

their land, and the rights of other users, as limited by law, to make consumptive uses of water, for reasonable beneficial uses---" (17-40.04(5)). Presumably, any successful legal challenge to the Water Resources Act (Chapter 373 Florida Statutes) or interpretations of it will affect policy, through the phrase underlined above. At present, the phrase appears to limit landowner water rights to the concept that water is a common property available for consumptive use only by permit.

-Water Shortage Management-

Extended periods of low rainfall result in rapid depletion of surface waters and shallow aquifers through natural evapotranspiration and consumptive use by mankind. In the populous lower east coast, these conditions have repeatedly required restrictions in lawn irrigation and other non-essential domestic uses. During 1980-81, a cumulative rainfall deficiency of about 30 inches over most of the peninsular section of the state resulted in many surface water bodies reaching record low flows and levels. Water levels in the deep aquifer (Floridan) dropped and salinity increased in many heavy withdrawal areas. In the spring and summer of 1981, water use restrictions were imposed in all or part of the SFWMD, SWFWMD, and SJRWDM. Some restrictions were voluntary, but in many areas they were mandatory and reached levels of 25 percent reduction in some urban communities, and 50 percent in some agricultural areas.

Water management districts have the authority to enforce their rules and regulations through the courts, however they do not maintain police units for this purpose. Florida statutes require law enforcement agencies of local governments to cooperate with water management districts in enforcement of water use restrictions. Local ordinances were adopted for this purpose. Also, municipal water supply systems reduced use by reducing line pressure. In general, there was good cooperation and the restrictions were met. Some confusion arose as municipalities responded to the water shortage with different ordinance and enforcement activity. The water management districts are developing strategies to better coordinate water management during future shortages.

During the 1980-81 drought, the sugar and winter vegetable producing area south of Lake Okeechobee was threatened with severe water shortage for the 1981-82 fall-spring growing season. Lake Okeechobee had fallen to an all-time low of 9.75 feet above sea level in late July, 1981. The desired level for the lake in late summer is 16 feet above sea level. The lake is the source of irrigation water for the area and is normally about 700 square miles in