



Florida's Area-Wide Optimization Program

The state of Florida has been participating in the Area Wide Optimization Program (AWOP) for many years. Program participation gained additional momentum approximately three years ago, and continues to receive the necessary support within the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Division of Water Resource Management (DWRM). Our Management understands the importance of AWOP for compliance assistance and optimization with the current number of health-based violations in Florida. DEP's Source and Drinking Water Program hosts training workshops to inform our 13 regulatory offices and the water systems' staff of the benefits of the program. The plan for implementation and maintenance of the program is to include the processes and techniques into the day-to-day compliance duties of the regulatory staff as well as the water systems that will be participating.

Several employees within FDEP's Division Source & Drinking Water and the regulatory staff will establish the 'AWOP Core Team'. The state has also officially gained the support of our Florida Rural Water Association (FRWA) to assist with building awareness and applying the tools at the water systems during technical assistance visits.

We are currently introducing the idea of creating small, centralized AWOP teams at our regulatory offices. The state is working towards organizing quarterly meetings with the regulatory staff to provide updates from the quarterly Region 4 AWOP meetings as well. The meetings will provide a means for staff to ask questions, discuss ideas for participating water systems with compliance issues, and consider any future ideas to move the program forward. There is also the creation of the Florida AWOP Directory which is located on FDEP's SharePoint. The directory is for the regulatory staff and FRWA to have better access to the information, and the ability for regulatory staff to contact each other regarding any technical performance goals they may be performing at a water system. The directory will be updated on a quarterly basis, and an email will be sent to the offices once the update is completed. A list of ideas will also be provided to management for updates to continue to move the program forward.

AWOP has allowed Florida the ability to regularly host training workshops for the regulatory and water systems' staff, and the ability to share the tools and material available. FDEP's attendance at each Region 4 meeting offers excellent concepts to relay and share as well. Those concepts are extended to the water systems that need technical assistance, especially the systems with health-based violation issues. Florida is excited to provide technical assistance along with FRWA for the water systems that are working towards compliance and optimization. The AWOP program continues to provide support and expand our knowledge to increase compliance for Florida's water systems.