



Water 2020: Real Solutions for Sustaining Florida's Economy

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Mission Statement: Bill McCollum Commits to Bring Leadership and Funding for Florida's Water Needs

Water is essential to life and water is a requisite for all economic activity in Florida, including residential and commercial construction, power production, tourism and recreation, as well as agriculture and other industries.

Ensuring adequate water means jobs for Floridians. The protection and promotion of clean, abundant water is essential to Florida's environmental and economic future.

As Governor, I will make water a central and public aspect of my administration, and will dedicate funding and resources toward ensuring meaningful conservation and adequate development of water supply.

In shaping my vision for the future of the state of Florida, I will make sure that state government acts as one engine with our policies toward growth which means the true coordination of all agency missions.

The following proposals address water quantity, water quality, and water management. I hope and believe that this plan can serve as an opening blueprint for more detailed discussions and initiatives in the months and years to come.

➤ Water Quantity: Develop Long-Term Water Access Solutions

Florida is quickly approaching a water supply crisis. While growing demands will require that Florida have access to 2 billion more gallons of water per day, less and less is expected to be available from traditional groundwater sources. For example, as early as 2013, we may have areas in Florida where no more additional groundwater is available. Water, transportation, and schools are three cornerstones of Florida's infrastructure, but among these priorities, water is the only one which does not receive dedicated funding or strategic direction from the executive branch of state government. To address Florida's water supply needs, I will undertake the following initiatives.

- Provide immediate investment in Alternative Water Supply solutions

The first and best defense against the effects of drought is a good offense, and that includes both conservation and increased Alternative Water Supply (AWS) funding. Proactive conservation efforts and AWS projects, such as the desalination of seawater or brackish groundwater or surface water storage, are critical to meeting Florida's future water needs. The technologies are available and ever evolving, but are expensive to implement without regional cooperation.

We must also improve statewide water storage, such as through reservoirs and more aquifer storage and recovery areas where environmentally and economically feasible. To accomplish this most effectively, a statewide approach to AWS must be refined and properly funded. State agencies, water management districts, local governments/utilities and the private sector must collaborate and prioritize the most cost effective and efficient AWS systems to meet their needs. For example, Florida has made positive strides toward the reuse of our storm and waste water, but more can always be done to ensure the useful capture and storage of the more than four feet of rainwater that falls on Florida each year.

As Governor, I will make the funding of AWS projects a priority within my recommended budget. Florida must commit to finding new sources of funding for AWS. I will also seek out innovative financing ideas, such as public private partnerships, that will help expand our water resources effectively and efficiently.

- *Promote regional water supply solutions*

As Governor I will encourage regional development of water supplies to make best use of economies of scale. Local governments and private utilities have the responsibility of delivering potable water to water users, and this needs to continue to be the case. However, groundwater and surface water do not pay any attention to political boundaries. Local water problems will continue to become regional water problems, and with respect to new future alternative water supplies, it may be more efficient for these sources to be developed by multiple parties. We need more regional water suppliers fashioned after Tampa Bay Water or the Peace River Manasota River Water Supply Authority, which serve several local governments at the same time. Regional entities that take advantage of these economies of scale can count on financial support from the state.

- *Develop conservation strategies through economics and incentives*

As Governor, I will promote conservation through economics rather than just mandates. Florida residents have among the highest per capita water usage rates in the nation, and this is something that we must address immediately. As Governor, I will embrace approaches that incentivize good behavior versus simply imposing new regulations. For example, in the course of regular business, buying bulk usually means discounted prices. This should not be the case for water. If residents use less water, then the prices should be minimal. However, if homeowners wish to use water past certain thresholds, they should pay more for it. Local governments and utilities are better prepared to handle this type of approach, rather than programs such as 1 or 2-day-a-week watering rules that place untenable pressure on water resources as well as requiring expensive and intrusive compliance programs. Other states and even areas within Florida have seen success through residential pricing structures that promote conservation. Economists and utilities can aid in the development of conservation rate structures that are best suited for their communities. Taxpayers need to know that their dollars are being spent wisely, so the use of quantifiable strategies like conservation rates structures will be tied directly to access to funding for AWS. This type of program would maintain fairness for all parties involved, while drawing attention to the scarcity and growing value of our water resources.

- *Make Florida a national leader in water conservation technology*

I will work every day to build Florida as a national leader in the use of water technology because it holds great promise for long-term conservation outcomes. Innovations like soil moisture sensors or automated irrigation controls can go a long way toward preventing overuse; and these types of technologies should be used far more than they are today. Education is also critical to water conservation behaviors, and as Governor, I will promote greater efforts in our schools to teach students about conservation and its importance to Florida's ecology and economy. The Florida Friendly Yards and Neighborhoods program has made great strides in getting homeowners to reduce landscape irrigation waste, and I will promote the continued cooperation with Florida's nursery growers, landscapers and others to our conservation efforts.

- *Better integrate Florida's conservation programs with water goals*

Although Florida receives abundant rainfall it is not always well-distributed across the state, and therefore some areas may be subject to droughts or floods, sometimes at the same time. The Florida Forever program already includes within its mission the protection of water storage and recharge areas, to ensure adequate supplies into these natural systems. However, greater attention and funding can be dedicated to these goals. This can be accomplished in a way that preserves the intent of Florida Forever while using additional public lands for water storage in natural and sustainable ways, especially in areas of the state that struggle with adequate water storage. Currently more than 27% of Florida is publically owned. This makes Florida stand out among all other states in our commitment to public conservation lands. Since these lands belong to the public, it makes sense to look at new land purchases in terms of their benefit to conservation and water resources alike.

- *By Executive Order, convene the Florida Water Strategy and Action Commission*

The first step to long-term water planning is a comprehensive assessment of statewide needs, resources, and challenges. If elected Governor, the day I am sworn into office, I will issue an Executive Order to create the “Florida Water Strategy and Action Commission.” The Commission will be comprised of a diverse group of Florida water experts, local government water utility representatives, water management district representatives, and other stakeholders. Within the first 45 days, this Commission will provide initial legislative and administrative recommendations to pursue; and shortly thereafter will provide more detailed recommendations to myself and legislative leadership in a Strategic Water Plan for the state. Among other tasks to be identified, the Commission will:

- 1) Take an inventory of existing and future water needs by region.
- 2) Identify the investments required to meet existing and projected needs.
- 3) Assess wastewater and flood control deficiencies and provide a forecast of future needs.
- 4) Provide recommendations for measurable conservation programs for Florida’s communities.
- 5) Work with local and regional areas to review, refine and prioritize regional water needs.
- 6) Provide recommendations of potential funding strategies for meeting demands.
- 7) Provide recommendations for legislative action.
- 8) Consider the roles that existing lands and restoration programs can have in terms of future water supply opportunities.

➤ **Water Quality:**
Achieve Aggressive Goals and Improve Water Quality Technology

Florida's rivers, lakes, springs and estuaries are among the most treasured and visited in the world, but are also among the most vulnerable. Florida's state parks and other natural spaces are considered the best in the country, and the quality of waters within these attractions is essential to those who enjoy and visit them. Increased demands for water diminish the supply of water in natural systems and this has far-reaching effects on Florida's ecosystems and future water supply. Whether the issue is saltwater intrusion, waste, biological changes, or other quality issues, Florida must prioritize the health of our waters.

- *Make Florida a national leader in water quality technology*

In my campaign for Governor, I have outlined an economic development plan that prioritizes the growth of high-tech industries in Florida. Among these, biotech and nanotech stand out as fields that have great promise for innovations that will revolutionize the approach to water quality and quantity. In addition to creating jobs, the technologies developed by these companies may someday provide efficient and inexpensive means for the purification of water. For example, a polymer-based technology being developed by a company here in Florida would provide significant breakthroughs in desalination. As Governor, I will look to prioritize the growth of these industries, especially those that include water and energy breakthroughs among their missions.

- *Focus and continue Florida's commitment to Everglades Restoration*

Florida has embarked on a noble effort to restore the Everglades, yet this process has been challenged both by funding and logistic difficulties, as well as a lack of commitment from our federal partners. The direction and mission of this great project has continued to change, but the goal remains the same. As Governor, I will work with all parties involved to decide on the best course of action, based on scientifically sound principles and at a cost Florida can afford, and move forward decisively with a long-term strategic plan. The future of our state depends on the proper restoration of the Everglades and I am committed to these efforts moving forward.

- *Maintain Florida's high standards while taking a lead in protecting Florida's businesses and residents regarding new federal Numeric Nutrient Criteria*

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is making Florida the nation's guinea pig for Numeric Nutrient Criteria (NNC) rules, and this is a position that is impractical and unfair to the residents and businesses of this state. Florida already has a process for systematically improving water quality to set aggressive goals and meet historic conditions. Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are working, but Florida cannot build solutions around constantly changing goals or goals that place an undue burden on our state.

The new federal NNC rules are a moving target; and as they are written now, they are not economically feasible to implement. Beyond that, the goals themselves may not even be scientifically feasible to achieve because the technology does not exist to meet some of the requirements. Further, it does not make scientific sense to impose an arbitrary water standard statewide when a growing body of scientific research suggests that a regional approach is the most appropriate.

Just as I have taken strong action against federal healthcare legislation which puts an unfunded mandate on this state, other federal regulations that impose high or impossible standards must also be met with decisive action. As Governor, I will lead Florida's efforts to challenge the federal government to develop a reasonable and fair strategy for NNC implementation. Florida must continue to implement realistic and cost effective water quality standards.

➤ **Water Management:
Increase Statewide Collaboration to Meet Regional Goals**

Over the years, the Legislature has looked to Water Management Districts (WMDs) to handle a wide variety of regulatory, service, and water resource functions. These duties have evolved and it is time to take an inventory of what actions should be taken moving forward, both in terms of statewide and regional needs. As Governor, I will provide clear lines of communication and leadership with Water Management Districts, the Department of Environmental Protection, and other public and private stakeholders, and will undertake the following activities to ensure a unified set of goals.

- *Change the regulatory culture at our agencies to work with, not against, economic development partners, cut red tape, and coordinate multijurisdictional actions*

Each region of Florida is different in geography, culture, and needs. Each Water Management District is best equipped to understand what these unique needs are, however, greater coordination of goals and regulations can certainly be achieved. Places, such as Orange County, are within multiple water districts; and the expense and confusion of dealing with unnecessarily different regulations and policies must not be allowed to strangle growth. In my campaign for Governor, I have already committed to conducting “Fresh Start Reviews” of all agency regulations and bureaucracy to make Florida agencies as efficient as possible and the Water Management Districts will be subjected to the same process. My office will take an active role in facilitating these reviews and working with Districts to streamline processes while maintaining their independent jurisdictions.

Our current regulatory process for obtaining water use permits is too cumbersome, length, expensive and inefficient. We can have a more efficient, non-adversarial process that includes all interests, including applicants, regulators, those impacted by permits, and environmental interests. This will require better communication and transparency in the process. The culture at Florida’s regulatory agencies, including the Water Management Districts and the Department of Environmental Protection, must be one of partnership not conflict with the customers they serve.

As Governor, I will use my authority to appoint Water Management District board members to establish and maintain a unified vision for the state. I will look for board members who can help orchestrate multi-jurisdictional actions while still representing the interests of their own communities.

Water Management District coordination and independence will also be addressed by the Water Strategy and Action Commission in their development of Florida’s Strategic Water Plan.

- *Refocus the mission of Water Management Districts to ensure goals are achieved*

The Florida Legislature has looked to the Water Management Districts to take greater responsibility for activities, such as land acquisition, storm water management, dock permitting, environmental resource permitting, environmental restoration, and the list goes on. This has led to the gradual development of “mission creep” on the part of the Districts. The refocusing of District priorities will require the collaboration of all parties involved (the Executive Office of the Governor, the Legislature, Water Management Districts, Department of Environmental Protection, water utilities, and other stakeholders). For functions that are determined to be outside the scope of Water Management Districts, these roles can be delegated to appropriate state agencies. As Governor, I am committed to correcting this problem. My Executive Order to create a Florida Strategy and Action Commission will bring all parties together to develop consensus on how Florida will define and accomplish our common goals for better water quality and water supply.

- *Lead Florida's efforts in interstate water conflicts*

Georgia is already having an adverse impact on North Florida, and this must be corrected. The current battle on the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee and Flint (ACF) rivers has been on-going since the late 1970s, and although Florida is making headway in the courtroom, there is much more that needs to be done to protect Florida's water interests. In addition to the ACF, groundwater pumpage is adversely impacting Northeast Florida, including the Jacksonville area and the Suwannee River. As Attorney General I have been actively involved in these issues and as Governor I will maintain strong leadership on behalf of Florida.