



St. Johns River Water Management District Water Conservation Rebate Program Applicant Handbook FY 2026-27

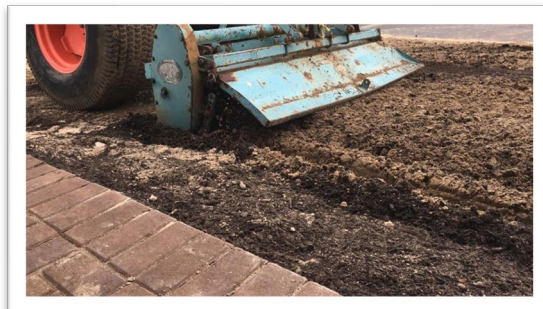


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Introduction

In 2023, the Water Conservation team at the St. Johns River Water Management District (District) developed and launched the Water Conservation Rebate Program to support eligible non-agricultural water conservation projects. (Information on agricultural cost-sharing can be found at www.sjrwmd.com/localgovernments/funding/agricultural-cost-share.)

Four years later, the program has become an important component of the District's mission to protect water resources while meeting the public's water needs. The Water Conservation Rebate Program promotes and incentivizes water-efficient practices that support the District's strategic goals for water conservation and resource sustainability. The target audiences for the rebate program — local governments, utilities, homeowner associations, and multi-family property owners — were selected based on their ability to implement measurable water-saving benefits. By reducing water use and increasing efficiency, these entities play a significant role in helping meet regional water supply needs and advancing resource protection goals.

The program provides cost-share rebates of up to 50% of eligible project expenses, with a not-to-exceed maximum amount for each eligible item. Applicants may receive up to \$10,000 in rebates per fiscal year. Funds are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until all available program funds have been allocated.

This handbook guides applicants interested in participating in the Water Conservation Rebate Program during fiscal year 2026-27 (October 1, 2026, to September 30, 2027).

Program Guidelines

To be eligible to participate in the Water Conservation Rebate Program, the following guidelines must be met:

1. The project location must be within the District's boundary ([Figure 1](#)). Search for your property at: [Map of the St. Johns River Water Management District](#).

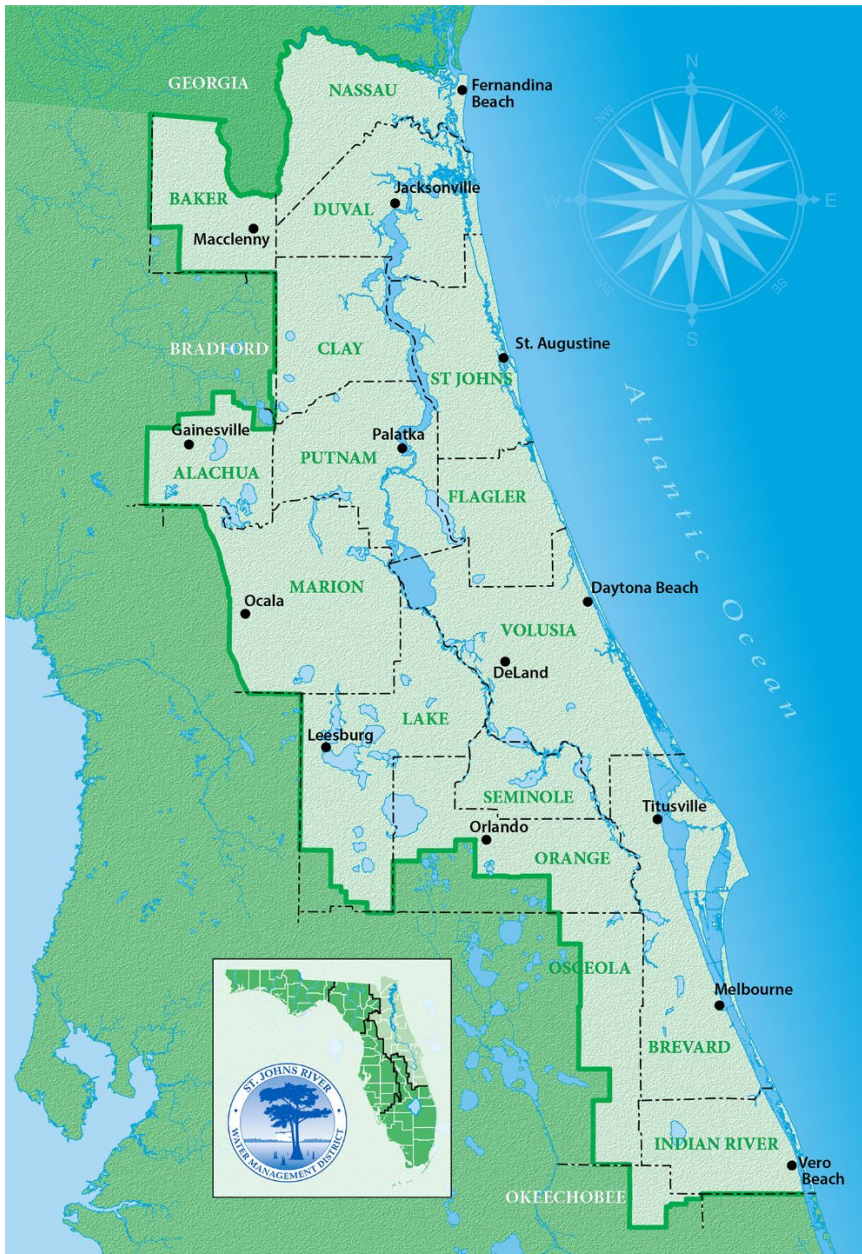


Figure 1. Map of the St. Johns River Water Management District

2. All participants must submit a pre-qualification application ([Water Conservation Rebate Program Qualification Application Form](#)) and receive approval from the District to participate in the Water Conservation Rebate Program.

3. The applicant and project must comply with all District regulatory requirements. Each applying municipality or county must have a landscape irrigation ordinance that is consistent with the District's model irrigation ordinance.
4. The water source being conserved through the project must be groundwater or reclaimed water that is constrained or supplemented with groundwater.
5. Applicants are limited to:
 - Local governments;
 - Public and private water utilities;
 - Incorporated homeowner and property owner associations, as defined by Chapter 720, *Florida Statutes* (F.S.), Chapter 617 F.S., or Chapter 163, F.S.;
 - Condominium associations, as defined by Chapter 718, F.S.;
 - Community development districts as defined by Chapter 190, F.S.; and
 - Private and publicly owned multi-family properties (e.g., apartments, condominiums, dormitories, hotels, etc.).
6. Entities that provide rebates for irrigation well construction in an area of a constrained resource (e.g., Upper Floridan aquifer, MFL waterbody, etc.) are not eligible for funding from this rebate program.
7. For homeowner, condominium, and community development district associations, eligible projects are limited to residential implementation and/or common area irrigation.
8. Applicants should focus efforts on high water-use customers.
9. Projects must be completed during the fiscal year (i.e., October 1, 2026, to September 30, 2027) of application submittal.
10. Projects that receive funding from any other District program in the same fiscal year are not eligible for the Water Conservation Rebate Program.
11. Applicants must consent to the terms of the Water Conservation Rebate Program as set forth in the Applicant Handbook and the Water Conservation Rebate Cost-Share Agreement.
12. Applicants awarded funding must submit water use data for the six months before and after project completion for each property (if available).

Rebate Amount (District Cost-Share)

1. The District has established maximum rebate amounts for each eligible item in [Table 1](#) below. The District will reimburse the lesser amount of 50% of the actual cost to implement each item or the maximum rebate amount.
2. The District's maximum per applicant reimbursement, cumulative for all conservation item rebates, is \$10,000 per fiscal year.
3. Any costs that exceed the program guidelines will be borne by the applicant. The District reimburses materials and installation costs only. Administrative and/or overhead costs will not be reimbursed by the Water Conservation Rebate Program.
4. Rebates will be paid monthly on a "first-come, first-served" basis until program funds are depleted. Remaining available program funds are updated monthly and posted at www.sjrwm.com/water-conservation/water-conservation-rebate-program.
5. Rebate payments will be made to the applicant.

Eligible Water Conservation Items

The District offers rebates for a variety of water-saving items. In addition to the hardware components (e.g., material, fixture, etc.), the necessary labor for installation is an eligible expense. [Table 1](#) identifies conservation items, reimbursable costs, and the maximum rebate for each item.

Table 1. Eligible rebate items

Conservation Measure	Reimbursable Costs* (to be documented on the reimbursement requests)	Maximum Rebate Amount (per item)
Florida Water Star SM certification for new residential construction	Fees for inspection and certification	\$150
EPA WaterSense-labeled smart irrigation controller	Material and installation	Residential: \$100 HOA common area and multi-family properties: \$3,000
Irrigation conversion (High-volume spray to a high-efficiency rotary nozzle or microirrigation)	Material and installation	Residential: \$100 HOA common area and multi-family properties: \$5,000
Irrigation evaluation and timer modification	Contractor cost per visit	Residential: \$75 HOA common area and multi-family properties: \$500
Landscape soil amendment (for new residential construction)	Material and installation	\$250
Indoor fixture retrofit	Fixture and installation	<u>Toilets</u> \$150/unit (0.8 gal/flush) \$100/unit (1.28 gal/flush) <u>Faucets</u> \$45/unit (1.5 gpm) <u>Showerheads</u> \$35/unit (2.0 gpm)
H ₂ OSAV subscription	50 percent of the first-year annual subscription	\$5,000 per entity

*When seeking reimbursement for implementation/installation by an employee of the applicant, the applicant must include the following required information with the invoice; address of the implementation/installation site, material cost (copy of receipt), staff-hour cost with benefits (no indirect cost; system report or timesheet), and vehicle cost (IRS mileage) per visit.

Florida Water StarSM

Florida Water StarSM (FWS) is a water-efficiency certification program for new and existing construction (residential, commercial, and institutional) that promotes and verifies both indoor and outdoor water conservation measures. The costs associated with inspecting and certifying new residential construction are eligible for this rebate; however, HOA, property owner, condominium, and community development district common properties are not. FWS guidelines can be found at floridawaterstar.com/program-criteria/residential.

Smart Irrigation Controllers

Smart irrigation sensors and controllers (also known as weather-based controllers, climatologically based controllers, and smart controllers) monitor weather and other site-specific data to automatically adjust the irrigation system to apply the correct amount of water precisely when it is needed.

A soil moisture-based controller prevents over-watering by shutting off an irrigation system when the ground is saturated. The controller turns the system back on when the soil moisture drops to a level that requires irrigation.

For this rebate program, applicants must install and use an EPA WaterSense®-labeled product and program the controller according to the District's irrigation restrictions (www.sjrwmd.com/wateringrestrictions), as this will maximize water savings.

Irrigation Conversions/Retrofits

Retrofitting older, less-efficient irrigation systems with more-efficient nozzles/emitters can reduce the amount of water used in an irrigation cycle. Proper placement of nozzles increases application efficiency, and modern, water-saving nozzles typically use less water than traditional nozzles. This program offers rebates for sprinkler head nozzles, rotary nozzles, high-efficiency type nozzles, microirrigation in landscapes, and pressure regulation. For this program, all rebated items must comply with U.S. EPA WaterSense-labeling specifications (www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-products).

Irrigation Evaluation and Timer Modifications

Irrigation system evaluations can help homeowners save water. Evaluations include adjustments to the irrigation controller to ensure that each planting zone receives the correct amount of water while complying with local watering restrictions (www.sjrwmd.com/wateringrestrictions/#restrictions-summary). During evaluations, the homeowner is taught how to set and reset the controller, inspect the system for leaks,

and troubleshoot other system issues. Timer adjustments and homeowner education are mandatory components of the evaluation process. For this program, applicants must follow the Sprinkler Spruce-Up guidance provided by WaterSense (www.epa.gov/watersense/sprinkler-spruce-up) and complete the “Find It, Flag It, Fix It” irrigation system audit checklist (www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/documents/ws-outdoor-landscaping-find-it-flag-it-audit-checklist.pdf)

Landscape Soil Amendments for New Construction

Residential landscape soil amendments are organic materials mixed into the soil to improve the soil’s condition before installing residential turf or gardens. According to research (Guidance for Amending Urban Soils with Organic Amendments, University of Florida – Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF IFAS), 2020), amendments are valued for their ability to improve soil texture and structure, add nutrient content, adjust pH levels, and help with drainage or water retention. Organic matter creates a better environment for turf and plants to grow, particularly in new construction. Using amendments reduces both the irrigation requirements and the need for supplemental fertilizer application.

Those applying for rebate funding for residential landscape soil amendments must use a product that meets the standards of the US Composting Council’s Seal of Testing Assurance (STA) Program (www.compostingcouncil.org/page/STARequirements). The application should follow the manufacturer’s recommendations, and irrigation should be adjusted to reflect the reduced requirements for establishment. The applicant should include how these requirements will be met in the project description of the Rebate Program Qualification Application Form.

H₂OSAV

The Water Savings, Analytics and Verification tool (H₂OSAV) is a water conservation evaluation program operated by UF IFAS that analyzes local government and utility water use data to help participants implement targeted water conservation. This rebate program will help fund a local government or utility’s first-year subscription to H₂OSAV. For more information, please visit clue.ifas.ufl.edu/community-and-environment/h2osav. Contact Dr. Nick Taylor at nwtaylor@ufl.edu with questions or to sign up for H₂OSAV.

Indoor Fixture Retrofits

Large-scale retrofitting of indoor water fixtures, such as toilets, faucets, and shower heads, has significantly improved water conservation in recent years. This rebate covers indoor fixture retrofits at private and publicly owned multi-family properties and single-family homes. To qualify, entities installing the new fixtures must provide the flush/flow

rates for both the fixtures being replaced and the replacements. Private and publicly owned multi-family properties are eligible when the application is submitted by the owner, property manager, or a local government or utility managing a community-wide initiative. Single-family homes are eligible only through a community-wide program administered by a local government, utility, or HOA/property manager. Individual homeowners or renters cannot apply. For more information on water-efficient indoor fixtures, please visit www.epa.gov/watersense/watersense-products.

Estimated Program Water Savings

UF IFAS and H₂OSAV data from hundreds of sites document the water savings associated with the conservation practices in this program. [Table 2](#) presents the estimated range of savings.

Table 2. Estimated water saving per conservation item

Conservation Measure	Average Savings
Florida Water Star SM certification	Residential: 132 gpd
U.S. EPA WaterSense-labeled smart irrigation controllers	Residential: 95–100 gpd per property HOA common property/multi-family: 30% reduction in water use
Irrigation conversions (high-volume spray to a high-efficiency rotary nozzle)	Residential: 95–100 gpd per property HOA common property/multi-family: 10-20% reduction in water use
Irrigation evaluations and timer modification	Residential: 50–155 gpd per property HOA common property/multi-family: 10-20% reduction in water use
Landscape soil amendments (for new residential construction)	Residential: 50% reduction in water use for landscape establishment in year one
Indoor fixture retrofits	Variable
H ₂ OSAV	Savings are dependent on targeted conservation efforts

Sources: UF IFAS/H₂OSAV and Florida Water StarSM

Application and Rebate Process for Projects

Step 1: Qualification of Applicants and Projects

[Applications](#) can be submitted any time after the program is launched but must be approved before incurring project costs. Interested applicants may schedule a pre-application meeting with District staff listed under Program Contacts.

Step 2: Project Approval/Issuance of Water Conservation Rebate Cost-Share Agreement

- If approved, District staff will notify the applicant via email that the project qualifies for funding. However, qualification does not guarantee funds availability for reimbursement.
- District staff will email the applicant information on how to register as a vendor using PaymentWorks.
- District staff will issue a Water Conservation Rebate Cost-Share Agreement to the applicant.
- Once the Agreement is fully executed, the applicant is eligible to submit for reimbursement.

Step 3: Reimbursement through the Rebate Program

- To apply for a rebate payment, the applicant must submit the [Request for Rebate Invoice Form](#).
- For a rebate request to be considered complete, the Request for Rebate Invoice Form and [rebate detail spreadsheet](#) must be fully completed and submitted along with all invoices or other appropriate proof of payment.
- Rebate requests may be submitted monthly for completed and fully paid project work. The total amount of reimbursements may not exceed \$10,000 per applicant per fiscal year.
- District staff may verify item installation via in-person inspection or other means.
- Rebates will be made on a “first-come, first-served” basis until all program funds are depleted.
- If program funds are available, the District will issue reimbursement within 45 days of a complete rebate request.

FY 2026-2027 Key Dates

October 1, 2026	Start of FY 2026-2027 program. Eligible expenses may be incurred once a qualification form is approved, but no earlier than October 1, 2026.
September 30, 2027	Rebate work must be completed on or before this date.
October 29, 2027	Last day eligible expenses may be submitted for reimbursement (Request for Rebate Form, Invoice Spreadsheet, and other forms of proof of payment). Early submission of final invoicing is requested by October 7, 2027.

Program Contacts

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