

# 2015 UF/IFAS EXTENSION ALACHUA COUNTY

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## WATER QUALITY TOURS

**ABSTRACT:** Alachua County has several water bodies that are currently under a Basin Management Action Plan to help mitigate water quality issues related to either nitrogen or microbial contamination. Besides being a part of the UF/IFAS Extension Roadmap Initiative #2, Enhancing and protecting water quality, quantity, and supply were also identified as priority issues in the statewide Extension listening sessions that were held in Alachua County.

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of the tours were to provide community leaders and private citizens with research based factual information and to 1. Increase their knowledge of water quality issues impacting the water resources in Alachua County. 2. Encourage informative public policy decisions relative to water issues in Alachua County and Florida.

**METHODS:** In partnership with UF/IFAS Extension Specialist, Extension Agents developed a 3 day tour. The tour topics included the Gainesville Urban Watershed, Rural Watershed and Agricultural BMPs, and Springs Watershed. Speakers included UF/IFAS Specialists, Florida Department of Agriculture, and Leaders from the Florida Springs Institute.

**RESULTS:** As a result of the tours (n=36) 79% - 97% of participants increased their knowledge of Urban, Rural, and Springs Watersheds, Water Quality, and related issues.

**I enjoyed learning about the various water sheds. Knowing this information makes me feel more like an involved citizen and able to have an informed opinion when water issues come up.**

~ anonymous

**This is a very good program. It benefits the public and economy, environment as well.**

~ anonymous

**RESULTS & IMPACTS:** The water quality tours were attended by 130 people that included industry leaders, Farm Bureau representatives, and county commissioners. As a result of the tours (n=35)

- 89% of the program attendees increased their knowledge of the role of street sweeping in managing watershed water quality
- 97% of the program attendees increased their knowledge of the role of Sweetwater Wetlands Park in managing watershed water quality
- 79% of the program attendees increased their knowledge of the impact of agriculture on watershed water quality
- 86% of the program attendees increased their knowledge of the benefits of agricultural BMPs in managing watershed water quality
- 94% of the program attendees increased their knowledge of the impact of urban areas on local springs
- 94% of the program attendees increased their knowledge of the water quality issues of Poe Springs

