



released a press release citing that the cause of death of the pelicans dying around Lake Apopka was exposure to chlorinated pesticides. The federal agency issued health advisories in their press release. However, they have not released any of the data that their advisory is based upon.

Editor's Note: *These issues have potential to spill over into all commodity groups using pesticides. It is essential that you maintain proper records and comply with all safety rules and regulations so that worst-case scenarios will not dictate how the golf industry will be regulated.*

SWFWMD Working Group Targets Nitrate Pollution

The Nitrate Remediation Working Group of the SWFWMD held a public forum called "Seeking Solutions for Springs and River Pollution" at St. Leo College in May.

The group contends that homeowners,

agriculture and the green industry, including golf, is contributing a significant amount of nitrates to the springs and river systems from the Suwannee River south to Tampa.

Compelling presentations were made documenting the rise in nitrate concentrations in water samples and the interconnection of sinkholes, underground rivers, and the springs, although it must be noted that the nitrate levels were not yet above health warning levels. However the graph of the nitrate levels is on an upward trend which is growing steeper over time. The working group wanted to tackle the problem before it became more severe and invited all interested parties to the meeting.

Erica Santella, vice president of the FTGA and one of her territory managers from TruGreen-Chemlawn represented the lawn care industry. Paul Illgen of the Glen Lakes G&CC in Weeki Wachee and I represented the golf industry. Tim Hiers from Colliers Reserve in Naples made a

presentation on IPM and good stewardship in general.

Kyle Champion of the SWFWMD summed up the concerns of the Nitrate Remediation Working Group with his study of the origins of the nitrates in springs discharge. Champion stated that between 1991 and 1998, 14 sources of nitrate were investigated (*see sidebar*).

Champion claims that using a nitrogen isotope test, they have determined that the dominant form of nitrogen present is from inorganic sources. IFAS sources I queried were not aware of such an isotope test that could make that distinction. Champion went on to state that of the seven major spring groups, four were affected by residential/golf course fertilization, two are affected by historical grove fertilization, and one by pasture fertilization.

While those statements may seem pointed, the tenor of the meeting was inclusive and not accusatory. The SWFWMD was seeking cooperation to solve a problem, not pointing fingers to castigate.



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One interesting presentation which illustrated the complexity of the problem on a regional basis was made by Jim

Nitrate Sources

- 1) organic decay
- 2) rainfall
- 3) residential turf/landscaping fertilization
- 4) golf course turf fertilization
- 5) sewage effluent disposal via WWTP's (?)
- 6) land disposal of sewage sludge
- 7) effluent from septic tanks
- 8) land disposal of septage sludge
- 9) row crops
- 10) citrus grove fertilization
- 11) pasture fertilization
- 12) poultry
- 13) dairies (feedlots)
- 14) open range cattle and horses

Stevenson of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Stevenson's focus was on the famed Ichetucknee Springs northwest of Gainesville. Mysterious periods of turbidity made scientists wonder about the underground connections of springs to other bodies of water.

Stevenson's research showed an ancient river course that once flowed from Alligator Lake in Lake City to the present Ichetucknee springs and river. Remnants of the old river course are now fed by a few local creeks and sinkholes which indeed are still connected to the Ichetucknee Springs. Stevenson placed dye in Rose Sink six miles north of the springs and several hours later the dye showed up in the springs. The problem – the creeks and sinkholes in the area receive stormwater runoff from urban and agricultural areas in the basin.

The Solution

The SWFWMD is seeking collaboration among concerned citizen groups, local governments, IFAS and industry to

address the problem before it gets out of hand. Some ways to reduce and prevent nitrate contamination: better engineering and design of residential stormwater retention systems; good stewardship in agriculture and pasture management to prevent organic wastes from moving into the creeks and sink holes; implementation of best management practices for lawn and golf course fertilization including the use of slow release and liquid fertilizers.

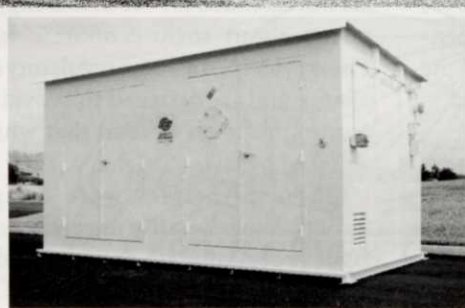
Santella and Illgen have volunteered to serve on the Nitrate Remediation Working Group to represent the turf and golf industries in future discussions.

Water quality is and will be a growing concern as development pushes farther into the pristine wilderness. You can reasonably expect this kind of emphasis to spread to other water management districts. Be prepared to offer your time and expertise in dealing with these issues in your area.

JOEL JACKSON

Director of Communications

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