

# Florida Specifier

Practical Information For Environmental Professionals

## Windermere upgrades stormwater systems to improve water quality

By PRAKASH GANDHI

**A**n upscale town near Orlando is forging ahead with some major stormwater treatment projects.

The town of Windermere, in southwestern Orange County, is doing its part to improve water quality in the Butler Chain of Lakes, designated by the state as an Outstanding Florida Water, with an ambitious \$2 million series of projects.

Windermere is surrounded by sand-bottom lakes. Lake Butler—the largest—is on the west; Lake Down on the east; and Lake Bessie on the southeast. By means of a system of canals, Butler, Down and six other lakes are connected to form what is known as the Butler Chain of Lakes.

Using grants to help pay for the projects, town officials have been busy replacing, rehabilitating and upgrading portions of stormwater conveyance and treatment systems.

Windermere town manager Cecilia Bernice said ten stormwater projects have been completed thus far. Two more are nearing completion and two others will kick off in September.

The town is making water quality improvements by installing stormwater treatment swales, Bernice said. “They will hold the water and filter out the impurities before the water is sent to the Butler Chain of Lakes,” she said.

“Where we didn’t have the room to install swales, we have installed Stormceptors (stormwater pollutant removal systems), which filter out the impurities and send cleaner water into the Butler Chain.”

The town of sprawling, tree-lined homes has also completed two retrofit projects in places where homes were flooding. “We received FEMA grants and we installed a system of culverts to protect the homes from flooding,” Bernice said.

The total cost of the work is about \$2

million, she said. The town has received federal, state and FEMA grants and most of the money has been matched by town funds.

Construction on the projects started about two years ago, with planning beginning back in 2004.

“The overall goal is to provide better water quality going into the Butler Chain,” Bernice said. “We want to take the initiative and do what we can to keep the water quality as good as it can be. We are only one town that is surrounded by the chain, but we are committed to doing what we can to help.”

“This is going to be a continuing program,” she said. “We know of about 17 areas that we need to correct.”

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