

January 8, 2008

The Honorable Governor Charlie Crist
The Capital
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Governor Crist:

Re: Fertilizer Task Force needs to focus on water quality, not just how to grow greener lawns.

We live in a state surrounded by and dependent on water, where pristine beaches and estuaries are among our greatest assets. Now is the time to address water quality as our priority, not how green our lawns will be.

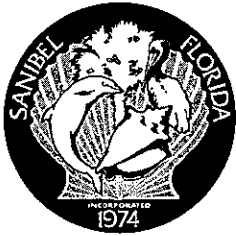
Several months ago, a Fertilizer Task Force was appointed with a primary objective to reduce the water quality impacts associated with fertilizer. Unfortunately, this Task Force has currently been hijacked by the fertilizer industry, appearing poised to deliver a "model" ordinance that is far removed from what is needed to protect state waters. Our environment, tourism, economy and our very way of life are at stake.

The serious issues are:

Use Water Quality Science

Regulation should be based upon water quality science. These regulations should acknowledge the impacts on water quality due to excess nutrients from fertilizer. Florida Department of Environmental Protection and South Florida Water Management District are excellent sources for solid scientific information on this issue. Additionally, any fertilizer regulations should be consistent with the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council resolution. To create a meaningful fertilizer regulation, three elements are critical:

- A no fertilizer use rule (blackout period) must be implemented during the rainy season to prevent rain from washing chemicals directly into storm drains and then into critical local waterways.
- A reasonable buffer of at least 10' must be established between fertilized areas and any critical water body. This decreases the likelihood of nutrient pollution into nearby waters.
- The amount of nitrogen and phosphorus in fertilizer products must be limited as a clear means to restrict the amount of nutrients entering our waters. This is one area where we believe the Task Force is headed in the right direction.



City of Sanibel

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AREA CODE - 239

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One Size Does Not Fit All

For the State to even consider preempting local communities from establishing their own standards borders on infringement of local home rule. One statewide law for fertilizer control will not work. Every locality has its own unique water quality needs. Florida's own Total Maximum Daily Loads rules will eventually develop stormwater permitting requirements that are very specific, focusing on area by area, stream by stream and estuary by estuary to determine precise regulatory requirements to bring water quality levels to an acceptable standard. The cost to prevent fertilizer pollution is far less than to clean up our waters after the fact.

Homeowner Education

Until all homeowners clearly understand the impacts of their actions when they fertilize their lawns and landscapes, costly environmental mistakes will continue to happen. An effective public education campaign should be a mandatory component of all fertilizer control regulations.

I ask you to ensure that any model ordinance that is finally approved does indeed serve to improve our State's water quality and does not preempt local government from the necessary steps to protect its own water quality. Clean water must be the priority.

A fertilizer regulation can improve our water quality, but only if properly drafted. We are looking to your office for the leadership required to adopt fertilizer regulations that truly protect Florida.

Sincerely,



Mick Denham
Mayor, City of Sanibel

Cc: Governor Charlie Crist
Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp
Senator Ken Pruitt
Senator Burt Saunders
Senator Mike Bennett
Representative Trudi Williams
Representative Marco Rubio
Representative Bryan Nelson
Mayor Jay Arend
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