

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT TOOLS TO SHIFT OUR LANDSCAPING PARADIGM**

***Eliana Bardi and Stacie Greco***

Alachua County Environmental Protection Department, Gainesville, FL, USA

Public supply is the largest use of water in Alachua County, with landscape irrigation representing much of the residential water budget. Alachua County applies a three-pronged approach to water conservation that focuses on education, incentives, and regulations. The County has a robust social media presence with targeted ads to high-water use neighborhoods, in addition to participating in tabling events and providing in-person outreach and training. We offer free irrigation tune-ups to high-water users and provide grant funded rebates to qualifying homeowners and businesses to implement water conserving upgrades. We also enforce local regulations on irrigation, landscaping, and fertilizer use. Our irrigation design standards were updated in 2023 and now limit the area that can be permanently irrigated to 50% of the permeable area and outline additional maintenance requirements for non-residential systems (including common areas in residential developments), among other changes. These changes have resulted in creative approaches to temporary irrigation and shifts in the landscape design to prioritize functional areas for irrigation.

This presentation explores the lessons learned from implementing these programs, focusing on stakeholder engagement, program development and promotion, and initial estimates of water savings.

PRESENTER BIO: Eliana Bardi is a Senior Planner with over 20 years' experience researching and implementing programs to protect natural resources. She holds a B.A. in Economics and an M.S. in Environmental Engineering from UF. Eliana implements regulatory and outreach water conservation programs for Alachua County.