



Polk Local Governments Adopt Florida Water Star Ordinances

The Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) Planning Area's population is projected to reach 4.4 million by 2040 — that's a 49% increase from the 2015 estimate. Population growth will bring significant increases in commercial and residential development. To help meet these water supply needs, local governments, water managers, builders and developers are working cooperatively through the Florida Water StarSM (FWS) program.

Developed nearly two decades ago, FWS offers an affordable, achievable certification for builders to improve water efficiency in newly constructed residential homes, communities and commercial developments. The major components of FWS include water-efficient design and installation both inside and outside the property.

Studies by the University of Florida, the Toho Water Authority and On Top of the World Communities have shown water savings of approximately 48,000 gallons per home annually, saving homeowners roughly \$530 each year on energy and water utility bills.

It is not just builders who have partnered with the FWS program. Since its launch in 2006, local governments and utilities have relied on the program to implement consistent language related to water-efficiency in their building codes and to offer financial incentives to builders for achieving FWS certification.

Within the CFWI region, local governments in Polk County are beginning to take FWS a step further by requiring builders to meet FWS criteria to obtain their Certificate of Occupancy. Builders have two options to meet the code requirements. The two options provide the builder with some flexibility and are as follows:

- Option One: A third-party inspection is conducted by a trained FWS inspector and official FWS certification is obtained. In this option, the builder is eligible to receive a \$700 rebate per home if construction is taking place in Polk County.
- Option Two: The builder submits affidavits stating that the FWS criteria have been met. A third-party inspection does not take place and the rebate is not available.

Local governments within the CFWI Planning Area that have written FWS into ordinance include Davenport, Mulberry, Lake Alfred, Lake Hamilton, Polk City and Bartow. Staff from the three water management districts within the CFWI continue to provide materials and presentations to governments that are interested in updating their

codes or currently working with their water management district on permit renewals. Additionally, in Polk County, the Central Florida Regional Planning Council collaborated with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to develop land development regulations that incorporate FWS requirements for several municipalities.

Aside from the FWS rebates and water savings obtained, other benefits to builders include the option of hiring an FWS Accredited Professional (AP). In partnership with the Florida Nursery and Landscape Association, the FWS AP program has trained over a thousand professionals from the landscape and irrigation industry to be better prepared to design and install water-efficient landscapes and irrigation systems. In addition, builders' Realtor staff receive training on selling the benefits and features of an FWS-certified home to their customers. New FWS-certified homeowners receive plaques and documentation to help increase the value of their home.

To learn more about FWS, visit floridawaterstar.com or contact the FWS representative in your water management district at:

SJRWMD – Deirdre Irwin dirwin@sjrwm.com

SWFWMD – Robin Grantham Robin.Grantham@WaterMatters.org

SFWMD – Robert Wanvestraut rowanves@sfwmd.gov