

## WATER RESOURCES - HOW WILL GROWERS MANAGE THEIR SHARE?

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You have already heard a full range of topics concerning water in the last two days. I'll try not to retrace too much of what has already been said; however, since I just showed up, some repeating will most likely occur.

Now, the topic. Water Resources - How will growers manage their share? First, let me say these are simply my views and those of a few other growers with whom I visited before this presentation. I don't really claim to have some extra special knowledge in this field. I think, however, that this free exchange of thinking can be beneficial - grower to grower and grower to water management officials and so on.

It is difficult to talk about "How" we must manage our share and not talk about "Why" we must manage our share, and why we have reached the situation in which we find ourselves.

So! There is a water shortage problem! Or is there? Ask people under phase II restrictions and especially those who are under phase III restrictions and they will surely say: "There is!" I believe the good Lord gives us enough water. I believe we mismanage it! All of us! Growers! SWFWMD! Municipalities! Homeowners! And just about everyone else. Of course, there are exceptions, but in general, we all mismanage to some degree.

Therefore, there is a water shortage! This may sound slightly contradictory, but I don't think it is. As a grower, I am like many others, I'm spoiled. In the past we haven't had to be overly conscious about the volume of water consumed. I am sure, in some cases, growers have surely overwatered, just because it was made so easy and somewhat cheap. We may all save a few dollars by being better managers of our water resources and still not cut ourselves short.

It appears to me that we are short of water, in the midst of plenty. Why? Lack of rain going on 20 years now may be the big reason! We can't do anything about this cycle. However, it's about the only area over which we can't have a significant impact in improving our plight. Briefly other "why's":

Why: Drainage - the channeling of rivers and floodplains.

Why: Storm water holding - stacking of excess water. Let's sacrifice a few cattails in order to preserve the water resource

Why: Fresh water discharge - rivers and creeks flow at certain times of the year and there is far more fresh water going into the Gulf and Atlantic than is necessary to keep that ecosystem healthy. Skim it off and stack it, inject it, or at least don't forever lose it!

Why: Reuse - like the Conserv program. There has to become a more widespread use of reclaimed water, even on a smaller, much smaller, scale to help stretch the water resource.

Why: Inefficient water systems - both agricultural and municipal. We have leaky, old, antique, poorly designed systems. In the agricultural area, much of the old overhead sprinkler irrigation is in very poor shape. Even in many early low volume systems, there was much poor design. In the case of overhead, we must wet the entire tree before we start getting significant amounts of water to roots directly beneath the tree canopy. With all this additional surface area exposed to the atmosphere, tremendous amounts of water pumped will potentially never do the tree any good. This is an inefficient process.

Another why: Management - most water systems can be improved with more intense management. This may require the use of flow meters. They are coming to all systems anyway, so let's make the most of it and use them rather than curse them. Simply stated, as water managers we can not have the Ostrich Syndrome! Under the management topic, tensiometers can help. Irrigate mostly at night where practical. Evaluate each site individually and determine specific water requirements - even differing situations can occur within the same site.

In short, except for the lack of rainfall, there are few water shortage causing situations that we can't do something about!

We may save dollars without under watering. One of the major issues I face in our operation is "Public Opinion", and I am sure I am not alone on this one! I'm talking yards vs. citrus groves, and lake augmentation vs. citrus groves. If you think the mobile home owner from up North doesn't think his yard and 6x8 garden plot isn't as important as your grove, then you have Ostrich Syndrome! See a doctor! As an industry we must do a better job of public education about food on the table, reliance on imports, cost of food, and associated regional compromises.

Often, the general public doesn't want to be confused with the facts. But by the way, I know a few citrus growers who don't want to be confused about the facts on the water shortage either. We must not fool ourselves. The "general public" will come first on the priority list. This can be done two ways: 1) by regulation, and 2) by vote.

A few quick words concerning our environment. Citrus groves provide excellent recharge sites during a rainy season. Citrus groves provide an excellent place to exchange CO<sub>2</sub> for O<sub>2</sub>. We must balance the needs of the environment with the needs of mankind. Something has to give. Hopefully the dinosaurs will not prevail. Endangered species, both plant and animal are important and should not be needlessly lost. However, to save them at all cost is just as irresponsible in my view. An example I have already used is saving the cattails vs. stacking of water for recharge or reuse.

A few words on political considerations. Highlands County is in the Ridge Water Use Caution Area. It has never had a board member on the SWFWMD board. Basin and District boards need conscientious directors and commissioners to represent agriculture as well as the other water users.

There is a constant redistribution of available water as more people enter the game, be they grove developers or urban users. We should not have to give up present efficient water use to allow someone

else to plant another grove or put in houses. One other point - it should not take a call from your state representative to a management district office to get a permit in a timely manner! It happens! Enough said!

I have done a lot of talking so far, but as to the "How" of how we intend to manage our share of the water resource, I will do it in this way - convert, convert, convert - from overhead to low volume systems. Improve management techniques, which I have alluded to previously. Conversion and better management address efficiency, public opinion, metering, tensiometers, soil evaluation, and staying abreast of new technology. One important point I didn't mention in our older groves as a reason for conversion of overhead to low volume irrigation is blight. Our best and most desirable locations have suffered big losses due to blight. With low volume irrigation these best sites will return to production more quickly and efficiently than with overhead sprinkler systems.

I guess the bottom line is, don't catch the Ostrich Snyder disease! This issue will not go away! Thank You!