



**ALACHUA COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
Jack Durrance Auditorium, Room 209 Second Floor 12 SE 1st Street  
July 14, 2015 Regular BoCC Meeting  
Agenda Item #21**

**Title**

Adoption of Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Code

**Amount**

\$35,500.00

**Description**

Staff is requesting the Board to adopt the Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Code. Permission to advertise the public hearing was obtained on June 23rd, 2015 and the Code was discussed at the April 14th, 2015 regularly scheduled BoCC meeting.

**Recommendation**

Adopt the Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Code.

**Alternative(s)**

Provide staff alternative direction

**Requested By**

Chris Bird, Director, 264-6801

**Originating Department**

Environmental Protection

**Attachment(s) Description**

Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Code, Presentation

**Documents Requiring Action**

Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Code

**Executive Summary**

Staff has drafted a Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Code as discussed at the April 14th, 2015 regularly scheduled Board Meeting. The proposed landscape irrigation system design code would reduce the amount of high volume irrigation, improve irrigation efficiency, incentivize the Florida Water Star Program, and increase the quality and workmanship of local landscape irrigation installation contractors. The budget to support implementation of this code has been submitted as part of the

proposed FY16 budget.

### **Background**

Landscape irrigation represents the largest discretionary water use in Alachua County. The 2010 Alachua County Water Conservation Initiative dedicates an entire section to landscape irrigation reduction options. Creating design standards for irrigation systems is one strategy that the BoCC directed staff to further develop in October, 2013. Staff has researched similar codes in other cities and counties and has worked with numerous stakeholders to draft a code. The proposed code would apply to all new residential and commercial irrigation systems. Bona fide agricultural activities, vegetable gardens, fruit trees, and athletic fields would be exempt. As drafted, the code would apply within all of Alachua County, including incorporated and unincorporated areas. Currently there are no design standards for irrigation systems within Alachua County. The proposed code would require separate irrigation zones for spray heads and rotors and turf and mulched areas, as these have varying application rates and water needs. High volume irrigation would be prohibited for trees and shrubs, as micro-irrigation or temporary establishment irrigation is the most efficient for these plants. Currently, there are no professional requirements for installing irrigation systems. The code would encourage landscaping professionals to pursue voluntary Irrigation Specialty Contractor Licensure by the State of Florida or to become a Florida Water Star Accredited Irrigation Professional. The code would also incentivize the Florida Water Star program for water conservation of new residential and commercial construction, as supported in Alachua County's Comprehensive plan (Policy 4.5.21). The Springs and High Aquifer Recharge Land Development Regulations (LDR) were updated in 2012 and apply to new land development projects in High Aquifer Recharge Areas within unincorporated Alachua County (mostly the western and northern portions of the County). This LDR currently limits high volume irrigation to 60% of the landscaped area and limits total landscaped area of residential lots to 0.5 acres in High Aquifer Recharge Areas. The proposed code would extend these standards to the rest of the county, increasing water savings for both surface water and groundwater resources while simplifying compliance. In response to Commissioner feedback during the April 14th, 2015 Board Meeting, a letter was sent from the County Manager to the City Managers of all of the municipalities within Alachua County describing the draft ordinance, the process, and offering staff presentations. Additionally staff discussed this ordinance at the League of Cities meeting on May 26th, 2015 and the Code seemed to be well-received. The attached draft ordinance takes into account public comments provided by staff from GRU, SJRWMD, UF Center for Landscape Conservation and Ecology, Marion County, and the Florida Irrigation Society. Using estimates from the Florida Water Star program, it is estimated that meeting the proposed code on a new quarter acre lot may add as much as an additional \$4,800 (53% increase) to the landscaping budget, depending on how compliance is reached. According to a local builder, meeting these standards on their typical lots would add \$700 - \$1,000 to the landscaping budget. Using GRU water and wastewater rates and Florida Water Star water saving estimates, homeowners will save an estimated \$409 on their annual utility bills while reducing outdoor water use by approximately 60%.

### **Issues**

The Florida Irrigation Society (FIS) provided two comments on the Code that have

not been incorporated into the current draft. The FIS requests that irrigation heads be allowed within 12 inches of vertical structures rather than 24 inches, as outlined in the draft ordinance. Staff opted to leave the 24 inches requirement in place, per the Florida Water Star Program criteria. The FIS requested that the definition of an "Irrigation Professional" reference the voluntary state licensure and professionals that have training and licensure. By including such in this definition, staff would be requiring that individuals that work on irrigation systems within the County obtain the voluntary state license. The County is pre-empted from such.

**Fiscal Recommendation**

Budget Proposal EPD16001-Reclassify Environmental Program Manager (1.00 FTE) to Senior Environmental Specialist for implementation of proposed landscape efficiency systems code is recommended in the FY16 Alachua County Budget.

**Fiscal Alternative(s)**

Provide staff alternative direction

**Funding Sources**

General Fund

**Account Code(s)**

001-5511

Attachment: [Presentation for 150714 Irrigation Public Hearing.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Irrigation Efficiency Code Draft 14.pdf](#)

