Collaborative Water Supply Planning with MFLs

Rock Springs is a second-magnitude spring and an Outstanding Florida Spring located in Orange County, FL.

It's an early morning at Wekiwa Springs State Park in Orange County as a group gathers to discuss the area's surrounding waterways: the Wekiva River, Wekiwa Springs, Rock Springs and Little Wekiva River. Along with stakeholder groups, water managers planned this public meeting as part of the process for developing minimum flows and levels (MFLs) for the four water bodies, which are part of the Wekiva Basin and within the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI).

Required by state law, an MFL defines the limits at which further water withdrawals would be significantly harmful to the water resources or ecology of an area.

MFLs provide a tool that can be used both in planning where new water sources could be developed and in regulating water withdrawals. Within the CFWI, which includes southern Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Polk counties, all three water management districts address waterbodies and wetlands through MFLs or Water Reservations.

Coordination, cooperation and consistency are critical components of the CFWI, so it's a collaborative approach that drives the focus of the CFWI's Minimum Flows and Levels and Reservations Team. The team, comprised of the Florida Department of

Environmental Protection, water management districts, and a variety of stakeholder groups, works together to develop measures to evaluate the effect of existing and proposed water withdrawal scenarios.

Involving the public is an essential component to the MFL development. Public workshops and meetings provide an opportunity for the public and other stakeholders to provide input throughout the MFL process, which involves environmental assessments, hydrologic modeling, independent scientific peer review, and rulemaking.

Schedules for developing MFLs vary. On October 23, the St. Johns River Water Management District will host its next public peer review workshop to continue discussion of models developed to support Wekiva Basin MFLs, a process that is planned to be complete by the end of 2019. Information about all public meetings, including those that support the MFL process, is available on the CFWI website.