

water also gave impetus to consumptive use permitting to establish a history and record of reasonable-beneficial use, thus protecting the resource for local use.

Until 1982, consumptive use permitting was initiated at the discretion of the water management districts. The 1982 legislature amended the Water Resources Act to require the governing board of each district to implement a consumptive use program "covering those areas deemed appropriate by the governing board" by October 31, 1983. By January 1983, all districts had consumptive use permit programs in effect.

-Policy-

A statement of water resource policy by the DER was considered a logical early objective to guide the water management districts in developing their own policies on water use and water allocation. A statewide policy was not developed easily, however. Early efforts were complicated by interests who doubted the ability of water management districts to protect water resources, and who advocated a very definitive state policy. Others wanted the state water policy to preserve natural water level cycles and virtually prohibit structural methods of water management. There was strong feeling among many landowners that they should have some private rights to water use. Above all, there was a growing awareness that future development would depend upon the availability of water; however, the administrative structure set in place by the legislature to manage water was, for some time, viewed with uncertainty by many people over the state.

After several years of effort, the DER developed and adopted, in July, 1981, Chapter 17-40, Florida Administrative Code, entitled "Water Policy." This chapter is to be a part of the State Water Use Plan being developed progressively through department and district rules and programs. The policy set forth in Chapter 17-40 includes strong positions regarding conservation of water and preservation of "natural water management systems." However, structural measures are also provided for. Although inter-basin and inter-district transfers of water are allowed by statute, the policy sets forth criteria which govern such transfers. Water quality protection, including existing standards and rules, are made a part of the State Plan through the policy statement. Maintenance of wildlife habitat is a high priority.

One much-discussed issue, concerning the rights to water on private property, was addressed in the policy as follows: "---the department and the districts shall recognize the rights of property owners, as limited by law, (emphasis added) to make consumptive uses of water from