

# The Villages is active in water conservation techniques, innovation

The cooler weather last week reminded me to reduce the watering times on my irrigation controller, as the shrubs and grass need less water in the winter.

This past summer was a more normal summer, as far as rainfall, which helped replenish the aquifer, fill the wetlands and keep the stormwater retention basins full. Winter is the dry season and the water levels in the stormwater retention basins reflect this.

It is everyone's responsibility to help continue to reduce consumption and reuse our water supplies. The state, the water management districts and your local governments all have been proactive in their efforts to educate, inform and look for innovative ways to establish, regulate and mandate water conservation techniques and methods.

These efforts provide us with potable drinking water as well as other sources of water that can be used to provide irrigation and other nonpotable services to the state.

This continued challenge, to look for creative and innovative ways to be good stewards of water resources, has allowed your community, The Villages, to set the bar on water conservation.

One innovation includes the ability to store and reuse stormwater and reclaimed water for irrigation of recreation and common areas. This includes running the sprinklers on the golf courses during excessive rain showers.

Letting the sprinklers run during high periods of rain releases excess water from our water retention basins. It allows the excess water to recharge the aquifer as well as serve as a flood management tool for our



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community.

The next time you see the sprinklers on during rain showers, you will understand why. If you would like more information on ways you can help in this effort to conserve water, visit our website at [districtgov.org](http://districtgov.org) and click on the Water Wisdom link.

Also, we have a separate nonpotable utility for homes and commercial areas south of County Road 466, which uses stormwater and the lower Floridan deep aquifer for irrigation purposes.

The water management districts, The Villages, the counties and the District all actively participate in public service announcements and numerous websites to campaign and promote water conservation awareness.

Let's talk about stormwater retention basins and wetlands for a minute. There are more than 275 stormwater retention basins in The Villages that the District maintains. Each of these basins is its own eco-system.

Some have shoreline plantings, others only grass around the perimeter. Some retain all the stormwater they receive, others are interconnected with other basins through the stormwater piping infrastructure. Some are used for irrigation only when they have excess stormwater, while those south of CR 466 are used daily for

irrigation.

Maintaining the stormwater retention basins is a challenge because of the fact that when it rains, the water washes whatever it comes in contact with into the stormwater retention basins, be it trash, dirt, oil, fertilizer or something someone intentionally put into the stormwater inlets. Whatever is on a sidewalk, driveway or roadway will end up in the stormwater retention basins.

Wetlands throughout The Villages are even more diverse. Each wetland has a permit issued through one or more agency, be it Southwest Florida Water Management District, St. Johns River Water Management District or Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Each permit has restrictions regarding what is required to keep the permit in compliance.

Some wetlands have upland buffers, others mitigation areas. With this diversity of the compliance requirements of permits, some wetlands have routine work done while others may require some type of work to be done only once a year or every few years. Needless to say, this causes confusion when it comes to what may or may not be done depending upon the area.

The Districts will be conducting an educational presentation about stormwater retention basins, the wetlands and preserve areas and other environmental issues throughout the Villages this year to help everyone understand.

I look forward to meeting with you again, next time at Our Place.

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