Reducing Residential Landscape Irrigation with Regulatory and Social Marketing Tools

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Landscape Irrigation Water Use

There are at least 14,000 landscape irrigation systems within Alachua County

Average daily water use in newer homes *(UF PREC)*:

- 358 gallons - with irrigation system
- 190 gallons - without irrigation

90% of new homes (in Gainesville Regional Utilities service area) have irrigation systems
Alachua County Irrigation Design Code

• All new irrigation systems installed after April 2016 in unincorporated area require approval
  – Submit plans and fees
  – Inspection (self-inspection or County)

• Irrigation professionals were previously an unregulated industry
Major Provisions of Design Code

• Based on Florida Water Star Criteria
  – Maximum of 60% high volume irrigation (rotors and sprays)
  – Maximum of 0.5 irrigated acres (residential)
  – Separate zones for head types
  – No high volume on shrubs
  – Pressure regulated heads
Program Stats

• April 2016-December 2017 (21 months)
  – 377 jobs submitted
  – 193 jobs inspected (51%)
  – 64 failed inspections (32%)

• Three consecutive failed random inspections results in loss of self inspection status

• Water savings will be estimated in 2019
The Bigger Picture - Shifting our Landscaping Paradigm

• Landscaping choices affect water use and water quality
• Trying to shift our perception of ideal yards
  – Facebook photo contest of springs friendly yards
    • ~50,000 reached
    • 54 pictures
Social Marketing

• The use of traditional marketing tools to influence behaviors for a greater good

• Identify a target audience for a focused behavior specific message (there is no “general public”)
  – Audience segmentation
Don’t get caught wasting water! Irrigation restrictions are reduced to one day a week starting November 6, because landscapes don’t need much/any additional water during cooler months. Try turning your system off and only watering if grass blades start to fold.

**Irrigation Restrictions**

Watering is allowed before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Winter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circle #</td>
<td>2nd Sun in Mar - 1st Sat in Nov</td>
<td>1st Sun in Nov - 2nd Sat in Mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odd House #</td>
<td>Wed and/or Sat</td>
<td>Sat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Even House #</td>
<td>Thur and/or Sun</td>
<td>Sun</td>
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<td>Non-residential/</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
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<tr>
<td>commercial</td>
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</tbody>
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Report Violations to 352-264-6800

$100 to reach ~35,000
Voluntary turf replacement program for addressing existing landscapes

• San Antonio’s Water Saver Coupons
Turf SWAP Program Goals

- Reduce the area of irrigated turf
  - Reduce nitrogen (fertilizer) pollution
  - Reduce outdoor water use
  - Promote Florida Friendly Landscaping™
Turf SWAP Pilot Project

• Targeted 6 neighborhoods
  – Offered free mulch, generic landscaping plans, discounted plants and labor, Master Gardener advice
• 142 people expressed interest
• 33 completed SWAP
• Funded by the Gainesville Clean Water Partnership
What Did We Learn?

• Interviews
  – Why didn’t you complete (barriers)?
    • Not enough money
  – Why did you complete (benefits)?
    • Having a hard time with my grass
    • Protect our water
Turf SWAP Program 2.0

• $300,000 cost share funding (Springs Protection- SJRWMD, SRWMD, FDEP)
  – 50% rebate, up to $2,000, per property
  – Open to residential, commercial, and HOAs within Alachua County
How it works

• Visit MyYardOurWater.org

• Work with a SWAP Shop to design landscape

• SWAP Shop removes high volume irrigation and installs Florida Friendly Landscaping

• Submit application, W9, and invoice

• Schedule post site visit
How is it going?

- Promoted via Facebook, press release, NPR Ad, Next Door App, Gainesville Sun ads, and events
- Steady interest since April 2017
  - ~150 interested participants have called
  - 39 completed applications (24% of funds spent)
  - 657 irrigation heads removed or capped
  - ~115,000 ft² high volume irrigation removed
Voluntary verses Regulatory

• Voluntary Florida Water Star program has existed for years.
• $105,000 in cost share funding has been awarded to give builders a $700 rebate for obtaining FWS certification.
  • Began April 2017
  • 2 rebates issued
New Homeowner Survey

54% DO NOT WANT IRRIGATION
Gainesville residents who purchased their home since 2010

58% WANT MORE PLANTS THAT NEED LITTLE WATER
MyYardOurWater.org

451 participants
145 participants
If you were purchasing a new home again, how much more would you be willing to pay for a lower water use landscape?

Residents who purchased homes since 2010

- None: 34%
- $500 to $1,000: 29%
- $1,000 to $1,500: 17%
- $1,500 to $2,000: 10%
- $2,000 to $3,000: 5%
- $3,000 to $4,000: 2%
- Greater than $4,000: 3%

Residents who purchased BRAND NEW construction

- None: 32%
- $500 to $1,000: 28%
- $1,000 to $1,500: 22%
- $1,500 to $2,000: 8%
- $2,000 to $3,000: 6%
- $3,000 to $4,000: 1%
- Greater than $4,000: 3%

66% willing to pay more

451 people surveyed

68% willing to pay more

145 people surveyed
New Homeowner Survey

If you were purchasing a new home again, what would you want to see in the landscape?

- **59%** More plants that need little water
- **48%** More grass that does not need irrigation (i.e. Bahia/Centipede)
- **43%** More hardscapes (i.e. patios and decks)
- **29%** More landscaped beds/plants
- **17%** More turf/grass (St. Augustine/Zoysia)
- **12%** Less irrigation
- **13%** Less turf/grass (St. Augustine/Zoysia)
- **11%** More irrigation
- **7%** Fewer landscaped beds/plants

Data from homeowners that purchased their homes since 2010.
Thank You!

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