POLK REGIONAL WATER COOPERATIVE

Providing clean, safe water for Polk County now and for future generations.

August 2023

Public Outreach Success

The Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) is developing strategies to meet Polk County's long-term water demands, providing infrastructure to meet those demand, and encouraging the responsible use of resources through a regional water conservation program. As part of that ongoing effort, an overview of PRWC progress developing the Southeast Lower Floridan Aquifer Wellfield and Water Production Facility (SELFA WPF) was provided at public hearings in Lake Hamilton on February 27, 2023, and in Bartow on February 28, 2023. The hearings were also an opportunity for residents to offer feedback on the selected water supply pipeline route. More than 100 people attended the hearings in person and online to hear a project presentation and ask questions. The presentations can be found on the PRWC website at https://bit.ly/prwc-presentation.

Designs Near 60 Percent Completion

Residents in east and central Polk County will learn more details about the 61-mile pipeline and 10-mile raw water pipeline routes for the wellfield and water production facility this summer when the design plans are 60 percent complete. At that stage, planners will be relatively confident of the route alignment and ready to begin easement acquisitions. Most of the pipeline installation will be happening in existing rights of way. However, a 30-foot to 40-foot easement may be needed in some areas where the pipeline does not follow an existing roadway, or the right of way is limited. PRWC will be conducting collaborative negotiations with property owners for the purchase and use of easements where public right of way is not sufficient. Property owners may expect to be contacted beginning this summer. When pipeline work is completed, property owners will be able to park vehicles, maintain a driveway, and add some landscaping to easements.

Meet Executive Director Eric Dehaven

Fading into retirement wasn't enough for Eric DeHaven, who after working for 35 years in water supply at another agency, signed up to continue the work by serving as Executive Director of the PRWC.

DeHaven spent his last three years at the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) serving as the primary liaison between that agency and PRWC, making him uniquely qualified for the role of executive director. The opportunity to use his deep knowledge of water supply issues to continue the development of the PRWC from the ground up was too enticing a challenge to pass up.

"The 'cooperative' is not just a word in our name," said DeHaven. "It's a true cooperative where 16 governments have come together and agreed to work on this problem for the sake of Polk County, which is a member as well."

All these regional partners are playing key roles in the PRWC, which is proactively identifying alternative water sources and projects that will protect and sustain our future regional water supply. The first of these projects under way is the Southeast Lower Floridan wellfield and water production facility. After treatment via reverse osmosis, the new facility will deliver up to 12.5 million gallons per day (MGD) of high-quality drinking water to utilities supplying member governments.

(Continued on reverse)

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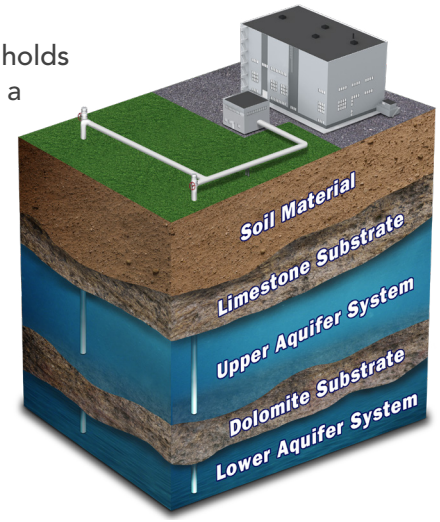
"This is the first real alternative water supply project to be undertaken in Polk County on a large scale," said DeHaven, adding that it's a great example of what can be accomplished with regional cooperation.

Prior to his current position, DeHaven worked as a Hydrogeologist and Assistant Director of the Resource Management Division at SWFWMD, where he was responsible for agricultural water supply initiatives, projects to establish minimum recovery flows and levels, and Cooperative Funding Initiative projects.

DeHaven is a registered professional geologist in Florida and Tennessee and holds bachelor's degrees in geology and geography from DePauw University, Indiana, and a master's degree in geology from the University of South Florida.



What are the Lower and Upper Floridan Aquifers?

The Lower Floridan Aquifer (LFA) and Upper Floridan Aquifer (UFA) are separated by a layer of rock that water cannot easily flow through. The deeper LFA contains brackish, or slightly salty, water. The LFA will be the source of water for the wellfield and water production facility and is expected to produce up to 12.5 MGD of high-quality drinking water. The UFA is the source of water for many surface water bodies and residential wells in central Florida. Drawing water from the LFA will reduce the likelihood of sinkholes and avoid impacts on availability of water from wells, lakes, and other water bodies dependent on the UFA.

Producing Safe, Great Tasting Water

The water production facility is a reverse osmosis (RO) water treatment facility currently under design. RO is widely regarded as the leading water purification technology in the water treatment industry. It removes unwanted sediments and salts by filtering water through "semi-permeable membranes" and capturing them at the molecular level, leaving behind high quality, great tasting drinking water. Water from the production facility will be piped directly to member government utilities.

Click here to see an online animated video of the water production facility.

Get Involved

PRWC is a non-profit, special district of the State of Florida tasked with the planning for Polk County's future water supply needs. The PRWC consists of 16 representatives and officials from Auburndale, Bartow, Davenport, Dundee, Eagle Lake, Fort Meade, Frostproof, Haines City, Lake Alfred, Lake Hamilton, Lake Wales, Lakeland, Mulberry, Polk City, Polk County and Winter Haven. **PRWC's Board of Directors meetings are open to the public and held at the Lake Myrtle Sports Complex, 2701 Lake Myrtle Park Road, Auburndale, FL.**

Upcoming public meetings are:

- Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 2-5 p.m.
- Wednesday, November 15, 2023, 2-5 p.m.

Public meetings are also broadcast on Zoom online. More information on upcoming meetings can be found on the PRWC website.

Check out our website!

Visit the PRWC website's news and events page a few days before each scheduled board meeting to see the agenda.

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