

Lee County fertilizer use regulation takes effect May 13

Lee County has launched a public awareness campaign called "Fertilize Smart, Do Your Part" to spread the word out about its new regulation on fertilizer use in the county, which takes effect May 13. The regulation applies to anyone who uses fertilizer and governs the content, amount and methods that can be used.

In 2008, Lee County commissioners approved the fertilizer regulation as a way to protect water quality. Runoff of nutrients into rivers, bays and estuaries contributes to the formation of algae in area waters and nutrients in fertilizer — especially nitrogen and phosphorus — contribute to algae blooms.

To help make residents aware of the new regulation, Lee County is spreading the message to "Fertilize Smart, Do Your Part."

It's well understood that fertilizers — in this case in the form of phosphorus and nitrogen — are the catalyst for the devastating impacts we've been experiencing in Lee County back bays, estuaries and the Caloosahatchee," said Lee County Commission Chairman Ray Judah. "They're part of the nutrient soup that leads to algae blooms, red tides, fish kills and the destruction of our marine ecosystem."

Our quality of life is dependent on these water bodies," said Lee County Commissioner Tammy Hall. "Lee County is 1,200 square miles, with 400 of that made up of creeks, rivers and waterways. We need to take responsibility for our part in making sure these water bodies are clean. And that includes being responsible homeown-

ers and business owners when we fertilize."

fertilize smart



Under the new rule, fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorus cannot be used during the four-month rainy season, June through September. During the rest of the year, use of fertilizer with those nutrients is limited, with any nitrogen required to be partially in a slow release form. Fertilizer application is prohibited within 10 feet of a water body. And spreaders must have a deflector shield to better target applications. In addition, clippings and trimmings must not be swept or blown into ditches, drains and water bodies, or onto roads and sidewalks.

If you apply fertilizer and you have what my husband calls a frog strangler — a heavy, heavy rain — it's going to wash the excess fertilizer into our waterways," said Marti Daltry, regional conservation organizer for the Sierra Club's Fort Myers office. "And that's going to contribute to red tide or algae blooms. By having this ban on nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizer during the rainy season, it will reduce those nutrients so we don't have as many algae blooms."

To help publicize the new fertilizer regulation and the message to "Fertilize Smart, Do Your Part," Lee County is using television, Internet, print materials and a LeeTran bus to introduce two characters: Gen and Russ, nicknames for nitroGen and phosphoRuss. As the regulation bans use of fertilizers containing nitrogen and phosphorus during the summer rainy season, June through September, the Gen and Russ characters will be sent on a vacation. ■