



Legislation Text

File #: 002262, **Version:** 0

Approval to Participate in a Water Conservation Awareness Campaign with the St. Johns River Water Management District and other Florida Utilities (B)

Several months ago, GRU was asked by the SJRWMD to participate in a water conservation campaign along with other water utilities in the state of Florida. The goal of this campaign is to educate the public on the importance of conserving water. Eventually we would to see public behavior regarding water use change so that eventually conservation can help ensure an adequate water supply for the future.

Currently, the District, and GRU's water conservation education programs utilize various means of promoting indoor and outdoor conservation. Efforts include the placement of newspaper articles and editorials, radio and TV news coverage, radio and TV public service announcements, presentation to community groups, displays at community events and distributing conservation literature. In addition, GRU Conservation Analysts provide water surveys upon request and assist customers with water conservation advice. We also promote the use of reclaimed water through a variety of programs and projects and we used some paid media during the drought when we had to communicate our mandatory water restrictions. Water conservation information is also available on the new GRU website.

While these efforts have been successful in educating a certain percentage of the population, a large segment of the population is either not receiving the information or not adhering to recommendations. Several issues must be considered when developing this program: 1) Florida, and especially Gainesville, is very transient. Customers are often here for only a short time; 2) the population will continue to increase. By the year 2020, the SJWMD estimates an increase in the population in their district of 50 percent. These customers come to us with preconceived notions about Florida's drinking water supply, so it is imperative that they receive a consistent, accurate message; 3) there is limited reach when using non-paid media. When relying on newspaper articles and editorials, you have very little say on when and where the information is disseminated. Paid advertising gives you much more control of your message; and 4) seminar and workshop participants are self-selecting. Those most concerned about these issues attend the seminars. Those least concerned, do not.

Based on these issues and the need to educate the public, SJRWMD is proposing a paid-media water conservation awareness campaign to be conducted starting in 2002. Utilizing paid media will be the most effective and controllable way to communicate a consistent message to the broadest audience.

This proposal was presented to the Regional Utilities Committee and the Water Management Advisory Committee and both recommended GRU's participation in this program. A letter from the WMAC is attached.

The City Commission authorize the General Manager, or designee, to sign an Agreement with the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) and other Florida water utilities for development and implementation of a water conservation awareness campaign. The cost will not exceed \$50,000.

Funds are available in the FY 2002 Marketing and Communications and Water/Wastewater budgets.

The SJWMD will contribute \$1 million toward this campaign and has asked other water utilities in the District to participate as well. As of this date, 20 other water utilities had committed to participate in this effort. Based on these participants, GRU would be the 3rd largest financial contributor.

Prepared by: Kathy Viehe, Marketing & Communications Director

Submitted by: Michael L. Kurtz, General Manager

