



Latino Environmental Education Network Newsletter

Summer 2008

Volume II, Issue 2

Did you know?

- Latinos make up 25% of Collier County and 15% of Lee County's population.
- Immigrant Latinos come from countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America.
- The mission of the Latino Environmental Education Network is to target environmental education efforts to an audience that has not been reached by traditional programs.

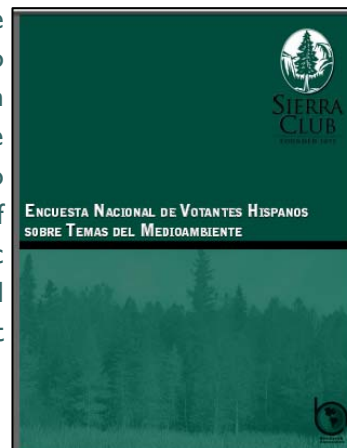
In this issue:

Hispanics Expressed Concern for the Environment	1
Plastic Bags and the Marine Environment	1
How Much Fertilizer is Ok?	2
Solar Energy in Florida	2
Making the Right Choices about Seafood	3
Lee County Fertilizer Ordinance	3
New Fishing Rules in Effect	3
Contact Information	4
Calendar of Events	4

Hispanics Expressed Concern for the Environment *by Ernesto Lasso de la Vega*

On April 23, the Sierra Club funded the *National Survey of Hispanic Voters on Environmental Issues* to enquire about the opinions of Hispanic citizens. The survey examined general attitudes, concerns, and understanding of major environmental problems, such as global warming, energy, air and water pollution. In addition, it provided a sense of environmental feeling from this growing ethnic group. This was a nationwide interview conducted by phone in either English or Spanish, with 1000 registered voters from several states including Florida. Some of the most remarkable findings were the overwhelming expression of concern for the environment. Most of the responders expressed belief that the environment affects their quality of life (83%) and the overall health of their family (81%). These numbers help to show the positive influence that Hispanics have on protecting our natural resources. When asked "If my family can help to curb global warming and pollution by being more conscientious?" an encouraging 94% of Florida responders answered "I believe so". The Southwest Florida Latino Environmental Education Network is proud to announce this major finding and is working to provide avenues of communication to let the whole nation know that the Hispanic community is an important driving force for the environmental movement. To find more information regarding the survey, please visit the following link at the Sierra Club website:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/ecocentro/survey/>



Plastic Bags and the Marine Environment *by Joy Hazell*

Do you bring your groceries home in plastic bags? According to the Environmental Protection Agency over 380 billion plastic bags are used in the United States each year but only 1% are recycled. It costs more to recycle a plastic bag than to make a new one. Plastic bags often end up on our lands and in our waterbodies where their effect on wildlife can be devastating. Birds and other wildlife become entangled and drown, or starve to death. Whales, turtles, dolphins and other marine animals ingest bags and are poisoned or starve to death because of a false sense of fullness. According to the Marine Mammal Commission, 267 different marine species have been reported entangled in or having ingested marine debris, including plastic bags.

So, what can we do? Reusable cloth bags have the potential to reduce plastic bag consumption by 22,000 bags over a person's life. Reusable cloth bags are now inexpensive, as low as \$.99 and easy to find in the checkout line of most grocery stores. To get into the habit of using cloth bags leave them in your car where you will see them before you go into the store. By making this small change we could reduce unsightly plastic waste and protect our environment.



How much fertilizer is OK? by Alberto Chavez



In the wild, plants grow naturally without fertilizer. We fertilize to create a more desirable appearance of our lawns and gardens. Fertilizers can increase growth and promote flowering or fruiting, enhance color and appearance and correct or prevent nutrient deficiencies. However, over fertilization can cause excessive growth, pest infestation, and major pollution of our water bodies. Over fertilization is also a waste of time, labor, and money.

Before you apply fertilizer it is highly recommended that you conduct a soil test to determine if fertilizers are needed. The lack of nutrients is not the only reason why plants do not grow properly. Location and the soil pH are also key factors for adequate growth.

Always keep in mind that more is not better; plants will only absorb the nutrients they need and the rest will get washed away by rain or irrigation water, or leach through the soil to the aquifer. Therefore, we must apply the correct amount of fertilizer to preserve water quality.

There are a variety of fertilizers in the market, which contain numerous combinations of nutrients. In Florida, each package of fertilizer must have a label with detailed information about its content, including application instructions. Always read the label before purchasing and applying fertilizers.

One of the most required and applied nutrient, and one of the most commonly found in our polluted waters, is nitrogen. Through research the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agriculture Science (UF/IFAS) have discovered that a moderate level of maintenance of planted gardens can be achieved by applying 2 to 4 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet every year. Applying fertilizers is not required:

- If you are pleased with the appearance of your lawn and gardens.
- If plants are flowering or fruiting, since exposure to high nitrogen at this stage may impede development.
- For trees, unless nutrient deficiencies exist.
- If you have a pest infestation; pests should be controlled first.

It is also important to follow local ordinances and State regulations. Contact your local government to find out more about laws regulating fertilizer application.

To learn more about fertilizers visit <http://solutionsforyourlife.com>



Solar Energy in Florida by Martha Avila

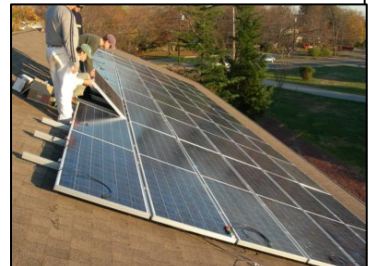
Harnessing the power of the sun is becoming more important due to the high price of the electricity. Solar technologies help diversify our energy supply, decrease pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. Solar energy is clean renewable energy; it reduces the consumption of fossil fuels, as well as current and future electric costs.

By switching to solar power, you can combat global warming and reduce our nation's dependence on foreign energy sources. Even a small solar electric system has a significant environmental impact. For example, a 2.5kW solar system reduces CO₂ emissions by an amount similar to what could be eliminated by planting one acre of trees; or the amount of CO₂ emitted by a passenger car driving 7,800 miles in a year.

Incentives, tax credits and rebates in Florida can help consumers purchase these systems with substantial savings. You can find more information about solar energy rebates by visiting the Florida Department of Environment Protection website at:

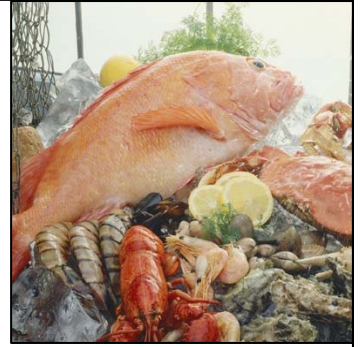
<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/energy/energyact/solar.htm>

Rebate Amounts	Residential	Commercial
Solar Photovoltaic System	\$20,000	\$100,000
Solar Thermal System	\$500	\$5,000
Solar Thermal Pool Heater	\$100	



Making the Right Choices about Seafood by Bryan Fluech

Despite all-time high consumption rates of seafood, there are a number of conflicting reports in regards to the safety and supply of the seafood we eat. Seafood has been shown to be a rich source of Omega-3 Fatty Acids and vital part of a healthy diet. There is debate, however, on the appropriate amount and type of seafood that should be consumed on a regular basis and this has created confusion about the health benefits and risks of seafood. Several safety concerns exist that add to this confusion including methyl mercury levels, parasites, natural toxins such as Ciguatera and red tides, bacterial pathogens, and allergies to name a few.



In addition to safety concerns, consumers are faced with questions over sustainability issues. For example, incidents of species substitution and mislabeling in recent years have raised concern about the types of seafood we buy and eat. Other controversial issues include the need for more reliable regulations, aquaculture versus wild caught seafood, product integrity, declining fisheries, environmental destruction from aquaculture production, and the benefit of local versus imported seafood.

To help consumers make responsible decisions about the seafood they eat, the National Marine Fisheries Service has developed a website called "Fish Watch" that provide science-based information on health and sustainability issues. The site's features include a listing of sustainable fish stocks, nutritional information for expecting mothers, and up to date seafood related news stories. To learn more visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/>.

Lee County Landscape & Fertilizer Best Management Practices Ordinance

On May 13, Lee County Board of County Commissioners passed a new ordinance to regulate the application of fertilizers including the following provisions:

- All landscape companies must be registered with Lee County.
- Professional landscapers need to obtain the Green Industries Best Management Practices certification to continue working in Lee County.
- There must be at least one professional on site at all times who is Green Industries trained and certified.
- Fertilizer shall not be applied between June 1st and September 30th.
- Phosphorus content; 0.25 lbs. P₂O₅/1000 ft² per application nor exceed 0.50 lbs. P₂O₅/1000 ft² per year.
- Nitrogen content; no less than 50% slow release nitrogen is required. No more than 4 lbs. of nitrogen per 1000 ft² in any calendar year.
- Fertilizer shall not be applied to any water body or impervious surface.
- A spreader deflector is required to be used near all waterbodies/wetlands and impervious surfaces.
- Mandatory 10 foot no fertilizer buffer zone near all waterbodies and wetlands measured from top of the bank.
- Homeowners are encouraged to follow the practices outlined and referenced in the ordinance and to seek education with the Lee County Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, however, education is not currently mandatory.
- Lee County has a one year grace period before the ordinance goes into effect, however, violations will still be subject to a warning.

To learn more about this ordinance and class schedules please contact the University of Florida, Lee County Extension Office at (239) 533-4327 or visit <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/>

New Fishing Rules in Effect by Joy Hazell and Bryan Fluech

As of June 1, 2008 new fishing rules are in effect for fishermen who target reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico waters, including inland waterways. One of the goals of the rule is to increase survival rates of fish that are caught and released. Anyone fishing for reef fish from a vessel must have and use non stainless steel circle hooks (when using natural baits), a dehooking device, and a venting tool. Reef fish include groupers, snappers, sea bass, gray triggerfish, hogfish, red porgy, amberjacks and golden tilefish.

There is considerable research reporting that the use of these tools can increase survival rates of released fish. To learn more about the new rules and how these tools work visit <http://catchandrelease.org/>.



More Information:

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Mark Your Calendar:

- July 31, 2008.** Best Management Practices Training Session Keeping your Landscape Green & Florida's Water Clean [**Collier County**] Sponsored by Rookery Bay & Project Greenscape. \$25. Contact 239-417-6310
- August 9, 2008.** Taste of Lee. Sponsored by Lee County Extension and Caloosa Rare Fruit Exchange. Contact 239-533-7514
- August 19, 2008.** Best Management Practices Training Session Keeping your Landscape Green & Florida's Water Clean [**Lee County**] Sponsored by Lee County Extension. \$25. Contact 239-533-7514
- August 21, 2008.** Best Management Practices Training Session Keeping your Landscape Green & Florida's Water Clean [**Lee County**] Sponsored by Lee County Extension. \$25. Contact 239-533-7514
- August 28, 2008.** Best Management Practices Training Session Keeping your Landscape Green & Florida's Water Clean. [**Collier County—SPANISH**] Sponsored by Rookery Bay & Project Greenscape. \$25. Contact 239-417-6310
- September 11, 2008.** Best Management Practices Training Session Keeping your Landscape Green & Florida's Water Clean [**Lee County**] Sponsored by Lee County Extension. \$25. Contact 239-533-7514
- September 15, 2008.** Best Management Practices Training Session Keeping your Landscape Green & Florida's Water Clean [**Lee County**] Sponsored by Lee County Extension. \$25. Contact 239-533-7514
- September 20, 2008.** International Coastal Clean-Up. Sponsored by the Ocean Conservancy and Local Partners. Contact 239-334-3488 [**Lee County**] or 239-417-6310 x204 [**Collier County**]
- September 25, 2008.** Best Management Practices Training Session Keeping your Landscape Green & Florida's Water Clean [**Collier County**] Sponsored by Rookery Bay & Project Greenscape. \$25. Contact 239-417-6310