

Report finds Floridians value water resources, want to conserve

February 19 2013, by Mickie Anderson

Floridians are more concerned with water quality than quantity, the results of a new University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences water survey suggest.

The survey of some 469 Floridians found that when respondents were asked to assign levels of importance to 16 [water](#)-related topics such as "plentiful water for cities" and "clean groundwater," residents rated having "clean drinking water" most important.

The survey respondents were selected as a demographically representative sample of adult Floridians, said Alexa Lamm, the University of Florida assistant professor who led the December 2012 survey effort on behalf of the Center for Public Issues Education, or PIE Center.

"The survey strongly suggests that people in Florida are very interested in conserving water and in maintaining its quality so that it will always be available for life-sustaining uses," she said. "And they're willing to make sacrifices to make it happen."

The survey is the first of what PIE Center officials hope will be four such public opinion surveys a year, covering topics such as Florida residents' experience with endangered and invasive species and their perceptions of organic and non-organic foods.

Officials with the PIE Center, part of UF's Institute of Food and

Agricultural Sciences, then plan to repeat the surveys each year, so that changes in public sentiment can be tracked over time, said Tracy Irani, the PIE Center's director.

Kicking off the surveys with one that focused on [water resources](#) was completely by design, said Jack Payne, UF's senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources.

"Water is, without a doubt, one of our state's most critical issues," Payne said. "As such, IFAS is going to focus a great deal of our research and outreach efforts into trying to ensure that our water resources are preserved and protected. The PIE Center water survey is a giant step in that effort."

The water survey and results can be found at a special IFAS water report website: www.piecenter.com/water/.

The survey produced a number of noteworthy results, among them:

- After [clean drinking water](#) (93 percent), the [survey](#) respondents listed having clean beaches (90 percent), oceans, bays/estuaries (89 percent), lakes and rivers (89 percent) as highly or extremely important, followed by plentiful water for industry and commerce (80.5 percent) and plentiful water for household landscapes (61 percent).
- Roughly 40 percent of respondents reported having had a negative water-quality experience, such as poor-quality [drinking water](#), closed beaches, springs, rivers or lakes, and catching fish deemed unfit for human consumption.
- Just over 65 percent reported willingness to use recycled wastewater for lawn or landscape irrigation (though few said it was an option available to them); nearly 53 percent said they

have low-flow showerheads, nearly 52 percent have water-efficient toilets, 33 percent said they use drought-tolerant plants in their gardens, and nearly 19 percent use rain barrels to collect water for gardening and yard use.

Provided by University of Florida

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