

## What is Florida Water Star?

It is a voluntary certification program designed to increase water efficiency inside the home and in landscapes and irrigation systems. While many certification programs provide general guidelines for water efficiency, Florida Water Star specifically addresses uses relevant to Florida. The Florida Water Star program provides a plan based on best management practices that encourages and promotes decisions about water use that will help sustain the area's water resources for years to come.

While it is a volunteer program, the Board has directed us to make it a requirement for irrigation permits. This ordinance will provide minimum standards for landscape irrigation design. It requires the permit applicant to self-certify.

## Why are we doing this?

- **Saving water saves energy.** It takes a considerable amount of energy to deliver and treat the water we use every day. For example, letting your faucet run for five minutes uses about as much energy as letting a 60-watt light bulb run for 14 hours.
- Using water more efficiently **helps maintain water supplies at safe levels**, protecting human health and the environment.
- **Water is going to become much more expensive** to the customer because of the increased cost to treat and the use of more expensive alternative sources to the upper Floridan aquifer.

## Doesn't the County have landscape irrigation regulations?

Currently There are two Ordinances that regulate Landscaping Irrigation:

1. **Chapter 12, Article V of the County Code:** the *Year-Round Water Conservation Measures And Water Shortage Ordinance* which establishes water use restrictions during drought periods.
2. **Land Development Code Section 226 Irrigation Systems** which applies to all development and **Section 720 Landscaping and Buffering** which applies to non-residential development and common areas within residential developments.

## What does this proposed Water Star Ordinance Do?

### Amends Section 226 Irrigation Systems

Replaces current requirements of a permit from Building Division and a rain sensor with the following:

- A. Permit Requirements
  - Requires all irrigation permits go through building division eventually. Even when they show on Level 2 Plans, building will issue final approval of the irrigation system.

- The **contractor, builder, licensed professional irrigation installer or homeowner** is required to **certify the plans are Water Star compliant** most likely.

B. Irrigation Design

1. Applicability
  - Applies to all new irrigation systems residential, and non-residential, and
  - Applies when existing system is modified more than 50% (which *may come to a judgment call*)
2. General
  - No one has to have irrigation,
  - Rain or soil moisture sensors are required on new and modified irrigation, systems and must function properly, and
  - Following this ordinance does not exempt you from following other requirements (local, state, or federal).
3. System Design and Installation
  - ½ acre maximum irrigated area on residential lots,
  - High-volume spray shall not exceed 60% for residential, and 50% for non-res,
  - No high-volume on irrigation on areas less than 4' wide,
  - No high-volume irrigation on trees, shrubs, or groundcover beds,
  - No mixing sprinkler head types (spray or rotor, not both) in same zone,
  - Each zone shall have matched precipitation rates,
  - Head-to-head coverage with rotors and sprinklers,
  - 4" space between spray heads and pavement,
  - 24" between spray heads and building,
  - Systems must have programable timers, shut off for rain, and battery backup,
  - Check valves required in low areas,
  - Systems must be installed to manufacturers specs,
  - No spray on walkways, buildings, or pavement,
  - Pipelines must have adequate pressure to provide uniformity,
  - Pipes must be buried at least 6" deep in the ground, and
  - Sprinklers shall rise above turfgrass height: a minimum of 6-inch pop-up for sprays and 4-inch pop-up for rotors for St. Augustine, Zoysia and Bahia grasses; a minimum of a 4-inch pop-up for sprays and rotors for Centipede, Bermuda and Seashore Paspalum grasses.

C. Maintenance

1. Contractors must provide:
  - a maintenance checklist affixed to or near the controller and accompanied by a
  - recommended maintenance schedule,
  - proper irrigation system settings according to season,
  - recommendations for checking technology that inhibits or interrupts operation of the system,
  - filter cleaning recommendations, and
  - information on the current water restrictions
2. Irrigation systems with known leaks shall not be operated until the leaks are repaired, except for testing purposes.

D. Exemptions

1. Bona fide agricultural activities;

2. Vegetable gardens and fruit and nut trees;
  3. Athletic fields;
  4. Neighborhood recreation areas/parks;
  5. Golf courses;
  6. Cemeteries;
  7. Nurseries; and
  8. Temporary establishment irrigation.
- E. Alternative Compliance
- Applicants may request to vary to accommodate unique site features or characteristics, utilize innovative design, prevent extraordinary hardship, or promote the overriding public interest or general public welfare.
- Diminished value or inconvenience is not an acceptable reason
  - Burden is on the applicant
  - Alternative plan must fulfill the purpose of the Water Star requirements

#### **Amends Section 720.E Water-Efficient Landscaping**

- Cemeteries, plant nurseries, neighborhood parks, entire golf courses, and temporary irrigation for plant establishment are added to exemptions.
- System design is referred to Section 226
- licensed irrigation professionals are required for non-residential and common areas within a residential development.
- Water Star self-certification from either the contractor, builder, licensed professional irrigation installer is required for non-residential and common areas within a residential development.

#### **Definitions added to Chapter 10:**

Automatic Irrigation System  
Automatic Controller  
Distribution Equipment  
Florida Water Star  
Florida Water Star Irrigation and Landscape  
Accredited Professional  
Head-To-Head Spacing  
High-Volume Irrigation  
Irrigation Design Professional  
Irrigation Professional  
Landscaped Area  
Licensed Irrigation Professional  
Matched Precipitation  
Rotor  
Spray Head  
Substantial Modification of Irrigation System  
Temporary Establishment Irrigation  
Watersense

#### **Definitions modified:**

Irrigation System  
Low-Volume Irrigation  
Micro-Irrigation

Effective Date:  
December 1, 2024