

# Projects will help citrus groves reduce groundwater pumping in Hardee County

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Two Southwest Florida Water Management District projects will help two Hardee County citrus groves reduce groundwater pumping.

The first project involves installing two soil moisture sensors and a weather station at the Groves of Peace River, Inc. and the second project involves installing four soil moisture sensors and two weather stations at Las Lomas Holdings, Inc.

Soil moisture sensors increase irrigation efficiency by only irrigating when water is needed. Weather stations helps farmers irrigate more precisely, based on weather conditions. For example, during frost-freeze events the farmer has exact data for the area and can turn on the pumps at the appropriate time instead of pumping all night.

According to the Groves of Peace River, Inc. water use permit, the 444-acre citrus grove is permitted to use an average of 589,700 gallons per day (gpd) for irrigation. This project is expected to reduce pumping by at least five percent, which would be 29,500 gpd.

This project is expected to cost \$25,000, of which up to \$12,500 will be funded by the District's Governing Board, the District's Peace River Basin Board and state appropriations. The remaining will be paid by the farm.

According to the Las Lomas Holdings, Inc. water use permit, the 1,170-acre citrus grove is permitted to use an average of 910,300 gallons per day (gpd) for irrigation. This project is expected to reduce pumping by at least five percent, which would be 45,500 gpd.

This project is expected to cost \$40,000, of which up to \$20,000 will be funded by the District's Governing Board, the District's Peace River Basin Board and state appropriations. The remaining will be paid by the farm.

These projects are part of the District's Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems (FARMS) Program, which is a cost-share reimbursement program that conserves water and protects water quality.

"While both of these projects are on the smaller scale, they illustrate how the savings can add up when everyone makes an effort to conserve," said William Orendorff, the District's FARMS Program manager. "The same technology and best management practices that the larger operations use to conserve water can be used at the smaller operations as well."

The FARMS Program is jointly funded by state appropriations, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the District's Governing Board and Basin Boards.

The FARMS Program is expected to reduce groundwater pumping by 40 million gallons per day by 2025.

<https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/about/newsroom/news/projects-will-help-citrus-groves-reduce-groundwater-pumping-hardee-county>