a diversified supply that includes a mix of sources such as ground water, surface water, reclaimed water, seawater and storage. This allows the utilities to rotate sources.

We believe in and financially support regional projects that create partnerships and develop integrated water supply systems that efficiently use those diversified sources.

2. **Q:** What is the District doing to address the drought?

A: The District declared a severe water shortage and issued a water shortage order in January 2007 that included restricting lawn watering to one day a week throughout the 16-county District.

The District has issued several emergency orders that allow water supply authorities to take additional water supplies from rivers to store water for the dry season.

The District has instituted several public awareness campaigns encouraging people to conserve water, which include asking residents to "skip a week" of watering in the cooler months to train their yards to be drought-tolerant in the spring. The District also implemented the "Reduce Your Use" campaign to remind residents to limit their water use and offered simple steps on how to do so during this critical time.

We will continue to monitor conditions and increase restrictions if necessary to address the situation. Our decisions are based on what the data tells us about our water levels and our analysis of water needs.

3. **Q:** Why should we have to conserve even more water if the District keeps approving new permits for construction?

A: We should always conserve water because it is a limited resource. Conservation means being nonwasteful.

Land-use decisions regarding growth and community development are made by local city and county governments. District permitting involving new developments is limited to stormwater management to reduce the risks of new



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development causing flooding or degrading the quality of the stormwater runoff and to protect the functions of the wetland in the watershed.

In some cases, a development also wants to create its own water utility rather than accepting water from an existing government or private utility. In these cases, the development will need a water use permit from the District.

A water use permit grants the holder the authorization to withdraw specific quantities of water for a limited period of time under certain conditions.

To get a water use permit, the applicant must demonstrate an actual need for the water and that the withdrawal will not harm the environment or affect existing legal users.

4. **Q:** Why should I conserve water when I see golf courses or farmers watering?

A: Most golf courses and farmers have water use permits that have conservation measures built into the permit. For instance, determining how much water a golf course or a farmer needs is based on the acreage being irrigated, the type of irrigation system being used, the type of turf or crop being irrigated and the types of on-site soils. In addition to demonstrating this need for a particular quantity, the permit holder must also demonstrate that the water withdrawal will not harm the environment or affect existing legal users.

During a drought, water shortage orders may put additional restrictions on a permit holder's water usage in the same way that additional restrictions are put on residences and businesses.

5. **Q:** Why does the District continue to issue water use permits during a drought?

A: Droughts are short-term, temporary problems. Water use permits are long-term authorizations to withdraw water based on average conditions. We don't base the issuance of a water use permit on a drought any more than we would base it on a flooding event such as a hurricane.

6. **Q:** Why doesn't the District declare a total ban on outdoor watering to ensure groundwater limits are not exceeded?

A: Such a ban is an available tool, but only as a last resort. The District is well aware that such a ban could lead to the ruin of thousands of acres of landscaping and have enormous economic ramifications. Also, massive amounts of water



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would be required to re-establish lawns after the drought. A more prudent action at this time is to ensure that we realize maximum savings from the existing restrictions and emergency measures.