

Green Lawns Gone

May 1, 2015



“Here in Florida, we’re still focused on further tapping our water resources to facilitate development. Instead, we need to embrace water conservation and projects that recharge the aquifer.”

These wise words are from [Gainesville Sun](#) editor Nathan Crabbe in yesterday’s editorial column.

It is difficult to say what we need to get our water policy changed, but Tom Swihart said in High Springs Monday night, that sometimes, to change policy you have to change policy makers.

More wise words. Let’s do it!

Here is the article, but if you want to read it as it appeared in the *Sun*, go to this [link](#). OSFR is happy to see the *Sun* continue its thankless quest to protect our waters.

Editorial: Green lawns gone

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When a county government that lets its grass go brown seems to be on the cutting edge, it’s a sign of how far Florida needs to go to reduce the abuse of our aquifer.

Alachua County officials deserve kudos for stopping the irrigation of lawns at about a dozen county-owned buildings and planning for a change in turf and end to lawn watering at another four. But much more needs to be done to lead public entities as well as private citizens across the state to take similar actions.

California's drought is forcing such actions there, and Florida would be better served dealing with the issue now before it becomes a crisis here.

Unfortunately, our state Legislature has long taken a pass on implementing a sustainable water policy. The latest evidence is a water-policy bill that was gutted of meaningful changes before dying due to the Florida House skipping out on the end of the legislative session.

If our region's depleted and polluted springs aren't enough to force legislative action, maybe California will serve as a cautionary tale. In response to a multiyear drought, California Gov. Jerry Brown this month ordered a 25 percent mandatory reduction in urban water use there.

His order calls for the state to help replace 50 million square feet of residential lawns with drought-tolerant plants. Even before the order, residents were already being offered rebates to pay for those conversions through so-called cash-for-grass programs.

Brown's order also calls for a rebate program to replace old appliances with more water-efficient models. It bans watering lawns on public medians as well as yards in new housing developments unless drip irrigation or reclaimed water is used.

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embrace water conservation and projects that recharge the aquifer.

Whether potable water or treated wastewater is used, landscape irrigation is a wasted use. Yet the state's lawn-irrigation limits are barely enforced, even in places such as Alachua County that have rules allowing local citations to be issued.

Tougher restrictions on lawn watering would be a start, but the entire idea of green lawns being a right in this state needs to go away. Homeowner associations shouldn't be allowed to fine residents that let their lawns go brown or convert to drought-resistant plants.

Programs such as cash for grass could provide financial assistance in making changes. Homeowners would save time and money by converting water-thirsty grass to more hardy varieties or other drought-resistant plants.

Alachua County officials are showing it can be done. Now the rest of us need to follow their lead.