

Fertilizer Task Force Finishes Guidelines; Preemption Cause for Concern

A Fertilizer Task force charged with creating State guidelines for fertilizer use held its final meeting January 10, but one state representative had announced he will still seek preemption legislation for the fertilizer this session.

Mayor Mick Denham, who has been monitoring the Task Force meetings for Sanibel, reported to the Council January 15 that at the end of the Task force meeting, State Representative Bryan Nelson announced that he still planned to seek a preemption. Preemption legislation would be a statewide rule that would not allow individual cities and counties to pass more stringent regulations.

Because water quality is such an important issue to this area, the loss of local control could have severe consequences for Sanibel and Lee County. The Council agreed that citizens need to address this issue by contacting officials and also by encouraging residents in other areas of the State to do so as well.

One point the Council stressed is that water quality is not just an environmental issue, but an economic one as well, meaning area businesses also need to become involved and speak out against preemption legislation.

The Task Force had agreed that governments could enact stricter fertilizer ordinances if they could show that area waters were degraded.

The Task Force also agreed to recommend that one type of fertilizer be used throughout Florida with a low nitrogen and phosphorus content. However, the model guidelines do not require buffer zones or rainy season prohibitions. The Sanibel Ordinance does require a setback and it bans fertilizer use during the rainy season.

The Council is encouraging everyone to contribute to a goal of 100,000 letters to the Florida Legislature regarding preemption.

A letter from the Sanibel Mayor to Governor Crist is attached under recent news.