

A local columnist who tends to have a liberal point of view was decrying the tactics of a developer who had threatened a couple of citizens with a lawsuit for their irritating meddling in opposition of a new project.

The writer described the developer's actions as "bullying and heavy-handed" as he pursued an anti-nuisance lawsuit designed to curb frivolous opposition. The columnist also wrote a few paragraphs that reveal the problem in general with these "sky is falling" activists who play a blame game in the media as they tout their anti-growth, anti-golf and anti-pesticides and fertilizer agendas with full media cooperation and ignorance.

He wrote, "...Unfortunately the defendants (activists) have left themselves somewhat vulnerable. I don't think they deliberately lied about (the development). But if I wrote all the dire things they wrote about it, such as a claim that the planned retention pond would pose a 'huge risk of flooding to the nearby neighborhood, and to our lakes,' I would be writing corrections and clarifications for a week. ..."

In a lawsuit, these are called "false statements of fact."

How many times do we read stories about claims that products used on golf courses, home lawns or turfgrass in general are causing runoff and leaching of pollution into our waterways or any other number of ills to the environment? No one is writing corrections or clarifications to all these claims, and no one seems to mind as the misinformation becomes accepted fact because it is repeated so often, even if most of it is the stuff of which legends and myths are made.

In an attempt to defend the activists, the columnist ends up condemning them — not for their right to dissent, which I certainly support, but with the following words that explain why more people are turned off by them. He wrote, "... Such activists often delve in technical matters they don't fully understand, like retention ponds (read fertilizers and pesticides). Of course, they make mistakes. They are emotional. Of course they exaggerate. That doesn't mean they should not be heard or that legiti-

Activists Convicted by the Defense

BY JOEL JACKSON



I GUARANTEE YOU
THAT MORE PEOPLE
ARE FLUSHING
THEIR TOILETS
THAN ARE APPLYING
FERTILIZER
TO TURFGRASS

mate issues aren't buried in the rhetoric. ..."

I couldn't have criticized them better myself.

There may be some legitimate issues. Golf courses, developers and homeowners should be good stewards of the environment. But the gross exaggerations and emotional claims and incorrect assertions only serve to vilify our industry without really focusing on the big target. I don't know about your state, but when it comes to golf in Florida there are only about 200,000 maintained acres (140,000 irrigated) of golf turf compared to more than 4 million acres of residential and commercial lawns.

For example, if locals want to point fingers at poor water quality in the area, the first thing they should do before banning fertilizers is find out where the local utilities are dumping the sewage effluent. Next, they should find out how many people have septic tanks that drain into the nearby lakes and rivers. They should do this before jumping on the anti-fertilizer bandwagon because I guarantee you more people are flushing their toilets than applying fertilizer to turfgrass.

How do we fight back? Activists hate three little words — peer-reviewed science. Why? Because they don't have it, and they can't get it. Scientific studies have shown time and again that properly used chemicals and fertilizers do not have a negative impact on the environment. This goes against their version of the world as they see it. All they can do in the face of real facts and common sense is scream louder. And when they do, as they surely will, won't you just step up and calmly tell golf's side of the story?

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