

The 2021 Florida Statutes

Title XXIX

PUBLIC HEALTH

Chapter 403

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

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403.064 Reuse of reclaimed water.—

(1) The encouragement and promotion of water conservation, and reuse of reclaimed water, as defined by the department, are state objectives and are considered to be in the public interest. The Legislature finds that the reuse of reclaimed water is a critical component of meeting the state's existing and future water supply needs while sustaining natural systems. The Legislature further finds that for those wastewater treatment plants permitted and operated under an approved reuse program by the department, the reclaimed water shall be considered environmentally acceptable and not a threat to public health and safety. The Legislature encourages the development of incentive-based programs for reuse implementation.

(2) All applicants for permits to construct or operate a domestic wastewater treatment facility located within, serving a population located within, or discharging within a water resource caution area shall prepare a reuse feasibility study as part of their application for the permit. Reuse feasibility studies shall be prepared in accordance with department guidelines adopted by rule and shall include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Evaluation of monetary costs and benefits for several levels and types of reuse.
- (b) Evaluation of water savings if reuse is implemented.
- (c) Evaluation of rates and fees necessary to implement reuse.
- (d) Evaluation of environmental and water resource benefits associated with reuse.
- (e) Evaluation of economic, environmental, and technical constraints.
- (f) A schedule for implementation of reuse. The schedule shall consider phased implementation.

(3) The permit applicant shall prepare a plan of study for the reuse feasibility study consistent with the reuse feasibility study guidelines adopted by department rule. The plan of study shall include detailed descriptions of applicable treatment and water supply alternatives to be evaluated and the methods of analysis to be used. The plan of study shall be submitted to the department for review and approval.

(4) The study required under subsection (2) shall be performed by the applicant, and, if the study shows that the reuse is feasible, the applicant must give significant consideration to its implementation if the study complies with the requirements of subsections (2) and (3).

(5) A reuse feasibility study is not required if:

(a) The domestic wastewater treatment facility has an existing or proposed permitted or design capacity less than 0.1 million gallons per day; or

(b) The permitted reuse capacity equals or exceeds the total permitted capacity of the domestic wastewater treatment facility.

(6) A reuse feasibility study prepared under subsection (2) satisfies a water management district requirement to conduct a reuse feasibility study imposed on a local government or utility that has responsibility for wastewater management. The data included in the study and the conclusions of the study must be given significant consideration by the applicant and the appropriate water management district in an analysis of the economic, environmental, and technical feasibility of providing reclaimed water for reuse under part II of chapter 373 and must be presumed relevant to the determination of feasibility. A water management district may not require a separate study when a reuse feasibility study has been completed under subsection (2).

(7) Local governments may allow the use of reclaimed water for inside activities, including, but not limited to, toilet flushing, fire protection, and decorative water features, as well as for outdoor uses, provided the reclaimed water is from domestic wastewater treatment facilities which are permitted, constructed, and operated in accordance with department rules.

(8) Permits issued by the department for domestic wastewater treatment facilities shall be consistent with requirements for reuse included in applicable consumptive use permits issued by the water management district, if such requirements are consistent with department rules governing reuse of reclaimed water. This subsection applies only to domestic wastewater treatment facilities which are located within, or serve a population located within, or discharge within water resource caution areas and are owned, operated, or controlled by a local government or utility which has responsibility for water supply and wastewater management.

(9) Local governments may and are encouraged to implement programs for the reuse of reclaimed water. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prohibit or preempt such local reuse programs.

(10) A local government that implements a reuse program under this section shall be allowed to allocate the costs in a reasonable manner.

(11) Pursuant to chapter 367, the Florida Public Service Commission shall allow entities under its jurisdiction which conduct studies or implement reuse projects, including, but not limited to, any study required by subsection (2) or facilities used for reliability purposes for a reclaimed water reuse system, to recover the full, prudently incurred cost of such studies and facilities through their rate structure.

(12) In issuing consumptive use permits, the permitting agency shall consider the local reuse program.

(13) A local government shall require a developer, as a condition for obtaining a development order, to comply with the local reuse program.

(14) After conducting a feasibility study under subsection (2), domestic wastewater treatment facilities that dispose of effluent by Class I deep well injection, as defined in 40 C.F.R. s. 144.6(a), must implement reuse to the degree that reuse is feasible, based upon the applicant's reuse feasibility study. Applicable permits issued by the department shall be consistent with the requirements of this subsection.

(a) This subsection does not limit the use of a Class I deep well injection facility as backup for a reclaimed water reuse system.

(b) This subsection applies only to domestic wastewater treatment facilities located within, serving a population located within, or discharging within a water resource caution area.

(15) After conducting a feasibility study under subsection (2), domestic wastewater treatment facilities that dispose of effluent by surface water discharges or by land application methods must implement reuse to the degree that reuse is feasible, based upon the applicant's reuse feasibility study. This subsection does not apply to surface water discharges or land application systems which are currently categorized as reuse under department rules. Applicable permits issued by the department shall be consistent with the requirements of this subsection.

(a) This subsection does not limit the use of a surface water discharge or land application facility as backup for a reclaimed water reuse system.

(b) This subsection applies only to domestic wastewater treatment facilities located within, serving a population located within, or discharging within a water resource caution area.

(16) Utilities implementing reuse projects are encouraged, except in the case of use by electric utilities as defined in s. 366.02(2), to meter use of reclaimed water by all end users and to charge for the use of reclaimed water based on the actual volume used when such metering and charges can be shown to encourage water conservation. Metering and the use of volume-based rates are effective water management tools for the following reuse activities: residential irrigation, agricultural irrigation, industrial uses, landscape irrigation, irrigation of other public access areas, commercial and institutional uses such as toilet flushing, and transfers to other reclaimed water utilities. Each domestic wastewater utility that provides reclaimed water for the reuse activities listed in this section shall include a summary of its metering and rate structure as part of its annual reuse report to the department.

(17) By November 1, 2021, domestic wastewater utilities that dispose of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water by surface water discharge shall submit to the department for review and approval a plan for eliminating nonbeneficial surface water discharge by January 1, 2032, subject to the requirements of this section. The plan must include the average gallons per day of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water that will no longer be discharged into surface waters and the date of such elimination, the average gallons per day of surface water discharge which will continue in accordance with the

alternatives provided for in subparagraphs (a)2. and 3., and the level of treatment that the effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water will receive before being discharged into a surface water by each alternative.

(a) The department shall approve a plan that includes all of the information required under this subsection as meeting the requirements of this section if one or more of the following conditions are met:

1. The plan will result in eliminating the surface water discharge.
2. The plan will result in meeting the requirements of s. 403.086(10).
3. The plan does not provide for a complete elimination of the surface water discharge but does provide an affirmative demonstration that any of the following conditions apply to the remaining discharge:
 - a. The discharge is associated with an indirect potable reuse project;
 - b. The discharge is a wet weather discharge that occurs in accordance with an applicable department permit;
 - c. The discharge is into a stormwater management system and is subsequently withdrawn by a user for irrigation purposes;
 - d. The utility operates domestic wastewater treatment facilities with reuse systems that reuse a minimum of 90 percent of a facility's annual average flow, as determined by the department using monitoring data for the prior 5 consecutive years, for reuse purposes authorized by the department; or
 - e. The discharge provides direct ecological or public water supply benefits, such as rehydrating wetlands or implementing the requirements of minimum flows and minimum water levels or recovery or prevention strategies for a water body.

The plan may include conceptual projects under sub-subparagraphs 3.a. and e.; however, such inclusion does not extend the time within which the plan must be implemented.

(b) The department shall approve or deny a plan within 9 months after receiving the plan. A utility may modify the plan by submitting such modification to the department; however, the plan may not be modified such that the requirements of this subsection are not met, and the department may not extend the time within which a plan will be implemented. The approval of the plan or a modification by the department does not constitute final agency action.

(c) A utility shall fully implement the approved plan by January 1, 2032.

(d) If a plan is not timely submitted by a utility or approved by the department, the utility's domestic wastewater treatment facilities may not dispose of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water by surface

water discharge after January 1, 2028. A violation of this paragraph is subject to administrative and civil penalties pursuant to ss. 403.121, 403.131, and 403.141.

(e) A domestic wastewater utility applying for a permit for a new or expanded surface water discharge shall prepare a plan in accordance with this subsection as part of that permit application. The department may not approve a permit for a new or expanded surface water discharge unless the plan meets one or more of the conditions provided in paragraph (a).

(f) By December 31, 2021, and annually thereafter, the department shall submit a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives which provides the average gallons per day of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water that will no longer be discharged into surface waters by the utility and the dates of such elimination; the average gallons per day of surface water discharges that will continue in accordance with the alternatives provided in subparagraphs (a)2. and 3., and the level of treatment that the effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water will receive before being discharged into a surface water by each alternative and utility; and any modified or new plans submitted by a utility since the last report.

(g) This subsection does not apply to any of the following:

1. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located in a fiscally constrained county as described in s. 218.67(1).
2. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located in a municipality that is entirely within a rural area of opportunity as designated pursuant to s. 288.0656.
3. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located in a municipality that has less than \$10 million in total revenue, as determined by the municipality's most recent annual financial report submitted to the Department of Financial Services in accordance with s. 218.32.
4. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is operated by an operator of a mobile home park as defined in s. 723.003 and has a permitted capacity of less than 300,000 gallons per day.

(h) This subsection does not prohibit the inclusion of a plan for backup discharges under s. 403.086(8)(a).

(i) This subsection may not be deemed to exempt a utility from requirements that prohibit the causing of or contributing to violations of water quality standards in surface waters, including groundwater discharges that affect water quality in surface waters.

(18)(a) By December 31, 2020, the department shall initiate rule revisions based on the recommendations of the Potable Reuse Commission's 2020 report "Advancing Potable Reuse in Florida: Framework for the Implementation of Potable Reuse in Florida." Rules for potable reuse projects must address contaminants of emerging concern and meet or exceed federal and state drinking water quality standards and other applicable water quality standards. Reclaimed water is deemed a water source for public water supply systems.

(b) The Legislature recognizes that sufficient water supply is imperative to the future of the state and that potable reuse is a source of water which may assist in meeting future demand for water supply.

(c) The department may convene and lead one or more technical advisory groups to coordinate the rulemaking and review of rules for potable reuse as required under this section. The technical advisory group, which shall assist in the development of such rules, must be composed of knowledgeable representatives of a broad group of interested stakeholders, including, but not limited to, representatives from the water management districts, the wastewater utility industry, the water utility industry, the environmental community, the business community, the public health community, the agricultural community, and the consumers.

(d) Potable reuse is an alternative water supply as defined in s. 373.019, and potable reuse projects are eligible for alternative water supply funding. The use of potable reuse water may not be excluded from regional water supply planning under s. 373.709.

(e) The department and the water management districts shall develop and execute, by December 31, 2023, a memorandum of agreement providing for the procedural requirements of a coordinated review of all permits associated with the construction and operation of an indirect potable reuse project. The memorandum of agreement must provide that the coordinated review will occur only if requested by a permittee. The purpose of the coordinated review is to share information, avoid the redundancy of information requested from the permittee, and ensure consistency in the permit for the protection of the public health and the environment.

(f) To encourage investment in the development of potable reuse projects by private entities, a potable reuse project developed as a qualifying project under s. 255.065 is:

1. Beginning January 1, 2026, eligible for expedited permitting under s. 403.973.
2. Consistent with s. 373.707, eligible for priority funding in the same manner as other alternative water supply projects from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, under the Water Protection and Sustainability Program, and for water management district cooperative funding.

(g) This subsection is not intended and may not be construed to supersede s. 373.250(3).

History.—s. 7, ch. 89-324; s. 3, ch. 94-243; s. 8, ch. 95-323; s. 37, ch. 2002-296; s. 13, ch. 2004-381; s. 48, ch. 2018-110; s. 12, ch. 2020-150; s. 1, ch. 2021-168.