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Newton Advocates State Water Rule

Times Staff Writer
DUNEDIN — State water management districts should have complete control over Florida's water supply if a water crisis is to be averted, a Democratic candidate for the newly created 5th Congressional District seat told Dunedin Rotary Club members Tuesday.

Miller Newton, an associate professor of education at the University of South Florida, said the federal and state governments should "deputize" the water management districts to centralize control over the water table.

"I WOULD propose giving the water management district total control," over the state's freshwater supply, including regulation of pollution and obtaining new sources of water, Newton said.

Pinellas and Hillsborough counties each has no fewer than 14 agencies — local, state and federal — that have control over some aspect of the water supply, Newton said.

"Every time one group starts to do something, two others get in the way," he said.

OF ALL THE agencies involved in the water crisis in the Tampa Bay area, Newton said, the county commissions in Pinellas and Hillsborough have done more to destroy the water table than any other.

Citing saltwater intrusion that he said can take place as a result of dredging operations, Newton said, "It only takes one gallon of salt water to destroy 10,000 gallons of fresh water for human use.

Speaking to about 50 Rotarians at a luncheon at McKown's Seagull Restaurant, Newton was applauded when he said he would like to see the water to every faucet in the watershed turned off for a 48-hour period to emphasize the urgency of the problem.

"UNFORTUNATELY, there is not a governmental agency that would do that," because the agency members are too concerned with getting votes in the next election, Newton said.

Newton, traveling in his camper, was in Pinellas Tuesday as part of a six-day campaign tour of the congressional district.