



St. Johns River Water Management District Champions Stormwater Harvesting

In recent years, stormwater harvesting has emerged as a promising approach to sustainable water management statewide. As Floridians continue to look for ways to replenish our groundwater aquifers, stormwater harvesting represents a largely untapped resource to meet our nonpotable water needs.

Florida's summer months are characterized by heavy rainfall, which often leads to excessive stormwater runoff. While the concept of stormwater harvesting (collecting stormwater for its future use) appears straightforward, its implementation is more complex. The St. Johns River Water Management District is championing this endeavor, fostering collaboration across interagency boundaries to address the challenges and requirements involved.

"We've had some success in the northern part of the District and are hoping to build on that momentum and carry it down to the Central Florida Water Initiative region," Clint Brown, a supervising hydrologist for the District, says. "The sooner we embrace stormwater harvesting as a standard practice, the faster we can add an additional tool and alternative water source to help ensure the long-term resilience and health of our region's ecosystems and water supplies."

One of the primary benefits of stormwater harvesting is the positive impact it can have on the aquifer. Areas utilizing stormwater harvesting don't need to irrigate with potable (drinking quality) groundwater; instead, they can use the stormwater, reducing the demand for groundwater pumping and adding to the long-term sustainability of Florida's water resources. Stormwater harvesting may also help to improve water quality by collecting, storing and reducing stormwater discharges from ponds by using the water for irrigation.

Projects suitable for stormwater harvesting are those that can utilize a lower-quality source of water. Besides the irrigation of golf courses, parks and residential or commercial common areas, ideal applications include cooling towers.

Of course, there are times when rainfall is low. Typically, a stormwater harvesting system will have a secondary source of water, to supplement the pond when needed. This can be done with other low-quality sources of water, like surface water, reclaimed water, or, if nothing else is available, groundwater. District staff discuss the feasibility and all variables with applicants interested in stormwater harvesting.

The District continues to explore stormwater harvesting to reaffirm its commitment to preserving Florida's precious water resources. If you're interested in learning more about this approach, please contact cmbrown@sjrwmd.com or ppresley@sjrwmd.com.