

Water School Educates Polk Leaders

Leaders from across Polk County recently participated in the two-day Polk County Water School to learn about the water issues affecting Polk and the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) region.

The educational event, hosted by UF/IFAS Extension Polk County and sponsored by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), included a one-day tour and a day of educational seminars.

The tour began at Bok Academy, a charter school in Babson Park, where the students demonstrated how the effects of runoff affect watersheds. Then, participants took a boat tour of Crooked Lake to see the benefits of a restoration project that helped improve water quality. Later, they viewed an irrigation audit demonstration.

The Day 2 sessions focused on topics that touched on the area's limited traditional water resources and the importance of water conservation.

Cindy Rodriguez, a Government Affairs regional manager for SWFWMD, said the Polk County Water School is an important opportunity to educate municipal and agency leaders about the water issues facing the CFWI region.

"It was very gratifying to see the level of engagement as elected policy-makers and other community leaders learned about the importance of water conservation and the critical need to more closely tie land and water planning decisions together," Rodriguez said. "All while we, collectively, pursue options for alternate water suppliers to ensure future needs can be met."