

Seminole County's Holistic Water Policy Takes a One Water Approach

The future of central Florida's water supply won't be determined by a single project or policy. Instead, it's shaped by thousands of everyday decisions, from a homeowner adjusting an irrigation timer to a local government investing in reclaimed water and water infrastructure. These choices influence the region's long-term water sustainability.

Seminole County is one of five counties within the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) Planning Area, where the St. Johns River Water Management District (District) and its regional partners are planning for future water needs through water conservation, alternative water supplies and other projects identified in the Regional Water Supply Plan.

That regional framework is now taking shape locally through Seminole County's Holistic Water Policy, an effort designed to manage all water as one resource. What began as an idea in 2021 has turned into a policy that includes approximately 40 projects, programs and initiatives focused on water conservation, alternative water supplies, reclaimed water expansion, watershed management and sustainable development practices.

"We have a guidebook in place, but successful implementation requires someone to connect the pieces," says Keeli Carlton, Seminole County's water policy program manager. "Internally, I serve as a bridge between departments to ensure water is considered in all county conversations. Externally, I work with partners and the community to build awareness and support for a more holistic approach to water management."

For residents and businesses, that approach is already starting to show up in practical ways. Seminole County has expanded its water conservation program using the University of Florida's H2O SAV software to identify high water users and proactively offer free irrigation evaluations. That data-driven approach helped save an estimated 56 million gallons of water in 2025 by helping property owners adjust irrigation practices and improve efficiency.

"Water conservation is the most cost-effective water supply option available," says Deirdre Irwin, a water conservation coordinator for the District. "Every gallon we save

today helps reduce pressure on our water resources and helps ensure a sustainable water supply for future generations."

Beyond conservation outreach, the county is also conducting water audits of its own facilities, reviewing development plans through a holistic lens and exploring opportunities to expand reclaimed water use, all part of a broader effort to align local decisions with regional water supply goals.

Looking ahead, Seminole County hopes the policy will serve as a model for other local governments seeking to integrate water conservation and long-term water supply planning into everyday decision-making.

"In my mind, the success of this policy will be measured not only by gallons saved, but also by continued investment in water systems and growing community support for water stewardship," Carlton says.