

# Well Installation Procedures for Agricultural Irrigation in Miami-Dade County<sup>1</sup>

Kati W. Migliaccio, E. Vanessa Campoverde, and Ann Marie Superchi<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Water wells or groundwater wells are the main source of irrigation water for agriculture in Miami-Dade County. Depending on the purpose and characteristics of the well, different permits are required for installing the well and pumping water from the well.

Installation of a well for irrigation in Miami-Dade County includes three steps:

- (1) Determining the proper consumptive use permit and obtaining that permit;
- (2) Selecting a well driller; and
- (3) Determining the proper well installation permit and obtaining that permit.

**Note that this EDIS document focuses on wells used for agricultural irrigation and not wells used for potable water supplies. The information provided in this document is based on current rules, contacts, and prices as of March 2012 for Miami-Dade County.**

## Consumptive Use or Water Use Permits

A consumptive use or water use permit (referred to as a CUP, WU, or WUP) is issued by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and is required before a well construction permit can be issued.

Consumptive use permits are required for agricultural irrigation, public water supplies, contamination clean-up, commercial/industrial uses, and dewatering/mining activities. Other activities, such as domestic uses for potable water or home irrigation and water used for firefighting, do not currently require a consumptive use permit.

By acquiring the permit, the permit holder is able to withdraw a specific amount of water from a specific location (e.g., ground, lake, canal, etc.). Permits vary depending on the amount of water needed and their duration (Table 1). Water volumes are allocated in millions of gallons per month (MGM).

Individual Water Use Permits vary depending on the permit duration and water use. Permit duration varies on the type of water use permit and whether the permittee is the owner or lessee of the land. Water use permits issued to the lessee are valid only for the duration of the lease. If a lease is automatically renewable, the SFWMD can issue the water

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2. Kati W. Migliaccio, associate professor, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Tropical Research and Education Center, Homestead, FL; E. Vanessa Campoverde, Extension agent, Miami-Dade County Extension Service, Homestead, FL; and Ann Marie Superchi, South Florida Water Management District, West Palm Beach, FL; Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611.

**Table 1. Description for different water use permits provided by SFWMD (March 2012 prices).**

Characteristics	Minor General Water Use Permit	Major General Water Use Permit	Individual Water Use Permit
Water volume	3 MGM or less	3 MGM to 15 MGM	Over 15 MGM
Cost	\$350	\$1000	Varies*
Permit duration	Up to 20 years	Up to 20 years	Up to 20 years; Varies
Processing time by SFWMD if application complete	Up to 60 days	Up to 60 days	Up to 90 days

\*See Table 2 for more information on Individual Water Use Permits.

**Table 2. Fees for Individual Water Use Permits that are used for irrigation (March 2012 prices).**

Water volume (MGM)	Duration	Cost
Over 15	Less than 20 years	\$1000
15 to 30	20 years	\$1600
30 to 300	20 years	\$3400
Over 300	20 years	\$5600

use permit for up to 20 years only **if the terms of the lease allow for renewals that long.** If there is no renewal clause in the lease, the SFWMD can only issue the permit for the term of the lease. Each time the lessee gets a new lease, he or she has to submit a letter requesting a modification to the permit to extend the permit expiration date, provided the lessee does so before the current permit expires. It is much simpler if the property owner is the permittee. The current fees related to irrigation uses for Individual Water Use Permits (one of the three types of permits provided by SFWMD, Table 1) are provided in Table 2. Individual Water Use and Major General Water Use Permits also have some reporting requirements. These permit holders (Individual and Major General) must submit records of monthly pumpage on a quarterly basis, calibration reports for water use accounting devices every 5 years, and compliance reports every 10 years.

Consumptive use permits are issued for a specific time period and, therefore, do expire. They should be renewed before the expiration date to continually apply irrigation water.

The SFWMD maintains a website (<http://www.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xweb%20-%20release%202/water%20>

use%20permits) that provides information on permit applications (see Figure 1). The page includes links to the forms needed and instructions on completing the forms. The website also includes information on where to submit the application. The SFWMD currently has an ePermitting (or electronic permitting) program for consumptive use permits. When submitting an online water use application for agricultural irrigation, you will be asked to enter an amount of water per day in million gallons per day (MGD).

## Selecting a Well Driller

Wells must be constructed by a water well contractor licensed by one of the water management districts in Florida. While the licenses are issued by the separate districts, the licenses are valid statewide in the other water management districts.

However, there are two exemptions to this requirement (Florida Statute 373.326(1)(2)):

(1) When the water management district finds that compliance with all requirements of this part would result in undue hardship, an exemption from any one or more such requirements may be granted by the water management district to the extent necessary to ameliorate such undue hardship and to the extent such exemption can be granted without impairing the intent and purpose of this part.

(2) Nothing in this part shall prevent a person who has not obtained a license pursuant to [s. 373.323](#), F.S., from constructing a well that is 2 inches or under in diameter, on the person's own or leased property, intended for use only in a single-family house, which is his or her residence, or intended for use only for farming purposes on the person's farm, and when the waters to be produced are not intended for use by the public or any residence other than his or her own, **provided that such person complies with all local and state rules and regulations relating to the construction of water wells.**

All farmers or lessees who install a well within these exemptions must still comply with the rules and regulations that a licensed well contractor must follow. Growers who hire a company to drill an irrigation well must use a licensed water well contractor as this is considered contract for hire. Some drillers will include obtaining the necessary permits in the services they offer. The well driller or contractor is responsible for submitting the well completion report to the SFWMD within 30 days of completing the well.



## Submitting a WU Application (Water Use Details - Agricultural Irrigation)

1. Click on the **Agricultural Irrigation** option in the water use classification box.
2. Enter **Amount of Water** requested in million gallons per day (MGD).  
1,500,000 gallons would be entered as **1.5**  
10,000 gallons would be entered as **.01**
3. Enter the **Number of Years** you are requesting the permit to be effective.
4. Click the **Add Parcel** button.
5. Enter **Agricultural Irrigation** information.
6. Click the **Save** button.
7. Attach files if applicable (refer to the *Attaching Files* process for detailed instructions).
8. Click the **Next Page** button or link.

Figure 1. Screenshot from the SFWMD website for ePermitting of the online application for Water Use Permits. Credits: SFWMD

## Well Construction Permits

The construction, repair, and abandonment of wells in Miami-Dade County require a permit. However, there is an exemption for South Dade agricultural wells less than 25 feet deep used solely for agricultural irrigation. The area that qualifies as South Dade is shown in Figure 2. These wells are exempt from the well construction permit per Chapter 40E-30 FAC exemption. (Note that 40E-30 is being updated and will become 40E-3.)

Wells not included in this exemption and less than 12 inches in diameter are permitted by the Florida Department of Health (DOH) (per FS 373 and FAC 40E-3.041 FAC) ([http://www.miamidadegov/derm/water\\_supply\\_private\\_wells.asp](http://www.miamidadegov/derm/water_supply_private_wells.asp)). The Florida DOH charges \$200 (March 2012 fee rate) for an irrigation well application, permit, and inspection. Applications for wells less than 12 inches in diameter in Miami-Dade County should be submitted to:

Mr. Nicholas Heybeck  
Miami-Dade Health Department  
11805 SW 26 Street, Miami, FL 33175  
Phone: 786-315-2444  
E-mail: [Nicholas\\_Heybeck@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:Nicholas_Heybeck@doh.state.fl.us), [Carlos\\_Icaza@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:Carlos_Icaza@doh.state.fl.us), or [Astrid\\_Edwards@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:Astrid_Edwards@doh.state.fl.us)

The application is generally processed within 5 business days and can be faxed back to the applicant. After the well has been installed, the driller or contractor must request an

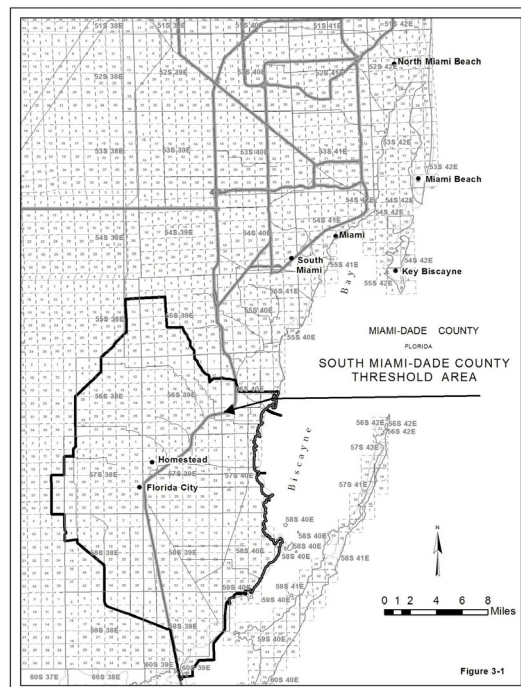


Figure 2. South Dade agricultural area outlined in dark black.

Credits: SFWMD

inspection and submit a completion report. An inspector will issue a green tag for the site once these have been completed, which indicates final approval by DOH.

Wells equal to or greater than 12 inches in diameter in Miami-Dade County are permitted by the SFWMD. The

SFWMD charges \$100 (March 2012 fee rate) for each well construction and well repair permit. There is no charge for Well Abandonment Permits. For this type of well, contact:

Ms. Ann Marie Superchi, SFWMD  
PO Box 24680, West Palm Beach, FL 33416-480  
Phone: 561-682-6929  
E-mail: [asuperch@sfwmd.gov](mailto:asuperch@sfwmd.gov)

The SFWMD has 30 days to return the permit application, although it is usually returned in a shorter time.

Well construction permit forms for both types of wells (i.e., less than 12 inch diameter or greater than 12 inch diameter) are available on the SFWMD website at: <http://my.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xweb%20-%20release%202/well%20construction%20permits>. You can also find this website by navigating to <http://my.sfwmd.gov> and typing “well construction permit” into the search box. This permit is required before a well is installed and must be kept on the property while drilling the well.

## Miami-Dade County Department of Permitting, Environment and Regulatory Affairs (PERA)

Miami-Dade County provides permits for potable water wells but has **no jurisdiction over irrigation wells**. For nursery owners who use a well for potable water consumption, a permit approval will be needed per Section 24-43.2 of Miami-Dade County Code. PERA is also required to

monitor that the potable water system meets drinking water standards. More information on how to obtain permit approval for potable water supplies can be found by contacting PERA – Water & Wastewater Engineering Section at 786-315-2879 or [psa@miamidade.gov](mailto:psa@miamidade.gov).

## Summary

There are three key steps in installing an irrigation well in Miami-Dade County. The first step is to apply for a consumptive use permit from the SFWMD using the ePermitting program. Once you get a water use permit, the second step is to determine who will drill the well and make sure that they are a licensed water well contractor in Florida. The third step is to determine whether a well construction permit is needed, and, if so, obtain the permit. Wells used solely for agricultural irrigation **within the South Dade Agricultural Area** should not need additional permits. However, if a well will also be used for potable needs then an additional permit may be needed from Miami-Dade County PERA.