

**DATE:** February 3, 2020  
**TO:** Matt Jordan, General Manager  
**FROM:** Kenneth R. Herd, Chief Science and Technical Officer *KRH*  
**SUBJECT:** Consolidated Water Use Permit Update – *Status Report*

**SUMMARY**

The current 10-year term of the Consolidated Water Use Permit expires on January 25, 2021. Tampa Bay Water must file an application to renew the permit prior to the expiration date in order to continue legally using this water for the purpose of public water supply. Staff anticipate bringing this permit renewal application to the Board for consideration and approval at either the August or October 2020 board meeting. This presentation will summarize the pumping history of the wellfields covered by this permit, environmental improvements observed since the reduction in wellfield pumping, and how these wellfields fit within our regional water supply system.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive presentation on the status of the Consolidated Water Use Permit renewal.

**COST/FUNDING SOURCE**

N/A

**DISCUSSION**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) issued Consolidated Water Use Permit (Consolidated Permit) No. 20011771.001 to Tampa Bay Water on January 25, 2011 authorizing the continued withdrawal of water from our 11 northern wellfields with an average annual limit of 90 million gallons per day (mgd). This permit will expire on January 25, 2021 and Tampa Bay Water staff are preparing an application package to renew the permit for another 10-year term with no change in withdrawal quantity. Staff expect to bring the renewal application to the Board for consideration and approval at either the August or October 2020 meeting.

This Water Use Permit and the upcoming permit renewal are significant to Tampa Bay Water for multiple reasons. In 2019, groundwater made up almost 63% (approximately 109 mgd) of the water that we delivered to the member governments. The Consolidated Permit authorizes the withdrawal of an annual average limit of 90 mgd which is 74% of our permitted groundwater supply. The wellfields included in the Consolidated Permit accounted for over 46% of the water delivered to the members during Fiscal Year 2019 and groundwater pumping at the current, reduced rate makes up the stable

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baseload component of our regional water supply. Maintaining this reliable, permitted quantity of water helps us meet the growing water demands of the members and maintain an affordable water rate for the Tampa Bay region.

The Partnership Agreement between the member governments, the West Coast Regional Water Supply Authority and the SWFWMD was signed in 1998 with four stated objectives; reducing the pumping rate from the 11 northern wellfields, development of new alternative water supplies, SWFWMD funding of the alternative water supplies, and ending and avoiding litigation and administrative hearings among the parties. Tampa Bay Water was formed in 1998 with the purpose of reducing groundwater pumping at these 11 wellfields and developing alternative water supplies to meet the future water needs of the members and to promote environmental recovery at these wellfields. Tampa Bay Water brought the first alternative sources online in late 2002 and reduced the pumping rate from the Consolidated Permit wellfields. Improvement of environmental conditions has been observed since the reduction in wellfield pumping but recovery is a long and steady process. Tampa Bay Water is currently completing an assessment of environmental recovery at the 11 wellfields that is due to our reduction in pumping. This recovery assessment document will form the foundation of our permit application to renew the Consolidated Permit. With this recovery assessment and permit renewal, we will fulfill one of the primary purposes behind the formation of Tampa Bay Water: scientific documentation of environmental recovery due to our reduction in wellfield pumping.

Staff will present a brief history of the development of the Consolidated Permit wellfields, describe how these wellfields are operated as a part of our regional water supply system, and present a preview of the Recovery Assessment Plan report. We plan to present the findings of our Recovery Assessment Plan work at the April 20, 2020 Board meeting and describe how this assessment will be incorporated into the Consolidated Permit renewal application. At the June 15, 2020 Board meeting, staff will present the contents of the permit renewal application package, a summary of our communication with the member governments and public, and discuss the conditions of the renewed permit that we will request of the SWFWMD. Finally, staff expect to present the Consolidated Permit renewal application to the Board at the August 17, 2020 meeting for consideration and approval. This schedule will allow Tampa Bay Water to timely submit the application to renew this critical permit.

## **BACKGROUND**

The 11 wellfields located in the northern Tampa Bay region were developed and operated by individual member governments or the West Coast Regional Water Supply Authority (Authority) between 1931 and 1992. New wellfields were developed as the population of the Tampa Bay area grew and the demand for water increased. Pumping from each wellfield was authorized under a separate Water Use Permit issued to one of the member governments and/or the Authority. The permitted annual average quantity for the 11 individual wellfields totaled 192 mgd. While the cumulative pumping from the wellfields never reached this permitted quantity, the maximum annual average pumping rate from the 11 wellfields reached 167.2 mgd.

Environmental impacts were documented in the northern Tampa Bay area and were attributed to the high rates of groundwater pumping, periods of drought, and landscape alterations due to development. Tampa Bay Water was created in 1998 and all of the groundwater wellfields were acquired by, and subsequently operated by, Tampa Bay Water as the foundation of a new regional water supply system. The Partnership Agreement between the member governments, the West Coast Regional Water Supply Authority and the SWFWMD consolidated the 11 individual permits into one new permit, issued to Tampa Bay Water. This new permit contained a phased reduction in the average annual wellfield pumping limit from 158 to 90 mgd. The initial Consolidated Permit expired on December 31, 2010 and was subsequently renewed by Tampa Bay Water at a continued average annual pumping limit of 90 mgd. This is the issuance of the Consolidated Permit that exists today.