

## Alachua County Smart Controller and Soil Moisture Sensor Fact Sheet

Beginning October 1, 2019, all newly installed irrigation systems and those modified 50% or more by area, must have a functioning weather based controller or soil moisture sensor (SMS), as per Chapter 77 Sec. 77.61(a)(11). – Irrigation design standards.

Due to Florida State Statute 373.662, which requires that ALL irrigation systems have a functioning rainfall shut off device, all irrigation systems must have a traditional rain fall shut off device or a soil moisture sensor, even if there is a weather based controller.

**Weather-based controllers** are also called “smart” controllers or ET controllers (evapotranspiration) and use local weather data to adjust irrigation schedules. All weather-based controllers must have a functioning rainfall shut-off device (traditional or soil moisture sensor).

When using a weather-based controller:

- ☛ Alachua County recommends that you select an EPA WaterSense labeled controller, as these have been tested.
- ☛ For a traditional rain sensor, set to ¼” and place in an area that is open to the sky and away from obstructions. If using a soil moisture sensor, follow recommendations listed below for placement, installation and operation.
- ☛ Program for local watering restrictions (days of the week, start time/s).
- ☛ If irrigation has been installed but the property is unoccupied and does not have wifi, the installer must re-program the controller once wifi is available.

**Soil Moisture Sensors (SMS)** are add-on devices that connect to irrigation system controllers and bypass irrigation when there is sufficient moisture in the soil. These can be wireless or hard wired.

When using soil moisture sensors:

- ☛ Place in the location that needs the most frequent watering, typically turf in direct sunlight.
- ☛ Place 5 feet away from any of the following: a property line, an impervious surface, a structure, a depression or swale, a septic tank or drain field, plant beds, the shaded north side of a home, a down spout, an overhang, a hose bib, and the AC system condensate line.
- ☛ Install the SMS in the root zone of turf grass in undisturbed soil, approximately 3 inches.
- ☛ Map the SMS location.
- ☛ Protect wire connections.
- ☛ Calibrate according to manufactures recommendations.
- ☛ Program for local watering restrictions (days of the week, start time/s).

**Variances-** It is possible to receive a variance for an additional irrigation day when SMS or Smart controllers are in use, however Alachua County does not encourage such.

- ☛ In the Suwannee River Management District, please call 386-362-1001 and ask to speak with someone about obtaining a water use permit
- ☛ In the St. John’s Water Management District (SJRWMD), please submit this [form](https://www.sjrwmd.com/static/permitting/Form_40C-2-900-3.pdf) ([https://www.sjrwmd.com/static/permitting/Form\\_40C-2-900-3.pdf](https://www.sjrwmd.com/static/permitting/Form_40C-2-900-3.pdf)) and \$50 application fee to SJRWMD