

Executive Summary

Public Opinions of Water in Florida
February 2015

Introduction

Water quality and water quantity are crucial issues in Florida. As the population continues to grow, balancing agricultural needs, business and development needs, and public use has become more challenging. The Public Opinions of Water in Florida survey was taken by 749 Florida residents and examines public opinions related to water quality and quantity issues.

Findings

- While 52% of respondents had not seen news coverage about water issues in Florida in the last month, 85% reported they were likely or very likely to pay attention to a news story about water.
- Fifty-three percent of respondents who had a yard had to abide by water restrictions.
- When ranked against nine other key Florida issues, water was listed third, behind the economy and healthcare. In addition, 84% considered water as extremely or highly important in Florida.
- Respondents felt it was more important to have plentiful water for city use (90%) than for use in golf courses (14%).
- More respondents agreed or strongly agreed red tide was an important issue in Florida (68%) than saltwater intrusion (59%).
- Twenty-three percent of the respondents had experienced poor quality drinking water at home, and 22% had experienced closed beaches due to red tide or poor water quality.
- Forty-five percent of respondents reported they turn off the water while brushing their teeth “every time,” while only 11% of respondents reported they shower for no more than five minutes every time they bathe.
- The most commonly owned water-efficient products amongst respondents were water-efficient toilets and low-flow shower heads. Fifty-eight percent of respondents owned a water-efficient toilet and 56% owned a low-flow shower head. Only 15% owned rain barrels and 24% used recycled wastewater to irrigate their lawns/landscapes.
- When asked about additional water conservation behaviors, 87% reported they were likely or very likely to only run the washing machine when it is full, compared to just 25% who were likely or very likely to join a water conservation organization.
- Seventy-seven percent of respondents were likely or very likely to vote to support water conservation programs, 72% percent of respondents were likely or very likely to support water restrictions issued by their local government, and 68% were likely or very likely to vote for candidates who supported water conservation.
- Seventy-eight percent of respondents were willing or very willing to take action to conserve water if it meant reducing the amount they water their lawn but only 42% were willing or very willing to do so if it meant portions of their grass may die and need replacing.
- Seventy-two percent of respondents would be willing to have their water bill increase by 10% if it ensured a future water supply in Florida, but only 19% were willing to do so if it required a 50% increase in their water bill.
- Overall, respondents had a low level of familiarity with water policies; the Clean Water Act had the highest level of familiarity.
- Out of a list of 14 water-related topics, respondents were most interested in learning about fish and wildlife water needs, with 31% of respondents interested in learning more about this topic.