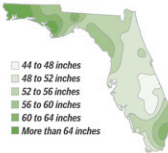


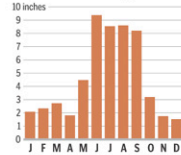
The role of rain water

While Southwest Florida averages about 53 inches of rain per year, that is still less than areas in the northern part of the state and around Miami.

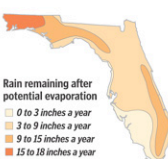
Average annual rainfall



Southwest Florida's average rainfall

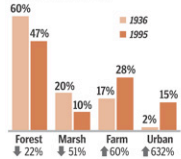


Difference between annual rainfall and annual potential evaporation

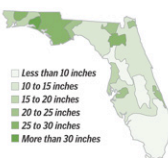


Changes in land use

As development encroaches on natural areas, more rainwater is lost to runoff instead of replenishing groundwater. Here are the changes in Florida's land cover between 1936 and 1995:



Annual regional runoff



Water crisis?

In a state surrounded by water and abundant in lakes and streams, it seems safe to assume that water is an endless resource. An in-depth look at the state of Florida's water supply shows that isn't necessarily the case.

Where do we get our water?

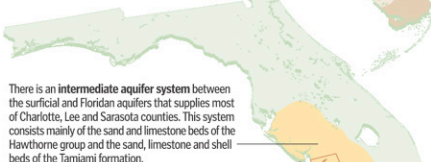
With the bulk of fresh rainwater being lost to evaporation, Floridians turn mainly to groundwater for potable water. This groundwater is stored in layers called aquifers beneath the surface of the earth. While some of these aquifers contain salty water, through treatment, potable water can be made available from every level of aquifer.

Shallow aquifers

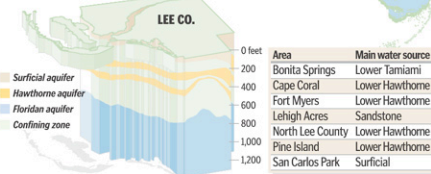


There is a surficial aquifer system that covers most of Florida, supplied mainly by rainwater. Because it is shallow, most of the water is lost to evaporation and runoff.

Intermediate aquifers



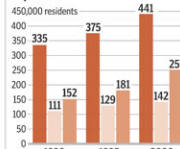
Floridan aquifer



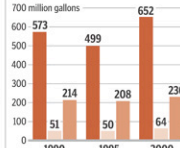
Supply and demand

Lee Co. Charlotte Co. Collier Co.

Population

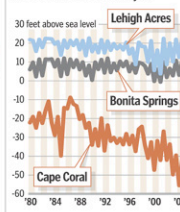


Total water use



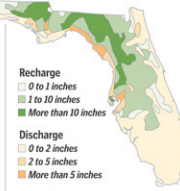
Water levels in aquifers

Shown are the depths of water in three areas of Lee County sampled in the summer and winter of each year.



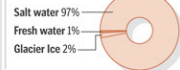
Use of the Floridan aquifer

In some parts of the state, more water goes into the Floridan aquifer than that which comes out. The parts of Florida where the reverse is true worry water management officials.



A global issue

The majority of the water on Earth is salt-water found in oceans.



SOURCES: LEE COUNTY UTILITIES; SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT; U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

DOUGLAS HARTMAN/THE NEWS-PRESS