Water Choices

How Should We Meet the Water Challenges of a Growing World?

Water is one of Florida's most abundant natural resources, a crucial resource that impacts not just the environment, but other important industries in Florida's Economy (tourism, agriculture, retail, real estate, etc.). However, due to high population growth, development, and agricultural needs of the state, freshwater resources that Florida so heavily depends upon are being significantly impacted.

Although we might not think of Florida when we think of dams, there are 895 documented dams in the state according to the National Inventory of Dams, the majority built between 1950 and 1980. Seventy-eight of those dams are classified as "High Potential Hazard" (when the loss of one or more human lives is probable should the dam fail for any reason). Only 16 of those have an Emergency Action Plan. Dams are numerous in Florida, mostly privately owned, and mostly used for flood control, fish & wildlife ponds, and other purposes (something other than debris control, fire protection, hydroelectric, irrigation, navigation recreation, tailings, water supply and unknown).

In addition to the potential positive or negative impacts of dams, Florida faces a wide variety of threats when it comes to water supply and water quantity. To avoid future water conflicts, different interest groups need to understand the water concerns of all users in Florida and work together to find sustainable solutions. The central questions around water resource concerns have become: Where are we going to find enough water to support our growing populations? How are we going to meet water quality standards?

This "placemat" presents three options for addressing water resource concerns that are based on the views and concerns of people from across the country. Water resource issues, and how we choose to respond to them, put these essential values into tension with each other.

These are not the only options for addressing water resource concerns, but they capture a range of commonly held views and their benefits along with their drawbacks.

Some questions to consider as you discuss the 3 options:

- How does this option address our concerns about local water resources?
- What worries us or make us uncomfortable about this approach?



Map highlighting dams in Florida.

Source: http://nid.usace.army.mil/cm_apex/f? p=838:3:0::NO

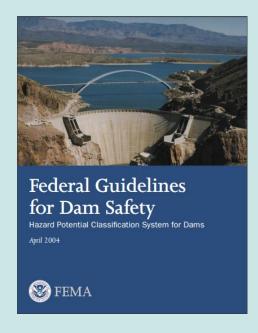
If this approach worked perfectly, what would the trade-offs or consequences be?

Option 1:

Protect the Health and Safety of People and Communities

Water is a public good, and we should use and provide it fairly to protect the well-being of people and communities.

| Examples of What Could Be Done | Some Trade-Offs to Consider |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Write to elected officials about re- | Cost to tax payers (if government |
| quiring Emergency Action Plans on | dam) or cost to dam owners to get |
| all "High Potential Hazard" dams | emergency action plan |
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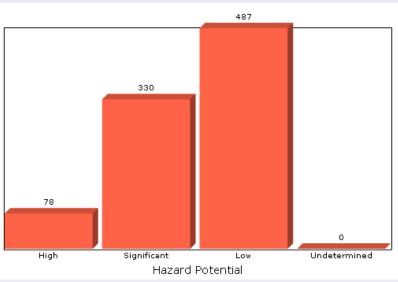


Option 2:

Work with Nature to Create Sustainable Water Systems

Many of our water systems work against nature rather than with it, and despite some efforts, nature often gets short-changed. Human communities are intertwined with the environment, so we must focus on creating water systems that are sustainable for people and nature.

| Examples of What Could Be Done | Some Trade-Offs to Consider |
|---|---|
| Ask your local representative to push for a review of all dams to determine which can be restored back to their "natural state" | Very costly to get an Environmental Assessment completed |
| | |

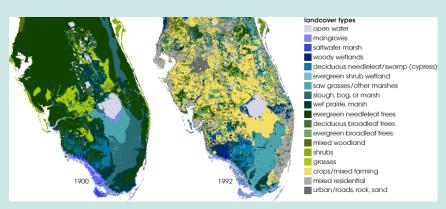


Graph of Hazard Potential classifications for dams in Florida. Source: http://nid.usace.army.mil/cm apex/f?p=838:3:0::NO

Option 3: Preserve Our Way of Life

Water is a resource essential to our livelihoods and our quality of life. We should make sure we have enough clean water so that people and businesses can continue to make their own decisions (how much water they need and how they want to use it).

| Examples of What Could Be Done | Some Trade-Offs to Consider |
|---|--|
| Support Tampa Bay Water in any and all efforts for them to provide enough water for commerce and residences (e.g. development of new water sources) | May not provide adequate environ- mental protection |
| | |



Maps of land use in central and south Florida showing. 1900 (left); 1992 (right). Source: http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Features/DeepFreeze/deep_freeze3.php