

## Non-point fertilizer pollution in Florida's waterbodies

A study analyzing 127 Florida Lakes for 27 years reported some interesting results. The authors concluded "Although the population of Florida has increased 116 percent over the last 27 years, expected increases in lake concentrations of nutrients were not found." Additionally, "Increased nutrient concentrations, or decreased water clarity, that is often speculated to occur with population growth and watershed development, have not been documented in this sample of Florida lakes."

Is non-point source pollution a problem for Florida's Lakes or not?

Scott Jackson, UF/IFAS Extension Director and Marine Science Agent in Wakulla County, provides some interesting thoughts in answering this question in today's article.

The authors and source of this information include researchers and founders of University of Florida LAKEWATCH Monitoring Program, Dan Canfield and LAKEWATCH Assistant Director Mark Hoyer. In 2005, LAKEWATCH analyzed monthly data from 870 waterbodies throughout the state including lakes, rivers, springs and coastal systems. This volunteer stewardship program provides vital baseline data on which we can gauge current conditions compared to the past. Visit <http://lakewatch.ifas.ufl.edu> for more information.

There are certain truths that we can claim while the debate continues and while more research is conducted. Truth # 1: When there are opportunities for saving money we should be good stewards of what we have been blessed with. Truth # 2: We should be good stewards of our environment.

The same scientists that wrote the journal article also have written newsletter articles for homeowners on the importance of keeping lawn fertilizer in your yard and not in your lake. Thankfully, natural waters have some protective systems to filter pollutants like fertilizers and pesticides.

None of these researchers advocate totally relying on this natural safety net. Without vigilance and stewardship, waterbodies can become impaired. It may take more nutrients to cause damage than we once thought but it's not a license to be environmentally reckless. Preservation is always cheaper than restoration. The Everglades Restoration projected costs \$8-11 Billion Dollars.

With a little help, like keeping native shoreline vegetation intact and following proper fertilizing practices, nature can do a great job.

Applying more fertilizer than you need results in added costs at the store and potentially additional lawn maintenance costs such as irrigation, mowing and pest control. For example, the sudden appearance of lush green turf is often the dinner bell for insects like chinch bugs which results in lawn damage and often expensive pesticides.

A balanced approach with proper fertilizing allows for a nice lawn, more money in the bank and a nice place to swim, fish or picnic. To learn more about proper fertilization for your lawn, visit <http://yourfloridalawn.ifas.ufl.edu> or contact your local UF/IFAS Extension Office.

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