



FY 2025-26

## **WATER SUPPLY AND CONSERVATION GRANT APPLICATION FORM:**

### **Name of applicant:**

Marion County Board of County Commissioners

### **Provide a short description of the proposed water conservation project in the text box below:**

Marion County Water Resources and Marion County Utilities work cooperatively to plan, implement, and manage a comprehensive, goal-based water conservation program, for the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. The program is conducted through public outreach, indirect public education, and direct water conservation incentives. The County requests funding for water use efficiency initiatives including low flow toilet rebates, low flow water conservation kits, rain sensors, and educational outreach programs and materials.

### **List previous grants received from WRWSA in the previous 3 fiscal years and date completed:**

2024= \$13,237.50 to be completed by September 30, 2025  
2023 = \$9,160.06 completed September 30, 2024.  
2022 = \$14,081.25 completed September 30, 2023.

### **Attachments to application:**

1. A resolution of support that includes a commitment that the grant recipient will budget and expend its matching funds as required by the grant program.
2. A summary of the project tasks (scope of services) with estimated costs by task, if applicable.
3. A time schedule for the project and expected completion date that will be inserted in the local government contract.

### **Return Application to:**

Suzannah J. Folsom, Executive Director  
WRWSA, 3600 W. Sovereign Path, Suite 228, Lecanto, Florida 34461

**Deadline: July 1, 2025, 5:00 p.m. EST**



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Marion County WRWSA FY 2025/2026 Grant Application Attachments

**Program Description**

Marion County Water Resources and Marion County Utilities work cooperatively to plan, implement, and manage a comprehensive, goal-based water conservation program for the Marion County Board of County Commissioners. The program is conducted through public outreach, indirect public education, and direct water conservation incentives. The County requests funding for water use efficiency initiatives including efficient irrigation rebates, low-flow toilet rebates, low-flow retrofit kits and educational outreach materials.

The following is a breakdown of the costs of the various projects that Marion County requests grant funding for during fiscal year 2025/26:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>County Cost Share</b>	<b>WRWSA Cost Share</b>
Educational Outreach	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$2,500
Utility Bill Inserts on Water Use Efficiency	\$3,000	\$1,500	\$1,500
Educational Print Media	\$1,000	\$500	\$500
Low-Flow Toilet Rebates (Non-MCU Customers East of I-75)	\$450	\$225	\$225
Low-Flow Toilet Rebates (Non-MCU Customers West of I-75)	\$450	\$225	\$225
Water Conservation Kits and Rain Sensors	\$6,100	\$3,050	\$3,050
Water Conservation Billboards	\$10,570	\$5,285	\$5,285
Smart Irrigation Controller Rebates	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Total Project Costs	\$36,570	\$18,285	\$18,285

These projects represent only a portion of the County's on-going Water Use Efficiency Program. A cost-share of \$18,285 will help to offset the costs of performing incentive-based water conservation programs as well as conducting public outreach. The remainder of the program costs will be funded by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners and other cooperative partners.



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**Educational Outreach:** The purpose of this program is to encourage residents to make changes to their daily water use habits to increase efficiency. The program focuses on education and water use efficiency. The target audience is county wide. The program will provide students and residents hands-on experience during events and in the summer months, as a follow up from other education initiatives, and incorporate how the implementation of simple water efficient practices have an impact on water resources. It also highlights the ability to collectively save up to 3,000 gallons of water a month per household by implementing these practices. Residents and students will be shown how to replace non-efficient faucet aerators, showerheads, and nozzles with efficient ones, check for leaky toilets, learn how to use rain gauges effectively, and apply water efficient practices in and around the home.

Marion County will offer summer presentations that students can take advantage of individually or in combination with other partnering organizations. Programs will consist of presentations, handouts, hands on application of water conservation items, and promo items for participants. Residents and visitors to Marion County will be provided educational and promotional materials during events and festivals throughout the year as well as demonstrations at workshops.

**Utility Bill Inserts on Water Use Efficiency:** Billing inserts are distributed on a bimonthly basis by Marion County Utilities. These inserts are used to educate citizens on water use efficiency and to promote the County's incentive-based programs. Message topics in FY2025/26 will include: informing citizens of the change back to the once a week watering schedule, how to conduct a routine check on an irrigation system, how to identify common household leaks, and other topics related to water use. These inserts are a big driver for participation in the County's water use efficiency initiatives.

**Educational Print Media:** Along with billing inserts for Utility customers, tip cards and brochures on water use efficiency, incentive programs, and resource protection are made available at Marion County libraries and the MCU lobby for customers free of charge.

**Low-Flow Toilet Rebates:** The toilet rebate program offers unincorporated Marion County residents up to \$100 (or \$180 if two toilets are replaced) to replace a conventional high-volume toilet (3.5 gallons per flush or greater) with a dual flush or high-efficiency toilet (1.28 gallons per flush or less). This is an ongoing program that has been in place since October, 2011. This grant would provide for approximately 100 toilet rebates in unincorporated Marion County for residents that are not Marion County Utilities customers. It is estimated that the replacement of these toilets will save an estimated 25.1million gallons total over their 20-year lifespan at a cost of approximated \$1.01per thousand gallons saved. The County is expected to have a grant with the Southwest Florida Water Management District to cooperatively fund rebates as well for Marion County Utilities customers. This will be the fourth phase of this program.

**Water Conservation Kits and Rain Sensors:** Low flow retrofit kits are distributed for free at the Marion County Utilities office to customers, as well as at various events throughout the year. These kits contain low-flow fixtures and devices to reduce both indoor and outdoor water use. Each kit fully installed has the potential to save 25,000 gallons of water a year. They will be distributed to both non-utilities and utilities customers. Rain sensors are required on all irrigation systems installed after May 1, 1991



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pursuant to Florida Administrative Code 40C-2.042(5). Rain sensors help to conserve water by preventing irrigation after recent rain events. The average rain sensor only functions for 2-3 years before needing replacement. Providing rain sensors to residents will help to ensure more irrigation systems function properly and conserve water.

**Water Conservation Billboards:** A billboard campaign is utilized each year to promote smart water conservation practices. These billboards promote the use of rain sensors, discourage overwatering of lawns, inform citizens of the shift to once a week watering, inform citizens about various water conservation rebates available, and emphasize the importance of protecting the aquifer. Past billboard campaigns have achieved over 1million impressions annually at a cost of less than \$0.01 per impression.

**Smart irrigation Controller Rebates:** Smart irrigation controllers utilize local weather and landscape conditions to tailor watering schedules to actual conditions on site. Studies have found that these devices reduce water use by an average of 15-30%. When used in conjunction with a soil moisture sensor (SMS) or evapotranspiration (ET) based sensor, the potential savings are as high as 90% during the rainy season. With these rebates, residents will be eligible for up to \$500 towards the purchase and installation of a smart controller and SMS or ET based sensor.

#### Grant Timeline

##### Education Outreach

Conduct education outreach campaigns 10/1/2025-9/30/2026

Give presentations at summer camps across the county 6/1/2026-9/1/2026

##### Educational Materials

Develop, print, and distribute materials 10/1/2025- 9/30/2026

##### Low-Flow Toilet Rebates

Enroll participants 10/1/2025-9/1/2026

Perform inspections and issue rebates 10/1/2025-9/30/2026

##### Water Conservation Kits and Rain Sensors

Order conservation kits and sensors 10/1/2025- 8/1/2026

Distribute and track conservation kits and sensors 12/1/2025- 9/30/2026



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Utility Bill Inserts on Water Use Efficiency

Develop, print, and distribute materials 10/1/2025- 9/30/2026

Water Conservation Billboards

Develop and run billboard campaigns 11/1/2025-9/30/2026

Smart Irrigation Controller Rebates

Enroll participants 10/1/2025-9/1/2026

Perform inspections and issue rebates 10/1/2025-9/30/2026