

management to include conservation and storage of water for use during dry periods. As the population grew and interests diversified, water resources were perceived to be important not only for mankind's consumptive uses, but also for the maintenance of wildlife, aesthetics, and preservation of natural ecosystems. Comprehensive water resource management, guided by a generally accepted statewide policy, became necessary and the legislature has attempted to establish the administrative framework to provide such management.

Water management by regional districts appears to have achieved general acceptance by the public. More than 30 years of experience in South Florida and about 20 in the southwestern part of the state have provided a base of experience for the three newer districts. Development of district programs has been generally successful. There is communication among districts through statewide conferences, DER, and direct discussions of mutual problems.

Communication between the districts and agricultural interests are steadily improving. Most irrigators have large investments in irrigation equipment and in seasonal plantings, leading them to support water use regulation provided it will increase their assurance of a continuing reliable supply of water. Much of early resistance to increased regulation has been tempered by the observed impacts of increased water use and periodic droughts on water supplies.

A major unresolved issue in water resource management in Florida is the allocation of water to water-short, high-population centers. To what extent should the resources of less developed areas be appropriated to support these growing urban areas? The second important issue is the allocation of water to preserve natural ecosystems, and this issue is often entwined with the first. The existence of these issues is well known, but a generally acceptable solution is not.

Statewide water resource management under state water law is in place in Florida and appears to be gaining in both proficiency and acceptance. The legal and political jousting which will probably increase as voter-abundant areas confront land - and water-abundant areas over the use of water will test the present statutes and the agencies which administer them.