Executive Summary

On May 22-24, 2002 the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium convened five subregional workshops on water supply planning in the East Central Florida area, as part of Phase One of the East Central Florida Water Supply Planning Initiative. The purpose of these initial three-hour workshops was to report on the assessment interviews and meetings with elected officials taking place in March and April, 2002, and to begin the dialogue among elected and appointed officials and other stakeholders on what priority water supply issues and promising strategies might be jointly explored at the subregional and regional levels.

Goal of Dialogue Process. At each workshop the facilitators and the consultant team presented a draft goal statement for the two phases of the proposed dialogue process and solicited comments and suggestions. The focus during Phase 1, from May through September, 2002, will be on convening a dialogue process among elected and appointed officials and other stakeholders to clarify key water supply issues, provide information and education needed on the issues, and identify promising subregional and regional strategies to address them. It will also identify next steps needed to continue the dialogue beyond October, 2002. And would seek to build upon the results of Phase One to help decision-makers continue the dialogue and jointly develop actions plan(s) and shape an agenda for the East-Central Florida region.

Assessment. The results of the assessment interviews and meetings conducted by the facilitation team in March and April, 2002 were summarised. There was nearly unanimous agreement that future additional groundwater withdrawals are limited, based on environmental constraints. There was also a willingness to look at solutions to long-term water supply needs from a "regional" perspective. Partners and projects identified usually related to reuse projects, not alternative water supplies, and identified partners in adjacent municipalities, not adjacent counties. Below is a brief summary of representative assessment interview and meeting comments:

- “Our local government's groundwater withdrawals would be fine if it weren't for other governments taking our groundwater.”
- “We are not going to raise our water rates for more expensive, alternative water supplies that are only needed because other local governments are not managing their water resources appropriately.”
- “We are doing everything we can to conserve groundwater resources and should not be punished because other local governments aren't doing their share.”
- “Our consumptive use permit is not as "good" as other local governments': the District is making these decisions arbitrarily.”
• “The District (or the State) should provide funding to offset the rate impacts of alternative water supplies.”
• “Trying to get additional groundwater from adjacent counties is not worth the political and legal opposition that is encountered.”
• “Greater-than-local solutions are appropriate for water supply issues, particularly reuse.”
• “It is difficult to get people to conserve water when new growth is being permitted at such a rapid pace.”
• “Water quality may be the problem, not quantity.”

**Critical Water Supply Issues.** Workshop participants reviewed and added to an initial list of water supply issue areas identified through the assessment and then ranked those most important to address for each sub-region. **Water Reuse** and **Conservation** were ranked within the top three issue areas for all of the five workshops. **Public Information and Awareness** was ranked in the top 5 issue areas by four of the five workshops.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregional Workshop #1- East Orange, Osceola, Brevard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority Water Supply Issue Areas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Water Reuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Creating new water supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conservation Strategies</td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregional Workshop #2- West Orange, Southern Lake, Osceola, Polk Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority Water Supply Issue Areas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Water Reuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enhanced Recharge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conservation Strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregional Workshop #3- Northern Orange, Seminole Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority Water Supply Issue Areas</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Water Reuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Aquifer Replenishment/Enhanced Recharge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conservation Strategies</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregional Workshop #4-Volusia, Seminole, Flagler Counties</th>
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<td><strong>Priority Water Supply Issue Areas</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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1. Water Reuse
2. Conservation Strategies
3. Public information and awareness efforts

Subregional Workshop #5- Northern Lake, Marion Sumter Counties

Priority Water Supply Issue Areas

1. Conservation Strategies
2. Water Reuse and Environmental impacts
3. Intergovernmental/regional cooperation

The discussions of these highest ranked issue areas often touched upon issues and strategies related to other identified issue areas (e.g. education, aquifer enhancement, enforcement, cooperation etc.). The participants at various workshops identified the following other issue areas as among their top five: water supply funding; intergovernmental/stakeholder cooperation; growth management/development (linking land use and water supply); and regulatory constraints. In addition, the participants at identified the following other water supply issue areas:

- Mitigation strategies
- Saltwater intrusion
- Implementation
- Linking land/water
- Controlling demand
- Watershed management
- Environmental impacts
- Regulatory oversight and coordination
- Regulatory equity
- Enforcement
- Buy-in to science and modeling
- Equity (for those doing a good job)
- Economic Parity
- Regionalization of water supply

Water Reuse Partnership Strategies Identified. The discussions of water reuse focused on the fact that in recent years the discussion has focused more on asset management and less on disposal. Many now see reuse as “recycling” water. Issues such as distribution, rate structure and pricing, treatment, storage, relationship of reuse to stormwater management, education, equity and access questions regarding new and older developments were all discussed. Workshop participants observed that reuse probably ranks high because its potential for reducing consumptive use of groundwater at lower costs than developing other alternative water supplies while also providing benefits for the environment.

Water reuse strategies identified included: targeting areas without supplemental irrigation to get early one-to-one matches and benefits; smoothing out the permitting process with DEP and WMDs; identifying areas in the sub-region where reuse could be most effective early on; considering expansion of metering and tiered rate structures; considering ASR strategies for reuse; moving to dual pipe systems for reuse and waste water treatment in new developments; providing greater incentives to agriculture to use reuse water; providing incentives for reuse as a
tool for wetland and aquifer recharge; evaluating the effectiveness of reuse as a mitigation strategy; and seeking to develop water budgets at the subregional or county level as a means to guide jurisdictions regarding reuse, recharge actions and responsibilities, and water supply policy.

**Conservation Partnership Strategies Identified.** The discussions of conservation focused on issues such as: tiered conservation rate structures; residential irrigation systems; multiple and conflicting conservation messages surrounding drought and other issues; roles of local government and water management districts on conservation; enforcement, compliance and restrictions; conflicting regulations regarding conservation for private water suppliers; and agriculture’s role in water conservation. Conservation strategies identified included: developing model local xeriscaping ordinances; promoting landscape design standards; sharing experience and lessons learned on enforcement and restriction strategies; providing rewards for municipalities implementing conservation measures; and developing a clear and coordinated conservation message campaign that targets education for K-12, farmers and those interacting with residential and commercial users such as developers, contractors, etc..

**Public Information/Awareness Partnership Strategies Identified.** The discussions of public information and awareness focused on the need for repetition of conservation and water supply messages directed to a variety of audiences and communities over time. Audiences identified included elected officials, city and county managers, technical utility staffs, as well as water users and those in the development community and building trades interacting with the public. It was suggested that this could be a critical strategy to build support and sustain the public commitment and investment in water conservation. Strategies suggested included: cooperative conservation programs among local governments; and cost sharing assistance from the Water Management Districts.

**Creating New Water Supply.** Two subregional workshops identified creating new water supply as a high priority issue area. They identified related to permitting, funding and partnership dialogue. Strategies suggested included: encouraging each county and municipality in the region to develop consistent long range water budgets as a tool for decision making; and continuing a dialogue at the subregional and regional level to identify opportunities for partnerships in developing new water supply for the region.

**Managing Growth and Environmental Impacts.** Two subregional workshops identified managing growth and environmental impacts as priority issue areas and suggested that water supply planning and growth management planning for development need to be better coordinated and integrated. Local governments, through cooperation with elected officials, planners and water supply technical experts, could seek to link growth management plans with water supply plans in the sub-region. It was also suggested that water management districts could assist, guide and support local governments in the review of their land acquisition programs and in coordinating those programs within each District.

**Enhanced Recharge.** Two subregional workshops identified enhanced recharge as a priority issue area and suggested that the three water management districts could work together to create more consistent regulatory policies aimed at optimizing recharge and water quality in
the East Central Florida region; and that that the “Sources and Sinks” study currently underway in Orange County could be expanded through cooperative efforts and greater support to cover more of the region.

One subregional workshop identified **water supply funding** as a priority issues area and suggested beginning to develop a region-wide consensus plan as the basis for increased funding and support at the district, state and federal levels. Another subregional workshop identified **regulatory constraints** as a priority issue area and suggested WMDs and local governments should jointly clarify enforcement powers through the collaborative development of model enforcement ordinances. One subregional workshop identified **cooperation and coordination** as a priority issue area and suggested that local governments and WMDs can’t do the work on the substantive issues (conservation, reuse, new water supplies etc.) in the absence of trust and cooperation and the participation and support of elected officials. It was suggested that there is an ongoing need for forums for managers and others to communicate, discuss and debate water supply issues, build trust and secure funding for partnerships.

The facilitation team suggested that the next steps would include making available workshop meeting summaries and conducting a second round of workshops aimed at building on the first round workshop comments and observations. They suggested that the second round of workshops could focus on testing the acceptability of initial draft strategies identified in the first round in the highest priority water supply issue areas. Participants completed a meeting evaluation and comment form which the facilitation team promised to review for improving the workshop process and include in the workshop reports.

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The Consortium is a legislatively created and publicly supported (F.S. §240.702) statewide neutral resource center offering assistance on consensus building and alternative dispute resolution. It is based at Florida State University with regional offices at University of Central Florida, Florida Atlantic University and Florida Gulf Coast University. For more information visit its website at http://consensus.fsu.edu or call at 407-835-3443 or 850-644-6330.