



Polk Regional Water Cooperative Moves Forward with Two AWS Projects

The Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) recently received the green light to move forward with two Lower Floridan aquifer alternative water supply projects that will provide 22.5 million gallons per day (mgd) of water to meet the projected water supply deficit and ensure a sustainable water supply for the region.

Polk County lies wholly within the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) and the majority of the county also lies within the Southwest Florida Water Management District's (District) Southern Water Use Caution Area. The District recognized that Polk County was reaching sustainable limits of traditional groundwater supplies through the 2015 CFWI Regional Water Supply Plan. The District began encouraging the formation of a regional entity in 2015 to develop 30 mgd of alternative water supplies and the PRWC, which is made up of 16 local governments, was subsequently formed in 2016.

The District's Governing Board recently approved moving forward with the PRWC's Southeast Polk Lower Floridan Aquifer Wellfield and Regional Transmission System as well as the West Polk Lower Floridan Aquifer Wellfield through the District's Cooperative Funding Initiative Third-Party Review process. The total cost of the projects is \$600 million with the District committing \$294 million.

"This has been a tremendous effort by the District to support the formation of a regional entity as well as support the development of two major alternative water supply projects in less than a decade," said Brian Armstrong, District executive director. "We have always believed in our model of regional partnerships and cooperation in the Tampa Bay area and we've been able to successfully replicate that here in Polk County."

The Southeast Polk project will provide 12.5 mgd of reverse osmosis treatment capacity based on 20-year demand projections. The preliminary design includes a 5 mgd initial capacity followed by 12.5 mgd at buildout. The total cost is \$228.6 million with the District's share being \$110.9 million. In addition,



West Polk Exploratory Well Site

the transmission main design includes 66 miles of pipeline to provide water from the treatment facility to participating PRWC members. The total cost of the regional transmission system is \$156.9 million with the District's share being \$76 million. Construction is expected to begin in 2024 with the initial phase coming online by 2027.

The West Polk project will provide 10 mgd of reverse osmosis treatment based on 20-year demand projections. The preliminary design includes a 2.5 mgd initial capacity followed by 10 mgd at buildout. The project will provide water to the City of Lakeland for distribution to PRWC members. The total cost is \$214 million with the District's share being \$107 million. Construction is expected to begin in 2025 with the initial phase coming online in 2030.

"The PRWC is very appreciative of the District's support, as well as the support of our other financial partners at the Florida Legislature, EPA and DEP, in helping us advance a regional water supply solution," said Eric DeHaven, PRWC executive director.

"Thanks to effective intergovernmental cooperation, these two projects will provide future water security for our rapidly growing communities throughout Polk County while also protecting and improving the natural systems that make it a beautiful place to live."