

Project Period	06/01/2009 - 06/01/2011
Award Amount	\$74,153.50
Matching Contributions	\$75,000.00
Project Location Description (from Proposal)	Hillsborough, Manatee and Pinellas counties
Project Summary (from Proposal)	Develop a regional educational campaign informing homeowners, retail outlets, and lawn care professionals about urban fertilizer use recommendations in Tampa Bay.
Summary of Accomplishments	<p>Development of a comprehensive education campaign called "Be Floridian," utilizing Social Marketing principles to foster a change in behavior and attitudes about fertilizer use. The campaign reinforces the main message of the TBEP Model Ordinance -- don't fertilize in the summer to protect our waterways.</p> <p>The campaign was developed by the professional marketing firm of Salter>Mitchell, with guidance from a steering committee coordinated by TBEP.</p> <p>Key accomplishments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Purchase of 10 billboards on major roadways in Pinellas County for April and May 2010. These billboards received more than 1.7 million "eyes-on impressions" (views) by motorists each week for the 8-week period. -- Quarter-page print ads published in the St. Petersburg Times twice weekly throughout April and May, which reached approximately 200,000 Pinellas County residents each week. -- Digital ads on the Bay News 9 website as well as two dozen other magazine and newspaper websites geographically targeting the Tampa Bay area were potentially viewed 3.5 million times during the two-month media campaign. --Tear sheets, rack cards, banners and buttons delivered to every store in the county selling lawn/landscape fertilizer. -- The Be Floridian website (www.befloridian.org) attracted 4,205 unique visitors from April 1- June 20, 2011, with more than 70% of those coming from the Tampa Bay area.
Lessons Learned	<p>We learned the value of regulation in reinforcing and facilitating an effective education program.</p> <p>Behavior change is very difficult to bring about, and to measure. The sales ban adopted by Pinellas County served as the cornerstone of the Be Floridian education campaign. Our central message that "True Floridians know better than to fertilize during the summer" was reinforced every time a homeowner visited a Home Depot, Lowe's or Wal-Mart and found ONLY zero-nitrogen products on the shelves. Educational banners, tear sheets and rack cards provided to these retail outlets further reinforced that message, as did training provided to garden center employees. We could not have forged these strong partnerships with the stores without the ordinance to "motivate" their cooperation.</p> <p>We learned the need to be adaptable, and focus our efforts where we had the greatest chance of success. The education campaign was initially intended for all of TBEP's partner governments, but during the PCEF grant timeframe only Pinellas and Hillsborough counties adopted a local ordinance. Unlike Pinellas, Hillsborough's ordinance had no nitrogen</p>

ban, so we decided to focus our campaign on Pinellas rather than dilute our strong message, or present a contrary message to that being given by Hillsborough. Thus the heavy reliance on geographically targeted advertising like billboards and ads in Pinellas-only newspaper editions.

Conservation Activities	Provide info about the fertilizer ordinance to retail outlets
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (Materials provided to and being displayed by all 47 retail stores in Pinellas that sell fertilizer)
Value at Grant Completion	100%
Conservation Activities	Ensure BMP certification of fertilizer applicators working for lawn care companies in Pinellas
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (decals and training provided to 500+ applicators)
Value at Grant Completion	100%
Conservation Activities	Implement recognition program for landscapers, manufacturers and lawn care companies that adopt and promote Be Floridian fertilizer principles
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (Criteria established for business partners; 10 now certified/recognized on Be Floridian website)
Value at Grant Completion	100% (more will be added on an ongoing basis)
Conservation Activities	Train retail outlet employees about new fertilizer ordinance
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (185 tip cards provided to staff of garden centers; workshops given to Home Depot, Lowe's staff)
Value at Grant Completion	100%
Conservation Activities	Enlist HOAs in distributing info about fertilizer ordinance
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (35 HOAs published newsletter article we provided; more than 4,000 doorhangers distributed)
Value at Grant Completion	35 neighborhoods total actively distributed info
Conservation Activities	Utilize mass media to deliver Be Floridian messages to residents
Progress Measures	Other Activity Metric (10 billboards purchases, print ads 2x/week for two months; digital ads on 25 news, magazine websites)
Value at Grant Completion	100%

Reach Display for Tampa Bay Estuary

Ad Placement: Network Home Channel, BT/CT Home; Tampa-St. Petersburg DMA

Ad Size: 728x90

Ad Placement Example: www.TampaBay.com

Your Display Ad



Your Ad's Landing Page



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floriducation (*n*) the act of familiarizing newcomers with the fact that they don't live in Ohio or New Jersey anymore

Unlike Ohio, Florida's border is surrounded by water.

Floridians know better than to fertilize during the summer, when rains wash it to the nearest lake, bay or ocean. That's why fertilizing your yard between June and September is illegal in Pinellas, Sarasota and 37 other Florida communities. See if your yard is designed for the place you live now at BeFloridian.org.

Be Floridian. It's where you live now.
www.BeFloridian.org

A man with a grey beard and sunglasses is lying on his back on a boat, wearing a white t-shirt. His arms are raised behind his head. In the background, there are yellow ropes and a red life preserver on the boat's deck. The water is blue and slightly choppy.

floridatation (*n*) deep state of relaxation attained once attuned to Florida's natural environment

**Note what this man is not doing.
He is not fertilizing his yard.**

He lives in Florida, where fertilizing in the summer rainy season spoils our water. That's why fertilizing your yard between June and September is illegal in Pinellas, Sarasota and 37 other Florida communities. See if your yard is designed for the place you live now at BeFloridian.org.

Be Floridian. It's where you live now.
www.BeFloridian.org

Be Floridian



PROTECT FUN



SKIP THE FERTILIZER THIS SUMMER

Florida's summer rains wash fertilizer into our lakes and bays, spoiling our water. That's why it's illegal to fertilize your lawn from June through September in Pinellas County and 38 other Florida communities.

So hold off on fertilizing this summer. Because in Florida, we like to protect our fun.

Be Floridian

www.BeFloridian.org





HOW TO FERTILIZE LIKE A **FLORIDIAN** And Follow Pinellas County Law

In Florida, summer rains wash fertilizers with nitrogen and phosphorus into our lakes and oceans, damaging what makes this state so beautiful. That's why it's illegal in Pinellas County to sell or use fertilizer with nitrogen or phosphorus during the rainy season, and why slow-release is required the rest of the year.

The good news is there are lots of ways to keep your yard looking great – while keeping algae-feeding nitrogen and phosphorus out of our waterways.

DURING THE MONTHS OF

OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER | JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY

- **Twice is nice.** Fertilize just twice a year, in April and October.
- **Watch the weather.** Rainstorms don't water in fertilizer, they wash it away. That wastes money and pollutes our water.
- **Skip the phosphorus.** The Tampa Bay region is naturally rich in phosphorous. Only use phosphorus-based fertilizer if a soil test turns up a deficiency.
- **Go slow by half.** Nitrogen in lawn or landscape fertilizers must be at least 50% slow-release (also called timed-release, controlled release or slowly available) from October to May. Slow-release provides nourishment over a longer period, saving you money and starving the algae.

DURING THE MONTHS OF

JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER

- **Just say no to nitrogen and phosphorus.** Pinellas County law bans the sale or use of any lawn or landscape fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorous from June 1 to September 30.
- **Pump some iron.** Use Florida-friendly yard products that contain iron or other micronutrients to green up your lawn during the summer.
- **Get better dirt.** Give your garden a boost by adding compost, composted cow or chicken manure, perlite or other soil amendments.
- **Pick better plants.** Florida-friendly landscaping needs less fertilizer, water and overall care – leaving you more time for fun. Ask a sales rep or visit BeFloridian.org to learn more.



Enjoy Florida. It's where you live now.

BeFloridian.org

June 1 - September 30 Fertilizer Rules for True Floridians

Pinellas County has passed a fertilizer law to keep nitrogen and phosphorus from ruining the lakes and bays that make our community so special. Here's how it works during the summer months:

- **Just say no to nitrogen (and phosphorus).** Pinellas County law bans the sale or use of any lawn or landscape fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorous from June 1 to September 30.
- **Pump some iron.** Use Florida-friendly fertilizer products that contain iron or other micronutrients to green up your lawn during the summer.
- **Veggies get a pass.** Nitrogen and phosphorus products can be used to fertilize vegetable gardens. Just watch the weather (no rain) and follow the package instructions. Our ability to swim, fish and boat in clean water is at stake.
- **Get better dirt.** Fertilizer isn't always the answer. You can give your garden a boost by adding compost, composted cow or chicken manure, perlite or other soil amendments.

***All products sold at this store comply with Pinellas County law.
We care about the health of our lakes, bays and the Gulf of Mexico!***

Need more info? Call 727-464-4425 or visit www.befloridian.org.

A SERVICE OF THE TAMPA BAY ESTUARY PROJECT

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Floridians know better than to fertilize during the summer. Rains wash nitrogen to the nearest lake, bay or ocean, spoiling the reason we moved here in the first place.

Be Floridian. Design your yard for the place you live now.

Enjoy Florida. It's where you live now.



Map Your Yard

Find Your Yard's True Home State

You are a Floridian through and through. But does your yard belong in Ohio? Take our quiz to find your yard's true home state.

Q. What does your yard need during the summer?

- ☐ Fertilizer. And mowing. And fertilizer. And mowing.
- ☐ A seasonal outfit for my lawn goose! And I'm thinking of adding some golfing!
- ☐ My gratitude. With native plants that don't need much work. I'll be relaxing on the water instead.

Continue Quiz ▶



Yard Matchup

Free Personality Matchup

Shrubbery speaks louder than words. What is your yard telling the neighbors about you?



Find Your Match ▶



Yard 911

Emergency Help for Florida Yards

Dear Yard 911,
Help, my lawn is brown! And I can't find fertilizer for sale anywhere!
- Can't Face the Neighbors, Oldsmar

Dear Can't Face,
Your lawn needs help — and you need some [Floriducation](#). Using fertilizer during the summer is illegal in 39 Florida communities to protect our water, and sales of the stuff are banned in Pinellas County from June to September. Besides, there are better ways to fix your lawn — and ward off the neighborhood evil eye.

MORE 911! ▶

About Be Floridian

You could call us the Society for Preserving Florida for Boating, Fishing, and Drinks with Little Umbrellas.

[READ MORE](#)

Get Help

Easy ways to welcome your yard back to Florida — whether you want to do it yourself or call in professionals. [READ MORE](#)



Shop the Store

Be Floridian in style with our hats, cell phone cases, T-shirts and more.

[START SHOPPING](#)

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Skip The Fertilizer This Summer—It's the Law!



**Protect
Our
Fun!**

Be Floridian

BeFloridian.org



ANALYSIS Of FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

TBEP'S FERTILIZER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

**By: Market Insight
June 2009**

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OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) is initiating a Fertilizer Education Campaign based on guidelines for fertilizer use contained in the Model Ordinance Regulating Non-Agricultural Use for the Tampa Bay Region. The ordinance was adopted by the Policy Board of TBEP in 2008 and is now being considered by governments in the three-county area of Hillsborough, Manatee and Pinellas.

Qualitative research was conducted to evaluate which messages are most likely to influence behavior change related to residential fertilizer use; and which distribution methods are most effective at reaching targeted homeowners in the three-county area.

Secondary objectives included assessing homeowners' current level of knowledge regarding fertilizer and its use; and any concerns they would have about following recommendations in the ordinance, specifically to refrain from using fertilizer during the summer (i.e., June through September).

Market Insight, a Sarasota-based marketing research firm, was commissioned to administer the study; and designed a hybrid approach in order to accomplish the objectives. It consisted of two traditional in-person focus groups and two Online Bulletin Board Focus Groups (OLBB's).

Participants were recruited by telephone and it was conducted "blind", that is the sponsor was not identified. At the conclusion of the last three focus groups TBEP was revealed as the research sponsor.

The main criterion that had to be met for inclusion in the research was ownership of a single family home in the respective county. They had to have either primary or shared responsibility for lawn care. Approximately one-quarter of homeowners for each discussion were to use the services of a lawn care company who applied the fertilizer.

Additional screening criteria included the respondent's ability to read in English as well as not be employed in sensitive industries (i.e., advertising, public relations, marketing research, environmental unit of government agency or private company, water utility or lawn care service). Participants for the OLBB's had to have access to the Internet.

Each group had a mix by age category, educational level, gender and zip code.

Participants from each county were recruited from a list of homeowners purchased by Market Insight. Twelve were recruited for each of the two in-person groups and 22 for each of the OLBB's. Five and eight homeowners attended the first and second in-person discussions, respectively. For the first and second OLBB's there were 16 and 15 participants, respectively.

The OLBB's included residents from all three counties in both discussions, which facilitated residents' geographic dispersion. This approach provided an opportunity to include homeowners throughout each county. For example, some of the towns represented in Hillsborough County were Lutz and Brandon, while in Manatee County participants lived as far east as Lakewood Ranch and as far west as Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key.

The in-person groups were held at a location within two of the three counties (i.e., Hillsborough and Pinellas).

Shown below for each of the four discussions is the type of focus group, county represented and the date / location that it took place:

<u>Focus Group</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
In-person – Pinellas	April 29 th	Holiday Inn Express, Clearwater
OLBB – All three counties	May 13-15 th	Online
OLBB - All three counties	May 19-21 st	Online
In-person – Hillsborough	May 21 st	Tampa Westshore Marriott

Each in-person group lasted two hours. The OLBB's were each conducted over a three-day period with a commitment of logging in twice a day for about 20 minutes each time or two hours over all three days of the discussion.

Participants received an honorarium of \$85 for their involvement in the study.

In each focus group a series of concept statements, creative materials and videos were shown and discussed. The order they were shown was rotated between the groups to avoid a potential bias. Please note that the videos were only shown to the online participants and the discussions were extended from two to three days to accommodate.

The in-person groups were audio recorded and transcribed. An instant transcript was available of the OLBB's as they were occurring.

The following sections are based on analysis of the data from the transcripts and recordings.

Recycled paper was used in printing this report and all forms associated with the project.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEHAVIOR AND BELIEFS

In order to understand what, if any objections, homeowners would have about following recommendations in the Model Ordinance, specifically to refrain from using fertilizer from June through September, their current practices associated with the use of fertilizer and knowledge of its impact was first determined.

More than three-quarters of all respondents indicated their lawn had been treated with fertilizer in the past twelve months and of these almost half had it applied by a lawn care service.

The frequency of applying fertilizer ranged from every other week to every five or six weeks to six times a year. The least frequent was twice a year, typically spring and fall.

- “Most of my neighbors, half of them are just over the top with their watering, their fertilizing and everything else. I mean they’re in violation of water restriction and the other half just let it go. They’ll mow, but they don’t do anything to enhance it...”

Fertilizer is applied monthly according to some who use a lawn service while the homeowner oftentimes applies it between regular applications. Others who use a lawn care service were not aware of how frequently fertilizer is applied.

Most participants held a deep-rooted belief that fertilizer is necessary to having a green, lush lawn.

- “I have had a brown lawn, I have had sand and I have had a green lawn and I definitely prefer green. It took me many years to figure out how those people down the street kept theirs’ green, but the spraying service takes care of that now.”

Not only did they express the belief that fertilizer is vital to their lawn, they were equally convinced that the best time to apply is during the rainy summer months. When applied then the risk of “burning” the lawn is minimized, the fertilizer is “watered in” and the cost is reduced since rain replaces watering.

- “...I find that it does make a difference to fertilize during rainy season and winterize right before it gets cold.”
- “...when it rains it is a very good time to fertilize.”
- “Truly, I have never checked the label to see if it recommends fertilizing during the rainy season; however, I do since I feel that the rain helps wash the fertilizer in and you don’t have to use your sprinkler system – one reason it is probably not a good idea to fertilize during rainy season is that the fertilizer is washed away quicker depending on how hard it rains.”

At the end of each discussion, after the concept statements, creatives and videos were discussed, several participants maintained their position that the rainy months (June through September) were still the best time to fertilize. They were not convinced the runoff from it is harmful and more importantly that their lawns would survive without it.

- “...Will a lawn survive if not being fertilized from June through September? I wonder if my service does this.”
- “...To be honest I would continue to during rainy season since it is necessary for fertilizer to work.”

Lawns are an investment of resources both time and money. The importance of a lush, green lawn was credited as having pride in home and conforming to the community, which leads to a sense of security in belonging. It also enhances self-esteem.

- “...it is both a contractual obligation under our homeowner covenants and of course, an obligation to my neighbors as well as a protection of our property values...and a matter of personal pride. We moved for a new job and had to buy in a short period of time. ...I don’t think I would choose a community again that requires such an expense of money and natural resources to maintain the ‘always green carpet’.”

While this respondent and others questioned the need for a ‘carpet of green’, a few have actually redesigned their lawns and use Florida-friendly landscaping.

- “My lawn is not green, because I am removing it. I feel great about it. First, it saves me a ton of money, no watering, no fertilizing, no pesticides, and no lawn mowing expense. Second, it is better for the environment, I have put in drought tolerant plants that actually thrive with little water, and no chemicals. Once I am done I think that I will have great curb appeal, it will actually look like I live on a tropical island, and not in the suburbs of Newark, New Jersey.”

Resistance surfaced at the prospect of alternatives to a green lawn and showing house-pride in another way. It was felt that community sentiment would be opposed.

- “I live under an HOA [Homeowners Association], so I am required to maintain a level of curb appeal with my home.”
- “I truly like the appearance of a lush lawn and the appearance it and your home have when well maintained. I don’t like a concrete jungle – I like the Florida look of palm trees and nice, well-manicured lawn.”

The insistence on the green lawn continued and some volunteered that they are watering more than allowed in order to maintain it.

- “...I am now watering my lawn with my hose (and attached sprinkler) because of the drought and concern over the condition of the lawn as the normal sprinkler system is inadequate and restricted.”
- “We are allowed once a week for watering, however, I have been getting in one more day since the present weather has been drying out the lawn.”
- “I’m in a catch 22. Do I not put it [fertilizer] down and my lawn looks like crap or do I put it down and pray and hope I’m not killing everything out there...”
- “...A pretty yard can be expensive; however, a pretty house with an ugly yard is like a formal outfit with combat boots.”

FERTILIZER EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

The perceived benefits offered in the campaign need to outweigh the (emotional) value associated with having a lush, green lawn.

Since most were not aware of the issue of fertilizer runoff prior to the discussions, the connection has to be “straightforward” between action and consequence. As one respondent said:

- “Exactly, don’t sing a song about it, just tell me.”

As the concepts were being discussed participants would repeatedly comment on whether it told them the “when, how much and why to fertilize”. The visual that best accomplished this was the one prepared by Southwest Florida Water Management District, which follows:



The statement, by itself, was presented earlier in each discussion and was among the top rated. There was some confusion as to type of water being referenced without the visual. Most thought drinking as opposed to surface water. Once this visual was displayed it cleared any confusion and became apparent that the water being referred to was in ponds, lakes, bays, etc.

- “Green drinking water could definitely be a turn-off. Manatee County’s drinking water supply comes from wells in the eastern part of the county and from the runoff into Lake Manatee, so I don’t think the runoff from my lawn would affect the drinking water. However, from here, it could possibly make it into Sarasota Bay and then the Gulf...”
- “...Green water kind of makes the point without all the debate.”
- “This is the best one, we live close to Anna Maria Island and the water out there is great, that is the idea of green water stops me on this statement.”

The picture of the boy was appealing to most and it caused them to consider their actions in terms of future generations.

The statement was seen as “bold”, “moving”, “earth-friendly”, “vivid”, “...most direct and forceful”.

The statement that was actually rated highest in overall appeal was:

**THIS SUMMER GIVE YOU AND YOUR LAWN A VACATION.
Don't fertilize from June through September.**

While some felt that it was incongruous since you still have to mow your lawn in the summer, its appeal gave them a "straight reason" and especially the "when" was very clear, possibly because "summer" and the months of June through September are both stated. There was a "self-serving" aspect for many who were not aware of the main issue; it gave them "a little bonus" and at the same time they were doing something good for the environment.

Participants with more awareness of the issue felt that "vacation" trivializes it. They were less concerned with having a vacation and more concerned with having green water.

Another visual, shown below, was also well-received and preferred mainly by those already aware of the connection between fertilizer and runoff.



- "...our general tendency is think more is better...and that sensibility should be incorporated in the campaign."

Most felt that they lacked enough information on the topic and in order to comply with the request or inform others would need facts about it.

- “...The ads don’t go far enough to give me a ‘buy in’. I would have to go do the research on the website if I was inclined to really understand...”

When asked what was unappealing, confusing or hard to believe about what they had seen, heard or read in the concepts, they echoed earlier comments that they did not necessarily believe the message:

- “...What is missing is anything to put some heft to what is being suggested. There is nothing to state basically that the environmental impact of fertilizer use is dangerous to the environment. It merely suggests this and asks you to be kind enough to refrain... What is missing is the hard punch about what exactly is affecting people because of nation wide lawns. ...convince people that grass is not the end all and be all... All kinds of plants and shrubs could do the same...”
- “...the fact that don’t believe in the basic theory that fertilizer can destroy our environment if used during certain months...produce the data and I could become a believer.”
- “...a key is to back up the ad with professional, expert-verified proof from a commercially-independent organization.”

Participants felt that a compelling argument for refraining from fertilizer use during the rainy months was the cost savings:

- “I think people understand the pocketbook level. Explaining that it is washed off and of no real use to their yards might work. Someone throwing money on a lawn in a rain storm would work.”
- “...waste of their time and money...”

Almost three-quarters of the respondents stated that they live on or near water, whether directly on Tampa Bay (11 feet from it) or on a barrier island (Anna Maria Island, Longboat Key) or on Lake Dorothea. Others who said they live on or near it either referred to a pond in their community or a river or bay several miles away. Yet they all were aware of water in their environment, however, few understood the impact of runoff on it.

Most said that recycling is their way of protecting the environment; a few have made more significant changes to their lifestyles.

Men were more aware of the issue than the women in the discussions. They tended to spend time at Home Depot talking to personnel about best products / practices. Women tended to find out about lawn care from neighbors, etc. Both looked to their lawn care providers as sources of information.

- "...We have asked neighbors for information [about fertilizing] as they have lots of insight!"
- "...Living in Florida is new and so is all this lawn care information. I do watch buses, billboards and videos..."
- "I have a gardening service, so if I was told they needed to fertilize during the summer I would accept what the professionals...say. I would bring this up to the neighborhood committee if I thought this was an environmental issue..."

Other sources of information are county governments and extension offices:

- "I did know not to fertilize during the rainy season because our county puts out such information and we read it. We know that the runoff gets into the rivers, Bay and ocean and can cause Red Tide and dead spots in the Gulf of Mexico..."

Since these are the sources currently used for information, they would be credible for the proposed education campaign.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program adds credibility. They were identified at the end of the last three discussions as the sponsor, and while not all participants were aware of them, the fact that they are not a private organization enhanced the appeal.

Please refer to the next sections for more detailed findings.

LAWN CARE ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

CARING FOR THE LAWN

Participants' descriptions of the feeling they associate with lawn care ranged from "enjoyable" and "love to work in the yard" to a "necessary evil" and "never ending". Most of the participants who indicated they do not enjoy lawn care acknowledged that they still have a responsibility to maintain it for themselves and their community.

Specific verbatim comments that reflect both the pleasure and lack thereof associated with lawn care included:

- "I enjoy maintaining my lawn. My lawn will never be the yard of the week, but being able to tend to the outside of my home is satisfying."
- "...I am a little frustrated with my lawn since we just re-sodded with zosia [zoysia] grass – it has green and brown areas – it is supposed to be drought free, which is the reason we chose it due to Florida going thru [through] a drought – I love to work in the yard, however."
- "...Well, I will say this much, it is not my favorite hobby. I take care of it because I own my home and the lawn needs upkeep."
- "I have just shy of an acre of property. Lots of trees, lots of leaves and pine needles. Very wooded area and needs constant attention – never ending."

Some participants said they find lawn care to be "relaxing" while others said it is "good exercise".

- "...Working with the gardens around the pool does not seem like work as much as mowing does. When I [am] working on the plants, my brain gets a rest. I am only focusing on the weed I am about to pull or the dead leaf that needs to be cut. Very stress relieving."
- "...It really makes the house and flower beds look beautiful and it's a good workout..."

The responsibility for lawn care is either solely that of the homeowner; shared with spouse or child; or handled completely or in part by a lawn care service.

- “All of the above. We have a lawn care service that maintains, I create and my husband helps. A lawn care service is awesome! It helps me stay on top of things.”

Many who said they are using or have used a lawn service expressed some dissatisfaction and felt that they did more damage than good to their lawns.

- “The lawn is covered by a service company and in the four years of living here this is our fourth company and [we] are interviewing another now as all want to spray on weeds instead of pulling. ... I can afford to let someone else do it but I still do it...”
- “...We have had a lawn service in the past but feel that we can maintain it better than they.”
- “...I used a lawn care service once. It was a disaster. They destroyed my lawn. Basically, they hired day labor to spray fertilizer in the general direction of my lawn and ignored everything else except the fee... I worked for two years to bring my lawn back from that.”

One participant said that he cancelled the lawn service two months ago due to the drought and he commented:

- “...why waste the money?”

Some participants have more than one lawn care company because of the importance of having a “...healthy, neat and tidy lawn” due to “...strict homeowners’ responsibilities, lawn care and landscaping are carefully regulated...”.

The benefit of a well maintained lawn was expressed as pride in their home, enhanced self-esteem and feeling secure as members in good standing of their community.

These sentiments are illustrated by the next comments:

- “It’s a reflection of one’s pride of their home. I, personally, feel that it’s a very important aspect of home ownership.”
- “Lawn care is just a responsibility of homeownership. It does have esthetic [aesthetic] value in the feelings we have about where and how we live. It is just a part of life.”

- “A nice [lawn] says a lot about a homeowner.”
- “It shows you’re clean.”
- “So the home looks good, to keep the neighborhood looking good.”
- “Also, then you won’t get any letters from your homeowners’ association.”

A well maintained lawn enhances curb appeal and contributes to a “...sense of achievement”. Some said they feel overwhelmed when the lawn is in need of maintenance.

Their comments included:

- “I like the look of a well manicured lawn. I think a well manicured lawn reflects on how well you take care of what you have invested in – your home and its appearance. I enjoy seeing plants grow and the lush look of a green lawn.”
- “There was a show on TV not long ago that explained how lawns came to be. When people moved from the city to the burps if you had a nice lawn, it was given that you had a nice house and housekeeping. That reinforces how I was brought up – everyone worked in the yard and maintained the grass, flowers and trees.”
- “...I enjoy the feeling of pulling up to my house and the lawn looks nice. If it does not, it feels overwhelming and frustrating.”

ALTERNATIVES TO LUSH GREEN LAWNS

A few participants indicated they have redesigned their lawns to have less grass and more Florida-friendly landscaping. The main benefits cited were fewer resources – both time and money.

Their comments follow:

- “...I know what you mean about having an alternative to needing to use all that water to keep a lawn alive. We worked with a landscaper and redesigned our yard and beds to require less water. That is why I switched to Bahia [grass]. Also, I have converted a lot of the beds to drip systems for watering.”

- “I take care of what lawn I have; most of my yard is a garden even the front I collect Plumeria (Frangipani) they need some work and I always seem to be outside.”

A respondent who lives on a barrier island said he has removed most of his lawn, a comment about his decision follows:

- “...lawns on a barrier island are non native and thus require a tremendous amount of work, water and fertilizers and pesticides. I decided last year to get rid of my lawn. The back is gone and I replaced it with native plants that require minimum care and mulch. I am in the process of removing the front lawn and have about half of it is gone.”

There was some discussion by participants, who have not yet redesigned their lawns, about the high cost of maintaining a lawn and that it is unnecessary to have the lush green appearance:

- “...I spent many years in Phoenix and would prefer to get rid of the grass and do something with zero-scape [xeriscape] plants. The drought is bad and I don't like to water grass, pay some one [to] mow not to mention all the companies that come by with offers to put chemicals to make it green and kill bugs. We are fighting nature with chemicals.”
- “It's discouraging and hiring a company it either takes a phenomenal amount of money for them to keep that unnatural beautiful green grass. ...it doesn't stay that way. If you don't put all kinds of chemicals and bug, and water it and you don't have the right shade...all your investment it's going to die eventually... It's discouraging and expensive to get that plush golf course kind of look.”

In response to this particular comment another participant discussed living in a community where there are specific lawn care requirements:

- “I agree with what you said about fighting nature with chemicals, but I live in a cookie-cutter neighborhood where most of the greenery is landscape-architected (not in its original state). The subdivision was filled with dredge material from the Bay and has a relatively closed drainage system. I want to help the environment, but with such an artificial locale, what more can I do than use the reclaimed water the county offers?”

When asked specifically how they would feel if their lawn was not “green” in the traditional sense several said that it is not green now due to the drought. Others indicated while they might be accepting of it their homeowners’ association would not.

Their comments follow:

- “It isn’t green now. Of course I like it better when it is, but without spending a fortune on it and risking a ticket for sprinkling more than we’re allowed, it’s not gonna happen. Once the rains hit, it’ll green right up and we’ll get to cut it once every five or six days...”
- “My lawn isn’t green and I am upset about it...I want our yard to look nice in our neighborhood, but I’m mostly upset since we resodded last year....”
- “Most of my yard is mulched and the neighbors love it, they are always here smelling the flowers... So, having a green yard isn’t always necessary for a nice yard. Is it?”
- “I am all for alternative to lawns, first lawns are not native to this climate. You will always be waging a costly, in terms of money and damage to the environment, battle to put in grass that does not fit. It is almost like if I moved to Kentucky and planted palm trees outside, it just doesn’t work.”
- “I think gardens and front lawn space can easily be enhanced (or replaced) with shrubs, rock gardens and all sorts of beautiful but appropriate landscaping. However, the entire nation is carpeted by grass from coast to coast and there is one neighbor who actually has almost no lawn (probably not done as well as could be), which draws comments from neighbors – though tolerated. It’s a cultural thing regarding grass...”

The respondent who made the last comment above was specifically asked if he would let his lawn go “natural”. He responded: “Not in my neighborhood. It is tightly controlled and deed restricted. (It would be cool though)”. Even though he understands there are alternatives and a member of his community has opted for a more natural landscape, he said he is unwilling to because of pressure from his neighborhood.

Others said that they would consider alternatives albeit with skepticism, which was expressed in the comments shown below:

- “I am open to alternatives, but I think they need to be done well. I don’t appreciate yards filled in with rocks. If someone can do xeriscape that is aesthetically pleasing, that is great. I don’t have that kind of talent.”

- “If you are referring to xeriscape, I think the concept overall is a novel idea and can be a nice alternative, but you also have to consider the rest of the neighborhood you live in. The same xeriscaped yard could be either aesthetically pleasing or an eyesore depending on the layout and other yards of the neighborhood it inhabits.”
- “To a degree we are going thru [through] a dry spell now – I would not like it – I truly do love a green lush lawn.”

FERTILIZER USE

Most participants said they believe that fertilizer is necessary to keep the look of a “green, lush lawn”. They were asked whether they fertilize and if they do, how often and their reasons for using it.

Their comments about whether they or a service fertilize the lawn and initial comments about the frequency of using it are displayed below:

- “...We have a service that comes once a month and sprays the lawn with fertilizer and pesticide – otherwise it would die (the voice of experience).”
- “We live in a gated community and our neighborhood has a contract with a landscaper who has main responsibility for the lawn. They cut the lawn. ...I do fertilize and cut the lawn myself occasionally.”
- “We don’t have a schedule and given all the states we have lived in – there has never been such a focus on feeding of lawns than here in Florida. ...It was, we would put some fertilizer on once a year and call it good...”
- “We just fertilized end of April and normally try to do so every three to four months.”
- “Like I said I’m out in my yard everyday doing something. All the plants either need fertilizing or sprayed for something. Now that the rainy season is about to start I will have to fertilize more.”
- “I fertilize the lawn about four times a year and water heavily after fertilizing if not in the rainy season.”

Participants indicated that they use fertilizer as often as every other week to every five or six weeks to five or six times a year to as infrequently as twice a year. Some said that they apply fertilizer in between applications by the lawn care service.

More than a few participants said that they fertilize during the rainy season, some as often as every two weeks. Fertilizing at this time of year serves more than one purpose. It not only “waters in” the fertilizer, it also reduces the cost of watering.

- “My husband does it when he sees it’s going to rain. Cause you know it will burn your lawn if you don’t water. We do have a sprinkler system but it’s cheaper if it’s raining...”
- “I do fertilize in the rainy season so that I do not have to run my sprinklers.”
- “I normally start to fertilize in late March or early April, when I am sure there will be no more frost!! During the rainy season I fertilize more because the rain washes all the fertilizer away, maybe every two weeks.”

As shown in the previous comment, a few said the rain “washes it away” as the reason to fertilize during the rainy season. It was a widely held belief among participants that it is best to apply fertilizer during the rainy season to avoid burning the lawn.

- “We do fertilize during rainy season so that it will be watered in good and the rain tends to wash away the fertilizer although it may not be good since the fertilizer washed away.”
- “I would think that it would be better to fertilize during the rainy season so that the fertilizer would not burn the grass as easily as it might in the dry season if you don’t water it enough.”
- “...I don’t know about fertilizing during the rainy season except that I’d want it watered-in just after application rather than waiting for unpredictable rain.”

As previously mentioned, many of the participants use a lawn care service and while most of them were aware of how often and when fertilizer is applied others were not:

- “I have the service fertilize because without it our lawn would die (you can easily tell which people in our subdivision don’t use fertilizer). They fertilize as needed on a monthly basis. I feel that liquid fertilizer is (at least a little) better for the environment since it sinks in better...”
- “The service fertilizes the lawn. They, professionally, do this as needed in the proper way and time.”

- “We have a lawn service who mows weekly and recently I won a one year free fertilizing from Scotts. I leave the number of services up to them and with that comes the need to get insects out of the lawn...The rainy season would help the fertilizer to get down to the roots.”
- “...We do have a company that sprays and fertilizes every two months. ...I rely on the company for hire to fertilize as needed.”
- “...We also have a company that comes out for fertilizing the lawn. They pretty much decide what it needs...”

Only one participant indicated that his lawn service actually advises against fertilizing during the rainy season; he commented:

- “...They send periodic advisories according to the season or specific issues affecting the yard and surroundings such as fertilizing during rainy season because of runoff into ponds, other surface waters and ultimately the aquifer and Gulf [of Mexico].”

REASONS FERTILIZER NOT USED

In each group a limited number of participants had prior awareness of the impact of fertilizer runoff. As a result they indicated that they typically do not use fertilizer or use an organic one. Their comments included:

- “The main reason that I have taken care of my lawn by removing it, is that I think a lawn on a barrier island is detrimental to the local environment. The fertilizer and pesticide will run off and contaminate the water. The grass provides little to no environmental plus...”
- “...nightly, I water my plants and garden. I use organic fertilizer only to keep the lawn nice without the use of chemicals. We fertilize every other week.
- “...I generally do not fertilize. I know it is good to water in a fertilizer but not during the rainy season as this may cause the run off into the lake [Lake Dorothea]. Not good.”

A few participants said their reasons for not using fertilizer are cost related or they prefer not to use chemicals on their lawn.

- “...I do not fertilize my lawn because I have a very shady yard and I mulch with the fallen oak leaves. I do not fertilize because of the cost also.”
- “...We don’t fertilize normally, since there are several families of cranes that stop off for a snack at our house on a fairly regular basis. I wouldn’t think fertilizer would be good for them.”
- “Basic, I don’t like the chemicals on there...”

PREFERRED CONCEPT STATEMENTS

Participants were shown a series of concept statements one at a time and the rotation was varied across the focus groups. The group members were asked their overall reaction to each. A numeric rating from “1” (Don’t Like It At All) through “5” (Like It A Lot) was used to indicate how much each statement appealed to them (likes and dislikes). Reasons for the rating; and their understanding of the statement’s message and whether anything about it was confusing or hard to understand was also discussed.

Seven statements were initially considered and presented in the first in-person focus group held in Pinellas County. All seven were discussed in detail and then culled based on participants’ reactions. Four statements were excluded from the next three focus groups and included:

THIS SUMMER, GIVE YOUR LAWN A VACATION.
Don’t fertilize from June through September.

MY HOME. MY YARD. MY FLORIDA. FERTILIZER-FREE
Don’t fertilize from June through September.

PUT YOUR LAWN ON A DIET.
Hold the nitrogen and phosphorous this summer.

DON’T FEED THE ALGAE!
Be fertilizer-free this summer.

Three concept statements were discussed in all four focus groups and are presented in this section. These included:

YOU WANT YOUR LAWN GREEN, NOT YOUR WATER.
Don’t fertilize from June through September.

THIS SUMMER, GIVE YOU AND YOUR LAWN A VACATION.
Don’t fertilize from June through September.

THIS IS MY FLORIDA.
More playing (fishing, free time). Less fertilizer.

THIS IS MY FLORIDA.

More playing (fishing, free time). Less fertilizer.

This statement was rated somewhat less appealing than the other two shown above.

The first line of the statement “THIS IS MY FLORIDA” had a couple of unenthusiastic reactions due to the similarity to “MyFlorida.com” (the official portal of the State of Florida). One participant said that his wife always makes a negative remark when she sees the myflorida.com license tags. Another participant, a teacher, said that she goes to the state website for stats, etc and the concept statement did not appeal to her.

What participants found unappealing as well as appealing are detailed in the next sections.

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

More than the similarity between the first line and Florida’s official website was the meaning of the second line “More playing (fishing, free time). Less fertilizer”. Many felt this was incongruous because “Less fertilizer implies less work which in fact may or may not be so.”. The following comments were offered by participants to whom this statement had very little appeal:

- “I think most people feel that Florida is the state for “playing” anyway – I don’t feel the “less fertilizer” is appropriate at all for the state.”
- “Since fertilizing is something that you only do a few times a year, I don’t really think it cuts into a steady stream of keeping you from enjoying your leisure activities. I think it would be a more prominent statement if the word ‘fertilizer’ was changed to ‘lawn cutting’.”
- “...I play a lot and work in the yard a lot as play!”
- “...I am not sure what playing and fertilizer have to do with each other...”
- “The statement implies that there is no effort involved in yard work...”
- “Love to play but fertilize to help your grass look better.”
- “It sounds like an advert[isement] for an alligator attraction. How about “THIS IS OUR FLORIDA. More Natural. Less Fertilizer.”

They were encouraged during the discussions to substitute the word “playing” for words they could more readily relate to, whether it was “spending time with grandchildren” or even “watching TV”. Still participants suggested that this statement was the least personal of the three or they could not make the connection between free time and fertilizing.

- “...I would much rather hunt, fish, play, etc. than fertilize, but again I don’t fertilize a lot!! During the rainy season I wait till it stops raining for a few days to fertilize!!”

SPECIFIC APPEAL

One of the main attractions of this statement was “...almost everything is better than [working in the yard]”. This statement also appealed to those already aware of the impact of fertilizer runoff.

- “I guess I would rather do dishes than [than] the lawn.”
- “I am curious how that would work. Does it mean getting rid of my lawn since it requires fertilizer? I’m a little apprehensive, having no details.”
- “The ‘playing’ catches my attention and the ‘less fertilizer’ makes me stop and think ‘Why?’.”
- “...You could change ‘playing’ to almost anything and I would agree, almost anything is better than fertilizer.”
- “The statement means more time for everything else in my life and less fertilizer means a better environment.”
- “...would mean not being a slave to one’s landscaping. ...We took care of that when we redid our landscaping three years ago. Our required time each week is down to a manageable amount. I don’t choose to look at it as a big environmental statement. As I said earlier, I don’t use that much and try to apply it when it won’t run off so much.”
- “It’s going to grow, why push it even harder. ...those summer months your lawn is going to grow. We have adequate water. The lawn is going to be green and it’s going to grow. If you fertilize it’s going to grow faster. It’s going to grow, you’re super charging, your putting high test...”

YOU WANT YOUR LAWN GREEN, NOT YOUR WATER.

Don't fertilize from June through September.

This was the second highest rated statement of the three.

Some participants were confused about the type of water being referenced (i.e., drinking or surface). A number of them thought it was implying "...yucky stuff in your [drinking] water". Uncertainty existed even among those aware of runoff and they questioned whether it was alluding to algae growth or something else.

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

The main issue / confusion that perplexed participants about this statement centered on the question of the type of water; and how unappealing green drinking water would be. Some were able to dismiss the statement since they felt they do not pollute drinking water. Examples of these types of comments are shown:

- "I don't like green water if I am drinking it!! When I fertilize I only feed the plants in a small amount as not to burn the plants and grass..."
- "I think the green water idea is misleading and unclear, unless you read the smaller print underneath, which some people will not. The second, smaller print statement is the main idea, but its meaning is lost..."
- "This means if you fertilize during rainy season...the water may drain washing away your fertilizer. I do not have a well and septic so I don't think it has anything to do with our drinking and bathing water."
- "...risk polluting Florida's drinking water supply."
- "Ugh!! Who would ever want green water? I guess this statement means no fertilizing during the rainy season. I would have thought that would be the idea [ideal] time to fertilize."
- "The rainy season goes hand in hand with fertilizing. You don't have to worry about manually watering your lawn when you fertilize during the rainy season...why wouldn't someone want to benefit from the natural advantages of a rainy season?"

SPECIFIC APPEAL

The relationship between green lawns and green water(s) were evident to many, although some still questioned the need to refrain from fertilizing during the rainy season since according to them it is the best time to do it.

- “I like a green lawn but dislike any run off into the water ways.”
- “It’s something to think about. I seem to think that maybe it’s not healthy to fertilize June through September because of the rainy season.”
- “I understand issues with the water table and other factors that put water restrictions on us. However those are the rainy months so less sprinkling is needed, but I don’t like when the restrictions are such that my yard starts to go down hill and cost me money because I couldn’t do for it what was necessary.”
- “Like it but why would June-Sept. make my water green?”
- “Not sure what that means but we fertilize December and May always.”
- “...It is what I do. The idea is not to promote algae growth by fertilizer run off, I think.”
- “...I am very concerned about the impact runoff is having on marine life from possibly exacerbating Red Tide to poisons and I believe fertilizer can be as bad as hydrocarbons.”
- “What do you want more, your water nice or your lawn nice? You know you can have the prettiest yard in the world, but you step across the road and you can’t go fishing or swimming, or take your kids to enjoy anything. You know just ain’t worth it.”
- “The bottom line is June through September that’s the rainy season really so you don’t have to. The rain really brings down a lot of fertilizer too. The nitrogen from the rain.”

REASONS FOR PREFERRING

The participants were asked to compare and contrast all of the statements and those who preferred this one overall commented:

- “...the most moving. I never gave it much thought, but if the fert. [fertilizer] floats away or dissolves with the rain I can see it making it to the water.”
- “...bold statement! It made me stop and think.”

- “Made me stop and think about needing to know more about when it’s best time to fertilize. This survey is giving me a light bulb moment to become more involved in our lawn care.”
- “Since we don’t fertilize now...puts more of a friendly earth spin. But I still see the need to explain why you won’t use the rain to help get the fertilizer into the soil...”
- “...It tells me why...
- “...[Other statements] appeal to selfish reasons or personal gain. [This] suggests there is something wrong with fertilizing in summer.”
- “The imagery...is pretty vivid. Unless you live in the Panhandle and are used to emerald green water or are from Chicago and have seen what happens to water on St. Patrick’s Day, the thought and sight of green water is unsettling.”

THIS SUMMER GIVE YOU AND YOUR LAWN A VACATION. Don't fertilize from June through September.

This statement had the most positive overall reaction of the three concept statements presented in the four discussions. The general appeal was based on the message that both they and their lawns would have a “break”. It felt less “guilt producing” compared to the concept of “green water”.

The message of when to avoid using fertilizer was clearer to them in this statement than the one previously discussed here, even though both have the same second line “Don't fertilize from June through September”. It may be more apparent to them in this statement because “summer” and the months (June through September) are both stated.

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

The unappealing or confusing aspects of this statement involved the need to still mow the lawn during the summer so they felt they would not really have a vacation from yard work; and there were those who indicated that they enjoy or relax while doing lawn care and they do not want a vacation from it.

Many still held onto their long-term belief that fertilizing especially during the rainy season was the best time to apply it. And, this statement does not offer the “why” not to fertilize then.

Specific comments about their dislikes follow:

- “...It would make the statement perfect if you could only add “Don't mow from June through September.”
- “...during the rainy season your grass is gonna grow so you can't really get a vacation.”
- “I am relaxing when working in the yard...”
- “...I am still not going to get away from mowing at least once a week when I do what this statement says so I don't see the vacation part for me.”
- “...It just doesn't make sense. Fertilizer is food. The lawn needs to be fed and this has nothing to do with giving it a vacation.”
- “It is good advice but doesn't tell me why.”

SPECIFIC APPEAL

Some suggested that this statement had a more personal or “self-serving” aspect than the other two, and not as “in your face” about what was being requested. It had a “sense of humor” that attracted some to it.

Comments offered by participants who rated this favorably follow:

- “I can always use a vacation. I think it’s a good statement. It gives us one way of how to protect our water.”
- “It is a little more subtle, not so in your face-make you feel guilty for fertilizing the lawn... I like the wording of “give you and your lawn a vacation” as opposed to “green water”.”
- “...tells me specifically not to fertilize my lawn between certain months...it sounds like it is my job to give my lawn a vacation from fertilizer.”
- “...That one had a more personal appeal...Those there remind me more of taking care of the environment completely where this is like there is a little bonus for me.”
- “Catchy and makes you feel like you are doing something to help.”
- “...I agree with the comments made by several other participants suggesting that now everyone is up to speed with the issue of runoff carrying fertilizer along with pet poop, tire dust, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, etc. into ponds and waterways so they don’t get the point immediately.”
- “The feeling I got on it is that you know you’re gonna have to cut your grass during the summer. If that’s the only thing you’re gonna have to do with it ...you know that’s a good thing.”
- “It has a sense of humor... It’s stating the obvious but the way that that kind of brings a smile...maybe I can make my life a little easier. It’s gonna be green but I won’t be able to hear it grow...”
- “How about ‘Go Green, Don’t Fertilize Between June and September’.”

REASONS FOR PREFERRING

In comparing and contrasting the statements the reasons for selecting this one were given as:

- “The closer it gets to fall and winter the more chance you have of burning your yard by over fertilizing. Things grow in the spring and summer and slow down during fall and winter.”
- “I think people need a straight reason about fertilizer run off and its effect.”
- “...I honestly don’t know if it’s best not to fertilize during the rainy season, but I like the idea of vacation for both me and my lawn.”
- “...the second one [“YOU WANT YOUR LAWN GREEN, YOU’RE YOUR WATER”] leaves me with a question in my mind. Why would it turn the water green? I do fertilize during the rainy season...only when it isn’t raining. From a logical standpoint (no real data to back this thought), I would fertilize, let it soak in the ground and then when it rains it will help the lawn.”
- “If someone was to point out that one’s lawn is actually under a lot of stress from fertilizing during the rainy season, then I could see why one would want to give it a break.”
- “I don’t know when to fertilize, so [this one] is the best because it clearly states it.”

PREFERRED CREATIVE CONCEPTS AND VIDEOS

A series of creative concepts and videos developed by other organizations were shown. Participants were asked their overall reaction and to rate each in terms of how much it did or did not appeal to them, again, using the numeric rating scale from “1” (Don’t Like It At All) through “5” (Like It A Lot). Their reasons for the rating and whether anything was confusing or hard to understand was also explored.

The next two creatives were shown in all four discussions and the third in this series was shown in all except the first online discussion. The order the creatives were shown in was varied across the discussions.

The following bus wrap was created by Lee County, Florida for their FertilizeSmart campaign and was shown in all four discussions.



This was the least preferred creative because it was perceived as “too cutesy”, “made for children” and “...a little too elementary”.

Most said that they did not understand what message it was trying to convey. Among those who understood the concept they felt that it lacked details about the “when, how much and why to fertilize”.

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

- “It is inane. Part of our problem in this country is trying to cute our way out of problems...”

- "...busy ad too much info. ...I like the graphics and understand the statement, but it seems like it is a Kid's Ad. People who fertilize their lawns are not in this age group."
- "I wouldn't know what PhosPhoRuss, I know what it is but I'd have to put it together..."
- "This one looks goofy and like something out of an elementary school play. It also isn't specific enough about when, how much, why to fertilize."
- "...the costumes are a little out there unless you are trying to sell to kids."
- "...gay and does nothing for me, but if it's on a public bus and doesn't cost much fine..."
- "...goofy. It distracts you from what is being said."
- "Leaves people guessing."
- "...I don't really understand the characters or what they are supposed to mean (reminds me of teletubbies). I'm also not wild about 'It's the Law!' part..."
- "Looks like a couple of M&M's."
- "Easter M&M's."
- "By the time you think about it the bus will be gone."

SPECIFIC APPEAL

A handful of participants voiced their approval of this creative mainly because it was "eye-catching". They also noticed the website.

Their comments follow:

- "...as visually it really catches your eye. It means that it is against the law to fertilize during the rainy season. It needs to say more about why."
- "The message is clear and brought to you by the county. ...the noted website is easy to remember..."

- “It suggests that there is something not being said that causes a pause to think. It doesn’t attack anyone and simply states an end to the act itself.”
- “...It’s a little too loud to be expressing the message it’s trying to convey, even though it’s eye-catching.”

The next visual that was shown in all four groups was developed for the Think Blue Massachusetts’ campaign.



This visual received the second highest rating of the three discussed in this section because it was more subtle and several held the same belief that more is not always better.

It should be noted that its appeal was most widespread among those who were already aware of fertilizer runoff. And, as pointed out in discussion some people do not know what the man is pushing, they may not have seen it since they live in a gated community and lawn work is done by a service.

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

The following comments reveal some of the less appealing aspects of this visual:

- “Scary and threatening, specific info is in small print that is too small.”
- “Has punch but a lot of people may think what is the connection to fish if they aren’t already aware of the issues.”
- “...a little insulting.”
- “Needs work with the picture. It doesn’t compel me to keep reading.”
- “...in a gated community don’t push spreader...”
- “...it gets the point across quickly but too many of us leave it up to our lawn service.”

SPECIFIC APPEAL

As mentioned above, the visual is viewed as subtle and thought provoking. The connection between fertilizer and runoff was clear to several of the participants especially those already aware of the issue. Detailed comments follow:

- “That would definitely get me to read what’s on the bottom...”
- “...explains what we can do to help the problem.”
- “We tend to have a belief that if a little does some good then more is better. More is just more sometimes and not a good thing. I think this message is to the point and shows the consequence of our actions.”
- “...confirm my belief that less is better, and that you should refrain during the rainy season.”
- “...message is much clearer, though maybe not as eye-catching [as Lee County’s Bus Wrap]. This might work as a billboard.”
- “I like the message. It isn’t colorful like number 1 [Lee County’s] but it’s not so obvious, makes you stop and think it through.”
- “Gets to the point, cut and dry (no pun intended).”

- “It’s more bland in appearance but it gets the message across more clearly and subtly.”
- “...that is my ignorant way of thinking, go heavy now and I won’t have to [do] this for another six months...”
- “...it had more outdoor appeal and that is what Florida is all about...”
- “...I like it because I care about life in our waters. So it catches my eye.”
- “Focus on animals and our earth. That has a way of hitting home for me. It’s like, hey, do I really need to put all this stuff in the ground.”
- “The message is straight to the point without getting into name calling of environmentalists versus conservatives seeking restrictions from government.”
- “Message is to the point; I like this one—makes you think.”
- “...short and meaningful message. The website stands out and that provides credibility.”

The third visual in the series discussed with participants was developed by the Southwest Florida Management District and shown in both in-person groups and the second online discussion.

**You want your lawn green,
NOT your water.
 Don't over-fertilize.**

Over-fertilizing can cause harmful water pollution. Here's how you can help:

- Don't fertilize right before a heavy rain
- Sweep up spilled fertilizer on paved areas or the lawn and put it back in the bag
- Use slow-release fertilizer
- Leave a 10-foot no-pesticide, no-fertilizer zone around water bodies



To find out more, visit WaterMatters.org and order a free *Fertilizer Facts* book today.

Southwest Florida
 Water Management District
www.sfwmd.com • 1-800-432-1476

This visual was the most preferred of the three main creatives shown to participants because they felt it was “eye-catching”, had information about what to do including a website and the child had universal appeal.

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

These included some confusion about what the boy was covered in – “...he’s covered in green and [yet] don’t want green?”. Participants to whom this visual was not as appealing offered the following comments:

- “I think this one is gross. Good message but for me it’s nasty looking...”
- “It is a little too general. What type of bad pollution? We tend to be hammered with ‘pollution’ in everything we do. ...more effective to state why this action specifically hurts the fish by blooming algae and robbing oxygen from the water.”

SPECIFIC APPEAL

The child in the visual encouraged participants to consider the impact of what they were applying to their lawns for the sake of their own young children as well as future generations. Participants commented that it was "...straightforward and tells you what to do...". The website was visible to most and they appreciated being able to follow-up for more details.

Comments included:

- "Gets your attention with the catchy phrase and silly outfits!! ...I like the little boy the most!! ...I have seen...it while traveling!! It always catches my eye!!
- "...explains what we can do to help the problem."
- "...it gives you a little more info than the other ones about fertilizing."
- "Eye-catching and attention getting, point is made immediately and to the point, specifics are clearly stated and, has an evident invitation to find out more, if you so choose."
- "Provides valuable information."
- "This ad gives more information and seems to be inline with the saving our planet. Sometimes less is better."
- "It is eye catching, gives a strong visual of the possible impact of fertilizer runoff AND gives specific action steps. Pretty good for SwiftMud [SWFWMD]."
- "...eye catching and more information..."
- "...you have the kid, you have the water. Two things that people enjoy and you have the info for people to read after the picture gets your eye."
- "...a lot of people don't think in the long term of all their runoff. Why should the children suffer later on because we want our grass to look pretty now?"
- "This one with the kid on it tells me more about what you want me to know about fertilizing and not fertilizing than the rest of it."

- “Especially if you have like small children. I have a small son that would catch my attention. I would be like ‘Wow’, what have I been doing that is going to affect him.”

A few word changes were suggested for this creative and included “We Want Our Lawns Green, Not Our Water”, which would make it more personal according to participants. A change in the second line to “Be fertilizer free this summer” was also suggested.

Both groups of online participants were shown three short videos developed by the Chesapeake Club, which is an initiative of the Chesapeake Bay Program. All three videos can be seen at <http://www.chesapeakeclub.org/media.htm>

One participant said of them “These messages are not offensive making anyone guilty, but are cute suggesting positive outcomes from positive behavior...”

"Sod" (15 sec) - Chesapeake Club



This video was least preferred of the three because at the end it shows a man in a bar / restaurant being served a plate of grass. Some did not understand the point it was trying to get across.

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

The reasons for low overall ratings were attributed to its “silliness”, “gross” and “it doesn’t spell it out. These are shown in the comments listed below:

- “It doesn’t spell it out like Clip S [“Delicious”] that fertilizer washes into sewers into rivers into the Bay killing crab...I think it should be clear...”
- “...a waste as it would be funny the first time but if it was repeated...boring.”
- “What is it supposed to mean? You can’t eat your lawn? I think some people might not make the connection.”
- “Why are you eating grass? Are you implying loss of crabs will rid us of all other food? Or are you saying ‘Do you prefer your lawn over crabs?’ Misses.”
- “Watching someone eat grass just didn’t do it for me.”

SPECIFIC APPEAL

The main component that was distasteful for most was the reason that some preferred it or gave it a high overall rating. Their comments follow:

- “...It would hopefully get someone who likes crabs not to over fert. [fertilize].”
- “This was a little less grass, I mean crass...”
- “...like better, it addresses the no fertilizer problem but gives it a little humor, with the man eating grass.”
- “A little more humor less kill the poor crabs, I like it...”

"Appetizer" (15 sec) - Chesapeake Club



The next video received the second highest overall rating of the three for some of the same reasons that the statement “THIS SUMMER GIVE YOU AND YOUR LAWN A VACATION”, the appeal of leisure time.

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

The main drawback according to participants who did not rate it highly was that it lacked information. They said:

- “...wasn’t very informative.”
- “...not much info.”

SPECIFIC APPEAL

Participants enjoyed the sense of humor expressed in it and found it informative. They commented:

- “...short and sweet and to the point...”
- “...nice and cute – my favorite. One [“Delicious”] was a bit harsh about eating the crab with butter, I would of expected a more ‘save the crab’ approach – not eat the crab. The third [“Sod”] was not appealing at all and made little impact with the guy eating a grass sandwich.”

- "...demonstrates proper behavior, why and puts a humorous slant on it."
- "...I would rather be in a hammock than doing the lawn."
- "...telling you that you don't have to do something this weekend."
- "Good punch line, a little light on the info."
- "I think maybe people can relate to that guy in the yard."

The last in the series of videos was titled "Delicious" and is discussed below:

'Delicious" (30 sec) - Chesapeake Club



"Delicious" was the most preferred of the three videos because it makes details the consequences; "...it spells out the process..." And because it is "...short and to the point and informative."

SPECIFIC DISLIKES

Some found the tongue in cheek humor off-putting as the next comment reflects:

- “I liked the no fertilize message, but I did not like that we should refrain so that crabs could perish in hot butter. I feel that the fertilizer runoff problem affects the whole Bay system, and not having a message that we should refrain just so that we can eat crabs, does not do justice to this serious problem...”
- “...it did not hit home for me. I thought it was a joke at first.”

SPECIFIC APPEAL

Yet the appeal of the “Delicious” video was the obvious connection between fertilizer and the impact on the crabs. Comments follow:

- “It made sense...seeing that water washes fertilizer into our sewers into the rivers into the Bay affecting and killing crab. Kind of funny, goofy that crabs should die in melted butter...but I get the message what a waste to die by fertilizer.”
- “Good message and well understood.”
- “I was told by a fisherman a few months ago that the blue crab was disappearing, this makes you think of what we do when we are unaware.”
- “Just love crab, don’t want any getting contaminated though.”
- “Shows the Bay and I like that impact.”

CREDIBLE AND COMPELLING

BELIEVABLE PREMISE

Many participants throughout the groups and even after all of the concept statements, creatives and videos were discussed, continued to question whether fertilizer was as injurious to the water and marine life as claimed. "...Does fertilizer really injure water life as much as the ad says?"

Or, they minimized and defended their use of it during the rainy season "If I fertilized a lot, yes [it would be harmful]..."

For these participants the idea that their lawns could be just as attractive without using fertilizer during the summer months was difficult to believe. As a participant stated:

- "What is hard to believe is the fact that once you fertilize you don't need to water or that all those months of not fertilizing would [not] cause harm to the green and healthy lawn..."

It was determined that about three out of four participants said that they had not been aware that fertilizer runoff impacts water prior to the discussion.

Participants were asked whether they believe, based on the information shown in the groups, that fertilizing during the rainy months has negative consequences on water and marine life. About three out of ten said that they do not believe that premise. As stated above, they reasoned that they do not use a great deal of fertilizer or they apply it correctly. Comments included:

- "I believe it can cause some damage in over fert.[fertilize]."
- "I guess it could be if every one at every house did it to [too] often. I do live near the water and when it floods it goes right back into the Bay."
- "I do not believe... My wife and I recycle, so it's not like we don't practice good stewardship of God's creation."
- "As I stated earlier I believe that you can use it carefully."

- “No, I don’t think using fertilizer when in the rainy season is harmful.”
- “...I am still not convinced.”, not sure it’s bad

Participants were then asked if anything in the message statements, visuals or videos would influence them to not use fertilizer during the rainy season. Again, about three out of ten said that they had not changed their opinions and did not believe that fertilizer runoff would be harmful. Some of their comments are shown below:

- “...if I was proved to be over fertilizing, but I am very careful about what I put in the yard
- “I only fert [fertilize] when plant show that it is needed.”
- “Based on how much we use, no I don’t think so.”
- “No. I do not regularly fertilize, but the month of the year would not be a determining factor...”

Those who were influenced by what they had seen, heard or read commented:

- “Yes, the...message with the boy in the water. I got more info from that then [than] any other.”
- “...What was especially helpful was the list of exact things to do to prevent fertilizer damage in the visual #3 [SWFWMD’s Creative].”
- “Yes, I do love crab.”
- “...This is such a simple change that it is easy to do and it makes sense to do it.”
- “Yes, I think they [messages] offer direct info.”
- “Yes, I get the point.”
- “Yes, most of those had an impact on me with the exception of the guy eating grass in the bar...”
- “I think if you change the ad from crabs to grouper it would catch someone’s eye.”
- “If they were presented by an authoritative source, I would probably change my habits...”

COMPELLING ARGUMENT

Regardless of whether participants believed the premise, they were asked to role-play and assume the identity of a fictional attorney such as Perry Mason, to convince a neighbor of the harmful effects of fertilizer runoff.

They indicated in their “arguments” that they would need to research certain facts, mainly the measured impact of fertilizer runoff. They wanted to be able to discuss how much of the fertilizer on a particular lawn makes its way to the Bay; and from there what actual damage or environmental impact is caused by a pollutant to the water and to marine life.

Other critical information needed would be alternatives / solutions to maintaining lawns without fertilizer and their “survivability”. They felt that visuals showing alternative landscaping or lawns grown with fertilizer and without fertilizer would win this point.

Cost savings was another position that participants would use to dispute their case.

Following are remarks made for each type of argument.

Research Needed:

- “You know, I’d have to know a little more before I’d talk to somebody because I don’t know enough to convince them to be fertilizer-free...”
- “...I would have to research and present documentation of, a, how fertilizing during this time is not the time to do it, b, the harmful affects of fertilizing during this time, and, c, alternatives...”
- “...I would have to prepare and educate myself more. First of all, I’d have to address facts to show people that fertilizing and watering don’t go hand in hand – that would require information from agencies or experts. ...what percent makes it to our streams and oceans. ...Provide solutions to ensure people would still have green lush lawns, that our community would not be affected and all the grass would not turn brown and get full of bugs...”
- “...be forced to research the discussion of Red Tide... I understand that Red Tide was diminished for the past two years because of the drought that has reduced runoff. The drought will not last forever. ...I would also have to be certain that changing the fertilizer schedule would not negatively impact on the poor grass.”

- "...I might prepare a map to show runoff from my subdivision could reach Sarasota Bay and the Gulf via the county's storm water system. I might make (or find) some calculations showing how much could run off from one lawn (average), then multiply it out by the number of lawns in my subdivision and tell what that amount of chemicals could do in Sarasota Bay. Also important might be how much of any one pollutant could kill a fish..."

Environmental Impact:

- "Facts will win the day. ...it is counter productive and hurts more than it helps. With the good rain we get during that time of year your yard is going to grow in this climate whether you do anything or not. What does happen is a lot of the fertilizer we apply during that time is washed down the sewer and gets into the aquifer. Once there it helps the algae bloom and this robs oxygen from the water and can and does kill fish and shell fish..."
- "...I would get all the evidence on how the fertilizer hurts the water that leads to the sea, then we fish and eat the fish that come from that area and that will affect us! You are what you eat!! The mercury use[d] to be bad in the Bay and you couldn't eat any of the fish for awhile."
- "After gathering a lot of information, my main argument would be the blue crab. How through fertilizing during the months of June through September can and is harming our sea life. Also adding that our grass can survive and flourish without being fertilized during the months of June through September."
- "...I would let them know especially since they live so close to the Bay the fertilizer can run into the draining [drainage] system and hurt a lot of living things in the Bay..."
- "...I would follow with the ideas and images from the 2nd and 3rd visual ["THINK MORE IS BETTER, TELL THAT TO THE FISH" and "YOU WANT YOUR LAWN GREEN, NOT YOUR WATER"] and the first video ["Delicious"] to strengthen the idea that our environment will also benefit with less algae growth in local ponds and bays, hopefully less favorable conditions for red tide and fish kills."

Visual Alternatives

- “...to have some kind of visual exhibits that show them before and after effects of the results fertilizing in the rainy season and the runoff results when the fertilizer goes into the water...”
- “...My main argument to them would be a visual, look at my yard, it is fertilizer free and it looks very colorful, including green, because the plants in my yard are Florida-friendly ones that don’t need fertilizer, by doing the same you can save time and lots of money...”

Cost Implications

- “...simple and even cost saving rule of thumb, we can make a difference! All you have to do is refrain from fertilizing your lawn from June through September. This is during the height of our wettest months in Florida and should not impact your lawn...”
- “...begin by pointing out the savings potential offered by not fertilizing from June thru [through] September both financially by avoiding the cost of fertilizer and the labor...”
- “...Save money. You will not need as much fertilizer if you do it when less will be washed away. Have a healthier lawn, be more aware of the impact our yards and what we put on them have on the areas around us, and save some money...”

Cost – Property Value

- “We live in Florida and our water resources are very important to everyone who lives and visits here. If we continue to pollute our rivers and the Gulf of Mexico, it will be a detriment to tourism and property values in our area...”

Cost – Approach HOA

- “...know the politics of my home owner’s association...My husband has...presented several projects that were well researched and presented in a clear, precise manner...talking to the wall. ...I would first research how much fertilizer the association uses, how frequently, when do they fertilize and how much it costs. ...would research the benefits of effective and environmentally safe uses of fertilizer... I would make a comparison between association’s current practices and the suggested effective environmental practices...biggest impact...would be the \$\$\$ saved. This would still be a hard sell, since I live in a golf community.”

PREFERRED MEDIA

Early in the discussions participants volunteered that much of the information about lawn maintenance comes from neighbors, lawn services and personnel at Home Depot or Lowe's. At the end of the groups the focus was on what method(s) would be best used to inform the community on the topic of the impact of fertilizer runoff.

It was suggested that placing information in the stores such as Home Depot would be a good location for it. Comments included:

- “You might get extra punch to your message if you could get support from the garden area of stores like the Home Depot and Lowe's. They have large environmental commitments, especially at the Home Depot. They could promote in their ads like they do things like the fluorescent light bulbs.”
- “A Home Depot or a Lowe's. I hardly ever go to the little shops so that would be where [I'd see it].”
- “You know you go to Wal-Mart or the craft store you see all these little free things you can do this, this and this, I take it. Just like coupons, I take it, but if it's hanging up like where the insecticides or fertilizer if it's going to tell me something I'll take it.”
- “...If you could get some big companies to support this (places like Home Depot or Wal-Mart where a lot of people buy fertilizer), then it would make a big impact. People might see a sign in front of the fertilizer display and would think ‘Wow, the people who are selling this stuff are telling me not to do it in these months – it must be THAT important’...”

Not surprising many of the online participants preferred the videos and the medium that would showcase them such as television or You Tube. It was also suggested that community association newsletters, etc. would be a good way to reach homeowners.

- “I like the videos best because they draw you into the message better. ...the most expensive option so I think you should do a combination of statements, visuals and videos as the budget allows. The video(s) would obviously be best on TV spots. The statements can be in variety of sites...inside mass transit, in grocery stores, on billboards. The visuals would be best on buses and other mass transit, billboards, etc. You might also consider getting the message out through community associations and nurseries, garden shops.”

Several reiterated the HOA as a place to begin getting the information out.

- “I would have to work through the Neighborhood Committee Chairperson to bring the discussion up at our monthly meetings. If successful, the topic would be on the agenda and would be published in the minutes taken. The purpose would be to bring the issue to getting on the entire community’s landscaping agenda. I live in Lakewood Ranch, which has many communities and a governing body.”

Many distribution methods were suggested such as bill inserts, local newspapers, as one participant commented:

- “...The topic would have to be presented with some education as to why it is not good, won’t hurt the lawn and who is encouraging. Then consistent follow-up with short, catchy ads in all forms of media, especially print and the air waves. Public service announcements, they run some very good ones with actors or the ones with the great calm voice. Certainly the local paper for print media, mail flyers with water bill and special news stories in May to remind people. But I still feel some of the early ads will have to have more information – or the big ‘fertilizer companies’ will get in the way...”

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program was identified as the sponsor in the last three groups and while some had not previously heard of it, it gave the necessary credibility to the message.



Final Programmatic Report Narrative

Instructions: Save this document on your computer and complete the narrative in the format provided. The final narrative should not exceed ten (10) pages; do not delete the text provided below. Once complete, upload this document into the on-line final programmatic report task as instructed.

1. Summary of Accomplishments

In four to five sentences, provide a brief summary of the project's key accomplishments and outcomes that were observed or measured.

The PCEF grant funded a comprehensive marketing and education campaign in conjunction with Pinellas County's fertilizer ordinance, which bans the use and sale of nitrogen fertilizers in the June-September rain season. The campaign, called "Be Floridian," targeted homeowners, retail outlets and lawn care professionals. Campaign materials reinforced the central theme that "True Floridians know better than to fertilize in the summer." Key elements included:

- 10 billboards on major roadways in Pinellas County that received more than 1.7 million "eyes-on impressions" (views) by motorists each week for April and May 2011.
- Quarter-page print ads published in the St. Petersburg Times twice weekly throughout April and May, which reach approximately 200,000 Pinellas County residents.
- Digital ads on the Bay News 9 website as well as two dozen other magazine and newspaper websites geographically targeting the Tampa Bay area that were potentially viewed 3.5 million times during the two-month April-May media campaign.
- Delivery of tip cards, tear sheets, rack cards, banners and buttons to all 47 retail stores in Pinellas County that sell fertilizer.
- Creation of a Be Floridian website (www.befloridian.org) that attracted 4,205 unique visitors from April 1- June 20, 2011, with more than 70% of those coming from the Tampa Bay area.

2. Project Activities & Outcomes

Activities

- Describe and quantify (using the approved metrics referenced in your grant agreement) the primary activities conducted during this grant.

Provide fertilizer education materials to retail outlets that sell residential fertilizer

Materials were provided to all 47 retail stores in Pinellas that sell fertilizer, as follows:

- 121 "Fertilize Like A Floridian" tear-off pads, each holding 100 individual information sheets. The tear-off pads are hung from store shelves so customers can tear off an info sheet about the ordinance and eco-friendly yard care in general.
- 150 "Ask Me About Summer-Safe Yard Product" buttons for sales staff
- 10 3' x 8' "Jump Into Our Summer-Safe Yard Products" store banners
- 10 cardboard cut-out flamingoes with a rack card holder and 2,500 Fertilize Like A Floridian rack cards

Ensure proper certification of fertilizer applicators working for lawn care companies in Pinellas

TBEP paid for 1,000 BMP certification decals for commercial fertilizer applicators in both Hillsborough and Pinellas. The decals are placed on company trucks to denote that the applicators have completed their required training in Best Management Practices for the Green

Industries, which includes specific training use of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. The decals provide quick and easy proof for both homeowners and county enforcement personnel of an applicator's compliance with the law. All commercial fertilizer applicators working in Pinellas County were required to complete their state-approved BMP certification training by January 2011. Decals were issued to company vehicles upon submission of the BMP certificates.

Additionally, Pinellas County's ordinance also requires lawn maintenance personnel that perform only basic services, such as mowing, mulching and pruning, to complete Best Management Practices training in these important aspects of lawn care. TBEP also paid for vehicle decals for these professionals.

Enlist Lawn Care Companies in Providing Information about Proper Fertilization to Customers

Both TBEP and Pinellas County have provided in excess of 5,000 doorhangers and brochures about the county ordinance to lawn care professionals to distribute to their customers.

Additionally, we are implementing a recognition program for industry representatives who commit to follow the requirements of the county ordinance. Criteria for recognition were developed by our Fertilizer Education Steering Committee for landscape designers; lake management companies; fertilizer manufacturers; and lawn maintenance companies.

Businesses can earn designation as a "Be Floridian" partner by signing a pledge to follow Be Floridian fertilizing principles (no nitrogen in the summer; slow-release nitrogen the rest of the year) and to distribute Be Floridian materials to their customers. Business partners are recognized on the Be Floridian website and Facebook page, and given a Be Floridian "seal of approval" to post on their website.

The program began in April 2011 and garnered 10 business partners by June. More will be added on an ongoing basis.

Train retail outlet employees about new fertilizer ordinance

Approximately 185 index-sized tip cards were sent to retail outlets to help garden center employees answer customer questions about the Pinellas ordinance. Special training workshops were provided to Lowe's and Home Depot staff by Pinellas County officials and representatives of Sunniland Fertilizer, a Florida company that is producing a variety of ordinance-compliant products.

Encourage Homeowner Associations to Adopt Model Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ contracts

Because the Steering Committee and our Marketing Consultants elected to focus our limited funds during the first year of the ordinance on retail outlets and homeowners in general, we did not work on this task. It was decided that HOAs would be educated to some extent by the ordinance itself, since the lawn care companies used or required by many HOAs would have to abide by the ordinance prohibitions against using nitrogen at all from June 1-September 30, and against applying any fertilizer the remainder of the year when heavy rains were forecast.

However, we did invest time and effort in providing information about the ordinance – and eco-friendly landscaping in general – to HOAs and neighborhoods throughout the county. Press releases were sent out by both TBEP and the county, and at least 35 HOAs published newsletter articles we provided for them about the ordinance, along with simple tips for maintaining a healthy lawn throughout the summer. Neighborhood volunteers distributed more than 4,000 doorhangers about the county ordinance.

Because we recognize that there are still conflicts between HOAs who mandate turfgrass-dominated landscapes and individual homeowners who desire to reduce or eliminate turfgrass in their yards, we want to expand our outreach to this important audience in future years. A proposed “Neighborhood Tool Kit” will help neighborhoods make the shift to more sustainable landscapes, including modification of covenants and deed restrictions regarding landscapes, and guidelines for selecting lawn care companies that adhere to eco-friendly landscaping principles.

Encourage homeowners to take online pledge not to fertilize in the summer

Because Pinellas County’s ordinance forbids use of nitrogen fertilizers in the summer, and reinforces that with a sales ban on such fertilizers, we assumed the majority of homeowners in the county would be in compliance with the ordinance in the first year. Thus, we decided an online pledge to encourage compliance was not necessary.

Instead, we decided the greater challenge was to make sure residents understood WHY the fertilizer restrictions are needed, and to begin to change the widespread perception that turfgrass is the only, or most desirable, landscape plant. This “attitude adjustment” is the primary focus of the Be Floridian campaign. By repeatedly reminding people why they live in the Tampa Bay area – because of our appealing water recreational activities like fishing and going to the beach – and emphasizing the “everybody’s doing it” message that *True Floridians know better than to fertilize in the summer*, we hope to gradually change the region’s attitude about acceptable landscaping and increase the use of native and Florida-adapted plants that need less water, fertilizer and chemicals.

To give ourselves a tailwind in such an ambitious effort, we decided to make a big splash in our first year through a mass media campaign that would provide widespread exposure and begin to brand our campaign image and logo.

A two-month media campaign was launched in April 2011 to prepare residents for the first year of the summer sales ban. The campaign included:

- 10 billboards on major roadways in Pinellas, with more than 1.7 million “eyes-on impressions” by motorists weekly
- Quarter-page ads in the St. Petersburg Times twice a week, reaching 200,000 residents
- Digital ads on the Bay News 9 website and 24 other newspaper and magazine websites that were potentially viewed 3.5 million times. The Bay News 9 digital had the highest rate of “click-throughs,” with 400 people actually clicking on the ad to get more information.
- Creation of a Be Floridian website (www.befloridian.org) that was launched in April 2011. The website attracted 4,205 unique visitors from April 1- June 20, 2011, with more than 70% of those coming from the Tampa Bay area.
- Be Floridian benefitted from “earned media” as well, including several articles in local newspapers about the campaign, and free advertisements published in six beach community newsletters that are direct-mailed to 90,000 county residents every two months.
- Briefly explain discrepancies between the activities conducted during the grant and the activities agreed upon in your grant agreement.

We had intended implementation of our education campaign in all of our partner governments, and our pre-campaign research assumed we would be implementing education throughout the Tampa Bay region (see Analysis of Focus Group Research document that accompanies the Final Grant report). However, our education program was contingent upon all our partner governments adopting the Tampa Bay Estuary Program’s Model Fertilizer Ordinance. We had to revise our strategy

significantly because only Pinellas County (and its 26 municipalities), adopted the Model Ordinance during the grant time frame. Hillsborough County adopted a much weaker ordinance with no ban on use or sale of nitrogen fertilizers, and Manatee County did not adopt any ordinance. (Both Manatee County and the City of Tampa have since adopted strong fertilizer ordinances). We decided to focus our education campaign in Pinellas, where we believed the presence of the sales ban offered us greater potential for educational success, and more bang for our advertising buck. We also did not want to dilute the very strong message of our campaign, or conflict with any education planned by Hillsborough in association with their less-stringent fertilizer rule.

Outcomes

- Describe and quantify progress towards achieving the project outcomes described in your grant agreement. (Quantify using the approved metrics referenced in your grant agreement or by using more relevant metrics not included in the application.)

Online Pledge

We elected not to use this as an educational tool, instead creating a random pop-up survey on the Be Floridian website to gauge citizens' understanding and receptiveness to proper fertilizer practices. Of the 100 surveys that were completed, 55 respondents said they planned to change how or when they fertilize based on something they saw or read, indicating that our messaging was driving behavior change.

Rewards for Compliance with Ordinance

We did institute a Be Floridian business partner program to recognize lawn care companies, landscape designers and other s who comply with the Pinellas ordinance and promote Be Floridian landscape principles for Florida-Friendly Landscaping.™ We developed specific criteria for approval for each category, and that category is posted on the Be Floridian website so that all can see that the designation must be earned and is more than just “window dressing.” So far 10 companies have earned the designation. They are recognized on the Be Floridian website and Facebook page and give a “seal of approval” to post on their own websites. Additions are expected as the program continues and more companies learn about it.

Measuring Reductions in Nitrogen Loadings

The most important measure of the success of the Pinellas County ordinance, and our companion Be Floridian campaign, is in a reduction in the amount of nitrogen entering Tampa Bay and county waterways from urban fertilizer runoff.

TBEP is launching a 4-year research project, beginning in summer 2011, to compare nitrogen concentrations in stormwater in residential communities with similar characteristics in each of our three counties. The communities consist of 50-home sections of newer subdivisions with stormwater ponds, where the ONLY source of the stormwater is the 50-home block singled out for the project. Water quality sampling for nitrogen will be conducted in these ponds during both wet and dry seasons, for four years, to detect changes in nitrogen levels. Social surveys of the homeowners in these areas also will be conducted at regular intervals, to establish a baseline of lawn care management, and then track changes in their lawn care regimen that can be attributed to education. This study should provide concrete data as to the relative effectiveness of the various ordinances currently in effect in Pinellas, Manatee and Hillsborough counties., as well as a measure of the success of the Be Floridian campaign.

- Briefly explain discrepancies between what actually happened compared to what was anticipated to happen.

Because we had to confine our efforts to Pinellas County, we were limited to certain types of advertising that could be generally contained within Pinellas, such as print ads and billboards. But scaling down the scope of the project actually was beneficial since it allowed us to use all of our funds in a smaller area, for greater impact.

Furthermore, because of the importance of the sales ban – and its newness – we decided to focus more time and money on working with retail outlets, since we could get more bang for our buck by utilizing the 47 retail outlets in Pinellas to reach residents, rather than us than trying to educate all 900,000 county residents alone. As a result, the main audiences we concentrated on were the retail stores and homeowners (through the general mass media campaign) and we did not do as much with lawn care companies or with Homeowner Associations as had originally planned.

- Provide any further information (such as unexpected outcomes) important for understanding project activities and outcome results.

3. Lessons Learned

Describe the key lessons learned from this project, such as the least and most effective conservation practices or notable aspects of the project's methods, monitoring, or results. How could other conservation organizations adapt their projects to build upon some of these key lessons about what worked best and what did not?

We learned the following lessons that have direct applicability to all types of education about environmental issues, especially where a behavior change is desired:

- Education alone is not nearly as cost-effective or successful as education supported by regulation. Just as most people did not wear seat belts until police began issuing tickets for failure to do so, most people will continue to buy the same fertilizer products unless they are forced by regulation to try something different – as in the case of the Pinellas ordinance. The sales ban adopted by Pinellas County served as the cornerstone of the Be Floridian education campaign. Our central message that “True Floridians know better than to fertilize during the summer” was reinforced every time a homeowner visited a Home Depot, Lowe’s or Wal-Mart and found ONLY zero-nitrogen products on the shelves.
- Our Focus Groups showed us that cultural and aesthetic beliefs that a lush, green lawn is the only acceptable landscape are highly engrained in our society. Lecturing to people about the harmful impacts of turf-dominated landscapes, and their drain on water resources, has not changed this mindset. A shift in marketing approaches is needed. We chose to attempt to create a new norm – the idea that *True Floridians know better than to fertilize in the summer*. And we focused on the idea of protecting our water recreation – “Protecting our Fun” -- as the hook. We are still too early in this campaign to know if we have succeeded, but the positive reception given to Be Floridian by residents, businesses, educators and tourism officials seems to indicate we are on the right track.
- It is increasingly important to embrace new media technologies. People learn in different ways, so successful education must employ a variety of tools, including Social Media, traditional media, printed products, Internet, and even a little outside-the-box thinking (like the traveling flock of plastic pink yard flamingos that visit various public venues) to make sure you are reaching out to as many segments of your audience as possible.

4. Dissemination

Briefly identify any dissemination of lessons learned or other project results to external audiences, such as the public or other conservation organizations.

The Be Floridian campaign and experience has been shared with stormwater educators throughout the Tampa Bay region, and several communities in other parts of Florida, including Sarasota County, Lee County and Alachua County. Summaries of the campaign have been provided to all 28 National Estuary Programs. Pinellas County watershed managers recently gave a presentation on the ordinance and the education campaign to members of the Florida Lake Management Society.

5. Project Documents

Include in your final programmatic report, via the Uploads section of this task, the following:

- 2-10 representative photos from the project. Photos need to have a minimum resolution of 300 dpi;
- report publications, GIS data, brochures, videos, outreach tools, press releases, media coverage;
- any project deliverables per the terms of your grant agreement.

POSTING OF FINAL REPORT: *This report and attached project documents may be shared by the Foundation and any Funding Source for the Project via their respective websites. In the event that the Recipient intends to claim that its final report or project documents contains material that does not have to be posted on such websites because it is protected from disclosure by statutory or regulatory provisions, the Recipient shall clearly mark all such potentially protected materials as “PROTECTED” and provide an explanation and complete citation to the statutory or regulatory source for such protection.*

Reducing Nitrogen Runoff Social Marketing Plan

October 2010

FINAL

What's Inside: Contents of the Marketing Plan

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Executive Summary

Goal

Reduce the use of nitrogen-based fertilizers during the summer rainy season in Pinellas, Hillsborough and Manatee counties, thus reducing the No. 1 pollutant degrading Tampa Bay.

Major Challenges

- ▶ A green lawn is equated with responsible homeownership
- ▶ Homeowners may feel social pressure to “keep up the neighborhood” by trying to maintain a green lawn
- ▶ Homeowners may receive additional pressure to maintain a lawn from their homeowner association (HOA), despite state laws that allow Florida-friendly gardening practices to supercede HOA covenants and restrictions
- ▶ Some homeowners mistakenly think the best way to maintain a green lawn in most circumstances is through frequent use of nitrogen-based fertilizer
- ▶ Some homeowners mistakenly believe that, because fertilizer should be watered in when applied, it is a good practice to fertilize just before it rains
- ▶ While there are a number of generally accepted best management practices for fertilizer use and application, they are not widely known or followed
- ▶ Secret shopper research indicates that best management practices for fertilizer use and application are not widely known by retail sales representatives, who may dispense advice that contributes to excessive use of nitrogen-based fertilizer
- ▶ Lawn-care companies and retail outlets receive income from selling fertilizer and fertilizer applications to homeowners, giving them a vested interest in continuing to do so
- ▶ Best management practices that call for not fertilizing before a heavy rain are difficult, if not impossible, to follow in Florida, where even professional weather forecasters have difficulty making accurate predictions for a given location¹
- ▶ Busy homeowners and lawn-care companies may find it difficult to schedule fertilizer applications around unpredictable weather patterns
- ▶ Behavioral research shows that behaviors that are complicated and/or difficult to do are less likely to be widely adopted
- ▶ The three counties have differences in how they govern the application and sale of nitrogen-based fertilizer

Major Assets

- ▶ Excess nitrogen is the No. 1 pollutant in Tampa Bay; the No. 1 source of that pollution is storm-water runoff; the No. 1 source of storm-water runoff (20%) is residential properties. This creates the opportunity for a targeted fertilizer-reduction campaign.²
- ▶ Even small reductions in residential fertilizer use will positively impact the water quality of Tampa Bay, helping to hold the line on nitrogen loadings even as the population in the three abutting counties continues to grow
- ▶ The single most effective way to reduce residential fertilizer runoff is to not fertilize during the summer rainy season -- and Pinellas County and most of its cities have adopted a summertime ban on the application of nitrogen-based fertilizer

¹ Anika Myers Palm, Weather forecasting: Cloudy, with a chance of uncertainty (Orlando Sentinel, August 15, 2010).

² Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Charting the Course: The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan For Tampa Bay (2006).

- ▶ A similar ban on general homeowner application of fertilizer during the rainy summer months has been passed in other municipalities, including Orange County, Florida, reflecting a growing awareness of a ban as an effective way to reduce nitrogen runoff
- ▶ Pinellas County and most of its cities will implement a ban on retail sales of nitrogen-based fertilizer beginning in June 2011
- ▶ A ban on nitrogen-based fertilizers during the summer rainy system is simple to understand and easy to follow, increasing the likelihood of broad compliance
- ▶ Nitrogen-based fertilizer is not needed during summer months to keep most Florida lawns green
- ▶ The rivers and oceans of Tampa Bay are a source of regional identity and pride, providing widely appreciated scenic beauty and recreational opportunities
- ▶ While lawns can be a source of homeowner pride, they also can be a source of frustration over the amount of time and money required for maintenance, as well as the frequently less than ideal results. This frustration opens the doors to marketing Florida-friendly landscaping, which requires less fertilizer and water and encourages plants more adapted to the Florida environment.

Key Recommendations

- ▶ To effect behavior change, this campaign should address social norms, efficacy, and perceived benefits and consequences
 - Social norms: Because having a green lawn (or at least trying to have one) currently is the norm for homeowners, this campaign should tap into a broader social identity – being Floridian
 - Efficacy: The single most effective way to reduce the amount of nitrogen in residential storm-water runoff will be to encourage a voluntary ban (or compliance with a legal ban) on nitrogen-based fertilizers during the summer rainy season – a behavior that is simple to understand and easy to do
 - Perceived benefits and consequences: Marketing must directly address the target audiences' wants and needs, providing individuals with something they already are shopping for – in this case, less time and money spent on lawn care, more time spent enjoying recreation and leisure, and a sense of fitting into the social norm (we will tweak this norm to encompass the “club” of Florida insiders who know the way things are done here and work to protect our way of life).
- ▶ The campaign should launch in late winter, before homeowners begin thinking about and settling on plans for springtime and summer yard care
- ▶ The campaign should initially focus in those markets where the message is most likely to resonate, take root and grow
- ▶ The campaign should focus on homeowners in Year One, and use traction gained with this target audience to spread the message in Year Two to homeowners associations, lawn-care service providers, and retail outlets

Situational Analysis

Introduction

Tampa Bay spans 400 square miles and has a drainage area nearly six times that size. Florida's largest open-water estuary, the Bay has an average depth of only 11 feet and is home to a diverse natural ecology, three busy seaports, and a thriving tourism industry. It is also a place that, like much of Florida, has experienced rapid and continuing residential and commercial growth -- more than 2.3 million people now live in Hillsborough, Manatee and Pinellas counties, which border Tampa Bay, and the population is expected to grow by nearly 19 percent by 2015. This continued growth threatens the enormous strides made in recent decades to reverse damage to Bay habitats. Merely maintaining -- let alone improving -- water quality will require more effort every year to compensate for increased pollution associated with growth.³

One of the main threats to water quality and plant and animal habitats is excess nitrogen -- the No. 1 pollutant in Tampa Bay. The primary source of that pollution is storm-water runoff, and the primary source of storm-water runoff is residential land uses.⁴ In short, the way homeowners currently use nitrogen-based fertilizers in their yards is directly threatening the very reason many residents moved to the Tampa Bay area in the first place -- the abundant natural beauty of the Bay and its inland waterways, and the recreational and leisure activity opportunities these provide.

The Tampa Bay Estuary Program is tackling this threat with a two-year social marketing campaign that aims to reduce the use of nitrogen-based fertilizers in the Tampa Bay watershed, especially during the summer rainy months. The challenge this campaign faces is that it can be hard to persuade individuals -- aside from a small core of engaged advocates for the cause -- to change their personal behavior to benefit a larger social good. For many homeowners, avoiding the risk of neighbors' disapproval over a less-than-manicured lawn can be a more immediate and pressing priority than stopping the algae that is spreading across the bottom of their favorite weekend fishing hole. For some homeowners, there is simply a lack of awareness that their fertilizing practices are contributing to water quality problems and environmental damage, as well as a mistaken belief that simply throwing fertilizer on a lawn will make it green. For others, awareness, while important, may not be enough. People have many competing "shoulds" to sort through every day. In this case, homeowners' perception that their lawn (which they see every day) "should" be green likely will win out over messages telling them that they "should" use less fertilizer to save the Bay; and if most of their neighbors are using fertilizer, they are unlikely to believe that letting their small patch of grass go brown will make a difference to the Bay.

However, TBEP has a variety of tools in its tool chest with which to tackle this problem. A major asset is TBEP's *Model Ordinance Regulating Non-Agricultural Use for the Tampa Bay Region*. This model ordinance -- already adopted by Pinellas County and all Pinellas cities -- includes a summertime ban on the use and (beginning in June 2011) retail sale of fertilizers that contain nitrogen. Although there are a number of widely accepted best-management practices for fertilizer use and application, a ban on summertime use is the single most effective way to reduce nitrogen in storm-water runoff. A ban on nitrogen-based fertilizers during the summer rainy months is simple to understand and easy to follow, increasing the likelihood of broad compliance, and takes into account the high frequency of rain during Florida summers and the difficulty of predicting exact rainfall locations.

Another major asset for TBEP is the extent to which Tampa Bay residents are invested in their

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

waterways as places of beauty, relaxation and fun. The area's outstanding waterways and top-rated beaches are key to the Tampa Bay lifestyle and a significant source of pride. In addition, TBEP can capitalize on the insider status many people across Florida feel about the outdoors beauty they enjoy as residents of the Sunshine State.

Research Summary

Qualitative Research Methodology

Market Insight, a Sarasota-based marketing research firm, conducted formative research for TBEP to evaluate which messages are most likely to influence behavior change related to residential fertilizer use, and which distribution methods are most effective at reaching targeted homeowners in the three-county area. Secondary objectives included assessing homeowners' current level of knowledge regarding fertilizer and its use, and uncovering any concerns they would have about following recommendations in the TBEP model ordinance, including refraining from using fertilizer during the summer months (June through September).

Two traditional in-person focus groups and two online bulletin board focus groups were held from April 29 to May 21, 2009 (n=44). Participants owned a single family home within the three-county study area and had primary or shared responsibility for lawn care. Each group had a mix by age category, educational level, gender and zip code.

In addition, TBEP conducted 17 "secret shopper" surveys of retail outlets in the region – 8 in Hillsborough, 4 in Pinellas, and 5 in Manatee. Each survey contained six questions designed to determine whether sales associates were knowledgeable about and provided recommendations based upon best management practices regarding the use and application of nitrogen-based fertilizers.

Qualitative Research: Major Findings

- Homeowners feel pressure – from their homeowners association and neighbors as well as from their own self-standards – to maintain a green lawn

A nice [lawn] says a lot about a homeowner.

I live under an HOA, so I am required to maintain a level of curb appeal with my home.

So the home looks good, to keep the neighborhood looking good.

Also, then you won't get any letters from your homeowners association.

I personally feel that it [a green lawn] is a very important aspect of home ownership.

It shows you're clean.

- Some homeowners enjoy maintaining their yards

I enjoy seeing plants grow and the lush look of a green lawn.

I enjoy maintaining my lawn. My lawn will never be the yard of the week, but being able to tend to the outside of my home is satisfying."

I enjoy the feeling of pulling up to my house and the lawn looks nice...

- ▶ But homeowners also are frustrated by the required investment of time and money – and the often less than picture book results.

My lawn isn't green and I am upset about it.

It's discouraging and expensive to get that plush golf course kind of look.

*I enjoy the feeling of pulling up to my house and the lawn looks nice.
If it does not, it feels overwhelming and frustrating.*

*I don't think I would choose a community again that requires such an expense
of money and natural resources to maintain the 'always green carpet'.*

- ▶ Best management practices for fertilizer application are not widely known, and homeowners may turn to family, friends, neighbors are their lawn service for advice

We have asked neighbors for information [about fertilizing] as they have lots of insight.

*I have a gardening service, so if I was told they needed to fertilize
during the summer I would accept what the professionals ... say.*

*I did know not to fertilize during the rainy season because our county puts out such information
and we read it. We know that the runoff gets into the rivers, Bay and ocean and can cause
Red Tide and dead spots in the Gulf of Mexico...*

I find that it does make a difference to fertilize during rainy season.

When it rains it is a very good time to fertilize.

The rain helps wash the fertilizer in and you don't have to use your sprinkler system.

To be honest I would continue to during rainy season since it is necessary for fertilizer to work.

Consumer Needs-States

Outlined below is a look at our target audiences and what they think they need (what they are “shopping” for) based on research from this project, other available data, and assumptions from experience. Instead of convincing an audience they have a need they don’t think they have, this plan will frame our services as the solution to a need consumers *already* perceive.

Here are the needs we identified:

Target Audience	Needs-State	New and Better Offer
Homeowner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit in • Save money • Save time • Have fun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeowners who know Florida don’t use fertilizer during the summer. (Let’s tell the new people in town). • Florida-friendly yards save time and money because they require less fertilizer and watering, giving you more time for fun It’s easy to make your yard Florida friendly • It’s easy to keep your Florida-friendly yard looking attractive
Homeowner association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain property values • Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve home values by protecting the reason why people want to move here (beauty and recreational opportunities of Bay and its inland waterways) • Show HOA members how to keep their Florida-friendly yards attractive
Retailer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products to sell • More customers • Customer loyalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to market other products during fertilizer ban: Florida-friendly plants, fertilizer, landscaping plans, advice, etc. • We will help you find customers and build their loyalty by endorsing your Florida-friendly product/business and promoting it on our website • This will help create new market demand for your products
Lawn-care services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services to sell • More customers • Customer loyalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to market other services during fertilizer ban, such as using Florida-friendly (nitrogen free) fertilizer • We will help you find customers and build their loyalty by endorsing your Florida-friendly businesses and promoting it on our website • This will help create new market demand for your services

Market Analysis

Below is a glimpse of the marketplace in which we are competing for attention and resources. It is within this framework that we must make our improved offer to meet the consumer needs addressed above.

Target and Competitive Behaviors

Target Audience	Target Behaviors (Helps Bay)	Competitive Behaviors
<i>Homeowners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Don't apply nitrogen-based fertilizer June to September ▶ Make your yard more Florida friendly by incorporating the appropriate plants, products and management practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do things the way you always have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fertilize any time that you think is good for your lawn ▪ Use the landscaping products and services you are used to ○ Don't risk rocking the boat with the neighbors or HOA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain a big lawn if expected to do so ▪ Do anything it takes to try to make it emerald green
<i>Homeowners associations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Don't apply nitrogen-based fertilizer June to September on community grounds ▶ Make your community grounds more Florida friendly by incorporating the appropriate plants, products and management practices ▶ Allow and encourage Florida-friendly landscaping by members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do things the way you always have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fertilize any time that you think is good for your community grounds ▪ Use the landscaping products and services you are used to ○ Maintain and enforce current rules and expectations for members' yards
<i>Retailers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Don't sell nitrogen-based fertilizer June to September ▶ Educate sales representatives and customers about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The fertilizer ban and why it's important for the community ○ Alternatives to nitrogen-based fertilizer ○ Florida-friendly plants, products and landscaping practices ▶ Promote landscaping products that make yards more Florida friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to stock and sell nitrogen-based fertilizer year round if your county allows it ○ Fight sales ban in municipalities that have adopted a ban ○ Leave it up to individual sales representatives to figure out why there is a ban ○ Leave it up to individual sales representatives to figure out what to tell customers about how to use nitrogen-based fertilizer ○ Promote landscaping products that are likely to sell best in current market conditions

<i>Lawn-care services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Don't apply nitrogen-based fertilizer June to September ▶ Use alternative, Florida-friendly fertilizer if a yard needs it ▶ Educate staff – who in turn can educate customers -- about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The fertilizer ban and why it's important for the community ○ Alternatives to nitrogen-based fertilizer ○ Florida-friendly plants and landscaping practices ▶ Promote landscaping products and services that make yards more Florida friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to apply nitrogen-based fertilizer year round if your county allows it ○ Fight application ban in municipalities that have adopted a ban ○ Leave it up to staff to figure out what to tell customers about the fertilizer ban where there is one ○ Promote landscaping products and services that are likely to sell best in current market conditions
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Market Size

Overall residential market

Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater MSA (total population: 2,395,997)			
Owner-occupied household	Household type	Population	% of market
1,702,608 (71% of total MSA market)	Family households	497751	69.68%
	Married-couple family	412418	57.73%
	Other family	85333	11.95%
	Non-family households	216623	30.32%

Age of householder (owner-occupied)		% of owner-occupied market
15-24	8,108	1.13%
25-34	69,222	9.69%
35-44	137,623	19.26%
45-54	137,575	19.26%
55-64	113,896	15.94%
65-74	122,750	17.18%
75-84	99,296	13.90%
85+	25,904	3.63%

Major ethnicities (owner-occupied)	1,702,608	% of owner occupied
White	1,500,092	88.11%
Hispanic	136,867	8.04%
Black	117,839	6.92%

Source: 2000 Census, U.S. Census Bureau

Homeowners Associations (estimated)

Homeowners / Civic Associations	
Hillsborough County (includes Tampa)	810
Manatee County	110
Pinellas	530

Source: Tampa Bay Estuary Program

Fertilizer consumption, by category (tons)

	Total	Lawn-Turf	Golf-Athl.	Garden	PotPlantSoil	Nursery
Hillsborough	30,055.26	2,257.63	822.94	704.73	1,283.21	511.03
Manatee	44,969.09	452.76	411.48	261.87	265.01	90.38
Pinellas	3,445.89	962.74	588.90	479.78	1,001.20	114.35

Fertilizer consumption, by nutrient type (tons)

	Fertilizer type				Multiple-Nutrient			All Fertilizer		
	Total	Single	Multi	Other	N	P205	K20	N	P205	K20
Hills.	30,055.26	1,867.47	23,125.38	5,062.42	2,180.62	818.63	2,639.37	2,347.83	824.29	2,916.68
Manatee	44,969.09	1,646.15	20,653.14	22,669.79	2,067.82	769.10	2,402.32	2,395.70	814.76	2,532
Pinellas	3,445.89	264.23	2,710.55	471.12	229.90	47.32	142.89	272.43	48.96	172.41

Source: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Agricultural Environmental Service

Potential Allies/Advocates

Those with an inherent interest in promoting a fertilizer reduction campaign include:

- *Municipalities that support nitrogen reduction efforts, including a summertime ban, such as:*
 - Pinellas County and supporting cities
 - Sarasota, which is outside the target market but a close neighbor
- *Businesses that sell Florida-friendly yard products, such as those listed on:*
 - floridagardener.com/FLNatives/NPS.htm
- *Nonprofit organizations that support Florida-friendly landscaping practices businesses, such as:*
 - Association of Florida Native Nurseries
 - Florida Native Plant Society
- *Local environmental groups*

Distribution/Exposure Opportunities

TBEP could use the following channels for exposure and distribution:

- Funny website with embedded campaign messaging and social media tools for sharing with friends
- Print, radio and outdoor ads to drive traffic to the website
- Social media, such as YouTube video(s)
- Pre-written articles for homeowners association newsletters, explaining summer fertilizer ban with focus on HOA concerns (maintaining curb appeal)
- Point of (non) purchase signs for retailers explaining retail ban (in Pinellas) and promoting website
- Yard signs to build informed trusted sources (neighbors) and aspirational campaign brand

Strategy

Overall strategies

- Associate not fertilizing during the summer with “insider status” as a Floridian
- Associate big green lawns and frequent fertilizing with clueless newcomers
- Associate Florida-friendly landscaping with the Tampa Bay lifestyle
- Build efficacy for Florida-friendly landscaping practices
- Help create market demand for Florida-friendly products and services

Target Audiences

- Homeowners
- Homeowners associations
- Retailers
- Lawn-care providers

Offer Statement

During the summer months, I won't use or sell nitrogen-based fertilizers because ...

- It's something only clueless newcomers do
- Yards don't need it anyway
- Summer rains wash nitrogen into nearby waters, destroying the reason we moved here in the first place

I will also try to make my yard more Florida friendly because ...

- I want my yard to belong in Florida, not New Jersey
- It uses less water and fertilizer, saving me time and money
- That means I can spend more time enjoying Tampa Bay's outdoor splendor

Key Messages

Homeowners

- Floridians know better than to fertilize in the summer, between June and September
- Summer rains wash fertilizer into the nearest stream or ocean, spoiling what makes Florida so beautiful
- It's so bad, fertilizing your yard between June and September is actually illegal in Pinellas, Sarasota and 37 other communities
- People who move to Florida from other states sometimes need **floriducation** – that is, learning how things are done in Florida
- Go to www.BeFloridian.org to see if your yard belongs in Florida
- Florida yards include native plants that need less work, leaving homeowners more time to spend enjoying Florida's beauty

Retailers

- Businesses that are attuned to the local community know that Floridians don't fertilize during the summer
- Fertilizing during the summer spoils area streams and oceans, which play a key role in the community's economic engine
- It's so bad, selling fertilizing between June and September is actually illegal in Pinellas, Sarasota and 37 other communities -- and discouraged throughout the Tampa Bay area
- There are other products that can be sold during the summer when fertilizer is banned, including Florida-friendly (nitrogen free) fertilizer and native plants
- Retailers that pledge to Be Floridian – by promoting, through education of their employees and customers, Florida-friendly fertilizer application methods and landscape products – will be promoted via the BeFloridian.org website and promotional materials

Lawn-care services

- Businesses that are attuned to the local community know that Floridians don't fertilize during the summer
- Fertilizing during the summer spoils area streams and oceans, which play a key role in the community's economic engine
- It's so bad, applying fertilizing between June and September is actually illegal in Pinellas, Sarasota and 37 other communities -- and discouraged throughout the Tampa Bay area
- There are other products and services that can be sold during the summer when fertilizer is banned, including summer safe (nitrogen free) fertilizer and Florida-friendly plants
- Lawn care providers that pledge to Be Floridian – by promoting, through education of their employees and customers, Florida-friendly fertilizer application methods and landscape products – will be promoted via the BeFloridian.org website and promotional materials

Tactics

Implementation: Delivering the Better Offer

Below are the tactics we could employ to:

- Associate not fertilizing during the summer with “insider status” as a Floridian
- Associate big green lawns with clueless newcomers
- Associate Florida-friendly landscaping with the Tampa Bay lifestyle
- Build efficacy for Florida-friendly landscaping practices
- Help create market demand for Florida-friendly products and services

Tactic	Plan	How this delivers the offer
Year One		
BeFloridian website	Grab attention with humorous website about how to Be Floridian by not fertilizing during the summer	Immediately associates not fertilizing during the summer with being an in-the-know Floridian.
	The website could include funny interactive tests to measure whether your yard belongs in Florida.	Provides entertainment while embedding messaging about Florida-friendly yard care
	Website can include get help pages, providing both DIY information and lists of supportive businesses	Builds efficacy for Florida-friendly yard care; helps create demand for Florida-friendly products and services; helps promote businesses that provide them
Print ads	Build the Be Floridian brand and drive traffic to the website with targeted print ads that associate not fertilizing with the Tampa Bay/Florida lifestyle, and help spread awareness of ban on summer sales in Pinellas	See reasoning in top two boxes above.
Radio	Build on print ad campaign with radio ads, which could include deejay time, perhaps having deejays take a test to see what state their yard belongs in	See reasoning in top three boxes above.
	TBEP could provide expert for a call-in show where people can ask questions about fertilizer and Florida-friendly yard care.	
	Could include a contest where a caller gets a free product or service from a partner business.	
Outdoor	Create billboards in targeted markets to build the Be Floridian brand, drive traffic to the website, and to help generate earned media	See reasoning in top two boxes above.
Earned media (news) placement	Encourage news coverage in newspapers and magazines and on radio and TV. Key message: Floridians know better than to fertilize during the summer.	See reasoning in top two boxes above

Tactic	Plan	How this delivers the offer
Point of (non) Purchase signs	Provide in-store signs Pinellas retailers can use to explain why there is no nitrogen-based fertilizer for sale June to September, plus simple fact sheets stores can give to sales reps.	Interrupts consumers in situation where they are eager for information (if they are looking for fertilizer); arms sales reps with informed answers for customers.
YouTube video	Create YouTube video with homemade look and feel, perhaps showing people as they try to pass a test to prove their yard belongs in Florida.	See reasoning in top two boxes above
Year Two		
Yard signs	Distribute clever – i.e., covetable -- yard signs to designate Florida-friendly yards	Encourages word of mouth promotion by trusted sources (neighbors) about Florida-friendly practices; spreads awareness of campaign; helps create aspirational campaign brand
Outreach to lawn-care services	Expand outreach to lawn-care services that use Florida-friendly fertilizer practices, promoting supporting businesses via yard signs and the website help pages	Expands compliance with summer ban to commercial sector; lawn services also are a trusted source for homeowners seeking information about how and when to fertilize; will help grow the market for Florida-friendly landscaping services.
Outreach to HOAs	Create vehicles to pass information to HOA boards about fertilizer ban (in Pinellas) and Florida-friendly landscaping, such as article templates that can be customized for each HOA newsletter; fact sheets or simple tips for creating a more Florida-friendly yard; and designated speaker(s) to appear at HOA board meetings. Information should focus on things HOAs care about: saving money, following the rules, and keeping property looking nice.	Addresses major barrier to Florida-friendly landscaping (HOA rules and expectations); spreads word about the campaign through highly targeted distribution channel.
Expand outreach to retailers	Provide in-store workshops for customers on Florida-friendly yardscapes and fertilizer practices	Increases homeowner efficacy for maintaining Florida-friendly yards; helps educate in-store sales reps about fertilizing and landscaping methods
Outreach to farmer's markets	Host booths at local farmers markets to explain fertilizer ban and Florida-friendly yard care – could provide Yard Sign as an incentive	Increases homeowner efficacy; creates informed trusted sources; expands brand awareness
Television	In Year Two, once a core portion of homeowners are engaged in the cause, TBEP may want to use targeted PSAs to expand campaign's aspirational brand	Deepens awareness and drives further engagement with campaign; videos can also spur viral marketing

Action Plan

Action Plan and Sample Timeline: Year One

(Target launch date: Feb. 15)

Tactic	Tasks	Assigned to	Proposed Timing
BeFloridian website	Create mockups of 4 web pages: Homepage, Map Your Yard, Yard Matchup, Yard 911	Contractor	Oct. 30
	Revisions, Round 1	TBEP	Nov. 15
	Deliver revised mockups	Contractor	Dec. 7
	Approve revised mockups	TBEP	Dec. 15
	Program and test website	Contractor	Jan. 31
	Ready for launch	Contractor	Feb. 15
Print, Outdoor and POP signs	Create mockups	Contractor	Nov. 15
	Revisions, Round 1	TBEP	Nov. 30
	Revised mockups	Contractor	Dec. 15
	Final approval	TBEP	Jan. 10
	Deliver print ready files	Contractor	Jan. 31* (may need to be earlier for ad placement)
Radio	Write script for two radio ads	Contractor	Oct. 30
	Round 1 revisions	TBEP	Nov. 15
	Deliver revised scripts	Contractor	Nov. 30
	Approve revised script	TBEP	Dec. 7
	Deliver rough cuts	Contractor	Jan. 15
	Approve rough cuts	TBEP	Feb. 1
Earned media / fact sheets for retailers in Pinellas	Create press kit (media advisory, release, fact sheet, talking points) and retailer fact sheet.	TBEP	Jan. 1
	Provide feedback on press kit	Contractor	Jan. 15
	Finalize press materials	TBEP	Jan. 30
	Send out media advisory	Contractor	Feb. 7
	Begin pitching	Contractor	Feb. 15
YouTube video(s)*	Draft video script	Contractor	Jan. 21
	Approve script	TBEP	Feb. 11
	Deliver rough cuts	Contractor	April 1
	Revisions, Round 1	TBEP	April 8
	Deliver final version	Contractor	May 4
	Approve final version	TBEP	May 11
	Ready for launch	Contractor	May 18