

PINELLAS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL WORKGROUP
THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2004
MEETING SUMMARY

ATTENDEES:

Environmental Work Group: Bill Showalter, Dave Baras, Jake Zimmerman, Barbara Hoffman, Dianne Wheatley Giliotti, Mary Berglund, Ellen Pfau, Joyce King, Holly Greening, James Richter, Jason Mickel, Judy McSwine

Pinellas County Staff: Gordon Beardslee, Liz Freeman, Samantha Shorr-Zigante, Andy Squires, Chris Staubus, Todd Tanberg

Welcome and Introductions

- The Work Group reviewed the March meeting summary and made one correction.
- Then Gordon Beardslee, Pinellas County Planning Department Administrator, welcomed everyone and began introductions.
- Chris Staubus, Assistant Director of Pinellas County Utilities, and Todd Tanberg, Director of Alternate Water Sources – Pinellas County Utilities, were introduced.

Introduction to Water in Florida

- Chris Staubus, Assistant Director of Pinellas County Utilities, reviewed several charts and tables of data with the group in order to provide a perspective of where Florida fits and more specifically where Pinellas County fits in regard to water use.
- The United States Geological Survey (USGS) table titled *Table 1 Estimated Use of Water in the United States in 2000* compares the freshwater usage of all the states. For example, Florida uses 53% for agriculture and 30% for public supply.
- Depicted on *USGS Estimated Use of Water Table 5: Public Supply Water Withdrawals, 2000*, Florida ranked 28 out of all States at 174 million gallons per day (mgd) while the overall national average was 178mgd (not including commercial numbers or reclaimed water figures).
- Overall use, Florida is right in the middle of all these comparisons, and Pinellas County is at 96 mgd.

Rate Comparison Tables

- Although Pinellas County is a high importer of water because it is a peninsula, the *Water Fund MGD Water Purchases* chart is projecting the use of less water over time. According to Utilities staff, conservation efforts have been a big contributor. The Work Group asked how does tourism fit into all this? Gordon answered the County averages 80,000 tourists per day with half that number staying with friends and relatives.
- The *Water Fund Expenses* chart shows the breakdown of \$3.5 billion in costs to set up Tampa Bay Water (TBW). The red line on the chart equals expenses paid to TBW. The Work Group asked why the 2003 expenses were so high. Utilities staff said operation and maintenance as well as the desalination plant and reservoir costs were the causes for increased 2003 expenditures.

Rainfall Facts

- Of 150 billion gallons per day (bgd) of rainfall, 107 bgd evaporates.
- One inch of rain equals **one** trillion gallons across the State.
- On average, Florida receives 54 inches of rain per **day year**.

Pinellas County Utilities Water Conservation Programs

- Utilities staff said that Pinellas County is aggressively pursuing water conservation efforts and then proceeded to discuss the following four programs:
 - 1) Reclaimed Water Program (Issues)
 - Through permits, excess water is discharged to surface water and/or to golf courses in North County. This wet weather disposal has allowed golf courses to receive reclaimed for free. However, starting June 2004, golf courses will be put on interruptible reclaimed service and will pay rates established by the Board of County Commissioners and the goal is to eliminate surface water discharge.
 - Although the demand for reclaimed is approximately 15 million gallons per day (mgd), North and South County locations produce 33 mgd. By using reclaimed, overall County water savings amount to 4.5-5 mgd while the goal is 9.5-10 mgd.
 - It has cost \$283 million to fund the reclaimed water system and the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) has contributed \$23 million.
 - Currently, reclaimed water is not endorsed for anything but irrigation. There is also an issue of demand management. By 2007, all the reclaimed water available will be allocated to customers and projects. Therefore, through education, Utilities staff is addressing the issue of overuse. Reclaimed is not metered for residential customers. The residential cost breakdown is as follows: \$7 per month for availability fee and \$2 per month flat fee for a total of \$9 per month. Commercial customers are metered though. The Work Group noted that the City of Dunedin has reclaimed water restrictions. Utilities staff said that the County did not go into meter reading immediately, because they wanted to get the “word out first.” The County wanted to get customers using the system and wait to meter-read until they had a “mature system” similar to Dunedin’s and St. Petersburg’s.
 - Utilities staff said Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) is key in water conservation. ASR is when you store water underground during wet weather, and then pump and distribute it to customers in dry weather. Utilities staff said that they are currently looking at permitting for ASR cycle testing.
 - Utilities staff said that with a successful reclaimed water program comes higher water rates.
 - 2) Ultra Low Volume Toilet Replacement Rebate Program
 - Pinellas County Utilities Department offers up to \$100 rebate per toilet replaced. This program/rebate is applicable to toilets installed prior to 1993. The low volume toilets use 1.6 gallons per flush. To date, Utilities has installed 49,000 low volume toilets. The goal is to install 94,000 low volume toilets within five years. Once all these toilets are installed, they will save 2 mgd. The cities of Clearwater, Safety Harbor, Largo, Pinellas Park and Oldsmar are also involved in the program.
 - 3) Alternate Water Source Rebate Program
 - This program involves a few different efforts. The first one is a pilot program in the Pinellas County Utilities building involving its cooling towers. Utilities went to a “no-bleed” (no discharge) system for two years and saved 1.1 million gallons of water. They also saved \$12,000 in sewer fees.
 - Healthy Lawn Program is the second effort. This program teaches you how to properly utilize water and how to fertilize (e.g. encourage deep root systems, grouping plants, etc.). Pinellas County Utilities coordinates the program with Florida Yards & Neighbors

(FY&N). This program is often promoted through radio spots, environmental fairs and earth fests.

- The third effort encourages homeowners to install alternate water supply sources. Utilities will pay half of the cost up to \$300. So far, approximately 620 shallow wells have been installed. The Work Group asked if Utilities could work with a whole neighborhood on this program and Utilities staff said “yes.”

- 4) Industrial, Commercial, Institutional Water Conservation Program (Performance Contractor Rebate Program)
- The Water Conservation Hotel and Motel (C.H.A.M.P.) Program is part of this effort. The District's Pinellas-Anclote River Basin Board is funding the program in Pinellas and southern Pasco counties through June 2004. The goal of this free program is to help hotels and motels save water for Florida's future in ways that save money. Staff goes out and reviews individual operations and provides advice. Thus far, 76 hotels and motels have signed up and Utilities staff has looked at 17 in detail. Staff has provided the hotels and motels with such information as water-use surveys, training materials to provide on-site water conservation workshops for staff as well as a linens and towels reuse program. This has resulted in saving 16 million gallons of water in just one year. Staff will continue to meet with the remaining hotels and motels that have signed up. Water C.H.A.M.P. has proven to be so valuable that on June 1, 2003, it expanded into Hillsborough County.

State/Water Management District Concepts

- Due to time constraints, County staff was unable to cover this agenda item.

Level of Service and Rate Impacts

- Due to time constraints, County staff was unable to cover this agenda item.

Assignments for Next Meeting

- The Work Group will review the goals, objectives and policies and then let staff know what recommendations they have for the Board of County Commissioners.
- Per the request of the Work Group, Staff will discuss sewer specifics such as infrastructure/maintenance, intake and drainage to the Bay.

At this point, with no further questions, the meeting concluded.