

OPINION

Water Woes Building

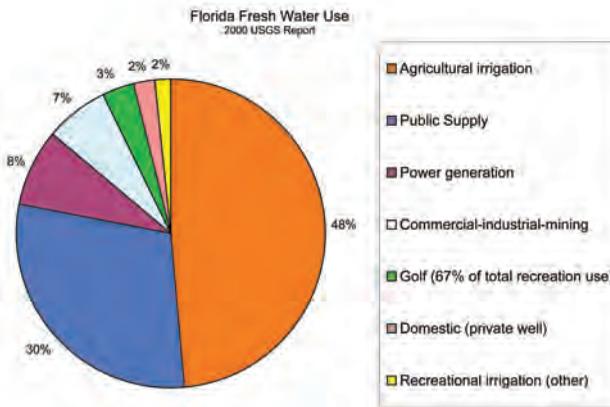
By Joel Jackson

Water restrictions are the hot topic throughout the state. In the South Florida Water Management District, the entire region was on Phase 2 - 30 percent since the spring.

As of Jan. 15, 2008, Consumptive Use Permit holders will go to Phase 3 - 45 percent restrictions because of the continuing drought conditions and the traditional winter dry season. Currently the district is conducting a five-meeting Water Conservation Summit to talk about future water resource management.

Meanwhile in parts of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, golf courses have been restricted to watering two days per week on fairways and roughs and three days per week on greens and tees, according to Bill Kistler and Tampa Palms G&CC. I thought we had gotten away

from the day-of-the-week method so professional turf managers could apply water when and where it was needed. Locking businesses like golf courses



2000 USGS Florida Water Use Report

Golf course irrigation has remained around 3 percent since the 2000 US Geological Survey report on consumption by six major consumer groups.

into some inflexible system may force some users to just crank up the run times and really not save any water. By instituting a common-sense percentage

reduction of overall usage, the superintendent can keep his turfgrass healthy and save measurable amounts of water.

Farther north, the word is that the Suwannee and Northwest districts don't even have a water shortage plan on the books and looking to Georgia and Alabama to see what they are doing. Even back during the 1988-2000 drought, I researched all the district web sites and true enough, they didn't have any restriction guidelines posted. I guess it haadn't been a problem until now.

Over in the St. Johns River Water Management District, they are discussing going to the one-day-per-week watering for home lawns as South Florida and Tampa Water Authority have done. I haven't seen specific hard numbers for golf courses. As of my last Web search, they call for golf courses to stay within permits and use Best Management Practices.

I wouldn't be surprised if that changed sooner than later. The North

Florida Golf Industry Economic & Water Facts

FROM 2000 GOLF ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY

Florida leads the nation in the number of golf courses. A recent economic study listed more than 1,300. The National Golf Foundation reports around 1,097 courses, but may not be counting some of the small 9-hole operations.

Total annual revenues: \$4.44 billion.

Annual expenses: \$3.7 billion.

Golf industry employment: 73,000 persons.

Book value of assets owned by golf courses: \$10.8 billion.

Charitable contributions: \$12 million in cash and \$25 million "in-kind" donations.

Rounds of golf in 2000: 58.6 million. 33 percent by out-of-state visitors.

Travel expenses in Florida by golf-playing visitors were estimated at \$22.9 billion, of which \$5.4 billion may be attributed directly to golf. These expenditures had an impact to the Florida economy of \$9.2 billion in personal and business net income (value added) and 226,000 jobs.

Area owned by golf courses : 205,000 acres, with 147,000

acres in maintained turf and 140,000 acres under irrigation. (Compare to 800,000 acres of citrus and 4-5 million acres of home lawns.)

Total county property taxes generated by golf courses, based on average county millage rates in 1999, and were estimated at \$214 million.

Water use: 49 percent of the surveyed courses in 2000 use reclaimed water for their irrigation source. 29 percent used surface water. Only 21 percent used deep-well sources from the aquifer. The use of reclaimed water for irrigation on golf courses provides an efficient way to re-use our water resources and dispose of treated water that is not immediately suitable for human use.

Compared to five years ago, water-use per acre decreased on 42 percent of the surveyed golf courses. 94 percent of the courses surveyed used automatic or computer controlled irrigation systems.

For more information see: University of Florida publication EIR 02-4 at <http://Economicimpact.ifas.ufl.edu>

Florida, Central Florida, Seven Rivers and Treasure Coast chapters need to get involved with their district contacts to make sure no restrictions are imposed without real-world input about common-sense, progressive, percentage cutbacks for various shortage phases.

One thing for everyone to remember – and tell anyone who will listen – that statewide, the golf industry (that's right golf is a \$5-billion-a-year business) uses only about 3 percent of water consumed every day.

Drastic cutbacks to our industry's water use don't really conserve that much water, but can cripple local and statewide tax revenues. Remind them that we know we are highly visible, but we are also highly responsible water users, particularly compared to some others.

Recently I got this

note from Rich Marella who works for the U. S. Geological Survey and who has been collecting water-use data for Florida and issuing reports on Florida water use every five years. Here's what Marella had to say:

Joel, I posted the 2005 data on the USGS Web page (see new link below). For 2005 total water used for recreational irrigation was 330 million gallons per day. This is a decrease of 82 million gallons or 20 percent from 2000 value of 412 million gallons per day.

Of the 330 million gallons per day used in 2005, 68 percent (226 million gallons per day) was for golf course irrigation. The decline between 2000 and 2005 was primarily from weather conditions, as 2000 was very dry and

2005 received a more normal rainfall coupled with many new courses and several older courses using reclaimed wastewater as their water source (the 330 or the 412 do not include reclaimed wastewater used for golf course irrigation).

(Editor's Note: This is fair since reclaimed water is usually not subject to restrictions and certainly is not a public potable water source)

Overall, total freshwater use for 2005 was 6,841 million gallons per day, which golf course use was 3.3 percent in 2005, and golf course acreage was about the same in 2005 as it was in 2000. I will add the water management district tables for 2005 to the Web site sometime in December. I am still waiting on

some data from some sources to finish up my estimates. I hope this answers your question, please call if you have any other questions.

Here are the links Marella referred to. They don't have the whole state by water management District but they do contain county-by-county data on water use:

Florida USGS WEB Page: <http://fl.water.usgs.gov>

Water-Use WEB Page: <http://fl.water.usgs.gov/infodata/wateruse.html>

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