

Fertilizer Citizen Education Campaign DRAFT 6

This paper summarizes the main reasons for supporting a public relations campaign that will explain to our citizens the importance of **the responsible use of fertilizer in urban landscapes.**

POWW!

A campaign to **Protect Our Wonderful Waters!**

1. Some important facts:
 - o Everyone remembers the disastrous effect that the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf had on the economy. Great damage was done to beaches in four states: tourism was affected from New Orleans to Marco Island, irrespective of actual harm.
 - o Property values and tax income in all Florida counties bordering the Gulf are largely dependent on tourism. Tourism is heavily influenced by water quality.
 - o Excessive nitrogen from fertilizer used in urban lawns and landscapes has a detrimental effect on the coastal waters in Southwest Florida. This is particularly true during Florida's rainy season.
 - o Excess nitrogen encourages the growth of red drift algae, blue green algae and red tide, all of which have a harmful impact on our beaches, our wildlife, and our very way of life.
 - o Between 2003 and 2007 the Caloosahatchee estuary experienced some of the worst algae blooms ever recorded. Subsequent research clearly demonstrated that stormwater runoff containing nitrogen from fertilizer contributed to these massive algal blooms. The research team recommended that best management practices should include controls on the application of urban¹ fertilizer.

¹ We clearly differentiate between the urban and the agricultural use of fertilizer. The one leads to pollution caused by two legged creatures; the other that caused by four legged.

- Responsible use of fertilizer, including rainy season blackout periods, imposed by local ordinances, is a most effective way of controlling fertilizer pollution of our waterways and estuaries.
- Equally effective, possibly more so, would be to build awareness among urban fertilizer users of the risk to our clean waters of fertilizer run off. Among these users are the many citizens who regularly apply fertilizer to promote the health and growth of their lawns and plant borders.
- Building citizen awareness would have three positive outcomes:
 - Ready understanding and acceptance of the need for local legislation to control fertilizer application
 - Strong resistance to any suggestion that local governments should be prevented from exercising these controls
 - Voluntary self-management by property owners of the responsible application of fertilizer, rendering extensive enforcement programs unnecessary

The cost of such a campaign would be more than offset by the reduction in cleanup costs

2. We are therefore proposing that cities and counties, environmental pressure groups, chambers of commerce and tourist bodies **should all join in a coordinated campaign** to communicate to citizens that:

- Water quality is crucially important to our tourist trade and therefore overall economic health;
- To protect water quality, fertilizer should be applied responsibly by property owners and curtailed at certain times of the year;
- They should recognize the role of local government in developing and implementing local ordinances appropriate to the many and varied local needs;
- Long term, this approach not only promotes our economic well-being but also enables our natural environment to maintain a healthy balance between the demands of its users: wildlife, tourism, commerce and citizens.

3. One city cannot do this alone. This can only be accomplished through a consortium of willing entities in this region – local governments, environmental groups, citizen groups and commerce. With the enthusiastic support of my Council I am visiting groups throughout the region, in the hope that together we can launch a campaign to Protect Our Wonderful Waters - **POWW!**

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