



# EVERGLADES COALITION

February 8, 2024

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## **RE: Everglades Coalition Support for Strong Local Government Urban Fertilizer Ordinance**

The Everglades Coalition, nearly 60 organizations dedicated to protecting and restoring America's Everglades, with a 12.2-million-constituent network of followers, is dedicated to the full restoration of the greater Everglades ecosystem. The Coalition strongly supports the continued use and adoption of strict urban fertilizer ordinances that include rainy-season application bans on landscape fertilizers containing nitrogen and phosphorus.

Support for and promotion of stronger-than-FDEP model urban fertilizer ordinances is exemplified in our 2020 resolution [Supporting the Adoption of Strong Urban Fertilizer Ordinances by Local Governments. 30 of the 18 county-wide and 111 municipal](#) rainy season application ban ordinance provisions have been adopted within the confines of the South Florida Water Management District, and many more have been adopted in the wider Greater Everglades ecosystem, including along Charlotte Harbor and the Indian River Lagoon, since 2007.

These ordinances are low-cost to no-cost tools that are critical to a local government's ability to address nutrient pollution within its jurisdiction. This "low-hanging fruit" method of decreasing the amount of nutrient pollution that fuels not only the toxic and nuisance algae outbreaks in Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie River, and the Caloosahatchee River, but also the lakes, streams, canals, and bays of Central and South Florida, must remain in place where it is currently adopted, and be made available to other communities that may need it. **We cannot leave all the pollution reduction to the agricultural and wastewater industries. Local communities, residents, and business owners must also do their part.**

**Preventing pollution is always more cost-effective than trying to remove it after it has entered our waters.** Limiting when and where fertilizer can be applied can combat excessive nutrient runoff into our lakes, rivers, and coastal waters. In 2009, Florida Statute ([403.9337](#)) mandated that each ordinance stronger than the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Model ordinance be "science-based, and economically and technically feasible." Since 2007, stronger-than Model ordinances [covering 18 counties, and over 111 municipalities](#), have been adopted and implemented across the state.

*The Everglades Coalition is a 501(c)3 alliance of local, state, and national conservation organizations dedicated to the full protection and restoration of America's Everglades.*

[evergladescoalition.org](http://evergladescoalition.org)

The recent [UF-IFAS Report](#) contains no justification to relax fertilizer restrictions. While we do not know the exact contribution of specific urban fertilizer ordinances in their respective watersheds, that should not prevent us from stemming damage to our waterways while we pursue a question that may never be answered. The cost to the state to engage in the breadth and depth of research to confirm what we already know – that every rainstorm is a potential pollution event, and the backbone of urban fertilizer pollution reduction is the strict avoidance of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizer during the rainy season – should be weighed against the other uses to which precious tax dollars could be spent, including new, controversial methods of pollution control.

The Everglades is widely recognized as one of the world's most unique and spectacular natural wonders, and Florida has a compelling interest in protecting and restoring the ecosystem due to its tremendous economic and ecological value. **Please join us in our strong support of the easiest, lowest-cost method of protecting the Everglades ecosystem from excessive nutrient pollution.**

Sincerely,



Mark Perry  
Co-Chair



Kelly Cox  
Co-Chair

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