

CHAPTER 2012-150

Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 639

An act relating to reclaimed water; amending s. 373.019, F.S.; defining the terms “reclaimed water” and “reclaimed water distribution system”; amending s. 373.250, F.S.; providing legislative findings relating to the use of reclaimed water; providing that reclaimed water is an alternative water supply and eligible for such funding; authorizing specified contract provisions for the development of reclaimed water as an alternative water supply; prohibiting the exclusion of reclaimed water use from regional water supply planning; deleting a definition for the term “uncommitted”; providing for the determination of uncommitted reclaimed water capacity by certain utilities; prohibiting water management districts from requiring permits for the use of reclaimed water; authorizing permit conditions for certain surface water and groundwater sources; authorizing water management districts to require the use of reclaimed water under certain conditions; prohibiting water management districts from requiring or restricting services provided by reuse utilities; providing an exception; clarifying which permit applicants are required to submit certain information; requiring the Department of Environmental Protection and each water management district to initiate rulemaking to adopt specified revisions to the water resource implementation rule; revising applicability; providing for construction of the act; amending ss. 373.036, 373.421, 403.813, and 556.102, F.S.; conforming cross-references to changes made by the act; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsections (17) through (26) of section 373.019, Florida Statutes, are renumbered as subsections (19) through (28), respectively, and new subsections (17) and (18) are added to that section to read:

373.019 Definitions.—When appearing in this chapter or in any rule, regulation, or order adopted pursuant thereto, the term:

(17) “Reclaimed water” means water that has received at least secondary treatment and basic disinfection and is reused after flowing out of a domestic wastewater treatment facility. Reclaimed water is not subject to regulation pursuant to s. 373.175 or part II of this chapter until it has been discharged into waters as defined in s. 403.031(13).

(18) “Reclaimed water distribution system” means a network of pipes, pumping facilities, storage facilities, and appurtenances designed to convey and distribute reclaimed water from one or more domestic wastewater treatment facilities to one or more users of reclaimed water.

Section 2. Section 373.250, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

373.250 Reuse of reclaimed water.—

(1)(a) The encouragement and promotion of water conservation and reuse of reclaimed water, as defined by the department and used in this chapter, are state objectives and considered to be in the public interest. The Legislature finds that the use of reclaimed water provided by domestic wastewater treatment plants permitted and operated under a reuse program approved by the department is environmentally acceptable and not a threat to public health and safety.

(b) The Legislature recognizes that the interest of the state to sustain water resources for the future through the use of reclaimed water must be balanced with the need of reuse utilities to operate and manage reclaimed water systems in accordance with a variety and range of circumstances, including regulatory and financial considerations, which influence the development and operation of reclaimed water systems across the state.

(2) Reclaimed water is an alternative water supply as defined in s. 373.019(1) and is eligible for alternative water supply funding. A contract for state or district funding assistance for the development of reclaimed water as an alternative water supply may include provisions listed under s. 373.707(9). The use of reclaimed water may not be excluded from regional water supply planning under s. 373.709.

~~(3)(2)(a) For purposes of this section, “uncommitted” means the average amount of reclaimed water produced during the three lowest flow months minus the amount of reclaimed water that a reclaimed water provider is contractually obligated to provide to a customer or user.~~

~~(b) Reclaimed water may be presumed available to a consumptive use permit applicant when a utility exists which provides reclaimed water, which has determined that it has uncommitted reclaimed water capacity, and which has distribution facilities, which are initially provided by the utility at its cost, to the site of the affected applicant’s proposed use.~~

(b) A water management district may not require a permit for the use of reclaimed water. However, when a use includes surface water or groundwater, the permit for such sources may include conditions that govern the use of the permitted sources in relation to the feasibility or use of reclaimed water.

(c) A water management district may require the use of reclaimed water in lieu of all or a portion of a proposed use of surface water or groundwater by an applicant when the use of uncommitted reclaimed water is available; is environmentally, economically, and technically feasible; and is of such quality and reliability as is necessary to the user. However, a water management district may neither specify any user to whom the reuse utility must provide reclaimed water nor restrict the use of reclaimed water provided by a reuse utility to a customer in a permit or, unless requested by the reuse utility, in a water shortage order or water shortage emergency

~~order this paragraph does not authorize a water management district to require a provider of reclaimed water to redirect reclaimed water from one user to another or to provide uncommitted water to a specific user if such water is anticipated to be used by the provider, or a different user selected by the provider, within a reasonable amount of time.~~

(d) The South Florida Water Management District shall require the use of reclaimed water made available by the elimination of wastewater ocean outfall discharges as provided for in s. 403.086(9) in lieu of surface water or groundwater when the use of ~~uncommitted~~ reclaimed water is available; is environmentally, economically, and technically feasible; and is of such quality and reliability as is necessary to the user. Such reclaimed water may also be required in lieu of other alternative sources. In determining whether ~~or not~~ to require such reclaimed water in lieu of other alternative sources, the water management district shall consider existing infrastructure investments in place or obligated to be constructed by an executed contract or similar binding agreement as of July 1, 2011, for the development of other alternative sources.

~~(4)(3)~~ The water management district shall, in consultation with the department, adopt rules to implement this section. Such rules shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) Provisions to permit use of water from other sources in emergency situations or if reclaimed water becomes unavailable, for the duration of the emergency or the unavailability of reclaimed water. These provisions shall also specify the method for establishing the quantity of water to be set aside for use in emergencies or when reclaimed water becomes unavailable. The amount set aside is subject to periodic review and revision. The methodology shall take into account the risk that reclaimed water may not be available in the future, the risk that other sources may be fully allocated to other uses in the future, the nature of the uses served with reclaimed water, the extent to which the applicant intends to rely upon reclaimed water, and the extent of economic harm which may result if other sources are not available to replace the reclaimed water. It is the intent of this paragraph to ensure that users of reclaimed water have the same access to ground or surface water and will otherwise be treated in the same manner as other users of the same class not relying on reclaimed water.

~~(b)~~ A water management district shall not adopt any rule which gives preference to users within any class of use established under s. ~~373.246~~ who do not use reclaimed water over users within the same class who use reclaimed water.

~~(b)(e)~~ Provisions to require permit applicants that are not reuse utilities to provide, as part of their reclaimed water feasibility evaluation for a nonpotable use, written documentation from a reuse utility addressing the availability of reclaimed water. This requirement shall apply when the applicant's proposed use is within an area that is or may be served with reclaimed water by a reuse utility within a 5-year horizon, as established by

the reuse utility and provided to the district. If the applicable reuse utility fails to respond or does not provide the information required under paragraph (c) ~~(d)~~ within 30 days after receipt of the request, the applicant shall provide to the district a copy of the written request and a statement that the utility failed to provide the requested information. The district is not required to adopt, by rule, the area where written documentation from a reuse utility is required, but the district shall publish the area, and any updates thereto, on the district's website. This paragraph may not be construed to limit the ability of a district to require the use of reclaimed water or to limit a utility's ability to plan reclaimed water infrastructure.

~~(c)(d)~~ Provisions specifying the content of the documentation required in paragraph (b) ~~(e)~~, including sufficient information regarding the availability and costs associated with the connection to and the use of reclaimed water, to facilitate the permit applicant's reclaimed water feasibility evaluation.

A water management district may not adopt any rule that gives preference to users within any class of use established under s. 373.246 who do not use reclaimed water over users within the same class who use reclaimed water.

(5)(a) No later than October 1, 2012, the department shall initiate rulemaking to adopt revisions to the water resource implementation rule, as defined in s. 373.019(23), which shall include:

1. Criteria for the use of a proposed impact offset derived from the use of reclaimed water when a water management district evaluates an application for a consumptive use permit. As used in this subparagraph, the term "impact offset" means the use of reclaimed water to reduce or eliminate a harmful impact that has occurred or would otherwise occur as a result of other surface water or groundwater withdrawals.

2. Criteria for the use of substitution credits where a water management district has adopted rules establishing withdrawal limits from a specified water resource within a defined geographic area. As used in this subparagraph, the term "substitution credit" means the use of reclaimed water to replace all or a portion of an existing permitted use of resource-limited surface water or groundwater, allowing a different user or use to initiate a withdrawal or increase its withdrawal from the same resource-limited surface water or groundwater source provided that the withdrawal creates no net adverse impact on the limited water resource or creates a net positive impact if required by water management district rule as part of a strategy to protect or recover a water resource.

(b) Within 60 days after the final adoption by the department of the revisions to the water resource implementation rule required under paragraph (a), each water management district shall initiate rulemaking to incorporate those revisions by reference into the rules of the district.

~~(6)(4)~~ Reuse utilities and the applicable water management district or districts are encouraged to periodically coordinate and share information

concerning the status of reclaimed water distribution system construction, the availability of reclaimed water supplies, and existing consumptive use permits in areas served by the reuse utility.

~~(7)(5) Nothing in~~ This section does not impair or limit the authority of shall ~~impair~~ a water management ~~district~~ district's authority to plan for and regulate consumptive uses of water under this chapter or regulate the use of surface water or groundwater to supplement a reclaimed water system.

~~(8)(6)~~ This section applies to applications for new consumptive use permits and renewals and modifications of existing consumptive use permits.

Section 3. This act does not:

(1) Impair or limit the authority of the Department of Environmental Protection to regulate water quality, including reclaimed water, pursuant to chapter 403, Florida Statutes, or to require a reuse feasibility study pursuant to s. 403.064, Florida Statutes.

(2) Impair or limit the authority of a water management district to conduct regional water supply planning pursuant chapter 373, Florida Statutes.

(3) Affect any requirement that may be applicable to funding of alternative water supply development, including reclaimed water, pursuant to s. 373.707, Florida Statutes.

(4) Affect or limit any applicable provisions regarding the setting of rates by public and private water utilities pursuant to chapter 153 or chapter 180, Florida Statutes, or s. 367.081, Florida Statutes.

(5) Affect or impair the powers of the Governor under the State Constitution; general law, including, but not limited to, chapter 14, Florida Statutes; and police powers of the state to adopt and enforce emergency rules, regulations, and orders.

Section 4. Paragraph (d) of subsection (1) of section 373.036, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

373.036 Florida water plan; district water management plans.—

(1) FLORIDA WATER PLAN.—In cooperation with the water management districts, regional water supply authorities, and others, the department shall develop the Florida water plan. The Florida water plan shall include, but not be limited to:

(d) Goals, objectives, and guidance for the development and review of programs, rules, and plans relating to water resources, based on statutory policies and directives. The state water policy rule, renamed the water resource implementation rule pursuant to s. ~~373.019(25)~~ 373.019(23), shall serve as this part of the plan. Amendments or additions to this part of the

Florida water plan shall be adopted by the department as part of the water resource implementation rule. In accordance with s. 373.114, the department shall review rules of the water management districts for consistency with this rule. Amendments to the water resource implementation rule must be adopted by the secretary of the department and be submitted to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives within 7 days after publication in the Florida Administrative Weekly. Amendments shall not become effective until the conclusion of the next regular session of the Legislature following their adoption.

Section 5. Subsection (1) of section 373.421, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

373.421 Delineation methods; formal determinations.—

(1) The Environmental Regulation Commission shall adopt a unified statewide methodology for the delineation of the extent of wetlands as defined in s. ~~373.019(27)~~ 373.019(25). This methodology shall consider regional differences in the types of soils and vegetation that may serve as indicators of the extent of wetlands. This methodology shall also include provisions for determining the extent of surface waters other than wetlands for the purposes of regulation under s. 373.414. This methodology shall not become effective until ratified by the Legislature. Subsequent to legislative ratification, the wetland definition in s. ~~373.019(27)~~ 373.019(25) and the adopted wetland methodology shall be binding on the department, the water management districts, local governments, and any other governmental entities. Upon ratification of such wetland methodology, the Legislature preempts the authority of any water management district, state or regional agency, or local government to define wetlands or develop a delineation methodology to implement the definition and determines that the exclusive definition and delineation methodology for wetlands shall be that established pursuant to s. ~~373.019(27)~~ 373.019(25) and this section. Upon such legislative ratification, any existing wetlands definition or wetland delineation methodology shall be superseded by the wetland definition and delineation methodology established pursuant to this chapter. Subsequent to legislative ratification, a delineation of the extent of a surface water or wetland by the department or a water management district, pursuant to a formal determination under subsection (2), or pursuant to a permit issued under this part in which the delineation was field-verified by the permitting agency and specifically approved in the permit, shall be binding on all other governmental entities for the duration of the formal determination or permit. All existing rules and methodologies of the department, the water management districts, and local governments, regarding surface water or wetland definition and delineation shall remain in full force and effect until the common methodology rule becomes effective. However, this shall not be construed to limit any power of the department, the water management districts, and local governments to amend or adopt a surface water or wetland definition or delineation methodology until the common methodology rule becomes effective.

Section 6. Paragraphs (r) and (u) of subsection (1) of section 403.813, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

403.813 Permits issued at district centers; exceptions.—

(1) A permit is not required under this chapter, chapter 373, chapter 61-691, Laws of Florida, or chapter 25214 or chapter 25270, 1949, Laws of Florida, for activities associated with the following types of projects; however, except as otherwise provided in this subsection, nothing in this subsection relieves an applicant from any requirement to obtain permission to use or occupy lands owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund or any water management district in its governmental or proprietary capacity or from complying with applicable local pollution control programs authorized under this chapter or other requirements of county and municipal governments:

(r) The removal of aquatic plants, the removal of tussocks, the associated replanting of indigenous aquatic plants, and the associated removal from lakes of organic detrital material when such planting or removal is performed and authorized by permit or exemption granted under s. 369.20 or s. 369.25, provided that:

1. Organic detrital material that exists on the surface of natural mineral substrate shall be allowed to be removed to a depth of 3 feet or to the natural mineral substrate, whichever is less;

2. All material removed pursuant to this paragraph shall be deposited in an upland site in a manner that will prevent the reintroduction of the material into waters in the state except when spoil material is permitted to be used to create wildlife islands in freshwater bodies of the state when a governmental entity is permitted pursuant to s. 369.20 to create such islands as a part of a restoration or enhancement project;

3. All activities are performed in a manner consistent with state water quality standards; and

4. No activities under this exemption are conducted in wetland areas, as defined in by s. ~~373.019(27)~~ 373.019(25), which are supported by a natural soil as shown in applicable United States Department of Agriculture county soil surveys, except when a governmental entity is permitted pursuant to s. 369.20 to conduct such activities as a part of a restoration or enhancement project.

The department may not adopt implementing rules for this paragraph, notwithstanding any other provision of law.

(u) Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in this subsection, a permit or other authorization under chapter 253, chapter 369, chapter 373, or this chapter is not required for an individual residential property owner for the removal of organic detrital material from freshwater rivers or lakes that have a natural sand or rocky substrate and that are not Aquatic

Preserves or for the associated removal and replanting of aquatic vegetation for the purpose of environmental enhancement, providing that:

1. No activities under this exemption are conducted in wetland areas, as defined in by s. ~~373.019(27)~~ 373.019(25), which are supported by a natural soil as shown in applicable United States Department of Agriculture county soil surveys.
2. No filling or peat mining is allowed.
3. No removal of native wetland trees, including, but not limited to, ash, bay, cypress, gum, maple, or tupelo, occurs.
4. When removing organic detrital material, no portion of the underlying natural mineral substrate or rocky substrate is removed.
5. Organic detrital material and plant material removed is deposited in an upland site in a manner that will not cause water quality violations.
6. All activities are conducted in such a manner, and with appropriate turbidity controls, so as to prevent any water quality violations outside the immediate work area.
7. Replanting with a variety of aquatic plants native to the state shall occur in a minimum of 25 percent of the preexisting vegetated areas where organic detrital material is removed, except for areas where the material is removed to bare rocky substrate; however, an area may be maintained clear of vegetation as an access corridor. The access corridor width may not exceed 50 percent of the property owner's frontage or 50 feet, whichever is less, and may be a sufficient length waterward to create a corridor to allow access for a boat or swimmer to reach open water. Replanting must be at a minimum density of 2 feet on center and be completed within 90 days after removal of existing aquatic vegetation, except that under dewatered conditions replanting must be completed within 90 days after reflooding. The area to be replanted must extend waterward from the ordinary high water line to a point where normal water depth would be 3 feet or the preexisting vegetation line, whichever is less. Individuals are required to make a reasonable effort to maintain planting density for a period of 6 months after replanting is complete, and the plants, including naturally recruited native aquatic plants, must be allowed to expand and fill in the revegetation area. Native aquatic plants to be used for revegetation must be salvaged from the enhancement project site or obtained from an aquatic plant nursery regulated by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Plants that are not native to the state may not be used for replanting.
8. No activity occurs any farther than 100 feet waterward of the ordinary high water line, and all activities must be designed and conducted in a manner that will not unreasonably restrict or infringe upon the riparian rights of adjacent upland riparian owners.

9. The person seeking this exemption notifies the applicable department district office in writing at least 30 days before commencing work and allows the department to conduct a preconstruction site inspection. Notice must include an organic-detrital-material removal and disposal plan and, if applicable, a vegetation-removal and revegetation plan.

10. The department is provided written certification of compliance with the terms and conditions of this paragraph within 30 days after completion of any activity occurring under this exemption.

Section 7. Subsection (6) of section 556.102, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

556.102 Definitions.—As used in this act:

(6) “Excavate” or “excavation” means any manmade cut, cavity, trench, or depression in the earth’s surface, formed by removal of earth, intended to change the grade or level of land, or intended to penetrate or disturb the surface of the earth, including land beneath the waters of the state, as defined in s. 373.019(22) ~~373.019(20)~~, and the term includes pipe bursting and directional drilling or boring from one point to another point beneath the surface of the earth, or other trenchless technologies.

Section 8. This act shall take effect July 1, 2012.

Approved by the Governor April 24, 2012.

Filed in Office Secretary of State April 24, 2012.