

Florida Local Environmental Resource Agencies

FLERA Focus!



Your RESOURCE for Environmental Protection

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In This Issue

FLERA's New Address

FLERA 2012

Legislative News

EPC New On-Line Permit
Tracking

St. Johns County Water
Quality Mgmt Program

Reducing Costs for Local
Agencies

New NENA Trail Opens

Happy Holidays from FLERA!

FLERA Has a New Address

Be sure to update your records!

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Association News

FLERA in 2012

In November 2011, the FLERA Board met in Orlando to plan activities for 2012. The mission of FLERA is to enhance communication, education and advocacy for Florida local environmental protection efforts. At the November 2011 meeting, the Board planned to address these three areas as follows:

Communication. Through its quarterly newsletter and [FLERA website](#), FLERA will continue to keep members informed of on-going activities, projects, and training opportunities of interest to local environmental protection advocates.

Education. The Board began planning for the 2012 Annual Conference. Early indications are that the Conference will be in Orlando, in October 2012, and will include a heavy focus on the business and associated challenges of maintaining environmental programs in the existing socioeconomic climate.

Advocacy. The Board strongly agreed to a major emphasis on advocacy within the state legislature and FDEP for continued support of local regulatory programs as a key component of

Florida's environmental protection. Already, FLERA and its members have been reaching out to local commissions, legislative delegations, key legislative committee members, FDEP leadership, and the Governor's office to advocate for local programs. Examples of materials used in these outreach efforts can be found on [FLERA's website](#) - members are encouraged to plagiarize freely. In January, the FLERA Board plans to follow-up these materials by personally visiting and advocating to individual legislators. Finally, at the November Board meeting, the Board agreed to focus FLERA's advocacy on compliance assistance, petroleum cleanup, ambient air monitoring and Title V programs, environmental resource permitting, and fertilizer bills.

The Board appreciates, and are themselves experiencing, the challenges facing local environmental programs. Each member of the Board feels strongly that a strategy to successfully negotiate these challenges includes FLERA effectively realizing its mission. Accordingly, each member of the Board commits to you, the membership, our best efforts to make 2012 a successful year for local environmental programs.

Legislative News

State Proposes Budget Cuts, Privatization of Local Pollution Control Programs

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and the Governor recently released their proposed budgets. As part of the Legislature-requested proposed cuts, FDEP proposed deep cuts and potential privatization of the Title V air permitting program and the petroleum storage systems compliance verification and cleanup programs.

FDEP proposed to cut funding to the local program's Title V permit programs by \$516,681 and reallocate \$186,000 in unspent Title V funds resulting in a proposed 32% budget cut from last year's levels. In addition, FDEP proposed to cut \$601,660 in ambient air monitoring funding to the local programs. In the budget issue description, FDEP proposed taking more of the responsibilities on themselves in Tallahassee and the District offices or by contracting with private sector entities.

FDEP also proposed to cut funding to the local program's petroleum systems compliance verification program by \$2,500,000. In addition, in its budget issue description, FDEP proposed to either take on the local program responsibilities themselves either by hiring OPS employees (PT/FT workers) or contracting out the program at \$100 per inspection.

FDEP proposed to cut funding to the local program's petroleum systems cleanup program by \$2,187,182. In its budget issue description, FDEP proposed to do away with cleanup contracts with 7 local programs - Alachua, Sarasota, Seminole, Volusia, Brevard, Pinellas, and Palm Beach County. In their place, FDEP proposed to hire 23 positions in Tallahassee and District offices using private contractors.

Once the impacts of the proposed cuts were researched and talking points prepared, FLERA representatives took to the halls of the Legislature continually stressing with supporting facts and figures that local pollution control programs can do the job faster, better, and in many cases cheaper than the state or private contractors. FLERA representatives spoke with House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations subcommittee and Senate General Government Appropriations subcommittee members and/or their aides as well as with the staff directors of both appropriations subcommittees regarding the impact of the FDEP proposed cuts.

More recently, the Governor released his proposed budget which only picked up FDEP's proposed funding cut to the local programs' petroleum systems compliance verification program. However, the Legislature is not precluded from including all of the FDEP proposed budget cuts in the proposed State budget. Therefore, FLERA representatives again took to the halls of the Legislature in Tallahassee to discuss budget issues with various representatives and senators and with FDEP key staff members in Tallahassee.

FLERA representatives recently met with Senator Hays, the chair of the Senate General Government Appropriations subcommittee, at length in his district office in Umatilla to discuss concerns with the proposed budget cuts to the local pollution control programs. Senator Hays was engaging, asked a lot of questions, and seemed empathetic to local issues. It was clear that he understood the potential environmental consequences and the importance of continuing to adequately fund the local pollution control programs. In addition, he expressed an interest in helping the local programs throughout the budget process.

More meetings are being set up with additional legislators to discuss the State budget as the budget process moves along in the Legislature. We will keep FLERA members up to date as the Legislative Session gets underway.

Membership Renewal Notices

Membership renewal notices for 2012 were mailed in early November. Be sure to note to your finance department that **the FLERA mailing address has changed**. Keep FLERA strong - mail your membership dues today!

News From Around the State

EPC Announces New On-Line Permit Tracking System

Submitted by Jerry Campbell, Hillsborough EPC

In October 2011, the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) of Hillsborough County launched a new on-line Permit Application Tracking System. EPC handles more than 1,000 requests each year to impact the air, water and soils of the County. These impacts are authorized with conditions through various agency permits. Prior to this new tracking system, applicants and the public had limited access to an individual application status unless they contacted EPC directly. This new tracking system allows the citizens and businesses of Hillsborough County to check on the daily status of any environmental permit application processed by the EPC at any time using the Internet.

The system was specifically set up to provide local citizens with quick, convenient access to all current projects through a variety of search options. It was designed using in-house staff and launched in less than six months. The system reflects the streamlined application processing at EPC which has been detailed into seven basic steps. Those seven steps are displayed in this on-line system.

The displays are updated frequently as each step in the review is completed and include information such as the date of receipt, project type, EPC processor contact information, inspection/review status, and final action dates. All open applications and those that have been closed within the last 90 days are available to the user. The system can be easily accessed through [EPC's website](#) by selecting the **Status of Permit Applications** icon.

St. Johns County Water Quality Management Program

Submitted by [Andrew Ames](#), Assistant County Engineer & [Alan Foley](#), Jones Edmunds

St. Johns County's population grew by over 50% over the last decade. This population growth fueled expansive land development that led to significant changes in hydrology and water quality despite the regulatory constraints of the Environmental Resource Permit process. At the same time, water quality concerns for the St. Johns River arose, and in 2008 the Lower St. Johns River Basin became the first in Florida to adopt a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) basin management action plan.

The County realized that it could face significant financial liabilities by complying with TMDLs.

Although the County is committed to clean water, it needs to minimize costs and maximize results; therefore, the County contracted with Jones Edmunds to implement a data-driven Water Quality Management Program to simultaneously manage water quality by identifying, prioritizing, and cost-effectively addressing point and non-point source water quality issues.

The Water Quality Management Program is supported by a central database and analysis tools. GIS serves as the storage, processing, and data maintenance tool of choice to manage the various data sets used to characterize the watersheds and the water resources within them. Most importantly, the overall program allows the County to appropriately plan and budget for water quality improvements to enable the County to more effectively engage FDEP and EPA as technical participants in TMDL development and modeling.

The Water Quality Management Program enables the County to better serve its citizens while reducing costs associated with stormwater management. The County's proactive approach will reduce flooding, improve water quality and help provide for sustainable growth.

Reducing Costs for Local Agencies through Paint Stewardship

Submitted by [Rita Perini](#), Florida NAHMMA Chapter Membership Chair

Around 10 percent of paint purchased in the United States becomes leftover each year, and is both expensive and cumbersome to manage. The paint industry and a group of Florida local governments are working together to try to introduce state legislation in 2012 that could provide local agencies with financial benefits of up to \$35 million. If passed, the legislation would require paint companies to collect and manage leftover paint from residents and contractors, as well as encouraging customers to minimize the amount of paint they waste. The program will also divert more paint from disposal, which will help counties meet their recycling goals while growing green businesses in the state.

Resulting from negotiations among government agencies, manufacturers, retailers, recyclers, and contractors, Oregon passed the nation's first paint stewardship law in 2009. Subsequent laws have passed in Connecticut and California, with legislation slated for introduction in more states in 2012. The American Coatings Association is now exploring the introduction of legislation in Florida. There is still time to join forces with the paint industry, Florida Caribbean Chapter of the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association, and Product Stewardship Institute to support paint legislation here.

For more information, contact [Mike Younis](#) at PSI or call 617-236-4855
www.productstewardship.us/Florida

New NENA Trail Open to Public

Submitted by [Ginny Powell](#), Environmental Program Supervisor

The [Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management](#) has opened a new multiuse trail within the Northeast Everglades Natural Area (NENA): a two-mile section of the [Historic Jupiter-Indiantown Trail](#). It offers backcountry access for hikers, cyclists and equestrians to three conservation lands and visitor facilities: the [County's Cypress Creek Natural Area](#), [Riverbend Park](#), and the [Hungryland Wildlife and Environmental Area](#) in Martin County. The trail includes a trailhead with off-street parking, an elevated, a fully-accessible trail surface of crushed rock, way-finding signage, and shade shelters. Bike racks, horse hitches, and mounting blocks are located at access points along the trail for users who wish to hike in the natural area.

[NENA](#) consists of 165,000 acres of public conservation and historic lands in northern Palm Beach County and southern Martin County. It provides a wide range of nature-based outdoor recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, and features more than a dozen activity and education centers. The goal is to make connections among and between these lands and

centers creating a world-class ecotourism destination and an alternate transportation network. Six main NENA connector trails are planned. A 5.5-mile segment of the nine-mile [Bluegill Trail](#) opened in March 2011. Construction has been paid for with grants from the Florida Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancement Fund.

For smart phone users, click on the link for instructions to download the new [Natural Areas Mobile Maps](#). Happy Trails!

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