

Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District Urban Irrigation Evaluation Program

Program Objective

The Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors approved funding for a mobile irrigation evaluation program. Irrigation evaluations identify unknown deficiencies in irrigation systems. Unnecessary watering can leach fertilizer and pesticides past plant or turf grass roots. When deficiencies are addressed, less water and nutrients will run-off into freshwater lakes, as well as reduce wear on irrigation systems.

The objective is to assist governmental entities, homeowner associations and businesses with meeting the reduced nutrient load requirements set in the Lake Okeechobee Basin Management Plan, mandated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

OSWCD Mission

The Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District mission is to provide services for soil and water conservation, proper utilization of natural resources, and to promote the continued use of land for agricultural purposes. The Board of Supervisors has identified a need for proper irrigation management and promotion of water conservation within the Lake Okeechobee watershed.

Program Overview

Irrigation evaluations will be offered at no cost to the participant. Upon completion of an evaluation, the participant will receive a report that cites any deficiencies by zone, along with tables that compare current system and proposed water use by irrigation zones. Water savings are calculated based on addressing the deficiencies reported. Irrigation terminology definitions, landscape and irrigation system maintenance recommendations are also included.

Evaluation Program Eligibility

This unbiased evaluation service is available to governmental entities, homeowner associations and businesses with landscape irrigation systems in Okeechobee County that complete an *Irrigation Evaluation Program Request Form*. It is not intended for individual residences.

Participants willing to address reported deficiencies are eligible to apply for financial assistance.

Application Development Costs

Neither the District nor its representatives shall be liable for any expenses incurred through the preparation, submission, or presentation of the funding Application.

The following is provided as guidance for applicants. The District Board will determine the priorities, the amount of funds to allocate, and the maximum cost-share made available to proposed projects for the program. Applicants that do not include all required documentation as outlined may be deemed ineligible by the District Board. Applicants will deliver or mail written proposals to:

Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District Urban Irrigation Evaluation Program

Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District, 452 US Highway 98 North, Okeechobee, FL 34972. Applicants should include contact information, project location, hardware and implementation costs and a timeline.

Specific Requirements for Irrigation Efficiency Improvement Projects:

- WaterSense approved irrigation controllers are recommended
- Reimbursement on projects involving irrigation technology devices (i.e. soil moisture sensors, rain sensors, etc.) must show proof that these items are installed and/or inspected by a professional who is a member of a recognized irrigation professional trade organization such as, but not limited to, the Irrigation Association, the Florida Irrigation Society, or the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association. A professional who has received certification in irrigation efficiency from these agencies or another agency (such as EPA's WaterSense program www.epa.gov/watersense) is also admissible. An invoice showing charges for project hardware installation and a signed statement indicating an inspection of devices installed by a professional is required
- For projects involving soil moisture sensors, the use of the *Field Guide to Soil Moisture Sensor Use in Florida* (IFAS, 2008) for the installation is recommended. A signed statement that this guide has been reviewed by the installer and personnel responsible for maintenance of equipment is required
- Project funds must be spent within six months of obligation

Allowable Costs for Water Conservation Projects Include:

- Irrigation retrofits, including soil moisture sensors, rain sensors, irrigation head upgrades, etc.
- Other hardware and/or technology-based project that increases water efficiency
- Certified training for irrigation management personnel

Non-Allowable Costs for Water Conservation Projects Include:

- Installation of new irrigation systems, irrigation wells, pumps, or the extension of an existing irrigation system to an area not previously irrigated
- Landscape materials, unless deemed necessary to address a deficiency
- Projects that are out of compliance with permit conditions or are proposed to bring a facility back into compliance or proposed as settlement for enforcement activities.

**Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District
Urban Irrigation Evaluation Program**

District Board funding support for the purchase and installation costs for common conservation fixtures/devices are shown below in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Allowable Funding Limits for Common Conservation Fixtures/Devices

Conservation Fixture/Device	Allowable Funding Limit
Irrigation controllers	Up to \$500 each
Rain sensors	Up to \$120 each
Soil moisture sensors	Up to \$145 each

The District will review projects based on program considerations and guidelines (no implied priority) as presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Water Conservation Considerations and Guidelines

Considerations	Guidelines
Supports mission of the District Board	Proposed project actively supports the District’s mission
Cost effectiveness, expressed as dollars per 1,000 gallons saved (\$/kgals)	Demonstrates cost effectiveness in installation, design, and use
Project readiness	Application demonstrates readiness to be implemented on schedule. For example, design complete; applicable permits in place
Innovation	Showcases innovation using new technology or the method in which the Project or technology is being implemented
Past Performance	The Applicant has no record of failing to complete work under any District Board project
Quality and detail of project planning	Application demonstrates a high level of detail and planning
Quantity of water saved	Estimated number of gallons saved per year compared to other funding requests

**Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District
Urban Irrigation Evaluation Program**

“Applicant” – All governmental entities, industrial, commercial, institutional, and homeowners’ or condominium associations submitting an Application to seek funding from the District Board pursuant to this Urban Irrigation Evaluation Program.

“Application” – A written document from an applicant seeking funding from the District Board pursuant to this reimbursement program

“Approved Funding” – The allocation of monies to an Applicant based on estimated costs as presented in the Application

“District Board” – The Okeechobee Soil and Water Conservation District.

“Funding or Actual Funding” – An allotment of monies disbursed toward the payment based on percentage or actual costs incurred

“Ineligible” – A determination by the District Board that the Application does not comply with the material requirements of this reimbursement program

“Participant” – Either the governmental entity, homeowner association or business requesting an irrigation evaluation. *OR* The recipient and end user of the conservation hardware. May or may not be the same as the Applicant

“Project” – The written description included in the Application that determines the eligibility for funding

“Project Cost” – The total cost of the project located within Okeechobee County

“Recipient” – The Applicant that has been awarded funding in support of a project