



**Guidelines for candidates seeking accreditation
as a Florida Water StarSM professional**

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Table of Contents

General information about Florida Water StarSM	2
Accreditation goal	
Types of accreditation	
Recommended credentials	2
Registration process	3
Application form	
Fees	
Examination dates and locations	3
Preparing for the examination	4
Content of the examinations	
Practice tests	
Required workshops	
Review materials	
Taking the examination	5
Candidate check-in	
Security and confidentiality	
Reference materials and resources	
Scoring and results	5
Scoring procedures	
Notification of results	
Exam review process/challenge	
Maintaining accreditation	6
Administrative policies	7
Accreditation board	
Absence policy	
Rescheduling or retaking the examination	
Florida Water Star SM logo use	
Change of contact information	

General information

Established in 2006 by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), Florida Water StarSM is a voluntary certification program for new and existing residential and commercial developments that encourages water efficiency in indoor fixtures and appliances, irrigation systems and landscapes. The following guidelines address the examination process to become an accredited Florida Water Star professional. SJRWMD has partnered with the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) to administer the program. Visit *floridawaterstar.com* for more details.

Inquiries about the program and professional accreditation process should be directed to:

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Florida Water Star Coordinator

St. Johns River Water Management District

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(386) 546-8437

Inquiries about the Florida Water StarSM exam scheduling and results should be directed to:

Merry Mott

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Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association

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Accreditation goal

The goal of the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional program is to provide advanced education for practitioners in the landscape and irrigation fields that will result in the sustainable design and implementation of projects to achieve program certification.

Types of accreditation

The program provides two types of accreditation: Florida Water StarSM Accredited Irrigation Professional and Florida Water StarSM Accredited Landscape Professional. Accreditation is available for irrigation professionals, landscape design professionals, and licensed landscape architects in the areas of irrigation design and installation and landscape design and installation.

Recommended credentials

The Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional program is designed for those professionals actively involved in the industry with relevant professional experience. This program is not an entry level accreditation.

Recommended credentials include one or more of the following:

- Certified Irrigation Contractor (CIC) or Designer (CID) by the Irrigation Association
- Florida Registered Landscape Architect (RLA)
- FNGLA Certified Horticulture Professional (FCHP)
- Three years or more experience designing or installing landscapes or irrigation systems

Appropriate professions include:

- Landscape professionals
- Irrigation professionals
- Landscape and building inspectors
- Urban designers or land planners
- Education professionals
- Developers
- Site design engineers or land development engineers
- Government employees in utilities, parks departments, etc.

Registration process

The exam is in association with Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional training. FNGLA will coordinate registration for these events. The exam is offered online following the completion of the FWS-AP training class.

Application form

Exam applications are accepted online and are coordinated by FNGLA. Applications can be submitted prior to, or just following, the in-person FWS-AP training.

When submitting a registration application, the candidate attests that all information provided in the application is true and accurate to the best of his/her knowledge. FNGLA will randomly verify the information contained in the application.

If FNGLA determines that an application is incomplete, an email is sent to the candidate to explain the deficiency. The candidate must respond and complete the application before their exam will be scheduled.

Fees

See FNGLA's website or specific training advertisement for current exam fees at www.fn gla.org.

Examination dates and locations

Exams are administered online immediately following each scheduled Florida Water Star training workshop. The Florida Water StarSM and FNGLA websites and calendars will list these dates. Online testing instructions will be shared during the training workshops.

Special needs requests

SJRWMD and the FNGLA comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, as amended, regarding the accommodation of disabled candidates who need special arrangements. A written request must be submitted with supporting documentation from a physician or other qualified professional, to indicate the candidate's condition and explain the exam aids or modifications needed for test-taking. Please contact the FNGLA coordinator concerning ADA arrangements.

Preparing for the examination

The examination is an online internet-based test. Each examination consists of 75 questions in multiple choice format. The candidate has three hours to answer all questions. Candidates are encouraged to bring laptop computers to the workshops and the examinations, as many resources are available online for the examination. Successful completion of the exam requires the candidate to answer 80% (60 questions) correctly within the three-hour period.

A. Content of the examinations

- 1) Irrigation examination
 - i. General Florida Water StarSM principles (10% of exam)
 - ii. Irrigation criteria (40% of exam)
 - iii. Irrigation points (24% of exam)
 - iv. Irrigation plan (20% of exam)
 - v. Water budgeting and scheduling (6% of exam)
- 2) Landscape examination
 - i. General Florida Water StarSM principles (10% of exam)
 - ii. Landscape criteria (40% of exam)
 - iii. Landscape points (30% of exam)
 - iv. Landscape plan (20% of exam)

B. Practice tests

Irrigation practice questions and landscape practice questions are included in the Accredited Professional workshops described in the following paragraph.

C. Required workshops

SJRWMD, SWFWMD and SFWMD offer training workshops to help candidates prepare for the examinations. It is required that candidates attend both the landscape and irrigation portions of the workshop even if they only plan to take one examination. The one-day workshop is advertised on the Florida Water Star and FNGLA websites. Training workshops require additional fees and the websites specify the amount. For best results, it is recommended the candidate take the accreditation exam within six months of attending a workshop. Florida Water StarSM is an ever-evolving program, and its content may be updated periodically.

D. Review materials

The candidate should review the following study materials prior to taking the examination:

1) Irrigation

- Materials from the one-day irrigation training workshop
- Florida Water StarSM Silver and Gold criteria (points lists)
- Florida Water StarSM Irrigation Accredited Professional Exam Irrigation and Landscape Plans
- *Florida Water StarSM Technical Manual (online)*

2) Landscape

- Materials from the one-day landscape training workshop
- Florida Water StarSM Landscape Plan and Shade Diameters
- Florida Water StarSM Silver and Gold criteria (points lists)
- Publications by the Florida Invasive Species Partnership
- *Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources by the Green Industries (online)*
- *Waterwise Florida Landscapes and Plant List (online)*
- *Florida Water StarSM Technical Manual (online)*

Taking the examination

A. Candidate check-in

Once the candidate has registered for the FWS Irrigation or Landscape exam, they will receive via e-mail the website link and log-in credentials. The link will be active for a period of 30 days during which time the candidate must complete the exam.

B. Security and confidentiality

As part of the application process, the candidate initials a statement assuring the information provided on their exam application is true. They also verify the exam is completed by themselves alone without assistance from another individual.

C. Reference materials and resources

Because this is an open resource exam, candidates should have with them all the review materials listed above, plus any additional reference materials which may be helpful to them. Much of the reference material is online. The candidate may utilize any books, handouts or websites. However, they cannot enlist the assistance of any other individual during the exam.

Scoring and results

Scoring procedures

All exams are graded electronically, and the result can be seen by the applicant immediately after taking the exam. If the candidate is unable to answer all 75 questions within the allowed examination period, any questions left unanswered at the end of the examination are scored as

incorrect. The final score is based on a denominator of 75 questions. Retests for failed attempts must be requested from FNGLA.

Notification of results

Once the candidate passes their exam, FNGLA will mail to the candidate within four weeks an FWS-AP certificate, pin and additional information. Results are forwarded to SJRWMD and successful candidates are recorded as accredited professionals in both FNGLA and Florida Water StarSM records.

Exam review process/challenge

Should a candidate disagree with his/her test score, below is a process by which the decision can be appealed.

1. Appeals shall be submitted in writing to FNGLA's Director of Industry Certifications at FNGLA, 1533 Park Center Drive, Orlando, FL 32835
2. The appeal must be submitted within one month of receipt of test scores.
3. Applicant must provide the following information:
 - a. Date of exam or application
 - b. Explanation of concern
 - c. Person or people involved
 - d. Desired result
4. Applicant will be contacted within two weeks of receipt of appeal concerning the timing of the appeal consideration.
5. All appeals will be taken before the Florida Water StarSM Technical Advisory Committee at its next regularly-scheduled meeting.
6. Applicant will be contacted within two weeks of the meeting of the Florida Water StarSM Technical Advisory Committee.

Maintaining accreditation

Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional designations are valid for a period of three years, during which time the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional is required to complete 15 hours of continuing education (CEUs) in order to renew. CEUs must be earned during the Accredited Professional's active period, and no CEUs are carried over from one period to another.

To earn CEUs, Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professionals must attend industry educational programs and submit proof of attendance to FNGLA. CEUs can be demonstrated in one hour increments through:

- Attending webinars, lectures, and/or workshops regarding irrigation, landscape, green industry, and/or Florida Water StarSM subject matters, whether offered in person or online. (One hour of CEU per one hour of attendance.)
- Presenting or teaching on landscape, irrigation, green industry, or FWS subject matters (Two hours of CEU per one hour of instruction.)

- Completing other continuing education courses required to maintain landscape architect or irrigation contractor license or any pesticide or fertilization license through the State of Florida. CEUs are also accepted from other professional designations such as FNGLA, Irrigation Association, Society of Arboriculture or the Landscape Inspectors Association of Florida.
- Attending trade shows regarding landscape, irrigation, or green industry.

CEUs may be held until renewal time, or may be submitted as they are earned. The following must be provided to FNGLA:

- 1) Proof of attendance (receipt, badge, signature of coordinator or instructor)
- 2) Where and when the event took place
- 3) The agenda and speaker
- 4) The length of the program

FWS-APs may also upload their own CEUs through FNGLA's website. FNGLA will contact the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional with the number of CEUs that can be provided for that event. The rule of thumb is one CEU for each hour of instruction. A fee will be charged to the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional by FNGLA to renew their accreditation.

FNGLA will send the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional a reminder 60 days before their accreditation expires, listing the number of CEUs the professional has acquired, how many are required for renewal and a renewal invoice. An additional reminder is sent at 30 days. Should a Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional fail to complete his/her CEUs within six months of their expiration, they will be required to retake the exam and pay the appropriate fees.

Administrative policies

Accreditation board

The Florida Water StarSM Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) serves as the accreditation board and is composed of 18 people. The TAC meets annually and is in regular email communication. The TAC is responsible for overseeing the accreditation program and presides over any grievances, appeals, or other matters filed by a candidate, existing Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional, or Florida Water StarSM coordinator.

Absence policy

Failure of the candidate to complete their exam in the allotted time period will result in the forfeiture of his/her registration fee.

Rescheduling or retaking the examination

A candidate can reschedule, cancel, or retake an exam once without repaying the registration fee. Should the candidate reschedule or retake the exam more than once, the candidate will need to repay the exam fee upon each change. Please note that a candidate cannot retake the exam more than three times in a 12-month period.

Florida Water StarSM logo use

A Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional may use the program logo in his/her professional marketing materials for the length of time the professional maintains an active accreditation through the Florida Water StarSM program. If a candidate does not maintain the accreditation, he/she may not continue to use the logo.

Change of contact information

It is the Accredited Professional's responsibility to provide updated contact information, including phone numbers and email addresses, to the SJRWMD Florida Water StarSM Coordinator or FNGLA within 30 days of the change.