

administrative framework for statewide management, and reviews the status and experience of management implementation.

Florida's Water Resource

With the exception of portions of the state bordering Alabama and Georgia, Florida is dependent on rainfall for fresh water supply. Florida receives an average of 55 inches a year according to U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). This compares to an average of 30 inches for the nation as a whole, and only 9 inches per year in Nevada, the driest state (Geraghty).

Total annual rainfall for Florida can vary considerably from one part of the state to another, from one season of the year to another, and from one year to the next. The highest average annual rainfall occurs in portions of the northwest "panhandle" of Florida and in Palm Beach and Broward Counties in southeastern Florida, where rainfall averages 64 inches per year (Hughes). The Florida Keys are the region of lowest annual rainfall, averaging 40 inches per year. The rest of the state averages about 55 inches.

Seasonal variation in rainfall is evident. Typically, summer is the wettest season in Florida, with 70 percent of the annual rainfall occurring during the period from May to October. However, extended wet or dry periods can occur at any time of the year.

Annual variations in rainfall can be extreme. For example, rainfall at Pensacola in 1953 was about 90 inches, but in 1954 it was less than 29 inches (Geraghty). The 1980-81 drought was the result of an accumulated two-year deficit of about 30 inches over much of the central and southern regions of the state. During 1982, rainfall over these same regions exceeded the average.

Such rainfall variations have direct impacts upon surface water and groundwater supplies. Flow characteristics of streams, levels of lakes and reservoirs and groundwater recharge are all functions of the amount and intensity of rainfall. Lack of rainfall for a few weeks causes depletion of moisture in Florida's predominantly sandy soils and necessitates irrigation to protect crops and landscape plantings.

Although rainfall is abundant in Florida relative to many other states, a major portion of it is never available for managed uses because of evaporation, and transpiration by the profuse vegetation common to Florida. This combined loss of water back to the atmosphere is called evapotranspiration and it amounts to about 40 inches during a normal year from