

2025

Southwest Annual Water Quality Report



1011 Jim Keene Blvd.
Winter Haven, FL 33880
(863) 298-4100



Figure 1 Cherry Hill Water Treatment Facility.

This report is designed to inform you about the quality of the water and services delivered to you in 2025 by Polk County Utilities, Board of County Commissioners. Included are details about where your drinking water comes from, what it contains, and how it compares to standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (E P A) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Agency (F D E P).

If you have any questions about this report, your water utility, or would like to obtain a copy of this report, please contact Craig Kristof (863) 298-4281.

Visit <https://www.polkfl.gov/services/utilities/>

2025 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report Southwest Public Water System (Number 6530852)

The Southwest Public Water System (P W S) is in the Southwest Regional Utility Service Area of Polk County. Last year, the customers connected to the Southwest P W S used approximately 1.4 billion gallons of water.

The Southwest P W S is supplied by ground water pumped from six wells drilled into the Upper Floridan aquifer. The Upper Floridan aquifer contains some of the cleanest water in the nation. This vast subterranean reservoir is fed primarily by rainwater that is filtered through hundreds of feet of rock and sand in a natural cleansing process. The ground water is treated at two different water treatment facilities (W T F s). Treatment at the W T F s consists of chlorine for cascade aeration for removal of hydrogen sulfide, chlorine for disinfection, green sand filters to further remove hydrogen sulfide (at the Imperialakes W T F) and a poly-orthophosphate is then added for sequestering iron.

In 2025, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (F D E P) performed a Source Water Assessment on our system. The assessment was conducted to provide information about any potential sources of contamination in the vicinity of our wells. There are five potential sources of contamination identified for this system with low susceptibility levels. The assessment results are available on the F D E P Source Water Assessment and Protection Program website at <https://prodapps.dep.state.fl.us/swapp> or they can be obtained from Polk County Utilities (P C U).

Hardness describes the level of the dissolved natural minerals (primarily calcium and magnesium) in drinking water. As a rule, water is considered hard if it contains more than 120 p p m as calcium carbonate (C a C O₃)(7 grains per gallon). Hard water requires more soap than soft water and will, with time, leave mineral deposits on pipes and valves. The hardness of the Southwest P W S is 132 ppm, or 7.7 grains per gallon. Alkalinity helps provide a stable environment in the distribution system. Alkalinity levels between 60 and 120 ppm as C a C O₃ are considered moderate levels. The alkalinity of the Southwest P W S is 154 p p m. The p H is 7.3.

Delivering Safe Drinking Water: The primary law governing drinking water in the United States is the Safe Drinking Water Act (S D W A). The S D W A, originally passed in 1974 and updated several times since, authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency (E P A) to establish comprehensive national standards for protection against both naturally occurring and man-made contaminants that may be found in drinking water. These standards, adopted by the F D E P, govern the quality of the water supplied, requirements for physical and chemical treatment, source water protection, operator training, funding for water system improvements, and public water information. Some of the standards adopted by the F D E P are more stringent than those established by the E P A.

P C U works closely with the E P A, F D E P, and the Polk County Health Department to ensure that the water delivered to our customers complies with the applicable standards. In accordance with the S D W A, P C U is required to treat the water, test the water on a regulated schedule for specified contaminants, and report the results to the appropriate regulatory agency. If a problem is detected, P C U immediately retests and informs its customers about the problems until the system can reliably demonstrate that the situation has been resolved.

If present, elevated levels of lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. P C U is responsible for providing high quality drinking water but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for 30 seconds to two minutes before using water for drinking or cooking. If you are concerned about lead in your water, you may wish to have your water tested. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead>.

The sources of drinking water (both tap and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity.

Contaminants that may be present in source water include:

- Microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment facilities, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, or wildlife.
- Inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or result from urban storm water runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming.
- Pesticides and herbicides, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban storm water runoff, or residential uses.
- Organic chemical contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban storm water runoff, or septic systems.
- Radioactive contaminants, which can be naturally occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

To ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the E P A prescribes regulations which limit the number of certain contaminants in the water provided by public water systems. The Food and Drug Administration regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health. Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791.

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with H I V / AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about

drinking water from their health care providers. E P A or Center of Disease Control guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by Cryptosporidium and other microbiological contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791.

We ask that all our customers help us protect our water sources, which are the heart of our community, our way of life and our children's future. Please DO NOT wash cooking oils, fats, or grease down sink drains and DO NOT FLUSH your unused or unwanted medications down toilets or sink drains. More information is available at <https://floridadep.gov/waste/waste/documents/how-dispose-unused-medicines>.

As authorized and approved by E P A, the State has reduced monitoring requirements for certain contaminants to less often than once per year because the concentrations of these contaminants are not expected to vary significantly from year to year. Some of our data (e.g., organic contaminants), though representative, is more than one-year-old.

P C U routinely monitors for contaminants in your drinking water according to Federal and State laws, rules, and regulations. Except where indicated otherwise, this report is based on the results of our monitoring for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2025. Data obtained before January 1, 2025, and presented in this report are from the most recent testing done in accordance with the applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

P C U has also been monitoring for Unregulated Contaminants (U C) in the Southwest P W S as part of a study to help the E P A determine the occurrence in drinking water and whether these contaminants need to be regulated. At present, no health standards (for example, maximum contaminant levels) have been established for unregulated contaminants. However, we are required to publish the analytical results of our unregulated contaminant monitoring in our annual water quality report. If you would like more information on the E P A's Unregulated Contaminants Monitoring Rule, please call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

The E P A requires monitoring of over 80 drinking water contaminants. Those contaminants listed in the following tables are the only contaminants detected in your drinking water.

The following are definitions of some of the terms you may find in our report.

- Action Level (A L): The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (H I V /AIDS)
- Locational Running Annual Average (L R A A): the average of sample analytical results for samples taken at a particular monitoring location during the previous four calendar quarters.
- Maximum Contaminant Level (M C L): The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. M C Ls are set as close to the M C L Gs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.
- Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (M C L G): The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. M C L Gs allow for a margin of safety.

- Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level (M R D L): The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.
- Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal (M R D L G): The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. M R D L Gs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.
- Not Applicable (N / A): Does not apply
- Not Detected (N D): Indicates that the substance was not found by laboratory analysis.
- Parts per billion (p p b) or Micrograms per liter (μ g / L): One part by weight of analyte to 1 billion parts by weight of the water sample.
- Parts per million (p p m) or Milligrams per liter (m g / L): One part by weight of analyte to 1 million parts by weight of the water sample.
- Picocuries per liter (p C i / L): Measure of radioactivity in water.
- Treatment Technique (T T): A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.

Southwest Public Water System Water Quality Test Results

Radioactive Contaminants

Contaminant and Unit of Measurement	Dates of Sampling (m o / y r)	M C L Violation Y / N	Level Detected	Range of Results	M C L G	M C L	Likely Source of Contamination
Radium 226 + Radium 228 or Combined Radium (p C i / L)	01/23-12/23	N	0.9	N D-0.9	0	5	Erosion of Natural Deposits

Radioactive and inorganic contaminant results in the Level Detected column are the highest detected level at any sampling point. Range of results is the range of individual sample results (lowest to highest) for all monitoring locations.

Inorganic Contaminants

Contaminant and Unit of Measurement	Dates of Sampling (m o / y r)	M C L Violation Y / N	Level Detected	Range of Results	M C L G	M C L	Likely Source of Contamination
Arsenic (p p b)	01/23-12/23	N	1.3	N D-1.3	N/A	10	Erosion of natural deposits; runoff from orchards; runoff from glass and electronics production wastes

Barium (p p m)	01/23-12/23	N	0.0098	0.0059-0.0098	2	2	Discharge of drilling wastes; erosion of natural deposits
Nitrate (p p m) (as Nitrogen)	01/25-12/25	N	3.00	N D-3.00	10	10	Runoff from fertilizer use; leaching from septic tanks, sewage; erosion of natural deposits
Sodium (p p m)	01/23-12/23	N	17	11-17	N/A	160	Saltwater intrusion, leaching from soil

Stage 2 Disinfectant/Disinfection By-Products

Contaminant and Unit of Measurement	Dates of Sampling (m o / y r)	M C L Violation Y / N	Level Detected	Range of Results	M C L G or M R D L G	M C L or M R D L	Likely Source of Contamination
Chlorine (p p m)	01/25-12/25	N	2.0	0.7-3.0	M R D L G = 4.0	M R D L = 4.0	Water additive used to control microbes
Haloacetic Acids (five) (H A A 5) (p p b)	04/25	N	12.74	3.00-12.74	N / A	M C L = 60	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Total Trihalomethanes (T T H M) (p p b)	04/25	N	31.02	18.71-31.02	N / A	M C L = 80	By-product of drinking water disinfection

For Chlorine, the Level Detected is the highest running annual average (R A A), computed quarterly, of monthly averages of all samples collected. The Range of Results is the range of results of all the individual samples collected during the past year. For Haloacetic Acids and T T H M s, Level Detected is the highest level detected, and Range of Results is the range of individual sample results (lowest to highest) for all monitoring locations.

Lead and Copper (Tap Water)

Contaminant and Unit of Measurement	Dates of Sampling (m o / y r)	A L Violation Y / N	90th Percentile Result	No. of sampling sites exceeding the A L	M C L G	A L (Action Level)	Likely Source of Contamination
Copper (p p m) tap water)	09/23	N	0.14	0	1.3	1.3	Corrosion of household plumbing systems

Lead (p p b) (tap water)	09/23	N	1.0	0	0	15	Corrosion of household plumbing systems
--------------------------	-------	---	-----	---	---	----	---

Lead and copper tap water results are based on samples collected at selected consumer home taps located throughout the distribution system. The 90th percentile lead and copper results show that 90% of the home tap water samples collected were equal to or less than the value indicated.

LCRR				
COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE LINE INVENTORY				
Submitted by 10/16/2024 (Yes/No) (Y/N)	Submission Date	Violation (Yes/No) (Y/N)	If NOT submitted, WHY? (e.g., ongoing data collection, resource constraints)	If NOT submitted, Provide Completion Timeline
Y	October 16, 2024	N	N/A	N/A

Lead can cause serious health effects, especially in pregnant individuals, infants, and young children. It enters drinking water primarily from service lines and home plumbing.

Thank you for being a valued customer. We at P C U would like you to understand the efforts we make to continually improve the water treatment process and protect our water resources. We are committed to ensuring the quality of your water. If you have any questions or concerns about the information provided, please feel free to call Craig Kristof (863) 298-4281.