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Water Resource
Fact Sheet Series

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For More Information

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

Water Reservations

Florida faces many challenges in meeting future demands for water, while sustaining natural resources. One way to ensure that water resources are protected is to establish water reservations.

Why Are Water Reservations Established?

Reservations set aside water from withdrawal as necessary for the protection of fish and wildlife or public health and safety. In the South Florida Water Management District, the reservation of water is also one of the mechanisms used to meet the federal and state requirements of protecting the water made available by projects constructed through the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

How are Water Reservations Developed?

A reservation is a rule adopted by the Governing Board of a water management district. In many instances, the water management district will scientifically identify the quantity, duration, and timing of water that is necessary to protect fish and wildlife. Often, the water management districts will produce a technical document that describes the methodology used and the natural resource features evaluated to determine the water to be reserved. Reservations may be calculated to reflect seasonal variations in flows or levels.

Additionally, the water management districts may select a peer review committee to evaluate the scientific principles and methods used to establish the water reservation. There is no legal requirement to conduct a peer review of a water reservation.

How Are Water Reservations Used?

The water management districts use water reservations for several purposes. The most common reason is to assist with a natural resource restoration project. Reservations can also be established as part of a recovery strategy to achieve a minimum flow and level on a water body. When the reservation is in place, the quantity of water reserved is set aside for the natural system and may not be withdrawn for human use.

How Many Water Reservations Have Been Established?

The following reservations have been adopted:

- SJRWMD - Prairie Creek and Camps Canal south of Newnans Lake in Alachua County (1994).
- NFWMD - Apalachicola River & Chipola River (2006).
- SWFWMD - Morris Bridge Sink, to help achieve the minimum flow and level in the lower Hillsborough River (2007).
- SFWMD - Picayune Strand (2009) and the North Fork of St. Lucie River (2010)

Will Additional Reservations Be Established?

It is anticipated that the establishment of water reservations will continue to increase, especially as more ecological restoration occurs and there is a need to protect the water made available through that restoration. Currently, the South Florida Water Management District plans to establish water reservations for the Caloosahatchee River, the Kissimmee River, and several of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes.



Kissimmee River
(Source: SFWMD)

Which is More Effective in Protecting Natural Systems, a Water Reservation or Minimum Flow and Level?

Florida water law provides many effective tools for protecting and managing water resources. One mechanism is not necessarily better than the other; each has advantages and disadvantages. The water management district selects the tool that is most suited to the water body to be protected. In some situations, it may even be valuable to establish both a water reservation and minimum flow and level.