



**Guidelines for candidates seeking accreditation
as a Florida Water StarSM professional**

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General information

Established in 2006 by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), Florida Water StarSM is a voluntary certification program for new and existing residential and commercial developments that encourages water efficiency in indoor fixtures and appliances, irrigation systems and landscapes. These guidelines address the examination process to become an accredited Florida Water StarSM professional. SJRWMD has partnered with the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) to administer the program. Visit floridawatestar.com for more details.

Inquiries about the program and professional accreditation process should be directed to:

Deirdre Irwin
Florida Water StarSM Coordinator
St. Johns River Water Management District
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Palatka, FL 32177
dirwin@sjrwmd.com
(386) 546-8437

Inquiries about the Florida Water StarSM exam scheduling should be directed to:

Merry Mott
Director of Industry Certifications
Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association
1533 Park Center Drive
Orlando, FL 32835
mmott@fn gla.org
(407) 295-7994

Accreditation goal

The goal of the Florida Water StarSM accreditation program is to provide advanced education for practitioners in the landscape and irrigation fields that will result in the sustainable design and implementation of projects to achieve program certification.

Types of accreditation

The program provides two types of accreditation: Florida Water StarSM Accredited Irrigation Professional and Florida Water StarSM Accredited Landscape Professional. Accreditation is available for irrigation professionals, landscape design professionals, and licensed landscape architects in the areas of irrigation design and installation and landscape design and installation.

Recommended credentials

The Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional program is designed for those professionals actively involved in the industry with relevant professional experience. This program is not an entry level accreditation.

Recommended credentials include one or more of the following:

- Certified Irrigation Contractor (CIC) or Designer (CID) by the Irrigation Association
- Florida Registered Landscape Architect (RLA)
- FNGLA Certified Landscape Designer (FCLD)
- Three years or more experience designing or installing landscapes or irrigation systems

Appropriate professions include:

- Landscape professionals
- Irrigation professionals
- Landscape and building inspectors
- Urban designers or land planners
- Education professionals
- Developers
- Site design engineers or land development engineers

Registration process

The exam is usually offered as part of an organized landscape or irrigation event such as The Landscape Show and in association with Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional training. FNGLA will coordinate registration for these events. The exam is a proctored paper or online test.

Application form

Exam applications are accepted online, or by mail, and are coordinated by the FNGLA. Applications should be submitted 30 days prior to a scheduled exam.

When submitting a registration application, the candidate must sign a sworn oath attesting that all information provided in the application is true and accurate to the best of his/her knowledge. FNGLA will randomly verify the information contained in the application.

If FNGLA determines that an application is incomplete, an email is sent to the candidate to explain the deficiency. The candidate should respond and complete the application within 15 days of the scheduled exam.

Fees

See FNGLA's website for current exam fees at *fn gla.org*.

Examination dates and testing locations

Exams are administered periodically, usually as part of an FNGLA event. The Florida Water StarSM and FNGLA websites and calendars will indicate the dates of examinations. Testing locations will be dependent upon the location of the event and will vary throughout Florida.

Special needs requests

SJRWMD and the FNGLA comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, as amended, regarding the accommodation of disabled candidates who need special arrangements. A written request must be submitted with supporting documentation from a physician or other qualified professional, to indicate the candidate's condition and explain the exam aids or modifications needed for test-taking. Please contact the FNGLA coordinator concerning ADA arrangements.

Preparing for the examination

The examination is either an online computer test or pen and paper exam that is administered by a proctor. Each examination consists of 120 questions in multiple choice format. The candidate has three hours to answer all questions. Candidates are encouraged to bring laptop computers to the workshops and the examinations, as many resources are available online for the examination. Successful completion of the exam requires the candidate to answer 80% (96 questions) correctly within the three-hour period.

A. Content of the examinations

1) Irrigation examination

- i. General Florida Water StarSM principles (5% of exam)
- ii. Irrigation prerequisites (40% of exam)
- iii. Irrigation points (25% of exam)
- iv. Irrigation plan submission (20% of exam)
- v. Water budgeting and scheduling (10% of exam)

2) Landscape examination

- i. General Florida Water StarSM principles (10% of exam)
- ii. General landscape prerequisites (20% of exam)
- iii. Landscape points (50% of exam)
- iv. Landscape plan submission (20% of exam)

B. Practice tests

Irrigation practice questions and landscape practice questions are included in the Accredited Professional workshops described below.

C. Required workshops

SJRWMD and FNGLA offer training workshops to help candidates prepare for the examinations. It is required that candidates attend both the landscape and irrigation portions of the workshop even if they only plan to take one examination. The one-day workshop is advertised on the SJRWMD and FNGLA websites and usually occurs immediately before the scheduled examination. Additional fees may be charged to attend the workshops. The website will specify the amount. For best results, it is recommended that the candidate take the accreditation exam within six months of attending a workshop. Florida Water StarSM is an ever-evolving program and its content may be updated periodically.

D. Review materials

The candidate should review the following study materials prior to taking the examination:

1) Irrigation

- Materials from the one-day irrigation training workshop
- Florida Water StarSM Silver and Gold criteria (points lists)
- Florida Water StarSM Irrigation Accredited Professional Exam Irrigation and Landscape Plans
- *Field Guide to Soil Moisture Use in Florida*
- *Florida Water StarSM Technical Manual (online)*

2) Landscape

- Materials from the one-day landscape training workshop
- Florida Water StarSM Landscape Plan and Shade Diameters
- Florida Water StarSM Silver and Gold criteria (points lists)
- Publications by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council
- *Florida-Friendly Best Management Practices for the Conservation of Water Resources* by the Green Industries
- *Waterwise Florida Landscapes (online)*
- *Florida Water StarSM Technical Manual (online)*

Day of the examination

A. Candidate check-in

The candidate is required to provide one form of photo identification upon arrival at the testing location. The candidate must arrive 15 minutes prior to the assigned examination time. Late arrivals will not be admitted to the examination.

B. Security and confidentiality

Before the examination begins, the candidate must sign a confidentiality agreement in which the candidate agrees not to share the content of examination questions with other existing or potential candidates. An FNGLA representative proctors each examination. No person other than examinant is allowed to enter the testing location. No talking or communicating is allowed during the exam.

C. Reference materials and resources

Candidates may bring with them to the exam all the review materials listed above, plus the following suggested tools: architectural or engineering scale, non-programmable calculator, pencils, and plain scratch paper. Laptop computers are allowed and recommended as many resources are online. Resources brought to the testing location may be subject to review by the proctor.

Scoring and results

Scoring procedures

All exams are returned to the FNGLA offices where they are graded. If the candidate is unable to answer all 120 questions within the allowed examination period, any questions left unanswered at the end of the examination are scored as incorrect. The final score is based on a denominator of 120 questions.

Notification of results

FNGLA will notify the candidate of his or her score by email once the exams are graded and test scores placed in the candidate's file. Test scores are also forwarded to SJRWMD and successful candidates are recorded as accredited professionals in Florida Water StarSM records. A formal certificate is sent to the successful candidate via U.S. mail within four weeks of the examination by FNGLA. The successful candidate's name and contact information is posted on the Florida Water StarSM website as having achieved accreditation.

Exam review process/challenge

Should a candidate disagree with his/her test score, below is a process by which the decision can be appealed.

1. Appeals shall be submitted in writing to FNGLA's Director of Industry Certifications at FNGLA, 1533 Park Center Drive, Orlando, FL 32835
2. The appeal must be submitted within one month of receipt of test scores.
3. Applicant must provide the following information:
 - a. Date of exam or application
 - b. Explanation of concern
 - c. Person or people involved
 - d. Desired result
4. Applicant will be contacted within two weeks of receipt of appeal concerning the timing of the appeal consideration.
5. All appeals will be taken before the Florida Water StarSM Technical Advisory Committee at its next regularly-scheduled meeting.
6. Applicant will be contacted within two weeks of the meeting of the Florida Water StarSM Technical Advisory Committee.

Maintaining accreditation

Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional designations are valid for a period of three years, during which time the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional is required to complete 15 continuing education units (CEUs) in order to renew. CEUs must be earned during the Accredited Professional's active period, and no CEUs are carried over from one period to another.

To earn CEUs, Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professionals must attend industry educational programs and submit proof of attendance to FNGLA. CEUs can be demonstrated in one hour increments through:

- Attending webinars, lectures, and/or workshops regarding irrigation, landscape, green industry, and/or Florida Water StarSM subject matters. (One hour of CEU per one hour of attendance)
- Presenting or teaching on landscape, irrigation, green industry, or FWS subject matters (One hour of CEU per one hour of instruction)
- Completing other continuing education courses required to maintain RLA, CIC, or FCLD
- Attending trade shows regarding landscape, irrigation, or green industry

CEUs may be held until renewal time, or may be submitted as they are earned. The following must be provided to FNGLA:

- 1) Proof of attendance (receipt, badge, signature of coordinator or instructor)
- 2) Where and when the event took place
- 3) The agenda and speaker
- 4) The length of the program

FNGLA will contact the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional with the number of CEUs that can be provided for that event. The rule of thumb is one CEU for each hour of instruction, up to four per day. A fee will be charged to the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional by FNGLA to renew their accreditation.

FNGLA will send the Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional a reminder 90 days before their accreditation expires, listing the number of CEUs that professional has acquired, how many are required for renewal and a renewal form. An additional reminder is sent at 60 days and again at 30 days. Should a Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional fail to complete his/her CEUs within six months of their expiration, they will be required to retake the exam and pay the appropriate fees.

Administrative policies

Accreditation board

The Florida Water StarSM Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) serves as the accreditation board and is composed of 18 people. The TAC meets annually and is in regular email communication. The TAC is responsible for overseeing the accreditation program and presides over any grievances, appeals, or other matters filed by a candidate, existing Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional, or Florida Water StarSM coordinator.

Absence policy

Failure of the candidate to appear at his/her scheduled exam date and time will result in the forfeiture of his/her registration fee.

Rescheduling or retaking the examination

A candidate is allowed to reschedule, cancel, or retake an exam once without repaying the registration fee, with a 10-day notice. Should the candidate reschedule or retake the exam more than once, the candidate will need to repay the exam fee upon each change. Please note that a candidate cannot retake the exam more than two times in a 12-month period.

To reschedule, the candidate must notify the FNGLA coordinator in writing at least 15 days prior to the scheduled date of examination.

Florida Water StarSM logo use

An Florida Water StarSM Accredited Professional may use the program logo in his/her professional marketing materials for the length of time the professional maintains an active accreditation through the Florida Water StarSM program. The candidate must sign a licensing agreement with SJRWMD prior to using the logo and will be provided with information on use of the logo. If a candidate does not maintain the accreditation, he/she may not continue to use the logo.

Change of contact information

It is the Accredited Professional's responsibility to provide updated contact information, including phone numbers and email addresses, to the SJRWMD Florida Water StarSM Coordinator within 30 days of the change.

