



FLERA FOCUS!

Florida Local Environmental Resource Agencies

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Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council – Enhancing and Coordinating Monitoring Efforts in Florida

The Florida Water Resources Monitoring Council (FWRMC) is an advisory group formed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to assist in developing monitoring standards and provide an active forum for coordination and communication among monitoring entities across entire watersheds. Part of the FWRMC's vision includes "seeking to better protect, preserve, manage and restore water resources in the state of Florida by coordinating water resource monitoring and by sharing information." The idea for a statewide council was developed during retreats in 2004 (Cocoa Beach) and 2005 (Clearwater) during which numerous FLERA members attended and provided valuable comments. While the initial framework of a statewide council has been significantly reduced, the idea of a council is being patterned after other successful efforts across the nation (e.g., Maryland) and has the potential for future growth.

The FWRMC membership is currently set at ten members and includes one FLERA representative as well as one person from each of the five water management districts and one member each from the Department of Health, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the FDEP. Two FLERA members are currently alternating representation at the Council's bimonthly meetings. Rob Brown (Manatee County, rob.brown@mymanatee.org) and Kevin Carter (Broward County, kcarter@broward.org) are committed to ensuring local monitoring groups benefit from the actions of the FWRMC and informing the Council about our numerous local monitoring efforts. FLERA's representatives also want to make sure unfunded mandates and unnecessary tasks are not handed down to local governmental monitoring agencies. Visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/WaterMonitoringCouncil/default.htm> for more information. Stay tuned for future updates!

Oak Ridge National Lab Hosts Workshop on Climate Change Research Needs

The Oak Ridge Center for Advanced Studies recently facilitated a day-long workshop on the research needs of local governments relating to climate change. Topics included the impacts of climate change on local government planning and decision-making, and those measures that local governments could take to reduce green house gas emissions. The event was sponsored by EPA Region IV. Needs identified during the workshop will be forwarded to the Center's participating universities for possible initiation as research projects. For more information on the Center for Advanced Studies, go to <http://www.ornl.gov/info/ornlreview/index.shtml>. FLERA Executive Director, Kurt Spitzer, participated in the event.

2008 Annual Conference - Call for Presentation Proposals

FLERA's 2008 conference theme is *Climate Change and Local Government, Roles Responsibilities and Opportunities*. The conference will focus on the role of local governments as Florida addresses the critical issue of climate change. Professionals in state, regional and local government and in the environmental, academic and consulting communities are encouraged to make presentations. Visit the FLERA website at <http://www.flera.org/conference.html> for more information including an application to submit a presentation.

Consumer Fertilizer Task Force

The Consumer Fertilizer Task Force (see <http://consensus.fsu.edu/Fertilizer-Task-Force/index.html>) held their next to last meeting on December 17th in Apopka. Created to examine the issue of local government regulation of household fertilizer use and application, the Task Force was a compromise with the fertilizer industry who had sought a complete, total and immediate pre-emption of all local regulations during the 2007 Session. The Task Force has prepared a draft "model" ordinance but it is unclear as to whether the model will be but one of many options or the only option to take. It is clear that industry representatives, DACS and IFAS still believe that the new labeling rule will be sufficient to improve water quality and that local regulations are unnecessary and impractical. The issue could easily evolve into a complete pre-emption, so FLERA members should be prepared to contact their elected officials and members of their Legislative Delegations. The last meeting of the Task Force is set for January 11, 2008, in Tallahassee.

Dues Revisions

FLERA members approved a revision to the association's dues structure during the Annual Meeting. The changes will result in an increase in membership fees for most FLERA members and is one of the recommendations resulting from the long range planning process that the Board of Directors completed over the past several months. The changes are effective January 1, 2008. Contact FLERA staff at 850/561-0904 for more information. The new rates are posted on the FLERA website.

"Providing Community-Based Environmental Protection"