



Latino Environmental Education Network Newsletter

Spring 2008

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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.

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There is an estuary in your backyard *by Joy Hazell*

Southwest Florida is surrounded by estuaries. The Caloosahatchee River, Estero Bay, and Ten Thousand Islands are all examples. So what is an estuary and why should we care about them?

An estuary is a place where freshwater from land, in the form of rivers, streams and sheet flow, meets saltwater from the sea. In our region some of the key estuarine habitats include seagrass beds, mangrove forests, mudflats and oyster beds.

Estuaries are important for many reasons. They are often called nurseries of the sea. Between 70% and 90% of recreationally and commercially important fish and shellfish depend on estuaries for some part of their life. Estuaries improve our water quality by filtering sediments and excess nutrients coming off the land. They also act as buffer zones between the land and the ocean. They protect us against storm hazards by absorbing flood waters and dissipating storm surges. Finally, many people depend on estuaries for recreation including fishing, boating, and nature watching.

Estuaries have been dredged and filled, polluted, and reconstructed to fit the needs of humans. It is vital to the health of our economy and environment to protect estuaries. This newsletter gives tools and tips for protecting our valuable natural resources including our precious estuaries.

To learn more about SW Florida's estuaries visit:

Charlotte Harbor NEP: <http://www.chnep.org/>

Rookery Bay NERR: <http://www.rookerybay.org/>

Conservancy of SW Florida: <http://www.conservancy.org/>



From the Desk of Lt. Governor Kottkamp Water Conservation and Protection: A Challenge to Residents of Southwest Florida

Governor Crist and I remain steadfast in our commitment to protecting, preserving, and conserving the natural and pristine environment that makes Florida such a wonderful place to visit and live. Important to this goal is the conservation and protection of Florida's water sources. We encourage all citizens of Florida to make water conservation a part of their daily lives. As Governor Crist said, "Every drop of water makes a difference, and water conservation needs to be part of everyone's daily routine." By encouraging proactive planning and taking steps to conserve water now, we will both protect and stretch the regional water supplies, especially here in Southwest Florida .



Storm water is a pollutant! *By Alberto Chavez*

Believe it or not storm water is a major pollutant. Storm water reaches our estuaries and our rivers carrying pesticides, fertilizers, oil, metals, bacteria, and other substances that people leave on streets, parking lots, lawns, and gardens. Additionally, excessive loads of storm water change the salinity of our estuaries killing a large number of living species.

Storm water drain systems consist of street gutters and inlets, swales, pipes (sewers), ponds with a water level control structure, and sometimes wetland preserve areas. They are designed to prevent flooding, improve water quality, recharge groundwater, and preserve and /or create wildlife habitat.

Storm water systems are separate from sanitary sewer systems. The sanitary sewer systems are usually maintained by the County, and sometimes by a private operator. The storm water systems are owned and maintained by the developer and eventually turned over to the Home Owner Association.

Come and learn more! If you are a professional landscapers or a Home Owner Association official, Project Greenscape is setting up an Urban Pond Management class for you. For more information please contact Alberto Chavez, Project Greenscape Coordinator at 239-417-6310 x 231 or Alberto.Chavez@dep.state.fl.us.

For more information about storm water visit:

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/stormwater/npdes/index.htm>

http://cfpub1.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/const.cfm?program_id=6

Keep the storm water systems clean. Do not throw anything in the Storm Water Systems!



Recycling Fishing Line Protects Marine Life *by Bryan Fluech*

Fishing line left in our estuaries poses a serious threat to marine life. Sea turtles, manatees, birds, fish and dolphins may swallow or become entangled in it, which can lead to permanent injury or death. Discarded fishing line can also become entangled in boat propellers, resulting in costly repairs for boat owners.

The Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program (MRRP) is a statewide effort to educate the public on the problems caused by discarded fishing line. The program's goals are to decrease the amount of fishing line left in the environment through a network of recycling bins and drop-off locations, and to increase the amount of monofilament line being recycled.

Monofilament recycling bins can be found at boat ramps, piers, bridges and other popular fishing spots throughout Southwest Florida. Volunteers collect and clean the line from the bins and take it to drop-off boxes at tackle shops where it is eventually shipped off to be recycled.

The MRRP would not be successful without anglers who make an effort to keep their waterways tangle-free. Whenever possible, responsible anglers should retrieve any line that gets caught up on trees, pilings, or other structures. They should also keep their old line with them until they can properly dispose of it.

To learn more about where anglers can recycle their line, tips on how to minimize impacts on marine life, or how to get involved with the MRRP go to the MRRP website at: <http://fishinglinerecycling.org/> or check with your county's Sea Grant Extension agent.

Monofilament bins such as this one at Tigertail Beach in Collier County encourage anglers to recycle their used fishing line



Water and Sustainability. By Martha Avila

Water is one of our most precious and valuable resources. Despite its importance clean drinking water sources around the globe are threatened by climate change, misuse, and pollution. Over 1.2 billion people don't have access to clean drinking water; more than 2 billion lack access to adequate sanitation; and millions – mainly children – die every year due to lack of potable water and water-related diseases.

Global demand for freshwater continues to grow, while many water sources are showing signs of stress. Businesses, communities, and ecosystems everywhere depend on clean freshwater to survive and prosper. Freshwater access is considered a key condition for food production and economic development. Water, environment, and food security are interrelated at local, regional and global levels.

But there are solutions. The following tips can help us take an active part in conserving and protecting our water supply.

You can do your part to conserve water by following the suggestions below:

KITCHEN

Dishes

Let soak, rather than scrubbing with water running.
 Fill one sink to wash, one to rinse.
 Designate one glass each day for your drinking water.
 Run the dishwasher only when fully loaded.

Cooking

Thaw food in refrigerator overnight or defrost in microwave, not under running water.
 Cook food in as little water as possible.
 Don't use garbage disposal; compost instead.

BATHROOM

Toilet:

Don't use the toilet as a trash can.
 Put a water displacement device in tank.
 Do not leave water running while brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing hands.

Tub/Shower

Limit your showers to 5 minutes. Turn water off when soaping your body and applying shampoo.
 If your water takes time to warm up place a bucket under the shower head. Use collected water for lawn irrigation.



From the Desk of Commissioner Ray Judah

The current draught condition in Southwest Florida is a good reminder of the importance of our precious water resources.

The South Florida Water Management District has limited lawn watering to once a week.

A number of years ago, Lee County established a Regional Water Supply Authority that developed an aquifer storage recovery program to capture excess fresh water during the wetter summer months and pump the water into natural storage reservoirs deep in the earth. Water currently stored in deep water reservoirs amounts to approximately 300 million gallons of water that can be recovered in times of emergency.

Recently, the Lee County Board of County Commissioners approved \$250,000 to cap a number of free-flowing wells. Left uncapped, these wells result in a loss of about 12 million gallons of water per day.

Lee County's environmentally sensitive land acquisition programs, including the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed Land Trust and Conservation 2020 have protected in excess of 50,000 acres since 1989 providing filtration and storage of storm water runoff and recharge of our groundwater aquifers.

Lee County is also expanding our wastewater effluent reuse system for irrigation of landscape areas and the County Land Development Regulations require the use of native vegetation in all development to conserve water.

Everyone can participate in helping to manage our water resources wisely, and we need to act responsibly to ensure an adequate and reliable water supply for our community.

More Information:

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Mark Your Calendar:

- April 3, 2008.** Best Management Practices Training Session Keeping your Landscape Green & Florida's Water Clean. Sponsored by Rookery Bay & Project Greenscape. \$25. Contact 239-417-6310
- April 8, 2008.** Turtle Talk with New York Times Bestselling Author Mary Alice Monroe: Sponsored by Rookery Bay Reserve. Contact 239-417-6310
- April 12, 2008.** Dive into Oceans Family Day: Sponsored by Rookery Bay Reserve. Contact 239-417-6310
- April 22, 2008.** Mangrove Workshop: Sponsored by Lee County Extension. Contact 239-533-7518
- April 26, 2008.** Kids Fishing Clinic: Sponsored by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. Contact 239-417-6310 x232

Coming Next Time

[Learn about global climate change, and what you can do to minimize your impacts](#)