Chapter 8: Water & Aquifer Protection

Why this matters

Land conversion and climate change have disrupted patterns of how water cycles through Earth systems. A warmer atmosphere leads to higher evaporation rates, which can drive increased intensity and frequency of rain events. Periods of extreme heat and drought will also be more common and last longer. At the same time, coastal impacts of climate change (like sea-level rise) are causing more Floridians to migrate to Alachua County, increasing water supply demands. Given our dependence on groundwater to meet these freshwater needs, water quality protection and conservation strategies are vital.

What's happening here?

These broader changes to our local climate and community will lead to increased irrigation of agricultural crops and home landscapes, more fertilizer use, greater water demand, and fluctuations in groundwater levels. Collectively, these activities deplete water supplies and degrade water quality. Adaptation projects and water quality restoration projects are much more costly than practicing conservation and protecting water resources on the front end.

The CAP focuses on two approaches for water resource protection:

Protect the health of our waterways by reducing pollution

Preserve freshwater supply by reducing groundwater pumping

What does the CAP include?

The County's Water Quality Code and Landscape Irrigation Design Standards are a strong foundation for reducing pollution and protecting water supply. CAP strategies that build on this foundation include:

- **Helping more water soak back into the aquifer**
- **Setting water-saving standards for new development**
- **Expanding and improving water-quality monitoring**
- **Encouraging landscapes that need minimal irrigation, fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide inputs**

Program Highlight

The County's water programs combine outreach, incentives, and regulation to help residents connect individual behaviors with protection of our shared lakes, creeks, rivers, and aquifer. More than a tagline, "My Yard, Our Water" drives meaningful change.

How can residents contribute?

Minimize landscape irrigation

- Replace turfgrass with native plants and less "thirsty" groundcovers
- Operate irrigation systems only as needed

Reduce personal pollution

- Skip herbicides and fertilizers, embrace wildflowers and native "weeds"

Minimize household use:

- Replace water-wasting fixtures with low-flow showerheads and toilets
- If you face a financial barrier to making these upgrades, visit the Community Weatherization Coalition at communityweatherization.org