

# Development of Regional Fertilizer Guidelines



- ❑ Four workshops between April-June
- ❑ Participation from 42 organizations (governments, trade associations, lawn care/fertilizer companies, environmental groups, researchers and extension agents)
- ❑ Consensus-based approach

# Key Issues Addressed

- ❖ *Licensing/Certification of Lawn Care Professionals*
- ❖ *Buffer Zones (Fertilizer-Free Zones)*
- ❖ *Application Timing (Rainy season restrictions)*
- ❖ *Reclaimed Water Guidelines*
- ❖ *Regional Education Recommendations*

## **Recommendations**

### **Licensing/Certification of Fertilizer Applicators:**

**Full BMP certification for site supervisors and managers; less intensive, task-specific training for other employees within 90 days of hiring. This less intensive training could be provided by BMP-certified trainers within the company and provided annually or whenever an update is needed due to changes in the BMPs or local ordinances.**

**Encourage certification of Spanish-speaking BMP trainers and BMP courses taught in Spanish.**

**Encourage creation of a baywide or “Tampa Bay region” license/certificate, so that commercial fertilizer applicators would not have to obtain separate BMP certification in each community in which they do business. Encourage reciprocity so that any Tampa Bay community with a fertilizer ordinance recognizes and accepts the regional certification.**

## Recommendations

# Buffer Zones

- Fertilizer should not be applied within 10 feet of a waterway, except in the case of commercial fertilizer applicators with BMP training, who may apply fertilizer as close as 3 feet of a waterway if using a deflector shield or drop spreader.
- Encourage a 6-foot low-maintenance (“no mow”) zone adjacent to a waterway using plants instead of turfgrass



## Recommendations

# Application Timing

### Split Decision:

- 17 votes in favor of ban on Nitrogen application from June 1-Sept. 30
- 11 votes in favor of allowing a one-time application of slow-release Nitrogen with a professional determination of N deficiency in turfgrass

# TBEP Staff Comparison of Application Timing Options

	Technical Defensibility	Ease of Enforcement	Ease of Education	Consistency with Fertilizer Ordinances in our Region
Rainy Season Nitrogen Fertilizer Black-Out (June 1- Sept. 30)	✓	✓	✓	✓ (Sarasota, Sanibel, Charlotte – although blackout periods vary)
One-Time Nitrogen application if deemed necessary by Professional	✓			

*Recommendations*  
Reclaimed Water

- Consider amount of Nitrogen in reclaimed water when providing education about proper fertilizer use in communities where reclaimed water is provided to homeowners.



Following is a table providing recommended annual fertilizer nitrogen application for lawns in addition to the nitrogen applied through reclaimed water irrigation. The nitrogen provided by reclaimed water varies by region, depending upon the source of the reclaimed water. The regions are as follows:

Region 1 – Bradenton, Clearwater, Largo, Oldsmar, and Palmetto

Region 2 – Hillsborough County, Tampa and northern Pinellas County

Region 3 – Pasco County

Region 4 – Manatee County

Region 5 – Zephyrhills

Region 6 - St. Petersburg

The recommended annual fertilizer nitrogen application for lawns is for 1000 ft<sup>2</sup>. The total recommended annual application from both reclaimed and fertilizer is 4 lb N/1000 ft<sup>2</sup>.

Region	Recommended application of fertilizer nitrogen (lb/year/1,000 ft <sup>2</sup> )	
	Irrigate <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> two times per week	Irrigate <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> three times per week
1	3.1	2.6
2	2.9	2.4
3	1.4	0.0
4	0.6	0.0
5	0.0	0.0
6	0.0	0.0

# Additional Consensus Points:

- Education about proper fertilizer use is critically needed
- Education about slow-release Nitrogen fertilizer is important to make homeowners aware that use of these products may not produce an immediate response in their lawns
- Proper irrigation management is critical and inextricably linked to proper fertilization
- Controlling spillage of fertilizer and organic debris on non-vegetated areas (including impervious surfaces) is critical



# Additional Consensus Points:

- Use of deflector shields is an important element of fertilizer BMPs
- No Phosphorous fertilizer should be applied at any time of year in the Tampa Bay region without a soil test showing a Phosphorous deficiency
- No Nitrogen fertilizer should be applied on newly established turf for the first 30 days
- Consistent guidelines for fertilizer application are needed for the Tampa Bay region

# Additional Consensus Points:

- Adequate enforcement is a key issue that needs to be addressed
- Guidelines should encourage the use of trained, certified professionals to apply fertilizer
- All landscape maintenance contracts should specify compliance with the DEP Green Industries Best Management Practices

# Education: A Head Start

- Consider tying Fertilizer Education Messages to Start of Hurricane Season
- Provide information about organic sources of Nitrogen
- Provide information about Fertilizer Use in Utility Bill Stuffers/Newsletters
- Provide education about yard waste composting to provide Nitrogen to lawns
- Drop-down boxes on government web sites showing additional Nitrogen needs with reclaimed water