

## **Water restrictions tightened to conserve our water supplies**

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The Tampa Bay region continues to suffer from the effects of a three-year drought, moving from a "severe" to an "extreme" status. We need your help to conserve water and protect the environment.

This summer's rainy season was not enough to refill our lakes and rivers. We are just beginning our eight-month dry season, yet many water levels are where they'd normally be at the end of the dry season. This month, the Hillsborough River reservoir, the main water supply for the city of Tampa, is as low as it normally is in May. The Alafia River is so low that it is no longer able to provide water to meet public supply needs. The C.W. Bill Young Regional Reservoir has about five billion gallons left in storage, compared to a capacity of 15 billion gallons, and water supply officials predict it could be dry by late April or early May, well before the start of the annual summer rainy season in mid-June. Weather forecasters are predicting below-normal rainfall conditions this coming winter and spring.

With seven months of the dry season still ahead of us and demand for water spiking, we face many challenges. If we don't reduce the amount of water we use, increased withdrawals will result in further impacts to our lakes, wetlands, streams and estuaries. In an effort to reduce demand for water, Tampa Bay Water, the region's wholesale water supplier, requested the District increase its watering restrictions for Tampa Bay Water's member governments in Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties.

On Oct. 28, the District Governing Board increased its water shortage designation for the Tampa Bay area from severe to extreme. The additional water shortage measures include restricting hand-watering and micro-irrigation for non-lawn landscaping to before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m.; ordering the postponement of turf grass renovations (including sod replacement and vertical mowing); reducing the hours that aesthetic fountains and waterfalls may operate from eight hours to only four hours per day; and requiring water utilities and other local enforcement officials to increase their education and enforcement efforts, including issuing citations for a first offense rather than a warning. These additional measures apply to all areas of Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties.

The Governing Board is asking residents and business owners to do their part by following the tightened one-day-per-week watering restrictions and by conserving water whenever possible both indoors and outdoors.

